

Faery: the Twilight Land

by
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Fairies are thought of as many things by mortals throughout history: nature spirits, dreams, monsters, fallen angels (or half-fallen angels), fallen gods, and the dead are just a few. All and none these things may be the case. The defining quality of fairies is their marginal status. Partly human, partly alive, or appearing at places at the edges of human society, fairies are liminal creatures confined to a middle region twixt existence and imagination.

But what if these twilight creatures could shrug off their obscurity and take on full being in the world of mortals...

What would drive them to enter the sunlit lands though? What plunders would be greater in value than the charmed gold of Faery?

The lands of faery are ephemeral, wonderful and ever changing, but in a sense life there is ever the same. To grow or become stronger Fairies must venture out of St. Martins land, into the realms of mortals and risk death or worse. By accomplishing some great deed in the world of men a fairy may win title or feif in the land under the hills, or gain something in power, or deepen their being.

Even in the mortal lands fairies are drawn to the inbetween states though. And thus is marked a difference in views between factions of fairy: seelie and unseelie. To most mortals the difference seems to be that seelie look kindly upon humans while unseelie seek to torment. But the true meat of the difference is somewhat more subtle.

Both factions are drawn to people or situations at cusps or perilous transitions: wars, familial problems, plagues, children lost, damsels menaced, and abominations walking. Seelie work as guides through this transition, seeking to shift the situation so that the participants may change and grow. This allows the fairies themselves to change and grow as well. By comparison Unseelie are a force of uneasy stasis, working to prolong the transition, to stall the participants in the state and heighten the drama of the situation. The unseelie way heightens the twilight

contrast of the soul and thus gives power.

But still it can be wrong to characterize the seelie as good and the unseelie as evil. Possibly individuals of each might attempt to perpetrate good or evil actions, but others have trouble understanding the concepts of good and evil at all. There are unseelie who seek to prolong some delusion or half-solution to a problem with the idea that a change would make things worse. Misguided surely, but truly evil? There are also seelie who would guide people and situations through crisis to crisis, ever growing and adapting, but with no mercy or compassion for those in the way.

This is a treatment of fairies for use with the game **Risus** by S. John Ross. It might also work as the poor man's substitute bastard red headed step child for those wanting to play ***Changeling: the Dreaming***. It may also be useful to read Jason Puckett's aptly named **Risus Magic** to help with ruling the specifics of Arts.

Cliches, Hooks, and Tales

Cliches - Fairies must take a Fairy cliche. They may also take Medium cliches if they so desire, as well as cliches relating to occupation, class or caste, and special qualities relating to their existence in Faery. Any fairy or medium cliches may (and probably should) use funky dice if such are allowed in the game. Mortal cliches should not (unless the mortals also happen to be supers, monsters, or wizards).

Fairy Cliche - this is the type of being the fairy is. It could be a troll, brownie, nixie, elf, hob, or any other fairy creature that you desire. The first die of fairy cliche must be purchased with a hook. The hook being some traditional weakness of fairies. Some trolls turn to stone when exposed to sunlight and some shades fade away every dawn. Other fairies have a tithe to hell and are incapacitated by crosses or the sound of church bells. Still others have an uncommon hunger that must be sated or a desire that must be fulfilled. Some are simply subject to local

superstitions and go from one town to the next not being able to see people with their coats inside out in one place, being barred by iron bits and four leaf clovers in the next.

A fairy cliché may either be pumped to assist it's self, or double-cross-pumped to assist other clichés, especially Medium clichés.

The fairy cliché also includes one medium cliché associated with the type of fairy involved. For instance a character with Faun as their fairy cliché would probably have the Nature medium included as part of their cliché, where as a character with the fairy cliché of Gremlin would probably include Widget as part of their fairy cliché.

Medium clichés - these are the stuff of the worlds. The canvas upon which the fairies work their Arts. But not all fairies have come to understand these mediums from their perspectives on the sidelines of existence. Some never expand beyond the limits of their fairy cliché or even dabble with the stuff of the world.

Media include: Nature, Widget, Folk, Ephemera, and Season.

- Folk allows the fae insight into the strange worlds of men and mortals.
- Ephemera governs the fae themselves and other effects of magical, weird, or transient nature.
- Nature allows one to effect the world unchanged by human hands and creatures of little insight.
- Widget grants mastery over any crafted thing.
- Seasons are the media of change: moments and hours, days and decades. Understanding them and controlling them.

Arts - But Mediums can do little without an Art to work upon them. The Arts are methods of working the mediums. When using an Art roll the dice of the Medium it's being worked upon, you can double cross-pump dice from the fairy cliché to power it if you want. And while not as myriad as the fairy who weild them, there are none the less a great number of Arts. A few examples might include:

Enchant - taking mortals and others into Faery. Charming others, manifesting faery might in the mortal realm (ie. enchanting a sword). This art can also be used to make the Fairy cliché obvious to things of the mundane world (otherwise a fairy is basically invisible and intangible with only the vaguest perceptions of what is going on in the mortal world nearby). This is easier for things like Ephemera and Nature which don't typically have wills to resist, but more difficult with Folk since humans are such a fickle and disbelieving lot. With Folk the character has to win a contest between the Folk medium cliché and the highest mortal cliché in the room to manifest the fairy cliché).

In some interpretations being enchanted may be the only way mortals can find the entrances to Faery at all. **Quick study** - this Art grants the fairy things they may need to fit in somewhere. At lower levels it grants the ability to speak the local language or understand customs, at higher levels it gives the fairy a fitting appearance (human normally, could be animal or machine for that matter, or Seasons if displaced in time. Interpret liberally.) for that local, and a temporary local cliché.

To get the local cliché pick an occupation, social class or other mundane cliché likely to be found in the area. Roll appropriate Medium cliché. This Medium will usually "Folk" to become a human or other sentient mortal, Nature to become a dog or pool or magma (if there is lots of volcanic activity nearby), etc. While giving the character human appearance and/or knowledge of local customs this won't necessarily make them a forrest ranger unless they also have "Nature" at some level, or a mechanic unless they have a die or two in "Widget". For every 6 points scored get one d6 of temporary local cliché. This temporary cliché fades at the rate of one die per day, but can be maintained by cross-pumping from the fairy cliché. However if the fairy cliché is cross-pumped to maintain the temporary cliché there are two problems: first dice pumped to maintain the temporary cliché do not recover as long as

the temporary cliché remains in place. Second, if the fairy cross-pumps her last fairy cliché die to maintain the temporary cliché, then the temporary cliché becomes permanent and she loses the fairy cliché, possibly forever (although an appropriate tale might regain it).

Of course the temporary cliché may be dropped intentionally or allowed to elapse and retaken later after regaining fairy cliché dice. But without some pretty high rolling there is a good chance the fairy will not be able to duplicate the exact same temporary cliché. Many a nymph has been a buxom ecologist one day and a beefy forester the next.

Metamorphosis - the art of changing things into other things. Fairy must understand the medium of the thing they are changing and the medium of the thing they are changing it to.

Elements - fire, earth, air, water, lightning, cold, etc. The ability to create, control, or destroy these.

Illusion - the ability to make the clear obscured and the obscure unknowable.

Divination - the art of bringing the obscure to light and lit things into true understanding.

Arts are not clichés. They are something else which I am not going to tell you, but it doesn't matter. Arts can be gained in one of two ways: at the beginning of play the character can purchase them using tales (one for one). Or during play the character can gain them instead of advancing all other abilities, at the rate of one per adventure or great accomplishment. The art gained should have something definitive, though not necessarily sympathetic, to do with the accomplishment or tale.

Adventuring in Faery, Adventuring in the Mortal Realms

The connections between Faery (Tir Na Nog, St. Martin's Land, or the land under the hills) are tenuous and some are prone to

random shifts, daily, or seasonal changes. But they exist nonetheless and both the fair folk and mortals may cross them if they choose, though fairies are more likely to find such shaded paths.

Fairies can adventure in Faery if they want. They can kill dragons, loot treasure, find lost secrets, rescue princesses, rescue princes, go to war, explore uncharted lands (or planets), enter al-Mithal or fight urges from the ancestral dream time. However in the end it's like an episode of some TV show, they always end up where they started with. No change of character can become evident. And what's worse: no gain of abilities or Arts to show for it! It's only by adventuring in mortal lands amidst the squalor, filth, and wretchedness of human concerns that they can gain great things.

Mortals can of course gain experience (which requires some explaining) in the mortal world since they do anyway. There are two ways you can play their encounters in Faery:

- Mortals can do great things in Faery, journey to new worlds, etc. But they can't gain any new cliches while there, or if they do then the new cliches only work in Faery. They can get changes, however such changes are internal (like coming to an understanding about the death of a loved one, or gaining the courage to stand up to a bully).
- Mortals can gain new cliches in Faery or new treasures and bring them into the mortal world, doing all kinds of wonderful things. However, they may be under some obligation if they eat the food and if they stole the treasures or gained anything deceitfully they better watch their bed for goblin traps from now on.
- Or, a little of both. Maybe there's a third option of how mortals and fairies work that hasn't been covered.

A character's pumped (and lost) cliché dice return at the rate of 1 per day in the mortal world (unless circumstances don't permit) or 1 per two hours if they are immersed in their element

(ie. tinkering with a machine if they are a gremlin, running a navy seal mission for an undine, etc.). In Faery the character's pumped fairy cliché dice recover at the rate of one per hour.

Some ideas for Fairy clichés:

Troll (trowie?), Gnome, Gremlin, Kobold, Tommy Knocker, Djinn (various types), Goblin, Yallery Brown, Lutin, Satyr, Ogre, Fir-bolg (not exactly, but you get the idea), Hobgoblin, Elf, Shade (term I made up, but sometimes ghosts were considered fairies, ex: Bean-shithe or banshee), Faun, Pixie, Nixie, Nymph, Dryad, Undine, just to name a few.

Some ideas for Fairy classes and occupations:

Master craftsman - maker of mead, cheese, and fine pretzels. Or maybe scrimshaw and other forms of carving... You sea livered dock sitting lout!

Sage - gathers obscure lore about Faery or mortal realms

Knight - fights, wears armor, honorable or black, if green can get his head chopped off and live, etc.

Bard - singing and playing an instrument, inspiring people with music (cross pump this cliché to others in your presence while you play).

Lurker - skulking, navigating tunnels, finding secrets and treasure, blinking in small patches of daylight.

Noble - lady, baron, thane, king, empress, king o' all the kings in the land. The higher the cliché dice the better the rank. But if they didn't appoint you king of everything, you can expect the real king of everything to show up and challenge you to a winner-take-all kinging contest.

And that's all about fairies. Thanks for reading.

This system is, as of yet, untested.

In addition to drawing upon *Changeling: the Dreaming* for part of it's magic and fairy/mortal treatment, I've also managed to

skill for another book in writing this: *At the Bottom of the Garden*. Throughout this work I've espoused a view on fairies heavily influenced by the one Diane Purkiss puts forward. If you wish to argue over my interpretations or others regarding this topic, I'll tell you now: I'm no expert in esoteric matters, but bring it on. I generally don't mind having my ignorance stamped out in such matters as long as you stomp carefully.

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