"Death in itself is nothing; but we fear
To be we know not what, we know not where."
— John Dryden, *Aurengzebe. Act iv. Sc. 1.*

The Fear-Maker's Promise

A Story for Changeling: The Lost using the Storytelling Adventure System

Written by Chuck Wendig Development and Book Design by Will Hindmarch Illustrations by Andrew Hepworth and Pat Loboyko

STORYTELLING ADVENTURE SYSTEM		
SCENES 8	MENTAL ●●●○○ PHYSICAL ●●●○○ SOCIAL ●●●○○	XP LEVEL 0-34

White Wolf Game Studio
Mountain East Business Center
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Frank Bittle (order #527774)

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"So the Bluebirds have contracted, have they, for a house?
And a next is under way for little Mr. Wren?"
"Hush, dear, hush! Be quiet, dear! quiet as a mouse.
These are weighty secrets, and we must whisper them."
— Susan Coolidge, *Secrets*

At twilight, a young boy chases a rabbit into a thicket and is never seen again.

At midnight, a mother hears the sudden cry of her newborn girl on the baby monitor... and when she enters the room to check on her, the child is gone, the crib is overturned, and the room is filled with red moths.

Toward morning, twelve-year-old twins finally decide to confront the monster that lurks in their closet, and in doing so, are snatched away by a pair of hands sticky with silk spun by greasy worms.

Perhaps it's time to put an end to these abductions. But is the cost of stopping these abductions too high? Is there cold comfort to be found in the sacrifice?

Introduction

The cruel reality is this: the True Fae like to steal children from the world. Why is this? Hard to say, and it's not like the Others are particularly clear about their motivations. Do they milk the humanity out of such younglings, drinking their Glamour (or their blood)? Could it be that, if taken at an early enough age, a child can grow up to "become" one of the Fae? Or are their purposes so alien that no human mind can come to comprehend them?

This story centers on a ritual performed within the local freehold with members of all the local Courts in attendance. The purpose of this ritual is to forge a new ceremonial contract with the city itself — the invocation of this so-called Children's Contract ends the True Fae's ability to steal children from this city for one year and one day.

This adventure kit provides something of a moral mystery for the characters. Can they navigate a tense social situation and a moral conundrum in time to see the truth of things? Can they muster the strength to combat the physical elements that stand in their path? This kit can be used as a stand-alone story comprising one or two sessions, or it can be folded into your current **Changeling: The Lost** chronicle.

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What is Inside

In lieu of a traditional table of contents, this product uses bookmarks to help you turn immediately to the page you're after. Most PDF readers list a file's bookmark links in an easy-to-access part of the interface, but check your program's documentation for more on bookmarks.

This story kit breaks down into three basic parts:

The **Introduction**, which you're reading now, gives you the gist of the story, the rundown on Storyteller characters and lots of history and back-story to help you bring the setting and the characters to life.

The **Scenes** are the heart of story. They detail the core actions of the tale, and help you improvise in the midst of your story.

The **Scene Cards** mark the beginning of in-play resources designed for easy printing. If you can't print this whole kit, just print pages 48-55 for the bare-bones you need to tell this story.

About the Storytelling Adventure System

If this is your first Storytelling Adventure System (SAS) product, you've chosen a fine place to start. To keep this story kit lean and focused, though, we haven't included a lot of the core Storyteller advice that's at the heart of the SAS. Whether you're a new Storyteller, or a leathery vet, be sure to read the *free* **SAS User's Guide**, found at the SAS website:

www.white-wolf.com/sas

The gist of the SAS format is this: The actions described in the **World of Darkness Rulebook** are archetypal, but by no means exhaustive. The "Foot Chase" action on p. 65 of that book, for example, describes foot chases in general. It gives you a place to start. The action in an SAS scene describe one specific event, one instance of action. So while the **World of Darkness Rulebook** gives you mechanics for *a* foot chase, an SAS product gives you game mechanics for *this one* foot chase.

This gives your story's actions more color and detail, and adds mileage to every Skill on the players' character sheets. No two foot chases — or whatever other action they're taking — are alike.

Likewise, the scenes in this story are not mandates. This kit doesn't describe how the story *must* go, but rather creates conflicts and circumstances from which it can begin.

Treatment

In "The Fear-Maker's Promise," an outsider to the freehold called Red Wren has offered up a promise to the local Lost: with a certain ritual that she has performed elsewhere, she can ensure that no children under the age of fifteen years will be abducted by the True Fae for one year and one day. The invocation of this Children's Contract is not pleasant, however, and forces the changelings of the freehold into a moral dilemma. The dilemma? The ritual demands that physical harm and mental trauma be brought against a single child — acting as a scapegoat, and a focus of the ritual.

The fear of the sacrificial boy is the catalyst for the ritual. His fear is enough to keep all the local children sufficiently afraid of that which they do not know (the Others) and the True Fae at bay.

The Children's Contract, performed on the Autumnal Equinox (on or around the 22nd or 23rd of February), therefore falls under the governance of the Court of Fear. Given that Red Wren belongs to the Autumn Court, it's not surprising that the court decides to go ahead with the ritual.

The adventure itself begins the night of the Children's Contract enactment, around sundown. Once the ritual begins, it must be completed by sunrise of the following day for its mystic effect to be invoked. Fail to complete the ritual by then, and it doesn't "take" — meaning children can continue to be abducted by the Others.

If only it were so simple. Early in the invocation of the ritual, an unseen figure absconds with the child and disappears into the Hedge, leaving behind a set of strange footprints. Those Lost in attendance remain torn as to what to do; some present claim to have second thoughts, and wonder if maybe the so-called "kidnapper" might not have the right idea, planning not to harm the child but instead to take the child somewhere safe. Other Lost feel that the child must be recovered — who knows what will happen to him in the Hedge? And isn't the minor harm that will be brought against this child worth it if it keeps all the children of the city safe?

The players must decide where their characters stand in this moral dilemma. If they choose to go after the thief and the child, they must enter the Hedge and descend deep within the tangle of Thorns to reclaim the stolen boy. If they remain with the other Lost, they must navigate an escalating social conflict that threatens to see violence between the Courts, driven on by their individual views.

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What's worse, one of the Others, bent on disrupting this ritual, shows his nightmarish face.

If the child is recovered, and the characters choose to go through with the ritual, and all threats are appropriately obviated, the ritual is impeded by a final wrinkle: the child is autistic, and does not scare easily. Morning approaches. Will the characters aid in this, too, by terrorizing an innocent boy?

Some of the scenes of this story are linear, whereas others happen only according to certain triggers. All scenes, however, can be reorganized as is necessary according to your story's needs and in reaction to the characters' actions and motivations. Remember that the troupe's characters are the protagonists — not Joey, not Red Wren, not anyone else. If the protagonists do not undertake a particular action, and a particular scene doesn't actually take place in your version of the story, so be it. That only means the relevant scenes can receive more attention in your tale.

A Chapter In Your Chronicle

This story plays well on its own as a singular gameplay experience, or as part of a larger **Changeling: The Lost** chronicle.

When played as part of a larger series of stories, the characters presumably already have allies and enemies within and outside of the four Courts. They have their own preconceptions (and fears) regarding things like fetches, Keepers, and the Hedge. "The Fear-Maker's Promise" works as one chapter in this overarching story. The Storyteller characters provided in this kit can easily be swapped out for characters that already exist in your chronicle. It's even possible that, in your chronicle's city, the practice of this ritual has been going on for years, and during this time has been keeping the children of the city safe from the thieving hands of the Others. In which case, things change or stay the same depending on the decisions made by the players' characters.

As part of an ongoing chronicle, once the story is complete the characters will have made choices that affect not just one child, not just the freehold, but a city's worth of children. What are the repercussions? Do they act against their own Court's interests? Have they alienated themselves from their allies? This story is meant to have far-reaching repercussions both socially and morally for your troupe's characters.

A Story by Itself

Alternately, "The Fear-Maker's Promise" plays well as a stand-alone story (though it may well take more than a single session of play).

You might tell this tale as a singular, experimental play experience. Maybe you've just gotten your copy of **Changeling: The Lost** and you want to try out the game, or maybe you're looking for a self-contained follow-up tale to the **Changeling** demo, "Dwelling in Darkness." This story is a fine way to begin a new chronicle, too.

While this adventure cannot possibly provide game statistics or details on every persona of every Court in the freehold, it does provide a few of the lynchpin characters. From here, you may choose to expand or revise the cast of characters according to your future plans for the chronicle, or use these quick impressions of Storyteller characters to create the illusion of a whole lived-in freehold existing in the background, behind the players' characters.

Acts and Scenes

Drama is about tension, and tension is about escalation.

In this story, things are "off" or "bad" to begin with — people have gathered to watch the torment of a young boy. Every scene after that needs to escalate that uneasy feeling, with the risks rising along the way. If you feel that a scene is dragging, or suddenly deflates for some reason, either insert some new conflict, or cut to the quick and push to the next scene — provided the players are ready for some resolution. Just as you shouldn't let a scene linger when it's finished, you shouldn't rush through a scene that hasn't done its part yet unless it's clear that the scene is getting in the way of tension going up or the story going forward.

Tension and conflict can draw a lot of negativity to the characters, but that's not to say that successes shouldn't be rewarded. Players should be made to feel good when their characters resolve something or manage a small success. But if the adventure isn't over, then such successes should only be breathers — the tension should return soon, more taut than it was before, urging the characters forward.

Dramatic Tension

Dramatic tension runs behind each scene, between the scenes, no matter what scenes are played, no matter how they turn out. Dramatic tension is what turns a conversational scene into a pivotal moment

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of profound decision-making. Early in the story, when tensions are more relaxed, a conversation might simply reveal something about the characters in involved. Later in the story, when the dramatic tension is high, a similar conversation can mean life or death.

This isn't something we describe for you in numbers. This isn't something linked directly to this story's individual scenes. Regardless of the choices the players make, regardless of the order in which the scenes unfold, the dramatic tension must always continue to rise.

It's part of the art of being a Storyteller — with one hand you must shape the story in reaction to the decisions of the players and their characters, and with the other hand you must be cranking the dramatic tension higher and higher as the story goes on. When the tension becomes too much to bear, and the characters either act to relieve the tension or the whole scenario breaks into violent conflict under the pressure, that's the climax to your story.

The trick is to pace the tension and the speed of play so that the scenes and the height of tension sync up at the climax. Get the timing a bit off and your story may peak before you reach a richer scene, or a potentially profound scene may play out with sparks instead of explosions.

You cannot achieve this goal with planning. You musn't sacrifice the players' input into the story to facilitate some schedule of dramatic tension you devised prior to play. Instead, get the story running as quickly as you can, keep its wheels on the asphalt, and make sure that every scene it drives through is higher up the mountain than the last one. Keep your eyes and ears open.

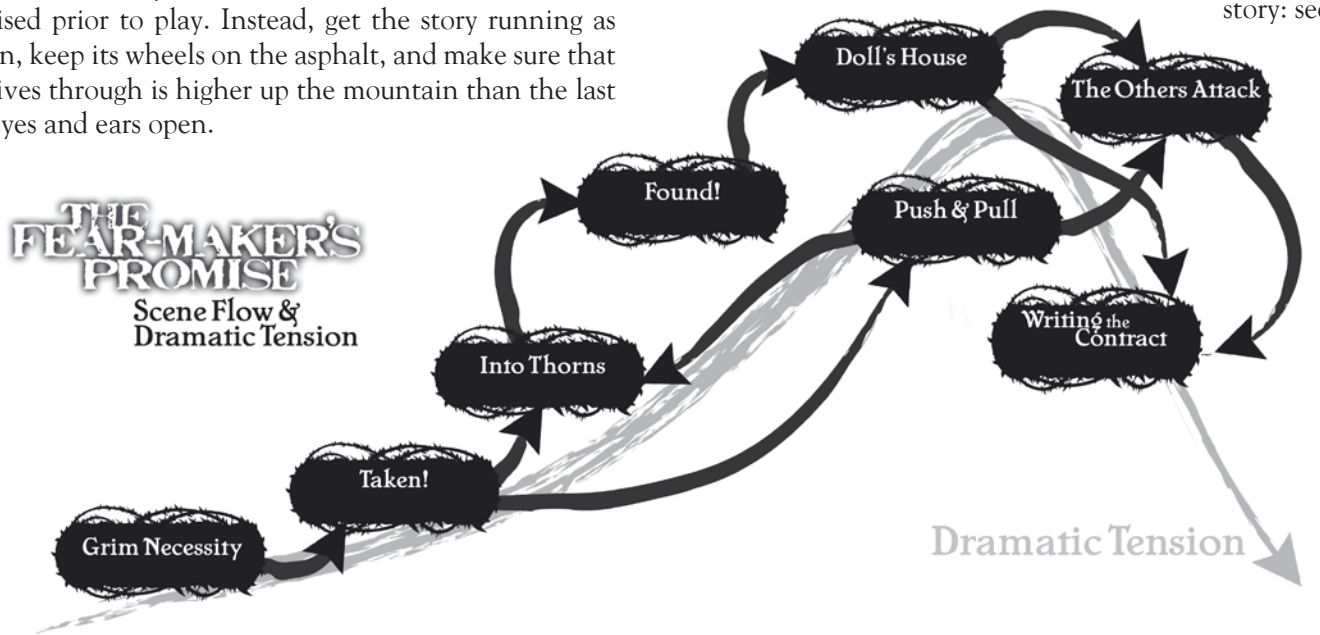
Notice, in this story's scene flow diagram (simplified below, in full on p. 51), how the dramatic tension rises regardless of the order in which the scenes are actually played. Remember that, even in the event the players take the story to the scene, "Push & Pull," before the scene, "Into Thorns," which is seemingly a step backward dramatically, the story is actually always moving to the right, higher up the dramatic arc.

No matter how the scenes get reorganized by you or the players during play, the dramatic arc is the same: Things get more and more tense until the story finally peaks.

In Medias Res

You've probably heard of this before. *In media res* means "in the middle of things." It describes the narrative trick of opening a story with the dramatic tension already cranked up beyond whatever the normal baseline level would be for the characters. "The Fear-Maker's Promise" is presumed to begin *in medias res*, in the seconds before the Children's Contract is to be invoked, with the scene "Grim Necessity."

This helps you begin with some momentum to carry the story up the hill, by starting the tale with an inevitable act — Joey's capture — from which everything else follows. (But this isn't the only way to begin your version of the story: see page 19.)



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Background and Set-Up

Before the story begins, a few important back-story events occur in and around the freehold:

• Within the last year, the number of children gone missing in the city has risen to frightening numbers. Every other night the news has another story of a missing or abducted child. By now, bodies should have turned up living or dead. None have. Some of the local Lost assume the worst: it's the True Fae, plucking children from the world as casually as you might pick flowers from a garden. Some of the Lost refuse to believe the Others can be so busy without having been spotted in action.

• Two months ago, the nephew of a prominent Spring Court member has gone missing. For the purposes of this kit, we've cast the nephew of the Spring Court's ruler, Queen Jackie Snow, in the role, but a relative of a character already established in your chronicle is an even better choice.

• A month ago, an Autumn Court witch known as Red Wren came to the city. She offered the rulers of the Courts and all the changelings of the freehold a way to stop the abductions of mortal children from the city. She offered them the Children's Contract. It is a ceremony she would perform and then teach to others so that the ritual may be kept every year upon the Autumnal Equinox. The freehold's personas were evenly split on whether or not the Children's Contract should or should not be performed for various reasons on all sides. While not universally so, for the most part the split was along Courtly lines: the Spring and Autumn Court believed it was a necessary evil. The Summer Court found it a grotesque offer. The Winter Court noted that the grief born of so many missing children was, while regrettable, perhaps necessary. Seeing as how the ritual would be performed on the Autumnal Equinox, that essentially put the Autumn Court into the position of deciding the fate of the ritual and the city's children. They decided to press ahead with it.

• At Red Wren's behest, one of the Autumn Court's motleys kidnapped a child of her choosing. Kidnapping is a Clarity 3 sin, remember: the motley chosen will likely be of low moral qualities or of fleeing sanity, either of which is an earmark of reduced Clarity or a *willingness* to give into that imbalance of mind, morals and perceptions. Consider early on how deeply you wish for your freehold to truly "take the hit" and suffer the cost of morality and madness. Given that some within the freehold have literally signed off on the kidnapping of a child (and are excusing it right from the get-go as an unfortunate sacrifice for the greater good), you may want any who gave their thumbs-up to this action to go through degeneration checks to see if their Clarity scores withstand the choice or break with the excuses given to the "greater good."

Backstory

Red Wren has reportedly been performing the Children's Contract for six or seven years, each year teaching a different freehold how to invoke the Contract. All evidence indicates that the ritual works — she can even produce contact information for Lost who can vouch for the efficacy of the magic in other freeholds she's visited.

Uncovering some of this enigmatic Autumn figure's backstory requires no dice: enough of her tale has gone around in changeling circles that rumors, at least, are common. And she's not shy about telling it herself should the characters meet her before the ceremony occurs. If you have the time, you can foreshadow this tale by including rumors of Red Wren's ways in stories leading up to this one.

Prior to her abduction about twenty years ago, Wren worked as an adoption agent, helping to place displaced or abandoned children with deserving and desirous families. She remembers her abduction with muddled clarity: she knows she was transporting a young boy to his new family. It was early evening. She made a wrong turn and ended up in a cul-de-sac overgrown with weeds and briar. In turning the car around she discovered that the road was gone, and left before her was a muddy path featuring two deep wheel-ruts. (The ruts were thin as if from carriage wheels, not from an automobile.) The briars continued on, coiling higher and higher into the distance. The city could still be seen, but only through a distant vapor, similar to heat-haze rising off a hot road.

Then she heard the rickety rumble of carriage wheels, and saw the black carriage barreling forward. The sky darkened. She heard laughing.

Wren doesn't remember what happened next, not exactly. She knows that her Keeper, a crow-like creature whose face still remains elusive to her memory, sought to abscond with the child. Somehow, she fought the Fae away from the child, allowing the boy to escape. It took her, instead.

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The story of her durance is simple and terrifying. If others tell it, they likely speak of it as if they cannot imagine it and are glad that they themselves did not undergo such horror. If she tells it, she speaks of it in removed, dispassionate tones as if it happened to someone else and she's simply relaying the information.

During her durance, Red Wren was made into a tree. Her feet were sunk into the rich soil of Arcadia, and her hands were nailed to a pre-existing tree. Over time — a period of which she believes was years — Wren merged with the tree, the bark and her flesh pushing painfully together. Leaves unfurled from the tips of her fingers. Fruit, plump and strange, bulged from beneath her arms, out of her eyes and mouth, and from her belly and breasts. Her Keeper — known only as The Orchard Bird — tended to her with meticulous grooming. Trimming overgrown branches and discarding rotting fruit, all pulled from her skin with anguish. The Fae also tended to a flock of little birds… red wrens, of course. The Keeper encouraged these birds to live upon his kept changeling. They nested within her, using her hair as materials. They also ate of her. Consuming the fruits and seeds of her very skin, which caused her constant misery.

Wren does not remember how she escaped. Or how she found her way back to this world, the memory of the many children she helped anchoring her path back home.

As to where the magic for the Children's Contract came from? Wren claims it came to her in a dream. She is a great believer of dreams, accepting that they are not false or open for interpretation, but instead provide real knowledge to those willing to look deep enough.

Fitting This to Your Chronicle

You have a number of ways to tie Red Wren's backstory to your current chronicle:

• Red Wren is not from another freehold, but from the characters' own freehold. Perhaps this is the first time she is performing the ritual for anybody. Alternately, perhaps she has been performing the Children's Contract here for a number of years, and its effectiveness is well-witnessed by the changelings and the characters.

• Red Wren has enemies. She is almost obsessively utilitarian, ready to perform any action for the greater good. She may have enemies among the characters' own freehold, perhaps changelings who are their friends, or who are *their* enemies as well as her own. Those in the past who have stood in her way find themselves the target of her manipulations. She has been known to make life difficult for any who directly oppose (with action, not with words) the Children's Contract. This could mean putting loved ones in harm's way, planting false evidence, even uncovering dark secrets and spreading them around in an effort to discredit her own detractors. She stops short of working with the Others.

• It's possible that The Orchard Bird, Red Wren's Keeper, is also Keeper to one of the characters, Keeper to one of the freehold's other changelings, or is already a persistent enemy in the chronicle.

The Sacrificial Boy

The child taken this time is a 12-year-old boy named Joey Duncan. You have a number of ways to connect him to your ongoing chronicle:

• He isn't Joey Duncan at all, but another child character who is tied directly to the characters (or a Storyteller character in the freehold). Putting a familiar face on the child — whether he's a family member or just a neighbor boy who's often seen riding his bike around the backstreets near to where the motley makes its home — helps get the characters personally invested in his well-being.

• He *is* Joey Duncan, but if you've been able to plan for this adventure in advance, you can insert him into your chronicle earlier. Again, he becomes a familiar face, whether relative, friend, or just a neighborhood persona.

• The characters don't know him, but have been dreaming about him. In the dream he seems strange, unaffected, almost as if he's mentally and emotionally "shut down."

• If you care to involve the troupe in the tale earlier, explore the story of their characters as the motley that kidnaps Joey in the first place. Note, however, that kidnapping is a Clarity 3 sin. Should the characters be in any way involved with the child's initial kidnapping, they may suffer a troubling shift in the stability of their perceptions: the moral breach may shake what sanity they possess.

Set-Up

The backstory only serves to provide some information and some tension to the adventure as it unfolds. Think of backstory as spice: adding too much can kill the stew. What follows now is information that more prominently affects the motley during the course of the adventure.

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Patronage and Motives

It's possible that the motley's involvement in the adventure requires a bit of motivation in the form of a nudge from a so-called "patron" figure — someone (or several individuals) who urge them to become involved for whatever reason.

First thing to do is examine the spread of loyalties to which the individual members of the motley cling. The motley may be unified in its allegiances, belonging only to one Court or no Court at all. Alternately, each character may hew to an entirely different allegiance, which can bring conflict to the table given that each Court tows a different "party line" toward the Children's Contract.

If a single patron figure approaches the characters and attempts to involve them directly in the events, consider why this might occur.

- The characters are low on the totem pole or are otherwise overlooked for one reason or another. Their involvement is therefore easier — they have fewer friendships and loyalties to disrupt, and any errors they make could be dismisses as the follies of youth and naïve inexperience. (Alternately, this might mean that the motley is "expendable," a sacrificial lamb to throw to the wolves.)
- The characters are bound by some pledge to perform actions demanded by the patron.
- The characters are unlikely to betray the patron out of adoration, friendship, even fear.
- The motley is or at least *appears* neutral, and can be counted on to perform the actions as asked for (and they'll likely respond more easily to some kind of reward: money, a token, help dealing with a troublesome fetch, etc.).
- The motley is important enough in the freehold that any actions it takes help to sway the minds of others.

The patron figure can come from any Court, and may not even believe in the party line his Court puts forth (think of an Autumn Courtier who is opposed to the Children's Contract).

The motives of the patron are important, as are the motives of the overarching Court. Whether you have a single patron asking for the motley's attention and loyalty or several opposing forces vying for their aid, you might want to take into account the general attitudes of the four Courts regarding the coming Children's Contract:

No Patron

Keep in mind it's possible that no patron is necessary to urge the motley forward. The Children's Contract is sensitive both morally and magically, and the characters may very well have an emotional stake in how it all plays out. Test them early on: have another Storyteller character, a non-patron figure, drop the news of the coming ritual. See if they bite. If the characters get riled up, if they start planning what to do about the whole affair… then they need no patron to subtly nudge them.

Autumn Court

Fear is an excellent tool and a motivator, not just a senseless emotion. Fear teaches. There is magic in fear. The Children's Contract is the perfect embodiment of these precepts. Harming and putting the ultimate fear into a child is no easy thing, but it is a necessary evil. The Children's Contract *must* be allowed to occur.

Winter Court

Grief is a good thing. Missing children is sad, certainly regrettable. But grief is a healthy emotion, and a solid reminder to the people of what they have — one must lose to gain, isn't that true? The reality is, though, if the True Fae want children, then that means they aren't bothered with the Lost. Why draw their attention? Why stick thorns in their shoes and paint bloody bullseyes on the chests of every changeling in the freehold? The Children's Contract will do just that thing.

Spring Court

The Children's Contract is something the courtiers are less comfortable with than they put forth. Sure, King Queen Jackie Snow wants it. But she's got a reason to want it to happen. The courtiers of desire support her because she is the King Queen, but that doesn't mean they're happy about it. Some think that maybe she's gone too far on the side of sorrow, or is supporting this out of wrath. Neither of which are particularly emblematic of the Court of Desire, are they? Reluctance pervades.

Summer Court

The Children's Contract must be stopped. To kidnap a child? To harm him in front of spectators? A grotesque display. If hurting one child helps a thousand, it's still too much a sacrifice. Better instead to

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take the fight to the Fae. None of this grim Autumn magic. When the Others come to snatch children, the Summer Court will be there, hunting them deep into the Hedge and cutting off their hands for trophies. Torturing an innocent boy before a carnival of monsters? Fuck that. The Summer Court will play nice. But as soon as the opportunity to stop this madness presents itself…

What is At Stake?

Why would the characters get involved at all? Certainly they have the option to not attend the ritual at all, either closing their eyes to the madness or simply deciding not to care. What motivates the motley to jump into this tense, morally-confused situation?

Advancement

Some kind of advancement is an excellent motivator. Maybe it means a little more power in a given Court. Could mean a boost to Mantle or Court Goodwill. Possible that it leads to the Entitlement of a noble order.

Faith

The motley may operate on faith. Certainly by involving themselves in this they're putting their faith in *someone* — if they seek to aid Red Wren and the Autumn Court, they're putting faith in that Court, its magic, and a stranger's ability to wield that magic. If they oppose the Children's Contract, they're putting faith with another Court, as well as in the idea that it'll all turn out all right even though they're theoretically opposing a measure to stop the abduction of *all* children by the Others for a year and a day.

Pledge

The patron might make some kind of pledge with the characters: a task for a task. Maybe the patron offers to harm or destroy a character's fetch. Or negotiate some territory. Maybe he agrees to get the motley some help in damaging the efforts of one of their True Fae adversaries. The pledge is made, and as long as everybody holds up their bargain…

Reward

Some manner of physical reward might be enough to push characters to do what the patron asks. A token. A bushel of oddments or goblin fruits. A Hollow already carved out for them. Could be money. The Lost sometimes struggle for wealth, and money can go a long way toward helping a changeling out of real-world problems.

Wrath

The motley may act on vengeful needs, able to secure some kind of vindication against the True Fae (the fulfillment of the Children's Contract certainly sticks a thorn in their side) or even another Court (their action may oppose the desires and philosophies of a given Court).

What the Patron Wants

This adventure is not predicated on the patron desiring any one particular thing from the motley in regards to the Children's Contract. Determine the motley's loyalties and play to them (or against them if you feel the temptation of a given reward could push them to some conflict, or if it might incur a tug-of-war between *two* patrons, one who wants one thing, one who opposes the other). Below are options for just what the patron may seek the motley to do:

- Disrupt the Children's Contract so that it cannot occur.
- Steal the child so that the ritual cannot take place.
- Protect the child at any cost to ensure that the Children's Contract goes off without a hitch. (Of course, the protection must end when it comes time for Wren to bring some measure of harm against the boy, for that is necessary to complete the ritual.)
- Kill Red Wren. (The patron may ask this under the auspices of preventing the Children's Contract, but in reality, its likelier about revenge against her for past ills.)

Research

Characters have the chance to investigate the situation somewhat before this chapter actually begins. If you're placing this as part of a larger chronicle, feel free to take time to roleplay out the investigation if the players see fit to do so. If this is a single story unconnected as yet to any larger tale, begin the story with the scene "A Walk in the Woods" and resolve research information during that opening event.

Intelligence + Academics

Characters use library resources (microfiche, newspaper archives) and internet searches to determine some information. Specialties certainly apply when necessary; otherwise, no significant penalties or bonuses are relevant.

Dramatic Failure: NA. (The roll can't be reduced to a chance die.)

Failure: The motley's research comes up devoid of any value. Maybe they didn't have enough time. Maybe they found nothing but frustration.

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Success: If they don't already know, they now know that the boy taken is Joey Duncan. They also uncover information they already know but is arguably worth reiterating: in the last year, an abnormal number of children have gone missing from the area. They also uncover statistics for missing children from other cities, including those cities that Red Wren has reportedly gone and helped. Those areas reported similar spikes in missing children… which not-so-conspicuously ends around Autumn of each given year.

Exceptional Success: The motley learns that Joey Duncan, the boy most recently taken (in this case not by the Fae but by the Autumn Court for the Children's Contract) suffers from autism.

Manipulation + Politics or Streetwise

This roll represents a canvassing of the local Lost, ensorcelled, and any other supernatural sources the motley may sometimes contact. Players shouldn't be allowed to roll both the Politics and Streetwise rolls for their characters; they should choose one depending on who in the freehold they see fit to contact. (It's also possible that a very urban freehold might necessitate the Manipulation + Streetwise roll, eschewing the Politics option entirely.) When making this roll, the following modifiers may be in place:

+2 Possesses Mantle with the Autumn Court
+1 Possesses Court Goodwill with the Autumn Court
-2 Character doesn't belong to any Court

Dramatic Failure: The characters make enemies of the changelings of a given Court for the duration of the adventure. Storyteller chooses the appropriate Court. The members of the motley suffer a -1 penalty on Social rolls when dealing with courtiers from that Court.

Failure: Either nobody knows anything, or they're not really willing to give up the goods to the characters.

Success: The characters learn the basic perspectives of each Court, as noted above under Patronage and Motives. They're able to suss out the general opinions of the overarching Courts, though this doesn't guarantee that *individual* courtiers don't possess feelings that go against those of their own people.

Exceptional Success: As above, but the following rumors are learned (though without the bracketed veracity).

RUMOR

Red Wren was once the Queen of her respective Court. She made enough enemies within and outside of the Court of Fear to put her on the outs with them. [True.]

RUMOR

Wren claims that she can't remember how she escaped Faerie. That's a lie. She remembers, because her Keeper freed her so that she could work for him here, in this world. [False.]

RUMOR

King Queen Jackie Snow's nephew was not taken by the Others. The truth is, Red Wren took him and is keeping him in the Hedge, along with Joey Duncan. She did this to manipulate Snow into agreeing to the Children's Contract. Him thinking the True Fae did it pushes him to her side. [True.]

RUMOR

Wren's ensorcelled servant — the adolescent boy, Henry — was her first sacrifice in her first invocation of the Children's Contract, years before. It did not go as planned. [True.]

Intelligence + Occult

Delving deep into old tomes, histories etched into knobby Hedge vines, or oracular visions penned down from decades before, the characters pursue information about the ritual that's supposed to soon occur. The following modifiers may apply:

+2 Encyclopedic Knowledge Merit
+1 Clarity of 7 or higher
-1 Clarity of 4 or lower

Dramatic Failure: The character not only learns nothing of value, but finds his senses and brain a bit muddled from plumbing too deeply into such maddening investigation. Assume that for the remainder of the adventure, the character suffers a -1 roll to all Intelligence-based dice pools.

Failure: The motley learns nothing of value.

Success: The Children's Contract occurs on the Autumnal Equinox. It requires that the child sacrifice be frightened in some traumatic way which is sealed with some manner of physical harm. The child takes on all the fear of all the children ever abducted by the Others. It marks the area with an undetectable fingerprint (and the local domain bears this mystical burden). This fingerprint of fear is what keeps the Others from abducting children from the area during the next year and a day.

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Exceptional Success: As above, but the motley also learns the following rumors (though not their veracity):

RUMOR

The Children's Contract is part of a far older — and now-forgotten — path of Contracts. Supposedly, they were called Contracts of Land and Domain. [True.]

RUMOR

The Children's Contract will require the child to be physically harmed with thorns plucked from the Hedge. The boy's blood is required to cement the deal. [True.]

RUMOR

The Children's Contract requires the child's *death*. [False.]

Allies and Antagonists

Here you'll find our cast of characters for this story. All these characters are mutable, so modify them as you like, or they can be switched out and replaced with Storyteller characters from your own ongoing chronicle. Only a handful of Storyteller characters are truly vital to the story as characters in their own right. Most of these are simple personas for you to use as mouthpieces for the story's dramatic questions. Use them to raise moral, tactical, or strategic issues that the players may not be considering (or suitably exploring) themselves.

Notice that even Joey — an essential character! — is not given complete game statistics here. This isn't an oversight. This is a design. Joey has no agency of his own. His fate depends on those characters who *are* given complete game statistics: the players' characters and their antagonists.

The personas listed beneath the individual Courts are only given one prominent dice pool apiece, are not fully described, and are listed by some kind of archetype. Their function in the story's moral argument is their most important factor. If you change a character or switch her out, you might still be able to use her role in the adventure even if her name and personality are different. Of course, if the archetypes don't apply, change them according to the needs of your chronicle or switch their functions between Courts in whatever combination creates the most interesting tension.

Autumn Court Personas

Hedge Freak

Ornithine appears to be a walking emblem of the Autumn Court: she's an eerily beautiful Wizened Artist with hair like wheat and a trail of dry leaves whispering around her bony feet at all times. She's a bit of a Hedge freak, devoting herself utterly to the study of the Hedge, specifically its treasures and its traps. In her hands at all times is a fraying notebook and a chewed-upon pen; in this book she takes detailed notes and odd sketches of hobgoblins, goblin plants, and rarely-seen oddments. Despite her appearance she is not a zealot for the Court, coming from a mixed motley. She is quietly uncomfortable with the ritual, but will play along for the good of the Court.

Little Details (dice pool 5) — Ornithine is often so devoted to the tiny details that she sees things others might miss. Her eyes are always scanning the smaller world: she sees a broken leaf, an interrupted line of ants, the faintest fingerprint on a doorknob.

Mad King

King Ruslan is old and at least a little bit demented. He appears Lich-like, a crooked zombie in a tattered graveyard suit (as a Darkling Gravewight, he carries the miasma of death around him like a cloud of invisible flies). He's powerful, but in many ways has forgotten how to use his power, both temporal and supernatural (the years have not been kind to his Clarity, and more and more he grows confused over what he sees and even who he is). His Court supports him because he's been around a long time, and they respect him for the same. But they know that it's up to them to make things happen, and so here they all defer to Red Wren's "expertise."

Rictus (dice pool 7) — Ruslan is fucking terrifying. The way his yellow eyes squint, the way he curls his purple lips back to reveal teeth both yellow with age and red with blood (his own, or another's)… the fear he causes another is done through silent intimidation. His grisly face and expression needs no words.

Secret Keeper

Mary O'Brine is uncomfortable here in the forest. As a Water-Dweller Ogre, her seaweed hair and skin the color of bay-water remind everybody that she'd much rather be near the water than here in a misty tract of trees. Mary is notoriously quiet, appropriate because she

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keeps a number of the Court's secrets — not so much because they want her too, but because she collects secrets like some people collect snowglobes or baseball cards. She rarely lets a secret slip… unless the target of said secret refuses to give in to whatever demands Mary brings to them. (Mary is well-aware that someone is going to steal the child away in the middle of the proceedings, and she will keep her mouth shut for as long as she is able and allowed to do so.)

The Simple Lie (dice pool 6) — Mary tells a lot of lies, so she's gotten good at it. She knows not to sell some wild story. She tells her deceptions simply. She mixes them with truth to muddle them further. Her lies rarely take more than a sentence or two to tell, and she only elaborates when further questions are put to her.

Spring Court Personas

Addict

Nyx is a junkie. A street-trash tweaker whose teeth grind and she smells a little like ammonia. A Darkling Mirrorskin, she appears as almost a photo-negative of her once-human self: pale skin turned black, so too with the whites of her eyes (but the dark irises have gone milky white). Nyx is fidgety. Doesn't want to be a part of this. Doesn't like this. But she's keeping quiet because she's tangled up in all sorts of pledges with King Queen Jackie Snow. Worse? She knows who's going to take the boy away from the Children's Contract and she's conflicted. Sell out her friend? Or give in to her Courtbound loyalties and tell someone?

Pocket (dice pool 4) — She steals things. Nothing big. Just items that she can pilfer quick and pocket. A watch. A class ring. A dime bag. A pill bottle.

Lordly Transsexual

King Queen Jackie Snow is a transsexual, born a man but believing that "her" destiny was always to be a woman. She hasn't had gender reassignment surgery, though rumors swirl that she was taken by the Others while waiting numb on the operating table. As an Elemental Snowskin, Jackie's skin sparkles like sun gleaming on ice crystals. Jackie is a study in contrasts: passionate, but cold. Male parts but a female demeanor (and demands to be referred to as a "she," not a "he"). Plays at being happy, a social butterfly who loves everyone… but she's got a real dark, sad center, and sometimes she lets the darkness flail out of her like a whip (and when this happens, she says some very hurtful, unforgettable things). Her own Court thinks she's selfish, and they only abide her until they can find someone who will do the job better. Right now, she's broken up at the loss of her nephew (stolen by the True Fae, so she believes). She will loudly support the Children's Contract.

Chatty Cat (dice pool 7) — She is both mistress and master of the social realm, flitting between conversational partners with the speed and flourish of a fancy dancer. Thing is, it all seems nice and friendly on the surface, but listen more closely: hear how she gets in those quiet digs, those subtle barbs? She leaves wreckage in the wake of a few delicate insults.

Tempter

Satrap Shadow is a known tempter. A Fairest Muse with wide eyes and a honeyed tongue, he doesn't keep his constant power-brokering a secret. He is a Pearl Satrap, and he hews adamantly to the noble order's ideal that *anything* can be bought and sold. Should the characters need something, he may offer whatever it is they desire (provided it is within his ability to provide it at this moment)… though he'll demand some kind of payment (token, pledge, a task) in return. The Satrap doesn't support the Children's Contract, but he also doesn't care enough to do much about it. He'll go whichever way the wind blows if it earns him some kind of barter or deal.

Sell Ice To Eskimo (dice pool 6) — Think of the way one might work a single thread from a sweater, slowly picking at it until it unravels. That is Shadow's Persuasion technique: he worries away at one's will until he sells them something they don't need.

Summer Court Personas

Moral Bully

Enkidu gets her way with stubborn bluster and bullying threats. Once a girl who thought herself prey (thanks to a pair of callous fox-headed Keepers), this Beast Runnerswift has changed her perspective to make her the hunter, not the hunted (think a burgeoning Cernunnos or Herne the Huntsman, except make it a young woman who's built like a concrete bunker). She doesn't get pleasure from bulling others, not exactly; but it is how she gets her way and how she "enforces" what she perceives to be right. In this case, she's disgusted at the back-handed attempt at harming the True Fae. She's rather lead the charge and storm

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onto a thorn-coiled battlefield against the Others — the Children's Contract, to her, is the way *They* would fight. It's abhorrent.

Browbeat (dice pool 5) — It's the tactic she resorts to most easily: strong-arming. Threats both casual and not-so-casual, have become part of Enkidu's regular parlance.

Outraged King

King Tom-of-the-Grotto, with his craggy face and mossy beard, is a simmering cauldron of rage over what's about to happen. He understands political protocol. And for now he's standing stoic in the face of what he very clearly does not agree with. A Wizened Woodwalker, he is further incensed that this is happening here, in what he perceives to be *his* forest. If the time comes that he can do something, *anything*, to hamper these proceedings… then he'll take that chance and oppose protocol. He cares little for the Autumn Court, so damaging an already-fractured relationship means little to him.

Signs of the Forest (dice pool 7) — Tom-of-the-Grotto is an excellent tracker. The woods are his home, and as he is a Woodwalker, he practically *is* the forest. Those who disrupt the forest do so obviously, even when they don't mean to. This ability could be of great use to the motley… if he can be convinced to use it on their behalf.

Simmering Drunk

The Wizened Brewer Gilbraith is, for now, quiet. A little man with drunken eyes and a kinky set of mullet chops, he's drunk most hours of the day and refuses to listen to those who tell him he has a problem and that his liver looks like a sun-baked walnut husk. Fuck them. And fuck all this Children's Contract shit, or so he says under his breath every ten minutes. For now, he's content to pickle and stew in his own indignation. But given the right spur, he might launch into a tirade, or worse, some kind of action. The whiskey that roils in his gut gives him a great deal of fiery courage.

Clamber (dice pool 5) — Gilbraith, or "Gil," likes to climb things. Give himself some height since he's (for his own sodden pride) uncomfortably small.

Winter Court Personas

Heartbreaker

Seems odd, perhaps, that an Elemental Fireheart would belong to the Winter Court, but that changes once one meets Morgana. Those eyes of blue flame — *cold* flame, some say — are both captivating and unnerving. She seems so passionate, so loving, so *sultry*… until one enters any kind of relationship with her and ends up a few weeks later weeping on the kitchen linoleum. Some say she's as callous as whatever incubus Fae stole her away from this world, and that she's just got a talent for masking it. Another thing she masks: her cunning comprehension of the political situation of the freehold. She plays dumb. And most buy it. But she knows a lot. Some might be *astounded* at the things she knows…

Big Picture (dice pool 7) — She plays politics and hardly anybody even recognizes it. She knows about any number of secret relationships and hidden grudges, about concealed pledges and broken bargains. Who knows? Maybe she even knows something about the characters. Maybe she'll even use it to get her way. If she can help end the Children's Contract, well then, her will be done.

Untested Queen

Lady Miss Pity has the lithe grace of a white ribbon caught in a light breeze. A Fairest Dancer, every move she makes is a delicate-but-sweeping gesture, epic in its minimalism. She is a wholly untested and too-young queen, say most. Why is she allowed to rule? Some say it's because her story is simply *dripping* with so much grief that how could they not? (Her entire family, including her four-year-old brother, was executed by the Others as punishment for her escape from Arcadia.) The Children's Contract is regrettable to her, for the harming of a child is — regardless of the result — too sad to even consider. But some say she's too passive a queen, and unless something stirs her to action, for now she will abide this unfortunate ritual in the hopes that some good can come of it.

First Aid (dice pool five) — Miss Pity was a young waif fresh out of nursing school when she was taken by her Fae Keeper, and while she never manifested that career in any meaningful way, she still remembers how to perform first aid.

Woebegotten Cynic

Walter Splithorn, a Broadback Beast, is depressed. Life is hopeless, and it should be declared as such to any he meets. With one curled horn split at the base and a sagging paunch hanging over his wobbly legs, he finds the entire experience of being alive — especially as one of the Lost — too trying to bear, most nights. Rumor is that he's tried to commit suicide. This whole Children's Contract thing has driven him into a deeper place of darkness, and for most of the ritual he'll sit

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and weep. Though, it might be possible for someone to turn that dark, depressive energy away from passivity and into action… what that action might *be*, however, is hard to say. It probably won't be good.

The Old Ways (dice pool 4) — Splithorn dabbles in the occult, specifically those "old ways" that relate to fairy tales, spirits, and Arcadia. If he could be cajoled into actually giving *up* this knowledge once in a while, he might be useful. Sadly, he keeps most of it to himself.

Courtless Personas

Dissenting Presence

Margrave Doorman, Wizened Soldier of the Brim, is a quiet man whose scars and wrinkles seem to persistently spill trails of red dust. Doorman plays at monitoring the proceedings and nothing more. He stays at the edges of the whole affair and talks to no one unless they speak to him first. But here's the thing. He hates the Courts. Once having belonged to the Summer Court, he knows that even the most direct courtiers will stab you in the kidneys given half-a-chance. What this means is that, once the shit hits the fan with the Children's Contract, he won't help the situation. In fact, he'll gladly say or do whatever it takes to get the Courts *more* at each other's throats. He takes no pleasure from it. At least, none that's easily perceivable…

Exploit Weakness (dice pool 6) — Not many people use Empathy as a weapon, but Doorman damn sure does. He can sense little things about a person's demeanor — maybe the way a voice raises in an octave or how an eyelid twitches. He knows when something has hurt someone, and he sees that crack and works at it until the fissure widens.

Fence-Straddler

Vitalja, the young Croatian girl, doesn't look like the Darkling Tunnelgrub that she is… until someone sees her pop her bones out of joint or collapse part of her skeleton. She's new to the freehold and hasn't yet made her peace with any of the Courts (and may not after tonight), but her loyalty still remains up for swaying.

A roller-derby fanatic and a sometimes-wrestler (when it pays), she's an alarmingly physical girl despite appearing small and, well, girlish. She approaches the Children's Contract with disdain, but that doesn't mean she opposes it. Vitalja recognizes that sometimes nasty problems have nasty solutions. When she was twelve-years-old, her mother's boyfriend beat her up pretty bad, so she poisoned his drink with oven cleaner. How's *that* for grim necessity?

Foot Chase (dice pool 6) — If it comes down to it, Vitalja can *move*. But it's not about speed, not really. She learned that in roller derby. It's as much about strategy, about placement, about cutting someone off before they get away from you.

Joey Duncan

Quotes: *"Something very bad is going to happen."*

"I don't trust you. My mother said not to trust anybody."

[silent, hollow gaze — the boy has clearly shut down]

Description: Joey is a tow-headed boy, a pale slip with pronounced freckles. He seems vulnerable: thin, small, wide-eyed. But he doesn't seem to *know* that he's vulnerable, standing stock still most times, rarely cowering, hands balled into tight little fists.

Something about his eyes draws your gaze to them. They are either infinite, containing an alarmingly deep well of wisdom, or they are totally empty — as devoid of anything as the deepest reaches of dark space. Is it possible that they can be both infinite and empty?

Storytelling Hints: Joey is an odd boy, autistic and strange. He seems mildly disconnected with what's going on around him, and this only worsens as the adventure continues. Sometimes, though, he looks right at the character and says something profound or strange before turning his gaze away. Given enough stress, Joey just shuts down, totally separating himself from the world.

Hide (5 dice) — Joey plays hide and seek a lot (sadly with himself), and this has given him a rather useful ability in this adventure.

Flee (6 dice) — The boy can bolt. He can run, duck under things, scurry into the nearest bolthole with his thin frame. If given half-a-chance, he'll stand motionless… and then suddenly break into a swift sprint.

Henry

Quotes: *(steely glare, nothing more)*

Description: Henry is a mute African-American adolescent, a wide-eyed unsmiling teenager who keeps his chest puffed out like he's proud of what he's doing, no matter what it is. The boy dresses simply: pair of distressed jeans, a white wife-beater t-shirt, and no shoes. (His feet, in contrast to his youth, appear over-large and leathery.) It may require characters a successful Wits + Composure roll to notice, but he's got a series of criss-crossing puffy scars on his palms and on the bottoms of

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his feet (suggesting that he was indeed one of the original participants in the Children's Contract ritual).

Storytelling Hints: It's all about the facial expressions for Henry. He does have a pen and small notepad if he needs to write complicated notes down, but for the most part he tries very hard (and generally succeeds) to let people know his thoughts via body language and changing expressions. Those who press him too hard or say one thing bad about Wren or the Children's Contract earn his enmity… and often enough, his ignorance.

Wren is a mother figure to him. She raised him for the last six years, and he clings very closely to her wherever she walks. He will not abide by those who speak ill of her. While he isn't capable enough to fight anybody, he *does* find ways of manifesting revenge — often by spying on people or by stealing things from them without them knowing it. It doesn't matter if *they* know it was him. As long as *he* knows, then it's all good.

In the adventure, Henry represents something of a conundrum for characters who discover that he was one of the first, if not *the* first, target of the ritual. On one hand, here he appears safe and sane. Ensorcelled, too. On the other hand, he's mute. Was he mute before the Children's Contract? Does that haunted look in his eyes tell characters anything? And is being the clingy boy-servant to an Autumn Court witch a truly ideal way for an adolescent to grow up? Doesn't seem healthy.

Grapple (dice pool 5) — Henry's used to holding people down; keeping them still while Wren… talks to them.

Read Movement (dice pool 5) — Henry can see what you're thinking by your body language. Of course, he won't tell you that. But with a few silent gestures of his own, he can tell Red Wren what's going on in your head.

Cobbler Cormorant

Quotes: *"You interrupt us? No interrupt us."*

"I show you the way. But first you must give me secret. Something you told no one else…"

"You make no bargain? We will crack you skull like rock. Peck at the dreams inside."

Description: The Cobbler Cormorant is a hobgoblin, a Hedge bird that likely comes up to or around a character's knee. The body and the feet appear to belong to a normal bird: salt and pepper feathers, a faint sheen of oil, a broad set of dark wings. The head, though, is where things get strange. The beak looks like half of a metal pick-ax. And the eyes? Human eyes, clearly so. Big and broad and blinking.

Storytelling Hints: The Cobbler Cormorants travel in "flocks" of five or more. They find hunks of stone within the Hedge and crack at it with their metal beaks, breaking open the rocks to look for treasures within that they can eat (and the Cobbler Cormorant will eat just about anything — from blood-worms to glittering sapphires to the eyes right out of a changeling's head).

The birds are fickle. Their moods shift wildly, hinging on a character's word or body language. They may be threatening, but if a character cajoles them and plays it obsequious, the birds may suddenly shift to become accommodating. Until, of course, the changeling coughs wrong or wets her lips… *clearly* a sign of offense to the cruelly capricious Cobbler Cormorants.

The Cobbler Cormorants represent the dual nature of the Hedge, for the Hedge is both a place of great bounty and promise as well as a land of constant peril to one's mind and body.

Traits

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 3, Wits 3, Resolve 2
Physical Attributes: Strength 1, Dexterity 5, Stamina 2
Social Attributes: Presence 2, Manipulation 4, Composure 2
Mental Skills: Investigation (Treasure) 3
Physical Skills: Athletics (Flight) 4, Brawl (Beak) 4, Survival 2
Social Skills: Intimidation 2, Persuasion 3
Merits: Direction Sense, Fleet of Foot (Wing) 3
Willpower: 4
Initiative: 7
Defense: 3
Speed: 14
Size: 3
Health: 5
Wyrd: 1
Contracts: Hearth 1, Fang and Talon (Waterbirds)

Weapons/Attacks

Type	Damage	Dice Pool
Wing Chop	0(B)	5
Beak	1(L)	7

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Red Wren

Virtue: Faith. Stick to the plan. Serve the greater good. This will work.

Vice: Pride. You're never wrong. Why can't others see that?

Quotes: *"Somebody has to make the hard choices. Great things aren't achieved by small gestures. Sacrifice is key. We all must do things we're not comfortable with."*

"Do not dare to stand in my way."

"Who was it that said this life would be easy?"

Description: Her flesh is like parchment, peeled from a sapling and pressed against human flesh. Beneath it, autumn red blood pulses beneath tan skin, and half-furled leaves peek out from beneath the sleeves and collar of her dark robe.

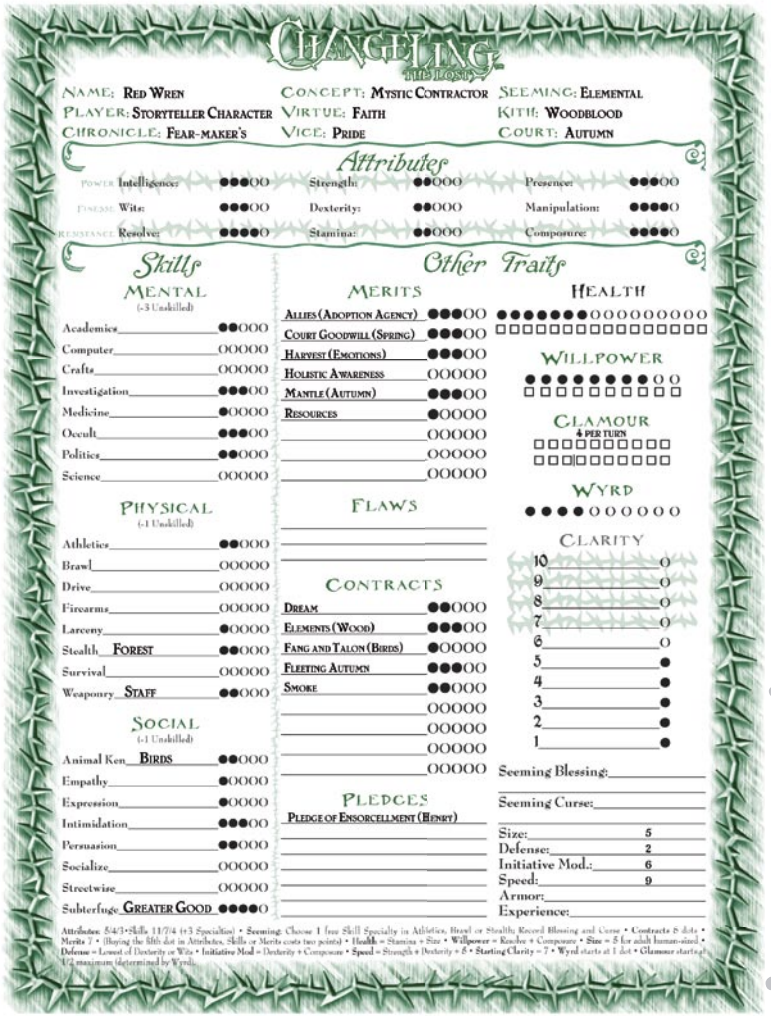
It's not just her look that suggests a tree, however; it's in the way she moves. The way her hair blows in the wind like the gust-shuddered boughs of a tall tree. Or in the way that her body sways gently back and forth even though her feet are firmly planted against the ground.

Oh, but there's a bit of bird in there, too — just the eyes, round and dark and black. You can never be sure if she's looking directly at you or at somebody else with those gleaming, soul-drinking eyes. And sometimes, the way red feathers seem to catch on a wind in her wake before disappearing entirely…

Storytelling Hints: She seems antagonistic. At every turn, Wren expects adversity and opposition — so she acts like it, even to those who might initially be favorable to her. She speaks clearly. She smiles without fail, but this smile is cold. She is direct, often with whatever minimal tact she can muster.

Wren can serve a number of functions, here. She's the lynchpin to the Children's Contract, and as such possesses a wealth of mystical knowledge. But she's more than that. She represents a character so tortured by her own lost life and time trapped in Faerie that she is willing to do anything to protect what she perceives to be the innocent. While she doesn't possess the fundamentalism of, say, a suicide bomber, she *is* willing to slit the throat of a sacrificial lamb. If killing one person saves ten others, so be it, she says. If hurting a single child keeps thousands safe, it's worth doing. To her, life is a cruel numbers game that one must play to win.

(And of course, this has earned her a slow degradation of Clarity over time. The kidnapping alone is a Clarity 3 sin she's justified every time she's done it, whittling her moral and perceptual balance down bit by bit.)



Changeling: The Lost

Name: Red Wren | Concept: Mystic Contractor | Seeming: Elemental
Player: Storyteller Character | Virtue: Faith | Kith: Woodblood
Chronicle: Fear-maker's | Vice: Pride | Court: Autumn

Attributes

Power: Intelligence:	●●●○○	Strength:	●●○○○	Presence:	●●●○○
Finesse: Wits:	●●●○○	Dexterity:	●●○○○	Manipulation:	●●●●○
Resistance: Resolve:	●●●●○	Stamina:	●●○○○	Composure:	●●●●○

Skills

Mental (-3 Unskilled)

Academics	●●○○○
Computer	○○○○○
Crafts	○○○○○
Investigation	●●●○○
Medicine	●○○○○
Occult	●●●○○
Politics	●●○○○
Science	○○○○○

Physical (-1 Unskilled)

Athletics	●●○○○
Brawl	○○○○○
Drive	○○○○○
Firearms	○○○○○
Larceny	●○○○○
Stealth: Forest	●●○○○
Survival	○○○○○
Weaponry: Staff	●●○○○

Social (-1 Unskilled)

Animal Ken: Birds	●●○○○
Empathy	●○○○○
Expression	●○○○○
Intimidation	●●●○○
Persuasion	●●○○○
Socialize	○○○○○
Streetwise	○○○○○
Subterfuge: Greater Good	●●●●○

Other Traits

Merits

Allies (Adoption Agency)	●●●○○
Court Goodwill (Spring)	●●●○○
Harvest (Emotions)	●●●○○
Holistic Awareness	○○○○○
Mantle (Autumn)	●●●○○
Resources	●○○○○
	○○○○○
	○○○○○
	○○○○○

Flaws

Contracts

Dream	●●○○○
Elements (Wood)	●●●○○
Fang and Talon (Birds)	●○○○○
Fleeting Autumn	●●●○○
Smoke	●●○○○
	○○○○○
	○○○○○
	○○○○○
	○○○○○

Pledges

Pledge of Ensorcellment (Henry)

Health: ●●●●●●●○○○○○○○○○ / □□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□

Willpower: ●●●●●●●●○○ / □□□□□□□□□□

Glamour (4 per turn): □□□□□□□□□□ / □□□□□□□□□□

Wyrd: ●●●●○○○○○○

Clarity: 10 ○ / 9 ○ / 8 ○ / 7 ○ / 6 ○ / 5 ● / 4 ● / 3 ● / 2 ● / 1 ●

Seeming Blessing:
Seeming Curse:

Size: 5
Defense: 2
Initiative Mod.: 6
Speed: 9
Armor:
Experience:

Attributes: 5/4/3 • Skills: 11/7/4 (+3 Specialties) • Seeming: Choose 1 free Skill Specialty in Athletics, Brawl or Stealth; Record Blessing and Curse • Contracts 5 dots • Merits 7 • (Buying the fifth dot in Attributes, Skills or Merits costs two points) • Health = Stamina + Size • Willpower = Resolve + Composure • Size = 5 for adult human-sized • Defense = Lowest of Dexterity or Wits • Initiative Mod = Dexterity + Composure • Speed = Strength + Dexterity + 5 • Starting Clarity = 7 • Wyrd starts at 1 dot • Glamour starting 1/2 maximum (determined by Wyrd).

She's the moral compass gone south, something the characters may revile or respect. You ever meet one of those people who is a "love 'em or hate 'em" type? That's Red Wren. She either earns total love or utter enmity. None are left ambiguous about their feelings toward her.

Worth noting is that while Wren is not especially combat savvy, she'll throw herself into the fray to protect her work if absolutely necessary.

Weapons/Attacks

Type	Damage	Dice Pool
Knotted Staff	3(B)	8

Frank Bittle (order #527774)

Cancer John

Virtue: Fortitude. Just make it to another day.

Vice: Greed. In the end, John wants it all. And he deserves it.

Quotes: *(lying) "Hey, hey, back off, I'm just… I'm just tryin' to do the right thing."*

"Back off, prickholes. I will send a shitstorm your way if you hurt me. You don't want my friends to come calling. Not the friends I have."

(wounded) "No! My leg! My goddamn leg! I'll do anything! Just fucking stop!"

Description: They call him Cancer John for a reason, and it's not *just* the pale skin marred with what look like keloids and carcinomas. It's the way he *stands*, hunched-over and sallow-chested (think of the way a long-burning cigarette starts to see its ash lean and bend before tumbling). It's in his yellow teeth. His chipped fingernails. His body is a jaundiced slip, a skeleton draped in ugly skin. He's a goddamn *weed*. It's made all the weirder how flies alight upon the patches of his ruined flesh… and how they wriggle their way beneath flaps of cancerous skin. (He is a Skitterskulk, after all.)

When he moves, he moved erratically — sometimes fast, sometimes slow. When he fights, it's a desperate and dirty thing; no honor to be found in the way he bites and scratches.

Storytelling Hints: Cancer John is weak. Not so much physically, but weak of heart and of resolve. And he acts like it.

If he thinks he can wriggle his way out of a problem, he'll play the beseeching, pleading, obsequious part. If that doesn't seem to be working, it's all slash and burn. He'll say cruel things. Make wildly impossible threats. He'll spit venom with every syllable and go for the jugular with every breath.

Cancer John, in a way, represents a cancer in the system. In the way a free radical roams the body and can turn into cancer, he's a similarly rogue particle that enters the Children's Contract adventure and causes chaos for those involved. The characters either rein him in and fix the situation or they counterbalance his chaos with a little bit of their own.

What this means is, feel free to play him as a loose cannon blasting about the deck of the ship. Players and their characters should genuinely be uncertain as to what he's going to do next.

Changeling: The Lost

Name: Cancer John | Concept: Sickly Kidnapper | Seeming: Beast
Player: Storyteller Character | Virtue: Fortitude | Kith: Skitterskulk
Chronicle: Fear-Maker's | Vice: Greed | Court: Autumn

Attributes

Power: Intelligence	●●○○○	Strength	●●●○○	Presence	●●○○○
Finesse: Wits	●●●○○	Dexterity	●●●○○	Manipulation	●●●●○
Resistance: Resolve	●○○○○	Stamina	●●○○○	Composure	●●○○○

Skills

Mental (-3 Unskilled)
Academics ●○○○○
Computer ●○○○○
Crafts ○○○○○
Investigation ●○○○○
Medicine ○○○○○
Occult (True Fae Lore) ●●○○○
Politics ○○○○○
Science ○○○○○

Physical (-1 Unskilled)
Athletics ○○○○○
Brawl (Dirty Fighting) ●●●○○
Drive ○○○○○
Firearms ○○○○○
Larceny (Shoplift) ●●●○○
Stealth ●●○○○
Survival ●○○○○
Weaponry ○○○○○

Social (-1 Unskilled)
Animal Ken ○○○○○
Empathy ○○○○○
Expression ○○○○○
Intimidation ○○○○○
Persuasion ●●●○○
Socialize ●●●○○
Streetwise ●●○○○
Subterfuge (Adaptability) ●●●●○

Other Traits

Merits
Allies (Pawn Shops) ●○○○○
Contacts (Drug Dealers) ●○○○○
Mantle (Autumn) ●○○○○
New Identity ("John Kelos") ●○○○○
Token (Cloak of Light-Shy) ●●●●○

Flaws
Addict

Contracts
Fang and Talon (Bugs) ●●●○○
Hearth ●○○○○
Mirror ●●○○○
Smoke ●○○○○

Pledges
Knight's Oath to His Keeper
The Sharp-Knife Man

Health ●●●●●●●○○○○○○○○○
Willpower ●●●○○○○○○○
Glamour (3 per turn)
Wyrd ●●●○○○○○○○

Clarity
10 ○
9 ○
8 ○
7 ○
6 Avoidance (mild) ○
5 ●
4 ●
3 ●
2 ●
1 ●

Seeming Blessing:
Seeming Curse:
Size: 5
Defense: 3
Initiative Mod.: 5
Speed: 11
Armor:
Experience:

Attributes 5/4/3 • Skills 11/7/4 (+3 Specialties) • Seeming: Choose 1 free Skill Specialty in Athletics, Brawl or Stealth; Record Blessing and Curse • Contracts 6 dots • Merits 7 • (Buying the fifth dot in Attributes, Skills or Merits costs two points) • Health = Stamina + Size • Willpower = Resolve + Composure • Size = 5 for adult human-sized • Defense = Lowest of Dexterity or Wits • Initiative Mod = Dexterity + Composure • Speed = Strength + Dexterity + 5 • Starting Clarity = 7 • Wyrd starts at 1 dot • Glamour starts at 1/2 maximum (determined by Wyrd).

Weapons/Attacks

Type	Damage	Dice Pool
Dirty Fighting	0(B)	7
All-Out Attack (no Defense)	0(B)	9
Improvised weapon (All-Out)	2L	5

Frank Bittle (order #527774)

Doll

Virtue: Prudence. Take only what you need.

Vice: Envy. Lonely... so lonely.

Quotes: *(whispering) "I need more parts. Do you have parts?"*

"This child stays with me. Unless you have a better toy to leave here."

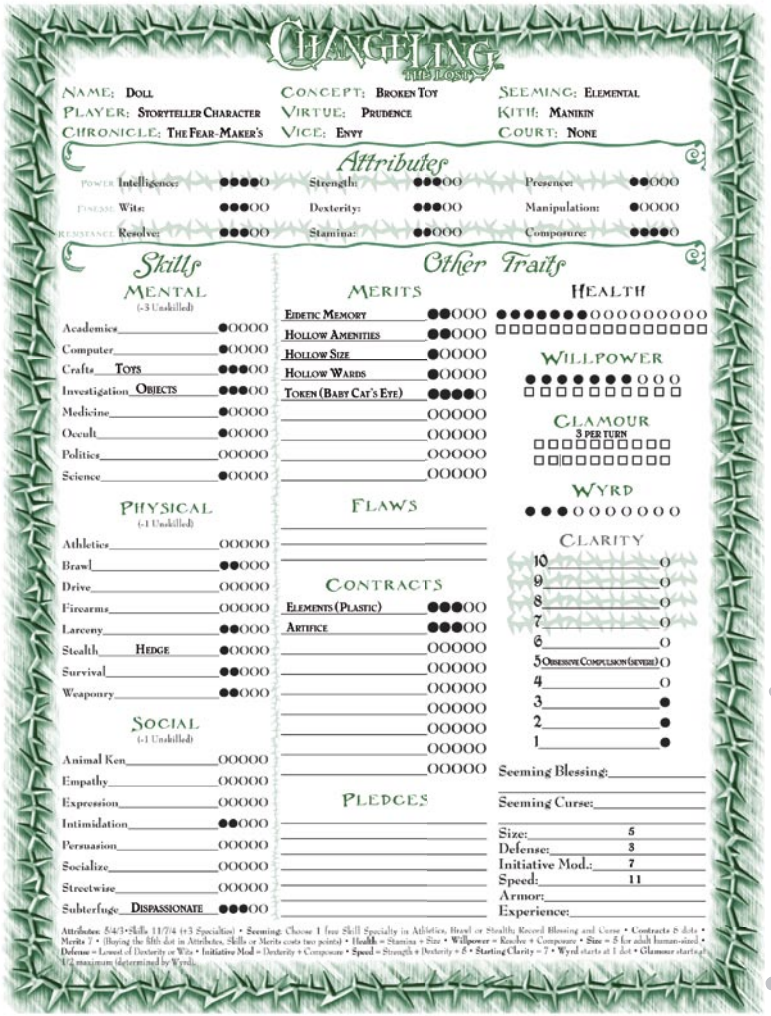
(attacking) "Give me your pieces!"

Description: Doll is a broken toy, a mannequin left to rot. His plasticine skin is cracked in places, revealing darker plastic beneath. One eye is a color different from the other. His legs are hitching mannequin legs with strange points-of-articulation. Both sadness and madness swirl about him: the way his mouth hangs open, the way his fake eyes search the Hedge for something that remains unclear, the way his knobby shoulders lurch forward with a kind of soul-crushing disappointment.

Storytelling Hints: Be clear, Doll is a monster. Aye, but there's the rub: in a way, so are the characters. They've all gone to Faerie and come back changed. Different flesh. Strange abilities. Perceptions that may shift and warp. Doll is that, only more so. He's a despairing lunatic living only in the Hedge, and it's certainly damaged his mind. Feel free to mimic the flat (dare we say, mechanical) tones to his speech, or the way he sometimes drops into a conspiratorial whisper.

See, Doll is on the cusp. He's a monster, but all is not lost for him. He's literally walking that line between "unforgivable Lost turned to a goblin among the thorns" and "a wayward Lost who could be pulled back from the brink of irreversible madness." This isn't entirely lost on him, either. He represents to the characters that they, too, are monsters-of-a-sort. Given enough time, they could end up like him (and he may wonder aloud why it is they have a child — what horrors do they plan to visit upon the boy as Doll himself hoped to do?).

Finally, Doll is lonely. His sanity is shaken. He lurks in the Hedge all by himself in a mad ramshackle Hollow. His very core is that he's alarmingly without ally in this world. This is the precipice upon which Doll teeters. Will characters offer him a way out of his loneliness and help him return to the world? Or will they kick him off the other side, deep into the dark abyss of irrevocable madness?



Changeling: The Lost

Name: Doll | Concept: Broken Toy | Seeming: Elemental
Player: Storyteller Character | Virtue: Prudence | Kith: Manikin
Chronicle: The Fear-Maker's | Vice: Envy | Court: None

Attributes
Power — Intelligence: ●●●●○ | Strength: ●●●○○ | Presence: ●●○○○
Finesse — Wits: ●●●○○ | Dexterity: ●●●○○ | Manipulation: ●○○○○
Resistance — Resolve: ●●●○○ | Stamina: ●●○○○ | Composure: ●●●●○

Skills
Mental (-3 Unskilled)
Academics ●○○○○
Computer ●○○○○
Crafts: Toys ●●●○○
Investigation: Objects ●●●○○
Medicine ●○○○○
Occult ●○○○○
Politics ○○○○○
Science ●○○○○
Physical (-1 Unskilled)
Athletics ○○○○○
Brawl ●●○○○
Drive ○○○○○
Firearms ○○○○○
Larceny ●●○○○
Stealth: Hedge ●○○○○
Survival ●●○○○
Weaponry ●●○○○
Social (-1 Unskilled)
Animal Ken ○○○○○
Empathy ○○○○○
Expression ○○○○○
Intimidation ●●○○○
Persuasion ○○○○○
Socialize ○○○○○
Streetwise ○○○○○
Subterfuge: Dispassionate ●●●○○

Other Traits
Merits
Eidetic Memory ●●○○○
Hollow Amenities ●●○○○
Hollow Size ●○○○○
Hollow Warns ●○○○○
Token (Baby Cat's Eye) ●●●●○
Flaws
Contracts
Elements (Plastic) ●●●○○
Artifice ●●●○○
Pledges

Health ●●●●●●●○○○○○○○○○ / ○○○○○○○○○○○○○○○○
Willpower ●●●●●●●○○○ / ○○○○○○○○○○○○
Glamour (3 per turn) ○○○○○○○○○○ / ○○○○○○○○○○
Wyrd ●●●○○○○○○○
Clarity
10 ○
9 ○
8 ○
7 ○
6 ○
5 Obsessive Compulsion (severe) ○
4 ○
3 ●
2 ●
1 ●

Seeming Blessing:
Seeming Curse:
Size: 5
Defense: 3
Initiative Mod.: 7
Speed: 11
Armor:
Experience:

Attributes: 5/4/3 • Skills: 11/7/4 (+3 Specialties) • Seeming: Choose 1 free Skill Specialty in Athletics, Brawl or Stealth; Record Blessing and Curse • Contracts & Pledges • Merits 7 • (Buying the fifth dot in Attributes, Skills or Merits costs two points) • Health = Stamina + Size • Willpower = Resolve + Composure • Size = 5 for adult human-sized • Defense = Lowest of Dexterity or Wits • Initiative Mod = Dexterity + Composure • Speed = Strength + Dexterity + 5 • Starting Clarity = 7 • Wyrd starts at 1 dot • Glamour starting 1/2 maximum (determined by Wyrd).

Weapons/Attacks

Type	Damage	Dice Pool
Hard Plastic Hands	0(B)	5
Scalpel	1(L)	6

Frank Bittle (order #527774)

The Sharp-Knife Man

Virtue: Temperance. The systems of the human body are in balance, and hidden within that lies a critical lesson. If only this Keeper could figure it out. With an even mind, he will try.

Vice: Lust. This is no sexual lust, but the lust of innards, viscera, blood.

Quotes: *"I come to end this charade."*

(slowly stalking prey) "Don't be afraid. I just want to open you up, see what you've eaten. To uncover your thoughts with a swipe of my knife."

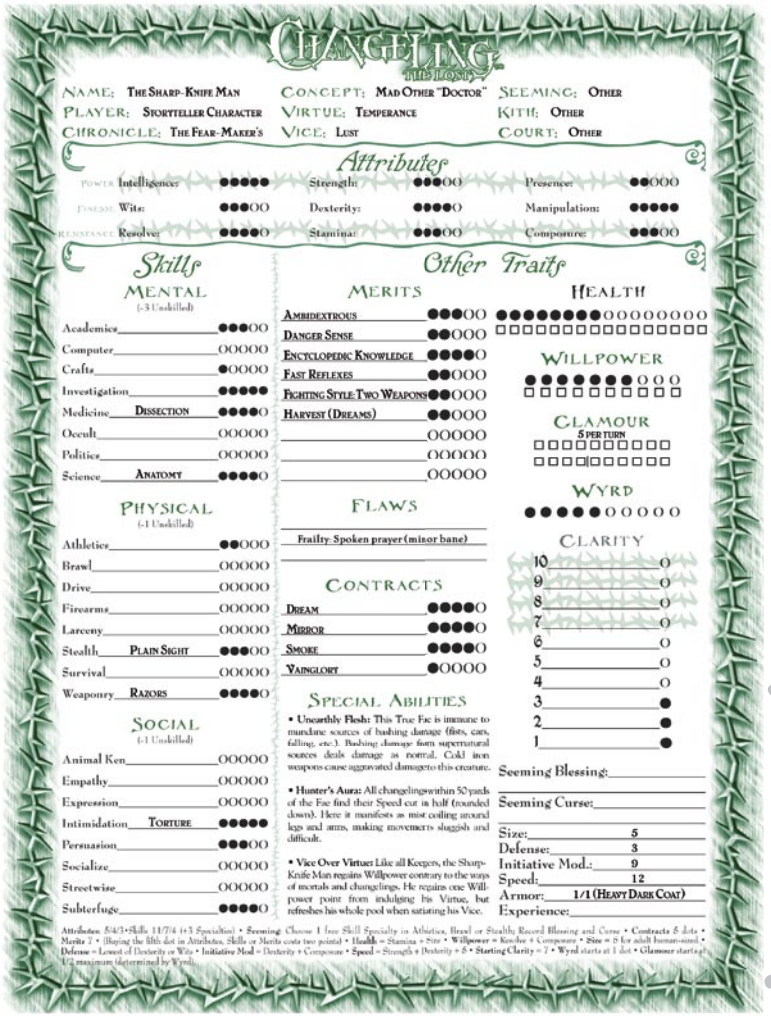
(wounded) "Come closer, little bee. Sting me again. I'll cut off your paper wings."

Description: This True Fae is the spitting image of a Victorian doctor — a single dark line comprising a sharp-angled (but moth-eaten) suit, a blood-red neck tie, a stock-straight top hat. His face is pale, flecked with bits of red and yellow fluids (dried and crusted to his otherwise unblemished countenance). Oddly, he features one accoutrement of modern medical practice: an all-too-shiny stethoscope hanging around his neck (that always seems to catch the light even when in the misty dark of the forest).

He moves with impossible gestures: his tall legs take small steps, and yet he moves so swiftly, almost as if gliding. He never seems to bend at the hips, always painfully upright. His clothing seems to absorb the light. In his hands are always two long scalpels, sharper than what seems physically feasible. He uses them as his hands, for the most part: need to pick up a pear? He stabs it and thrusts it into his mouth. Want to grab a fleeing changeling? Stick him in the front and pull him close.

Storytelling Hints: The Sharp-Knife Man embodies the mad, out-of-control curiosity of the Others. He is not some mad knight or poison king. He sees himself as a doctor exploring the boundaries of "medical science" Of course, he says these things and doesn't really understand what it means — he heals nothing, instead choosing to cut everything apart or test its boundaries through application of ceaseless negative stimuli. That is of course, what he does with the children he takes from the world: operates upon them tirelessly. When he removes parts from them, he replaces parts collected from his world, from Faerie. Those kept in his durance serve as both his helpers in the "operating room" and as those pinned to his splintery operating table.

He speaks in that faint crisp accent, with a slight up-tilt at the end of every sentence (almost as if asking a question). His voice, eerily enough, should be moderately pleasant, as if he wants to make friends and enjoy their company instead of cut them from sack to sternum to see what lurks within their viscera.



Changeling: The Lost

Name: The Sharp-Knife Man | Concept: Mad Other "Doctor" | Seeming: Other
Player: Storyteller Character | Virtue: Temperance | Kith: Other
Chronicle: The Fear-Maker's | Vice: Lust | Court: Other

Attributes

Power	Intelligence:	●●●●●	Strength:	●●●○○	Presence: ●●○○○
Finesse	Wits:	●●●○○	Dexterity:	●●●●○	Manipulation: ●●●●●
Resistance	Resolve:	●●●●○	Stamina:	●●●○○	Composure: ●●●○○

Skills

Mental (-3 Unskilled)

Academics		●●●○○
Computer		○○○○○
Crafts		●○○○○
Investigation		●●●●●
Medicine	Dissection	●●●●○
Occult		○○○○○
Politics		○○○○○
Science	Anatomy	●●●●○

Physical (-1 Unskilled)

Athletics		●●○○○
Brawl		○○○○○
Drive		○○○○○
Firearms		○○○○○
Larceny		○○○○○
Stealth	Plain Sight	●●●○○
Survival		○○○○○
Weaponry	Razors	●●●●○

Social (-1 Unskilled)

Animal Ken		○○○○○
Empathy		○○○○○
Expression		○○○○○
Intimidation	Torture	●●●●●
Persuasion		●●●○○
Socialize		○○○○○
Streetwise		○○○○○
Subterfuge		●●●●○

Other Traits

Merits

Ambidextrous	●●●○○
Danger Sense	●●○○○
Encyclopedic Knowledge	●●●●○
Fast Reflexes	●●○○○
Fighting Style: Two Weapons	●●○○○
Harvest (Dreams)	●●○○○
	○○○○○
	○○○○○
	○○○○○

Flaws

Frailty: Spoken prayer (minor bane)

Contracts

Dream	●●●●○
Mirror	●●●●○
Smoke	●●●●○
Vainglory	●○○○○

Special Abilities

- **Unearthly Flesh:** This True Fae is immune to mundane sources of bashing damage (fists, cars, falling, etc.). Bashing damage form supernatural sources deals damage as normal. Cold iron weapons cause aggravated damage to this creature.
- **Hunter's Aura:** All changelings within 50 yards of the Fae find their Speed cut in half (rounded down). Here it manifests as mist coiling around legs and arms, making movement's sluggish and difficult.
- **Vice Over Virtues** Like all Keepers, the Sharp-Knife Man regains Willpower contrary to the ways of mortals and changelings. He regains one Willpower point from indulging his Virtue, but refreshes his whole pool when satiating his Vice.

Health ●●●●●●●●○○○○○○○○ □□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□

Willpower ●●●●●●●○○○ □□□□□□□□□□

Glamour 5 per turn □□□□□□□□□□ □□□□□□□□□□

Wyrd ●●●●●○○○○○

Clarity

10	○
9	○
8	○
7	○
6	○
5	○
4	○
3	●
2	●
1	●

Seeming Blessing:
Seeming Curse:

Size:	5
Defense:	3
Initiative Mod.:	9
Speed:	12
Armor:	1/1 (Heavy Dark Coat)
Experience:	

Attributes: 5/4/3 • Skills: 11/7/4 (+3 Specialties) • Seeming: Choose 1 free Skill Specialty in Athletics, Brawl or Stealth; Record Blessing and Curse • Contracts: 5 dots • Merits: 7 • (Buying the fifth dot in Attributes, Skills or Merits costs two points) • Health = Stamina + Size • Willpower = Resolve + Composure • Size = 5 for adult human-sized • Defense = Lesser of Dexterity or Wits • Initiative Mod = Dexterity + Composure • Speed = Strength + (Dexterity + 5) • Starting Clarity = 7 • Wyrd starts at 1 dot • Glamour starting 1/2 maximum (determined by Wyrd).

As a foe, if you choose to use his scene, the Sharp-Knife Man is not a woefully-capable adversary as the aforementioned "mad knight" figure might be — he fancies himself a professional man (though of course, not a "man" at all), and that doesn't include a wide variety of combat skills. He should represent some manner of difficulty for the characters to defeat, but unlike some dizzyingly-powerful Others, he *can* be defeated — or, at least, sent packing if the characters allow him his escape.

Weapons/Attacks

Type	Damage	Dice Pool
Two keenly-honed razors	1(L)	9

Frank Bittle (order #527774)

The Scenes

The scenes in "The Fear-Maker's Promise" are the building blocks of the adventure. As the characters take actions or make certain choices, they trigger scenes or ignore others.

Don't like the way one of those building blocks holds up the others? Remove it or switch it out. Feel that the structure of the adventure could cater more personally to the players' characters by having an additional building block or two? Go for it.

What follows isn't a road-map meant to take you from Point A to Point B with no deviation. It's an uncertain journey whose uncertainty is driven by the players — and that's how it *should* be. They're going to do things that may surprise you or deviate from what's written here, and that's okay. Roll with it.

Use the tools contained with in and build some new blocks. If they really throw you for a loop, take a fifteen minute break, tell them you need to think of the repercussions of their actions.

As an example of this in action, we've included two optional scenes for you to use at the beginning of this story, if you want to take some time to build up atmosphere, introduce the Storyteller characters, or let the players acclimate to the game world. These scenes — "Into the Forest" and "The Ritual Space" — are what we're calling "prologue scenes." They lead into the heart of the story, drawing out the beginning.

This is terrific for establishing mood. This can be bad for pacing and a sense of player control.

If you want to begin the tale *in medias res*, as mentioned on p. 4, then cut these scenes right out and begin the tale with "A Grim Necessity." The advantage here is that the arrival of Cancer John and the very likely abduction of Joey Duncan will happen closer to the beginning of your story, setting up the premise early and giving you a little more leeway if you choose to make Joey's capture a foregone conclusion.

The closer to the beginning of the tale that such unstoppable events take place, the easier they are for players to abide. They can be accepted as part of the setup to the adventure, rather than a heavy-handed moment of Storyteller fiat.

Thus, if you think the action and mystery of pursuing Joey into the Hedge is essential to the play experience your troupe is after — if you want that atmospheric, spooky quest to be the thrust of your tale — begin the tale with "A Grim Necessity." In which case, think about handling all research and character introductions through simple exposition ("There's that weird Winter bastard you heard about," you say, "He's the one who [*insert relevant information*].") or through flashback versions of scenes like "The Ritual Space."

If you think the troupe will respond better to a tale of moral debates, social finesse, and subtle explorations of character, let them stretch out in the prologue scenes, adding vital depth to their rapport with the Storyteller characters. This will make scenes like "Push-and-Pull" and even "Writing the Contract" that much more compelling.

Frank Bittle (order #527774)

Optional Prologue: Entering the Forest

MENTAL — **PHYSICAL •** **SOCIAL •**

Overview: This scene sets "The Children's Contract" in motion. The characters enter the forest where the ritual will take place. It's all about the atmosphere, here.

Description: It's late evening and the sun is setting. The horizon, seen well-beyond the thick nest of trees, seems aflame with sunlight — a fire that slowly gutters and starts to fade as a deep blue darkness settles in. Isolation is key, here. The city isn't visible beyond the trees. Or beyond the faint mist that slowly begins to rise up off the ground, hovering about the verdant moss. The forest is like something out of a fairy tale: ancient, alive, and growing darker by the minute.

The characters are following an old rough-and-tumble deer trail well away from the beaten path.

(looking around) As the conflagration of sunlight in the distance starts to winnow and weaken, a carpet of mist rises to blanket the ground. You see other shapes — figures, people — in the trees, walking in the same direction as you. Nobody speaks. It's eerily silent. A few faint shafts of light come down through the rising mist, but soon even these start to fade. Someone whispers. You can't make out what they're saying. It's hard to tell how far away the others are — ten feet? Fifty? The way the trees stand so tall and the way the mist saturates the area, it seems to warp your perceptions…

(clarity) Eerie, isn't it, the way the tall trees tower over you? The same way the walls of the Hedge do. Good thing you're not claustrophobic — or are you? The tall specters of ivy-choked trees seem to shift and sway just slightly enough to cause your hands to ball into fists and your mouth to go dry.

(walking) The ground is steep in places, rough-going, knotted with roots and a cruel topography of rocks. It's made all the harder that in the growing darkness and the burgeoning mist you can hardly see what awaits each footfall.

(smell) The forest stinks of decaying life, like soil freshly turned over.

Storyteller Goals: Atmosphere and exposition. The mood of the scene should match the tension and apprehension waiting in the wings for what the characters are going to see. The mist represents threats veiled. The forest and its trees represent towering fears.

This is also the time wherein you'll flashback to handle the results of any research that may have occurred prior to the adventure. It's important to strike a balance here and keep the information gleaned fresh and interesting — don't just rattle off facts, but maybe describe briefly the characters ducking into a dark alley to learn a tidbit about Red Wren, or cracking open a tome that smells of lilacs, dust and dried blood to read a cryptic line about the ritual of the Children's Contract. Remember that this is about atmosphere; don't steal the power of their entry into the creepy forest by just reading off a list of facts.

Character Goals: Get to the area cleared for the Children's Contract (see following scene, "The Ritual Space"). Glean knowledge from flashback research and backstory. Interact, perhaps, with the other shadowy figures walking on other trails.

Actions: By and large, the primary action of the scene is resolving some exposition with flashback. That said, you may see fit to invoke two other actions of note:

• **Communicating:** Other shadows walk other trails — do the characters call out to them? Or stay silent, much as the shadows themselves are doing? If they call out to them, they may find that the shadows belong to a handful of the other changelings who intend to witness the grim spectacle of the Children's Contract. Choose two to four different Lost from the Allies and Antagonists section (excluding Wren and Cancer John).

• Hiking: Heading to the ritual space through the forest is neither a short nor an easy trip. It's about an hour hike through a darkening forest with an increasingly rough-and-tumble trail, so…

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Hiking

Dice Pool: Stamina + Athletics + equipment

Action: Instant

No need to make this an extended action, even though it's arguably a protracted action. This is just a brief test of Skill to see if the characters have trouble making it to the ritual space. (You can eschew it if you feel that rolling dice could take away from the atmosphere, though the results of this roll can add a veneer of fatigue and exertion to this scene, if you so desire it.)

Obstacles: The ground is tough with roots and rocks (-2), mist makes it hard to see (-1)

Assets: Hiking boots, if possessed (+1), walking stick (+1)

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: Character trips, skins his knee or twists his ankle. Assume one point of bashing damage. Make the roll again.

Failure: The character makes it, but it's slow going and tough. Probably requires help. Any Social rolls made during this scene (excluding those used in any flashback context) are made at -1 because the character is out-of-breath or frustrated.

Success: The character navigates the trail and mist with some strain, but no real difficulty.

Exceptional Success: The character glides along the trail as if it's a part of himself. If he needs to make any Stealth rolls during this *or* the next scene ("The Ritual Space"), he gains +1 to those rolls.

Consequences: The characters may recognize that these deer trails lead to Autumn Court ritual space. If they endeavor to make this trip again, assume that any hiking rolls made to navigate or find their way are made at +2 dice.

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Optional Prologue: The Ritual Space

MENTAL ••• **PHYSICAL —** **SOCIAL •••**

Overview: The characters approach the ritual space, which glows in the mist with flickering torchlight. They clamber over a massive fallen tree and enter the circle where other changelings have gathered to witness the Children's Contract.

Description: The ritual space itself is a broad circle, approximately 20 yards in diameter. The space itself is marked by a series of uneven stones… and beyond them, tall torches thrust into the ground (and away from trees, where they could ignite). Many Lost are already here, though others may trickle in after the characters arrive.

Within the circle itself, the grass lies dead and pressed against the earth as if wilted and struck with grief. Red Wren stands in the center of the circle, saying nothing (and nobody speaks to her right now, either).

As the characters settle in, they witness two characters approaching the ritual space from a different direction. It's Ornithine and Henry (Wren's ensorcelled boy). They carry a door with them hanging in a doorframe.

(the other characters) The gathered Lost shuffle around in an erratic orbit of the ritual space. Some stare balefully at Wren, silent as the mist. Others murmur quietly to one another, exhalations of outrage or agreement, whispers of indignation or grim necessity.

(wren) Wren stands stock still, though she sways ever-slightly, like a tree in an easy wind. The mist seems to avoid her, keeping out of the ritual space entirely. From time to time, you hear a faint flutter of wings, as if there are birds lurking under her Little Red Riding Hood cloak.

(the door) The door itself appears unexceptional. Just an old oaken door, dinged and scratched in places. It hangs locked in a dark cherry-wood frame (whose dark hues do not clearly match the lighter oak of the door itself). The doorknob, however, is what stands out: tarnished and dark, the knob features a songbird etched into the metal. Its wings whirl with elegant scrollwork.

Storyteller Goals: You're setting the scene here for the ritual to occur. This can work one of two ways.

In the first way, the characters may take some time to acclimate to the other gathered Lost. Certainly others are murmuring and whispering, and so the characters may engage in that. This lets them canvass the mood of the other Lost, as they may not be fully aware what Court believes what, or what the individual changelings think about this whole gloomy affair. This gives them time to find others they agree with, or those who might present trouble for their own intentions this night. Note that too, others may approach them to feel *them* out on the subject. Tensions are high among the gathered Lost, and everybody's a little on edge. Make the players feel that.

Alternately, don't force them to that path. If they seem content to stand quietly and survey the scene on a simple level, so be it. Move on to the second way, which is to push right into the next scene. Don't dally; your goal is to keep the tension ramped up. If too much chatter threatens to steal some of the apprehension, have Wren interrupt and declare that it's time for the ritual to begin. You have the luxury of allowing as much time as you feel is necessary, which means this scene can involve protracted socializing or none at all.

Character Goals: Discern the mood and opinions of the gathered Lost. Perhaps also discern the purpose of the door.

Actions: This is predominantly a social encounter which can involve some dice pools: however, if you're comfortable resolving this scene and supply the proper social clues without resorting to dice rolls, that's fine, too.

Note that talking to Wren and asking her questions requires no dice pool; she will answer all questions either honestly, or not at all. She's very forthright regarding questions about what will happen during the ritual. She'll also allow *one* of the characters (their choice) to come forth into the ritual space and see the door. Alternately, she will completely ignore all personal questions. Her face is dead to such queries, even the most intimately personal ones, and no Empathy roll (at present) will pierce this icy veil.

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Canvassing the Crowd

Dice Pool: Wits + Empathy *or* Manipulation + Socialize (some actions can be accomplished two different ways, and this is one of those actions; the first way involves standing back and observing body language and conversations, the second involves getting "into the trenches" and socializing to uncover the tenor and opinions of the amassed crowd)

Action: Extended

This is not a contested action for two reasons: first, this action doesn't involve trying to dredge up secrets or closely-kept knowledge, but instead involves just gauging the reactions and feelings of the collected Lost. Emotions are running high, and it's hard for the Storyteller characters to easily conceal their opinions. Second, this action allows the players to get a glimpse of each Court and changeling's opinions (as seen under Allies and Antagonists, earlier).

Obstacles: Character is without ties to any Court (-1)

Assets: Court Goodwill with more than one Court (+1)

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The character is either painfully obvious in his voyeurism or says something that earns him the ire of the gathered Lost. Either way, for the remainder of the adventure the character operates at -1 Social dice when interacting with all gathered changelings (with the exception of changelings of his own Court).

Failure: The character fails to uncover any solid impressions from the other Lost.

Success: The changeling gauges the general mood and feelings of the four Courts. In addition, pick three specific changelings (with the exception of Red Wren, Nyx, and Mary O'Brine): the character learns the general opinion and mood of these three characters.

Exceptional Success: As above, except the character also learns that Nyx seems to be particularly on-edge, as if hiding something. Moreover, the character gains a +1 bonus on Social rolls regarding the gathered Lost (with the exception of Red Wren).

Consequences: The characters learn some things about the Lost here. If the scene is roleplayed out, it remains likely that the characters also give up the goods on their own feelings, as well, unless they're keeping such opinions very close to the chest.

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Scene: A Grim Necessity

MENTAL •• **PHYSICAL •** **SOCIAL •••**

Overview: This scene involves the invocation of the Children's Contract ritual by Red Wren and her ensorcelled boy, Henry. It is interrupted, and an invisible Cancer John escapes into the Hedge with the boy, Joey Duncan.

Description: Here's the basic order of events regarding the Children's Contract, interspersed with more evocative description if you choose to read it aloud:

• The latter scene ("The Ritual Space") ends abruptly with Red Wren interrupting the proceedings. This doesn't happen at any given point, and should be done whenever you feel would be most abrupt or jarring (which is ultimately Wren's goal, to shake up the crowd). That said, mark the time that it begins in-game; a time limit may come into play, given that the ritual must be completed by sunrise at 5:30 AM.

Red Wren spreads her arms wide and with a booming, unusually commanding voice, declares: "It is now time for the Children's Contract to be written."

• As the crowd settles down (and if the characters themselves do not settle down, Wren will attempt to Intimidate them into doing so), she gives a subtle cue to Henry. The teen boy with the haunted eyes hunkers down near the door that lays against the ground, then knocks in it three times.

Henry raps on the door thrice, and Wren offers a strange rhyme that is not spoken with the same booming voice, but a quieter voice (as if she speaks only to the door): "Let us out, let us in, we eat of fear, we eat of sin."

• Red Wren turns the brass knob and opens the door. Both she and Henry reach into the door and begin pulling something out: a pinewood box… no, a pinewood *coffin*.

As the door opens, a faint amber light shines through up through the ground. Through the mist and the amber haze, you can see curls and coils of Hedge bramble tucked away just past the cherry-wood frame. A few dizzy fireflies rise up out of the doorway, whirling and dancing in the dark light. Wren and Henry reach in and pull out a simple pinewood coffin, made not for an adult but clearly for a child. It is wreathed in coils of dark ivy.

• They lay the coffin down, pull the ivy off of it, then open it. The boy, Joey Duncan, lays stock still in the coffin. Henry reaches in and pulls the boy's arm up. Wren says something, again in her booming voice.

The ivy rips away with a wrenching noise, and when Wren opens the box you see a young boy laying in the coffin. He is bare-chested, with only a pair of shorts on his lower half; he shivers, staring straight up in the air. His eyes do not blink. It's odd. He doesn't seem scared, not exactly. It seems as if he's… shutting down. Retreating within himself. As Henry reaches in and holds up the boy's arm, showing Joey's palm to the crowd, Wren again spreads her arms wide and declares: "Let the blood of the boy and the dreams of the thorns mingle. This will protect him and all like him from the fiends beyond the fence."

• Wren reaches into her crimson cloak and pulls out a handful of Hedge thorns — long needles, crooked and sharp. Henry holds the boy's wrist with one hand, and tilts his palm with the other. Wren thrusts one thorn straight into the boy's palm.

Wren makes no attempt to hide what lies in her own hand — she shows it around to the crowd in a sweeping motion, like a magician offering up a portion of the coming trick. As Henry steels Joey's hand, he offers the palm to Wren. The Woodblooded witch takes one thorn betwixt thumb and forefinger and thrusts it with a hard, downward motion into Joey's open palm. The boy doesn't flinch, but he does cry out. It is a quiet cry, only a peep — but in that small sound is a wealth of anguish.

(It's worth noting at this point or at any point during the proceedings, the characters may intervene. Let them. Assume that the ritual must be stopped and that Wren stands in their way, angrily decrying the interruption. Others get in on the condemnation, and while this all occurs, you can skip to the part of the scene where Cancer John sneaks in under the cover of visual invisibility to steal the child into the Hedge. *Alternately*, if the characters support the Children's Contract, they may be the ones to help put down outrage from another gathered character, probably someone from the Summer Court. If you have this occur, assume the same scenario: while chaos bubbles up, Cancer John does the deed.)

• Provided nobody intervenes, Wren goes around Joey in a counter-clockwork motion, thrusting one Hedge thorn into the soles of each of his feet and into the center of his other palm.

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Red Wren orbits the child. Henry follows, holding up Joey's limbs as she approaches them. She is silent as she thrusts the thorns into the boy's feet and hands. Joey does not struggle. The thorns go deep; almost to the hilt so that there's little left of the spike sticking from the flesh. With each jab comes another small cry from the boy. Blood drips to the dead grass of the ritual circle.

• At this point, Wren claps her hands and shows her own empty palms — the thorns are gone, thrust into the boy. With Henry's help she pulls the child up out of the coffin and has him stand — on his own bloody, thorn-stabbed feet.

The way Wren shows you her empty hands reminds you of a dealer in Vegas or a magician setting you up for a trick. She and Henry descend on the boy like two vultures — and amazingly, the child does not struggle as they lift him up out of the coffin and place him on his blood-smeared feet. He stands, wobbly, wincing. And yet, his face is passive, almost dead of emotion. Wren declares: "Now we bore into his heart and place fear into the hole. This fear will live in the hearts of all those like Joey, and they will know to be afraid of the fiends beyond the fence."

• It is at this point that the boy stands on his ruined feet in front of the still-open door lying on the ground. It's also here that Cancer John approaches under the cover of visual invisibility to literally tackle the boy into the Hedge — the door slamming shut behind them.

As they prop the boy up, standing him there on his skinny, trembling legs, you smell something: a heady whiff of body odor mingled with something that smells like decay… a little like rotting meat mixed with moldering wood. Suddenly, motion — a shape that cannot be seen hits the boy, and Joey Duncan topples backward into the door. It slams shut with a dooming clap.

Storyteller Goals: The first goal is to portray the somewhat grisly spectacle of the Children's Contract. This is the nature of old Autumn Court magic: bloody and cruel. Feel free to describe, too, the faces and reactions of the gathered changelings. Some surely turn away. Others simmer with anger. A few stare on with reluctant interest. Maybe one or two gazes forth with a kind of morbid pleasure.

The other goal comes in the final moments of the scene, when an invisible Cancer John absconds with the child into the Hedge. This is a moment upon which the scene hinges, and this scene (as well as the following scene, "Taken!") can go a number of ways depending on how the characters react.

Character Goals: The characters can choose to be passive in this scene, acting as audience to the cruel circus before them, or they can aim to be active — either disrupting it or preventing others from disrupting it.

The other possibility comes in at the tail end of this scene — sensing and preventing Cancer John from taking the child. Assume that, unless you'd like the adventure to go that way (and likely be truncated as a result), the child is still knocked into the Hedge. However, it might be possible to stop Cancer John from following the child, thus changing the dynamic of later scenes. *If* the characters successfully stop the child from entering the Hedge, that doesn't end the adventure. You still have some options. The crowd can still erupt in chaos, as per the scene "Push-and-Pull," or you can go to the scene where The Sharp-Knife Man attacks ("The Others Attack"). Or, you can cut to the quick and go right to the final scene, "A Hard Fright."

Actions: Disrupting the scene takes nothing more than being loud or… well, disruptive. The characters can get physical, entering the ritual space and attacking Red Wren, and that's fine — assume combat between the two parties, with the fracas swiftly being broken up by hands on all sides.

The other action, as noted under character goals, is sensing, and then stopping Cancer John. Obviously, stopping him is not an option if the characters do not first succeed in sensing his presence.

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Sensing Cancer John

Dice Pool: Wits + Composure versus John's Dexterity + Stealth + equipment (10 dice)

Action: Contested

Cancer John has a token that replicates the Light-Shy clause within the Contracts of Smoke. As such, not only is he being stealthy, creeping up from between changelings in the darkness of fading twilight and in the mist, but he's also genuinely invisible. This makes him hard to notice, clearly — though it's not impossible. Certainly his feet step on twigs, and particularly sensitive characters may hear the faint hum of fly-wings (for flies coat parts of his skin). And he also has an unpleasant odor wafting from him (the noted "body odor and decay" smell).

Obstacles: *(for characters)* Mist (-1), Darkness (-1); (*for Cancer John*) Crowded (-2)

Aides: (*for characters*) Already Suspicious (+2); (*for Cancer John*) Barefoot (+1)

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: Not applicable. It is mpossible to dramatically fail this reflexive roll.

Failure: The character fails to attribute any motion or suspicion to the odd scent of rot and body odor.

Success: The character senses Cancer John's presence as he moves through the crowd, into the circle and toward the child.

Exceptional Success: As above, but the character gains +1 dice to any roll to stop Cancer John during this scene (see below, Stopping Cancer John).

Consequences: Obviously, contributing to Cancer John's failure earns them his enmity. If they don't speak up swiftly enough or handle the situation, they could earn the enmity of others, as well (or the respect of others if they *do* curtail John's attempt in some way).

Stopping Cancer John

Dice Pool: Dexterity + Brawl

Action: Instant

A character may dive for the space in which she perceives Cancer John to be. Of course, Cancer John's a Skitterskulk, and while his Kith blessing (Impossible Counterpoise) technically only applies to Dodge rolls, think of what it's like to swat at a fly — it can be tricky. Now, imagine swatting an *invisible* fly. See Obstacles for more information.

Obstacles: Impossible Counterpoise (-5)

Assets: Exceptional Success on Sensing Cancer John roll (+1), character has a Speed score of 13 or higher (+1)

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The character tackles someone wildly inappropriate: Red Wren, Henry, or even the child. Assume that this other character suffers one point of bashing damage as a result.

Failure: The character acts but fails to stop Cancer John before he pulls the boy into the Hedge.

Success: The character successfully tackles Cancer John to the ground. He takes one point of bashing damage. Combat begins. However, Cancer John still hits the child with a shoulder… and Joey Duncan still drops into the Hedge, the door closing behind him.

Exceptional Success: As above, except the child is *not* knocked into the Hedge.

Consequences: Obviously, one consequence is whatever happens to the child. Also, combat results between the characters and Cancer John, an initially invisible presence (and until they can remove the token from him or until its turns of invisibility wear off, Cancer John's Defense should be doubled during that time — also, he'll continue to try to grab the child and dive into the Hedge; that will be the focus of his every action during turns of combat).

If the characters subdue him, one of them may end up with his cloak, which is a very powerful token.

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Scene: Taken!

MENTAL ••• **PHYSICAL —** **SOCIAL •••**

Overview: A scene of great decision for the characters.

Description: Disorder erupts. In the darkening forest, by the flickering torchlight, the door slams shut and there hangs a moment of bated breath — what will happen? What will the characters do?

Wren's unyielding façade shatters, and her eyes go wide. She matches those gazes that turn to her and she stammers, "I can't go in! I must not leave the ritual space or the contract won't be written!"

Note: the characters have only *five* turns to re-open the door and enter the Hedge if they choose to go after the child. (The door will only lead to the same place in the Hedge for a number of turns equal to the Wyrd score of the original opener of the door — in this case, Red Wren's Wyrd score of 5.) That's not to say they can't open it after those five turns are done (and in fact, doing so does not require the expenditure of Glamour since the door is already "keyed" to the Hedge), but it will not take them to the same place that Cancer John and Joey went.

Voices of dissent and protest will be certain, here. Some will demand that the child must be followed and reclaimed for the ritual. Others will demand he be claimed because… well, a child in the Hedge is doubly cruel and could get him into trouble far worse than what the ritual would bring him. There will be those, however, who will loudly proclaim that whoever took him is likely taking the child to safety… thus ending this dour ritual.

Storyteller Goals: This scene can go ten seconds or ten minutes. If the characters leap into action, *boom*, the scene is swift. If indecision plagues them or they decide to remain behind, the gathered Lost will devolve into a squabbling mess of blame, insults, threats, and desperate pleas (with, of course, no action actually being taken — remember that the characters are meant to be the truly dynamic presence in any story, and in this adventure it's no different).

Give the characters a moment to take the reins themselves and make a decision: will they go into the Hedge? Or will they let someone else go and remain on this side, negotiating the situation from here? If they hesitate and seem to be fading into the background of the disorder, urge them forward with the voice of another character, someone perhaps from their own Court or someone who represents their patron figure (or even the patron himself). It's even possible that Red Wren will turn to them during the chorus of rising voices and plead with them to go into the Hedge — she'll make wild promises to them in a desperate bargain, though she claims there isn't time right now to commit to a formal pledge. Will they take her up on it?

If they don't, assume that the scene drags on until someone finally decides to brave the Hedge to find the thief and the stolen child. (The easy assumption is that Autumn Court courtiers undergo this task: Ornithine, Mary O'Brine, and probably Wren's own ensorcelled boy, Henry. Though, if you have others better-suited to the task, do what's right for your story.)

Character Goals: Decisions, decisions. What informs the decisions of the motley? A number of things. First, they surely have some opinion on the Children's Contract. If they consider it important, maybe they go after the child. Or, as others note, a child in the Hedge is a dangerous scenario for the boy, so maybe a rescue is in order even if the ritual disgusts them. On the other hand… maybe the thief had the boy's best interest in mind. Maybe he's taking the child to another door in the Hedge and bringing him right back out somewhere else, thus working toward the child's safety and the obviation of the Children's Contract.

Do the characters go with what their patron asked of them? Do they go against the patron's interests? Do they give in to Wren's pleas?

Do they enter the Hedge within five turns? After? Or do they stay behind and let someone else do that dirty work?

Action: The only action is the informal decision of what to do, as noted. The adventure hinges in part on what the motley chooses at this point.

Consequences: Really, what the characters do determines how the rest of the scenes in the adventure line up. What has been up until this point a relatively linear progression of scenes, it now falls into a pattern based on the choices they make. And the choices they make have a very real effect on the freehold and all the children of the city.

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Scene: Push-and-Pull

MENTAL ••• **PHYSICAL —** **SOCIAL •••**

Overview: This scene occurs if the characters stay behind or try to gather facts before entering the Hedge. The tensions between Lost start to ratchet up as the thief gets further and further into the Thorns.

Description: Assume chaos. Yelling. Changelings on the verge of throwing fists, and already throwing insults and threats. This is a volatile situation, and the pivot point of it rests on the fate of a single child — a child who has already been wounded. The following things occur in no particular order; they happen at whatever point you need them to.

• Dissent foments within the Spring Court. King Queen Jackie Snow loudly declares that the thief must be caught and the child returned for the completion of the ritual. She demands that her "loyal subjects" go into the Hedge — and they don't. They balk. They make excuses. They don't outright *defy* her — their resistance is passive, but firm.

Jackie froths. Her face goes red. Lacquered blue nails press into her icy palms.

• Tom-of-the-Grotto and his Summer Courtiers move toward Red Wren, circling the ritual space like wolves.

Enkidu laughs, but there's no mirth in that stout bark. She says, "Did I hear you say that you can't be taken out of the circle? Or your precious ritual gets all fucked up?" The Summer Courtiers don't make a move. Not yet. But the hungry look in their eyes, they can see that this is the chance to do something about ending this gross charade.

• Ruslan rages and rants, weaving in and out of the crowd. Some of it makes sense: he's clearly in support of stringing up the thief and gutting him like a trout, and he certainly wants the child back for the completion of the ritual. Some of it doesn't make much sense: he babbles on about magic and childhood and the Others, but it all blurs together into a mad bouillabaisse of sentences.

Ruslan, King of the Autumn Court, thrusts his putrid face up into your own. You can smell the gamy rot on his breath and see millipedes crossing his pitted teeth. He demands that you do something! You think he mumbles something about a pox upon you if you don't help, but before you can respond, he's off ranting at Satrap Shadow.

• Nyx of the Spring Court retreats from the proceedings. She doesn't leave the area entirely, but moves just away from the torchlight and sits on a log.

You can see Nyx at the edge of the torchlight, sitting there on a fallen log. Her knees bounce up and down. As you get close, you can hear her teeth grinding. She bites her nails, snaps her fingers, chews her lip.

• Morgana, the Winter Court Heartbreaker, sees fit to embrace the ensuing social chaos and flirt. If one of the characters could be a suitable sexual or romantic partner for her — and that doesn't necessarily mean of the opposite sex, either — she might make a move. If a character spurns her, she may make the offer to them that she "knows something" about who took the boy (and she does, she knows the identity of the captor). If the character gives in, she offers nothing but herself. If her sexual negotiations go at all awry, she grows bitter and throws invective at the character, then moves on to somebody else.

There's something in the way her eyes flash. In the way she traces a nail up your forearm. Once, you may have thought her a tramp, an ice queen, or some callous conglomeration of both. But you think those deep eyes might hide something.

• Red Wren is starting to crack. Depending on who she's talking to at any given point, she vacillates between pleas of desperation and words dripping with venom (metaphorically, she's not a Venombite). Lady Miss Pity will seek to gain a brief audience with Wren and plead with her to promise to end the ritual now as it's obviously dividing the freehold and the local Lost are simply not ready for the kind of sacrifice necessary.

Lady Miss Pity seems a small slip of a girl in the shadow of Red Wren and her crimson cloak, but the girl holds her own and doesn't seem fazed by Wren's slowly twisting rictus — there's a kind of hate in Wren's face, and the way she bends over and whispers something in the girl's ear that sends the girl scuttling for the shadows tells you that she's really starting to fray at the seams.

• Margrave Doorman approaches the characters during whatever it is that they're doing in this scene. He waits for an appropriate moment, and when that moment comes, he leans in and offers something — a lie, really — to put the characters at odds with

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another changeling present at the ritual (someone of an opposing Court). The lie is simple, and doesn't even need any evidence, he's just planting a bug in their ear: maybe he tells them that another changeling plans to stand in the way of their plans. Or maybe that their "patron" is lying to them and plans to give them no reward for this. If they want to test if he's lying, see his dice pool regarding Exploit Weakness (and feel free to make it as personal as you can regarding a character's own fears and enmities).

You've heard the stories about Doorman, about how he hates the Courts. You've also heard not to trust him. But he seems sincere. His voice contains no malice, only what appears to be genuine concern. Is it possible that warnings against him were from those who have been stung by truth? Or is he just really, really good at tugging the puppet strings?

Storyteller Goals: Everything is on edge. The Summer Court might make a physical move against Wren. The Spring Court softly stands against their King Queen, and this could even lead to a coup. The Winter Court mostly falls apart and works on an individual level. The Autumn Court either goes into the Hedge (leaving Wren largely unprotected) or stands in the way of the Court of Wrath changelings. Margrave Doorman goes around fomenting further dissent.

The goal here is to not move forward unbidden. The characters are the important figures in the adventure, and so they should remain the catalyst for whatever ends up happening. If there is a tipping point, let them bring it. Look for cues: the players have the character lean in given directions, and you can build off of this.

Character Goals: Tensions escalate. The motley can try to surf the tensions in an effort to stay above them, using their brains to puzzle out just what's going on. They can try to take the steam out of some of the tensions, negotiating some kind of momentary peace between the fervid Courts. Or they can try to do as Doorman is doing, which is to push tensions to their limit, perhaps spurring someone to action. They could even take the action themselves — maybe removing Wren from the circle or defending her from the Summer Court members.

Actions: The motley may attend to two different paths: the Mental, whereupon they seek to gain some kind of information on whoever took the boy; and the Social, which involves either finding out information from the gathered changelings or simply trying to negotiate peace or stir up trouble.

Identifying the Thief

Dice Pool: Wits + Investigation + equipment

Action: Extended (three clues, each clue demands three total successes; one roll represents five minutes' worth of searching)

The characters may try to look for physical evidence of the thief's passing — certainly he crept through here, and while he was invisible, that doesn't mean that some clues of his identity don't exist in the dark forest.

Obstacles: Loud crowd (-1), Distracting Presence, perhaps Doorman or Morgana (-2), Mist (-2)

Assets: Flashlight (+1), Night-Vision Goggles (+2), Common Sense Merit (+2)

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The character finds evidence of some kind — a false footprint, an odd leaf, a tuft of fur — that points to the wrong identity.

Failure: The characters can't find hide nor hair of any evidence.

Success: Every three successes gained earns a single clue. A character can stop the investigation at any point, which may restrict access to certain clues. The clues are as follows:

- A couple of footprints in moss and earth. These footprints appear normal for a barefoot human of 5'8" or above with one exception: each print is ringed with squirming maggots.
- A broken branch about twenty feet away from the ritual space has something… hanging from it. It's a scab, a dark patch of puffy carcinoma skin, torn free from the body. A fly wing is pressed into the flesh.
- A patch of gray wool clings to a root on one of the incoming deer trails. It seems like nothing at first, but a quick Wits + Occult roll might tell a character that there's something special about it. This is actually a swatch of the token that Cancer John used to turn invisible: a character could actually roll Wyrd or just spend a Glamour point to activate the token: which means it turns invisible in her hand. (See "Cloak of Light-Shy" under Cancer John's entry.)

Exceptional Success: Halve the time it should've taken to gather the clues.

Consequences: The characters find a number of clues. If this is an ongoing game, they may already know of Cancer John the Skit-

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terskulk junkie. In knowing what he looks like, they could draw that conclusion. Alternately, maybe they ask around or you could allow them a Wits + Composure roll to "remember" details about Cancer John. Finding the clues likely leads to them successfully predicting his identity.

Fishing for Information

Dice Pool: Wits + Intimidation or Manipulation + Persuasion versus subject's Wits + Resolve (4 dice for Nyx, 5 dice for Morgana, 7 dice for Mary O'Brine).

Action: Extended and contested (task demands a number of successes equal to subject's Willpower: 5 for Nyx, 5 for Morgana, 7 for Mary O'Brine; each roll represents ten minutes of bargaining or interrogation)

The character can either try to bargain or convince another changeling to give up some info (hence Persuasion) or interrogate them (hence Intimidation). The character can try to get information from anybody, really — certainly a number of Lost are keepers of many secrets. That said, only three can yield *actual* information: Nyx, Morgana, and Mary O'Brine. All three know something about the abduction of the boy.

Obstacles: Character is of opposing Court (-1), character's had problems with the target in the past (-2)

Assets: Appropriate Court Goodwill Merit (+1), bribe or bargaining chip (+2), torture implement (+2)

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: Character earns the ire of the target, suffering a -1 to all Social rolls with this target for the rest of the story. In addition, the target lies.

Failure: The target is stubborn and refuses to give information.

Success: The following information is gleaned from the appropriate target:

- Nyx: *"Jesus, I know who took the kid, all right? It was a… a friend of mine. Cancer John. Know him? Autumn Court? No, I don't fuckin' know why he did it. Maybe he just doesn't like to see kids get hurt. Maybe he's going to sell the kid on the black market. What do I know? Hey. You holding? You're not going to tell Jackie about this, right?"*
- Morgana: *"Finally coming around, looking for a thrill, huh? Glad to provide. Indeed, I do know something. I had a fling with this junkie. Maybe you know him? Cancer John? It's been a few years, and that was when he wasn't a complete and total train wreck of a creature, but I've heard through the grapevine that maybe, just maybe, he owes somebody something. And maybe, juuuuust maybe, he was going to pay back a debt by taking the boy before the Children's Contract could be written."*
- Mary O'Brine: *"I know a thing or two. Seems time to stop protecting a friend, wouldn't you say? He's too far gone anyhow. Let the poor fool burn. I'm speaking about Cancer John, don't you know? The one with the scabs and scars. He's never told me this straight, but I've seen the signs. He's back in with his Keeper. Or maybe he never left his employ, as it were. I suspect the Others have a stake in ending this ritual, don't you?"*

Exceptional Success: In addition to learning the above info, the character gains a +1 to all Social rolls with this target for the remainder of the story. In addition, feel free to throw in some information the character might be seeking outside of this adventure (for use in an on-going chronicle). It's also possible that the character learns that Jackie Snow's young nephew *wasn't* taken by the Others, but was instead stolen by Red Wren herself in an effort to sway the ruler of the Court of Desire.

Consequence: The characters may make friends or enemies out of this. Moreover, they likely identify Cancer John and possibly get the target of their info-probe in trouble with other changelings (after all, these three have willfully concealed information — Mary O'Brine the worst offender of all).

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Negotiating Peace, Fomenting Chaos

No one roll can turn the tide of the rising tensions. You can either resort strictly to roleplaying, with the players inhabiting their characters and pushing the various members of the gathered Lost one way or the other. Or, you can demand a series of dice rolls where appropriate (the **World of Darkness Rulebook** has a number of Social rolls that could be appropriate, be it "Cutting a Deal," "Fast-Talk," "Oratory," or simply working off of Intimidation or Subterfuge rolls).

Provided you feel that the players are making a strong effort, assume that things move in the direction their characters push for — think of them as either the lit match that could blow the powder keg wide or the bucket of water that will douse the fuse. If they egg on the Summer Court or make a move themselves toward Wren, great — the deal is done, violence erupts, and Wren will fight like a caged animal to stay in her circle. If they beg for patience and provide a stabilizing voice, then that works, too.

Assume that the gathered Lost are more or less just waiting for an excuse to act — doesn't really matter *what* action it is, they're on the head of the pin and the characters' response is what pushes them one way or another.

Consequences: Negotiating peace is good. It might even lead to the brokering of a deal — and the ramifications of that deal are up to the characters. The only true sticking point to the deal is Red Wren — she will attempt to evoke the ritual with tooth and nail, and it inevitably comes to violence if any or all resist the Children's Contract. But, if they make a deal to "wait and see," she'll play along quietly, waiting to get the ritual back in gear.

Fomenting chaos results in chaos.

Certainly this scene has long-standing effects felt after the adventure concludes, should this game continue. Some will remember the characters fondly for doing whatever it is that they do; others will resent them, perhaps even move against them in the long term.

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Scene: Into the Thorns

MENTAL ••• **PHYSICAL —** **SOCIAL •••**

Overview: The characters enter the Hedge through the door laying on the floor of the ritual circle. In this broad-ranging scene they have the chance at a number of small events or encounters, including potentially tracking Cancer John and the stolen boy.

Description: If the characters enter the Hedge within five turns of Cancer John closing the door behind him, they enter the Thorns at a point further down the road, closer to where John entered (and this will make tracking him much easier; see below). If they do not enter within that time frame, they still enter the Hedge along the same road, or trod, but it is farther away from where John entered (and thus, harder to track him).

Regardless of when they enter, the Hedge is waning Autumnal. The door itself is literally stuck up into the Hedge, the base of the frame about five feet off the ground (requiring a small hop to the trod below).

Crooked trees climb the sky around you, each wound with coiled brambles. Leaves as orange as fire and as red as blood drift down around you. The trees sway, creaking as they do so. From time to time the brambles shake and shudder, but when you turn to see what made the noise, nothing is there. The trod here is a bumpy configuration of roots grown up over cracked cobblestone. Everything seems to shift slightly in your periphery, as if it's stealthily trying to close in upon you.

The trod goes left and right from the door. The one thing of note is that somewhere, off in the distance, music plays. Listening closely, characters find it's one of Elvis' hits. As that song ends, another Elvis hit begins. The music drifts lazily through the trees, soft and distant. (Songs like "Jailhouse Rock," "Love Me Tender," "Heartbreak Hotel," and "Are You Lonesome Tonight?")

Depending on where the characters go, they can find a number of locations. It's up to you to determine where Cancer John's trail takes them (if they successfully find it). It may lead them by all of these small locations and encounters, or it may take them by none of them (part of this is about determining how much time you have on the game — if you've only got one session, feel free to skip these extraneous bits). Each location is described below:

The Stabapple Tree

Off the trod sits a small clearing marked with a crumbling slate-stone path. In this clearing lurks a stabapple tree that gives the impression of a dark hand thrust up out of the ground, its bony fingers thick with fruit and sharp spines.

Attempting to grab a stabapple or one of the stabapple thorns (p. 224, **Changeling: The Lost**) requires a Climbing roll (two successes needed for a 20-foot climb, see "Climbing" on pp. 64-65, **World of Darkness Rulebook**).

The Stinking Pond

A narrow trail so tight that your shoulders brush uncomfortably against the brambled walls leads you to a small gray-watered pond, a slick scum of gassy algae resting atop the surface. It smells rich, heady, pungent. A flock of five Cobbler Cormorants gather by a small cairn of rocks and needle-like reeds, breaking the stones with their steel beaks. As you

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approach, you hear the sound of cracking rock, and the birds look up at you with those all-too-human eyes.

These hobgoblin birds can act as either antagonists or allies depending on how the characters act. The birds will initially be hostile, but characters have about three turns to talk the birds down. If they play it right and humbly explain their situation, the birds will actually offer help in finding Cancer John, adding a +5 to the tracking roll. However, the Cormorants will demand that one of the members of the motley tell a secret to the birds *and* to the other changelings. The trick? It must be a secret that the changeling has never told his mates. (If the characters instead kill the Cormorants and go to look at the broken rocks, they will find a handful of large white pearls pulled from within the rocks.)

The Fissure

The trail leads you down a path of zig-zags and switchbacks — and suddenly, the trail is interrupted by a deep, earthen fissure. The trail continues on the other side of it — but deep within is a trench of mist and shadow. A bitter stink rises up from within the pit.

Characters must cross the pit. They can go around it, but that requires stepping off the path (see "Off the Path," p. 220, **Changeling: The Lost**). The trench itself is about 12 feet across and 12 yards deep. Characters can get a running jump (or they can attempt a broad jump, though successes gained on a broad jump take a character a far shorter distance). Falling into the pit incurs four levels of bashing damage. Climbing down into or up out of the trench demands a Climbing roll with four successes necessary, and that roll suffers a -3 penalty (no handholds).

Down in the pit, however, one might find a handful of Jennystones (p. 224, **Changeling: The Lost**) if he looks hard enough.

A Minor Token

The characters find a minor token or trifle (the fuzzy dice of Driver's Little Helper is an option) dangling from an extended tree-branch jutting out of the Hedge wall. The token is surrounded by bulging purple flower pods (that seem to breathe just-so-slightly should a character pause long enough to look).

Reaching in to get the token rewards the character with, appropriately, the token. However, doing so requires touching the flower pods (unless a successful Dexterity + Athletics roll is made). The flower pod bursts, sending out a cloud of dense pollen — and the pollen, when breathed in, causes the character to hear a number of tiny whispering voices inside her head.

These voices incur the Irrationality derangement (p. 99, **World of Darkness Rulebook**). If the mild version is already possessed, the character suffers from the severe version, Multiple Personality disorder. This derangement lasts as long as the character remains in the Hedge.

Storyteller Goals: You have the option here of letting characters witness the perilous wonders of the Hedge, or allowing them to move right to the meat of the scene (which is finding Cancer John). Time is a factor; if you have only a single session available, perhaps it's worth not dallying too long with various small encounters within this scene. Alternately, the players will let you know what they want — they may cut right to the quick of the scene, or may instead take some time to drink in the experience. No matter which track they choose, be sure to paint the Hedge in all its mad colors and moods: yes, here it's beautiful, dreamy, otherworldly. But it also shifts and sways, and branches sometimes look like hands and sometimes it seems as if *things* are staring at the characters from behind the brambles. And always, always is the threat that the Others could come galloping down the trod on sweat-slick demon horses (or riding shotgun in an old muscle car whose exhaust pipe belches whorls of ice and snow).

Remember that the theme of all the smaller encounters is one of "reward with cost." Nothing in the Hedge is free, not even the simplest goblin fruit. One must climb the tree to get the apple. And to pluck the token from the Hedge, the character runs the risk of temporary madness.

Character Goals: The overarching goal is find Cancer John and the lost child. A side goal, which may not be a *conscious* one for the characters, is to experience that heady mix of danger and beauty that the Hedge provides. Also, the goal might be to follow the sound of the Elvis music playing…

Actions: Any actions taken outside of interacting with the "mini-scenes" found above are sure to be directed at tracking Cancer John and the child. Alternately, characters can instead choose to try to follow the Elvis music. This requires no roll, but takes them down a winding path (upon which you may still invoke some of the aforementioned "mini-scenes") away from the Cancer John trail. This leads to the scene, "Doll's House."

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Tracking Cancer John

Dice Pool: Wits + Survival or Wits + Investigation

Action: Extended (10 successes required; each roll represents 10 minutes of tracking)

The characters seek to examine the Hedge, the trod, and various paths to find signs of Cancer John's passing. Characters might locate similar clues to those found under the action "Identifying the Thief" described within the "Push-and-Pull" scene. These clues (footprints, swatches of cloth, bits of scab or skin) can allow characters to track John's movements through the Hedge.

However, John may also effect the Hedge with his Wyrd. He's both scared and angry, and the Hedge shifts slightly to match his mood. It curls inward, leaves tighten at the edges, vine-tips and ivy coil inward. Moreover, some leaves might be marked with carcinomas, just like John's own skin. This can lead to bonus dice as per Assets, below, but should only allow for the bonus dice *if* the players think to mention looking for Wyrd effects in the Hedge.

Obstacles: Cancer John crosses The Fissure (-1), Hedge shifts according to the characters' own moods and Seemings (-2), characters failed to enter the Hedge within five turns of Cancer John slamming the door behind him (-3)

Assets: Characters performed and succeeded the action "Identifying the Thief" from the "Push-and-Pull" scene (+2), Cancer John is bleeding (+2)

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: Characters follow the wrong trail and discover an enemy waiting for them. They encounter a pack of Briar Wolves eating a meal (p. 275, **Changeling: The Lost**) and they aren't happy about the interruption.

Failure: The character can't quite get a sense of where he went. The trod yields little information, and the various paths and tunnels into the Thorns aren't forgiving, either.

Success: The character tracks Cancer John to a point along the trod (go to scene, "Found!").

Exceptional Success: Upon finding John, the character also picks up a faint trail of the boy (who, as per "Found!," has escaped John). Any rolls to track the boy in subsequent scenes are made with a +1 bonus.

Consequences: Finding John takes the characters to the scene, "Found!" later in this adventure. Alternately, failing to find him forces them to choose another way. Either they must wander aimlessly, seek out the Elvis music, or attempt to return to the ritual space in the woods to reveal their failure.

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Scene: Found!

MENTAL ••• **PHYSICAL —** **SOCIAL •••**

Overview: The characters encounter a desperate Cancer John, searching along the edge of the trod, keening and weeping softly. He does not have the boy.

Description: Tracking Cancer John takes characters to him — and, at first, he doesn't notice their approach.

Cancer John frantically searches along the edge of the Hedge road, reaching into the brambles and feeling around before pulling his hand out as if stung. He cries and blubbers softly. You see the Hedge around him shift, shudder and recoil from his touch, as if the very land and flora finds him and his fly-specked flesh a disgusting blight.

Storyteller Goals: Ultimately, this scene is pretty short and straightforward. Characters find John, and they approach the encounter however they see fit. Remember that John is a desperate man, a traitor to the freehold and a consummate liar. He will do whatever it takes to squirm out of their grasp and convince them that he's on their side, somehow.

Character Goals: The characters have found John, but he doesn't have the boy. They must find Joey Duncan, and in all likelihood, Cancer John can "help" them (either willingly or by having his head half-caved in) find the boy in the Hedge.

Actions: The key action is dealing with Cancer John in some fashion, and characters can deal with him either socially or physically (or some combination thereof, like subduing him physically before subjecting him to a battery of questions). A secondary action is trying to pick up the trail of the escaped boy.

The Social Approach

Cancer John is a fawning, obsequious shit. Feeling cornered, he'll try to lie his way not only into having the characters forgive him for taking the boy, but he'll even try to get their help in recovering him. As noted, his stats support capable deception, but characters should be given the chance to see through his lies (ideally with a Wits + Empathy roll).

"Whoa! Hold up! C'mon, wait, wait, wait. I'm one of the good guys. I… I just couldn't let this happen with the kid, okay? I had a mother, right? And she kicked the king hell out of me twice a day, every day. Shackled me to a radiator. Whipped my hands and feet with a, a, a plug and electric cord. You know? I couldn't let this kid have that done to him. Not for any cost. But hey — if you think it's for the greater good, okay. The poor kid, he was crazed, couldn't handle this place. Kicked me in the face. Got away! Crawled off into the, uhh, into the Hedge. Into the Thorns. Goddamnit. Help me find him. Please? Then you can have him. Help me?"

He's mostly lying (well, except that part about the kick in the face and the kid escaping: that's true). He has no intentions of giving them the boy. Nor did he bring the child into the Hedge to save him. His plan was to come in and hold the kid captive until his Keeper, the Sharp-Knife Man, could wreak havoc on the other side and then enter the Hedge to claim the boy as his own. (For that would be a cruel spit in the eye of the Children's Contract — not only disrupt it, but steal away the target of the ritual and take him into Faerie as a kept boy.)

Cancer John will crumple under interrogation (p. 81, **World of Darkness Rulebook**). His urge is to protect himself at every moment, hoping to gain later advantage by surviving another day. (This means he'll spill the beans if pushed, but will still do his cheating best to get the child back from the characters should they reclaim the boy.)

"Fine! Dammit, I'm sorry, I'm sorry, I wasn't trying to take the kid for the sake of the kid, I… shit, it's my Keeper. Don't you get it? I'm still on the fucking leash, man. He's got me in a chokehold. But you can help me break it. Help me do right for once in my ass-fucked little life, yeah? Please?"

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The Physical Approach

Characters may sneak up on John or simply attack him. He fights back; he doesn't just roll over. In fact, Cancer John fights as dirty as possible: he goes for the eyes, the sucker-punch, the crotch. He'll throw dirt, push a character into some thorns, pop a goblin fruit in his hand and rub the stinging juices into someone's eye. He fights like a caged weasel — thrashing in one's grip to the last possible moment.

If characters physically subdue him or beat him into submission, any Social rolls made will go more easily: assume a +2 bonus to any rolls to detect Subterfuge (he's bruised and flustered) or to intimidate him (he's already received the earmarks of their threatening potential).

Tracking the Child

Dice Pool: Wits + Survival or Wits + Investigation

Action: Extended (6 successes needed, each roll is equivalent to 10 minutes of tracking)

The characters may try to find the boy. He escaped into the Hedge, stepping *off the path* and into the briar. (See "Off the Path — The Thorns," p. 220, **Changeling: The Lost.)**

Obstacles: John nattering in the character's ear (-1), Thorns are tight and tangled from John's or the character's Wyrd (-2)

Assets: Character received an exceptional success on tracking Cancer John (+1), John has told them approximately where the boy entered the Thorns (+2), the boy is bleeding (+3)

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: Characters step off the path and enter the brambles. They cannot find the trail, and each lose a point of Glamour as thorns bite into their skin and drink some of the magic contained within them.

Failure: The characters cannot locate where the boy might have gone.

Success: The characters step off the path and enter the Thorns, but find that the boy was not long off the beaten trail — he seems to have emerged into a smaller trail that leads up a small hill surrounded by trees losing their leaves. They track the boy to the scene, "Doll's House." Regardless of success, however, the characters each lose one Glamour from the Thorn scratches.

Exceptional Success: As above, but the characters deftly avoid the barbs and thus lose no points of Glamour.

Consequences: If the characters find the child, they enter the scene "Doll's House," perhaps with John in tow (or maybe he's laying back in the mud somewhere, bruised and bleeding, slumbering next to a pile of his own teeth). If they can't pick up the boy's trail, they can still hear the Elvis music playing: following that will still lead them to the "Doll's House" scene. Alternately, they may experience some of the "mini-scenes" found within the Hedge, or they may have to return to the ritual space (with or without John).

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Scene: Doll's House

MENTAL ••• **PHYSICAL —** **SOCIAL •••**

Overview: The characters either follow the Elvis music or track the lost boy and come upon a Hollow carved out of the Hedge atop a small hill: here dwells the mad Manikin known as Doll.

Description: Doll's House — really, his Hollow — is a rickety lean-to sitting atop a bramble-encircled hill. The characters have two ways of approaching it.

• The first way is discovered by successfully tracking the escaped child. They find a way under the coils of bramble that orbit the hill, and can sneak in through the back — here they have a greater chance of being stealthy.

The brambles wreath the hill like coils of barbed wire — but here you find that the ground has sunk a little bit, affording you the chance to belly-crawl beneath the glistening briar.

• The second way is by following the music, which takes them up the hill via a narrow path — here they encounter a thorn-wrapped rusty, crusty portcullis dropped down from a long and leafless tree branch above.

The portcullis pierces the earth, crusted with red corrosion. You can try to climb it, but you notice something: a small plastic speaker dangling from a nearby tree, connected to the wood with a couple of red and black wires. A button sits beneath the dirty speaker, and as you approach to get a closer look, the speaker box erupts in a squawk of static and distant voices.

• When characters get to Doll's House, either under the cover of Stealth or without any kind of furtiveness, they see the crazy Hollow this changeling has made for himself. (Note that the Hollow's stats, in Merit points, can be found under Doll's stats but are repeated here: Hollow Amenities ••, Hollow Size •, Hollow Wards •)

Imagine if a lunatic owned an antique store. Walls of corrugated metal lean haphazardly against one another, sporting crooked shelves featuring all manner of antiquated madness: filthy wind-up toys circling one another like wolves, old records from bands you've never heard of, blue-glass bottles of various shapes and sizes (and each featuring some small extremity like a finger, a finger-bone, an eye, a nose). In the corner sits an oddly large ventriloquist's dummy, sporting a dirty wedding dress. Half-covered by a grimy tarp sits a cracked Wurlitzer jukebox, and from inside the jukebox drifts the various radio hits of Elvis Presley. Against the far wall you see the boy, Joey Duncan, sitting in a rusted barber's chair. Doll peers into his mouth with a flashlight and a dentist's mirror, mumbling to himself.

• Joey seems terrified. This is interesting and useful. Interesting because he's autistic, and tends to shut down when faced with any extreme situation, but here he exhibits the characteristics of fresh and active fear. Useful because, should you choose to use the final scene ("Hollow Eyes"), this represents one avenue of thought in bringing genuine fear to the boy. Doll isn't harming the boy, not yet. Nor is there any sign that the boy has been hurt in any way beyond the suffering caused during the Children's Contract.

Leather straps pull the boy's arms and ankles to the chair. Some kind of metal clamp keeps his mouth open, and from his extended maw comes a steady moan of fear. Fresh tears stream down his face.

Storyteller Goals: Again, escalation. Characters are in the Hedge. They've dealt with Cancer John (who may even be with them at this point). They've all lost the boy, and now have found him in the hands of a Hedge-bound changeling whose motives are unclear but likely not friendly.

As noted earlier, Doll is a character who dances on the edge: he is close to becoming an irredeemable monster, but at this moment he remains capable of some kind of redemption. Doll shows them what happens when Clarity loss is too great and how one's sanity dwindles when one hews too closely to the world of dreams (in this case, the Hedge). How characters deal with Doll helps to determine this character's ultimate fate, and moreover, help to determine the fate of the boy.

Note that this scene can play out in a number of ways: there remains no single solution to deal with Doll. Clever characters can approach him using whatever methods their characters favor (Mental, Physical, Social) to solve this situation.

Character Goals: Primary goal is to get the boy back. That means dealing with Doll. Characters may take it on themselves to assume the secondary goal of redeeming or at least appeasing the Manikin.

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Actions: The first action worthy of note is to get into the Hollow. If characters choose to sneak, that action is described below. Dealing with the portcullis is a whole different manner, as it requires a straight path into Doll's House — they can either use the speaker box to contact Doll (*"Ah. Guests! Let me raise the gate."*) or they can try to climb up over it via the leafless trees (requires extended Climbing roll, four successes needed to navigate height and tree, assume that tree has jagged hard bark which incurs a -2 penalty to that roll; see pp. 64-65, **World of Darkness Rulebook**).

Sneaking into Doll's House

Dice Pool: Dexterity + Stealth versus Wits + Composure

Action: Extended and contested (seven successes required, each roll is equal to one turn)

Sneaking into Doll's House necessitates crawling under the network of brambles that line the small hillside and creeping into the Hollow through a rip in the corrugated metal wall of the "house." One character can crawl through at a time. The tear in the metal is against the wall opposite to the one where Doll hovers over the boy strapped into the chair, meaning that Doll's back is turned to this rip in the corrugated tin.

The contest comes in each turn to determine who is more successful — every time that Doll accumulates more successes in a turn, he becomes more suspicious of noises he hears. Certainly noises are common in the Hedge: odd birds warbling, bugs chattering, weird bits of radio static interrupting the Elvis hits, and so forth. If Doll's successes reach the target of seven before the character does, the Manikin's "suspicion-meter" is finally tipped and he comes looking for the characters. If the character reaches the target first, that character has successfully sneaked into the House and remains in the shadows.

The Hollow Wards • manifest as little objects that make noise when one bumps up against them: a small tuna can on a string, a tray of nails perched precariously on a shelf, a noise-maker toy sitting on the ground half-concealed in shadow.

Obstacles for Character: Hollow Wards • (-1), sneaking attempt during break in Elvis songs (-2 for that turn only), Doll was tipped off last round and is now suspicious (-2 for that turn)

Obstacles for Doll: Elvis music (-1), the boy's keening (-2)

Assets for Character: Dark clothing or mien (+1), soft shoes or bare feet (+1)

Assets for Doll: Finely tuned into the sounds and shadows of his own Hollow (+2)

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: For the character, that means he sets off one of the Hollow Wards loudly and obviously, and attracts Doll's attention. For Doll, it means that Doll becomes so enrapt by his examination of the captured boy that he stops making rolls, thus leaving the character's action to extended but *no longer* contested.

Failure: Either the character fails to successfully stay quiet or hidden and Doll notices, or Doll fails to notice and the character remains hidden. Both cannot fail; one or the other must eventually win the extended contest.

Success: As above; either the character remains hidden successfully or Doll notices.

Exceptional Success: Whoever wins the contest with an exceptional success gets a +1 to his Initiative score for the remainder of the scene.

Consequences: Either the characters sneak in and maintain cover or they are discovered by Doll. If Doll discovers them sneaking in, he will be hostile. However, if they chose to eschew sneaking and came in more directly — i.e. calling him on the speaker or making enough obvious noise so as not to startle him, he will be cautious but initially non-threatening.

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Playing with Dolls

Dealing with Doll is tricky. If characters don't spook him, he's oddly polite in a cold, automaton's fashion. His plasticine face reveals few changes in mood, and so any Empathy rolls to read him are made at -3 dice. He might offer the characters some refreshments: a jar of brined earthworms (each thick and with tiny human faces) and a cup of what appears to be antifreeze. The worms are gross, but are not poisonous (though they provide no benefit as an oddment). The antifreeze is poison, with a Toxicity rating of 4.

The Manikin is almost alarmingly straightforward in telling characters what he wants (and thus hopes to claim from the boy). He has a ventriloquist doll, wooden, with red hair, a tophat, and a monocle. Doll wants to give the dummy "real" parts in the hopes of eventually making him human. He will, if given half the chance, show the characters that he's gotten one part already: a human hand stitched onto the dummy's arm. (The hand is a little too large for the dummy, and appears awkward.)

Doll plans on taking a series of parts from the child: teeth and tongue. The rest, he claims, he does not need and will gladly give the boy back to them when he's done extracting his parts. If characters ask him why he wants to give parts to this ventriloquist dummy, he coldly and clearly states that it is because he's "dreadfully lonely."

A Mental Solution

Characters can attempt to outwit or outthink Doll. Ways to do so include:

- Realizing that Doll seeks "parts" because he is lonely could lead a character to try to remind Doll that he's lonely *because* he dwells in the Hedge and away from the freehold. A return to the freehold indicates a return to people, and thus, an eradication of loneliness. The logic is clear, and Doll enjoys logic. That being said, while this is a Mental solution, it still requires the Social Skills to convey it accurately (likely an Intelligence + Persuasion roll against Doll's Resolve + Composure).
- Characters who succeed on an appropriate Intelligence + Crafts roll might find a way to remind Doll that he doesn't need parts of flesh and blood to make the ventriloquist dummy "alive." A solution could be found requiring Crafts and Computer (i.e. creating some kind of artificial intelligence for the dummy).
- A Wits + Occult roll might allow a character to recall hearing stories of mortal sorcerers known as "demiurges" who are capable of giving life to false flesh (or giving flesh to unliving items). This might be enough to convince Doll to seek another solution. (If you possess **Promethean: The Created**, this could conceivably lead to a crossover story involving finding a mortal demiurge to help Doll with creating a Promethean all his own.)

A Physical Solution

Obviously, the Physical solution involves combat. If the characters surprise Doll and he discovers them sneaking into his Hollow, they have one turn to defuse the situation before he attacks them. Alternately, they may endeavor to take him by surprise or, should no other solutions seem viable, might hope to blindside him with a sudden assault.

Doll fights with icy fury. He will perish protecting his Hollow and the items within it, including the boy (who he now refers to as his "toy"). Doll is powerful enough to hopefully give characters a challenge should they go this route.

If they attack him and kill him without provocation, that is considered a sin against Clarity (Clarity 5). It is not a sin should they kill him in self-defense.

A Social Solution

The Social solution likely involves making some kind of deal with Doll, and any deal made is forged all the easier when the character accepts a literal pledge with the Manikin to perform whatever it is that is promised. Some potential deals include:

- A promise to get him more parts (likely twice or thrice as many as he could claim from the boy). Where these parts come from, who knows? Criminals? Enemies? A fetch?
- A gift of one's own parts. If a character relinquishes some of his own parts, that will work for Doll.
- A gift of Cancer John. It might take a bit of convincing (Manipulation + Persuasion versus Resolve + Composure), but the characters could offer John in place of the boy.

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Alternately, the characters could approach it from a moral standpoint. Trying to explain to Doll why harming the child would be wrong may work with a Presence + Persuasion roll against Doll's own Clarity score. If Doll succeeds on that contest, assume that he can justify the loss of the child's parts as a gain for the life of his not-yet-living ventriloquist dummy. If the characters succeed, then they convince Doll of his own monstrosity, and this is a step onto the path of Doll's redemption.

Of course, characters may very well come up with their own Social approach, and the above angles of solution are not exhaustive. Maybe a character offers him some other deal (token, pledge, servitude, even friendship is Doll is "lonely"). Could be that a character forges a convincing pledge with Subterfuge, then willfully breaks it (Clarity sin, of course). Let players have their characters try to defuse this tense, insane situation with whatever tactic they so desire.

Also, good roleplaying should be rewarded. If a player really gets into the role of the character and makes convincing arguments from the perspective of his changeling, that's worth a +1 bonus die to any Social rolls made here.

Three Strikes

Characters and players don't know this, but Doll's politeness has an end. If attempts to sway him with Mental arguments or Social tricks fail time and again, he'll eventually grow weary of such efforts and likely attack. Assume a "three strikes" rule. If what the motley attempts fails each time, after the third time, Doll blows a gasket. (In fact, allow characters Wits + Empathy rolls to see the escalation of Doll's tension: after each failed attempt to sway him, they can see signs of his frustration growing. His plastic smile tightens. The plastic around his mouth cracks a little. His false hands start to pick at bits of cracked enamel on his opposing forearms. The faint sound of steam hissing or seconds ticking away begins to emerge from somewhere within him.)

Consequences

The consequences felt as a result of this scene range far and wide depending on the motley's actions. The death of Doll may weigh on their hands. Alternately, they may have cut a deal with him or even helped him see the error of his Hedge-bound ways. Cancer John, too, remains a potential consequence. Do they give him up? Do they believe his lies so that he can make a grab for the child once more?

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Scene: The Great Egress

MENTAL ••• **PHYSICAL —** **SOCIAL •••**

Overview: The characters escape the Hedge, with or without the boy, with or without Cancer John. This scene is meant to be short, distilling the characters escaping the Hedge down to some key descriptions and dice rolls.

Description: Characters must find an active doorway back to the real world so that they may exit the Thorns and return to the ritual space in the forest (or, depending on their motives, take the child far away from that ritual space).

Even if the characters aren't consciously thinking about it, feel free to remind the players that there exists a time limit — the Children's Contract must be written into fate by sunrise at 5:30 AM. If you know what time that ritual started and approximately what time the characters entered the Hedge, you know how much time remains.

This provides a kind of unconscious anxiety (which may become quite conscious should the characters recognize it vocally). The Hedge reacts as they search for an exit:

The Thorns shudder and shake as you pass by. In the distance, floating over the black trees and Hedge walls, you hear the ticking of a clock. As you search for the doorway out, the speed of the ticking increases slightly, but soon it seems as if your heartbeat strives to match it.

Storyteller Goals: Resolve the scene swiftly, but not so swiftly that players don't feel the tension in-built. They have the child and are returning with him, or they failed to get him and are returning with bad news. (Or, again, they may be returning with the child with every intension of taking him away from the ritual.)

While some of this scene does come down to dice rolls, it's important to describe the tension, the time limit, the feel of fate escaping one's grasp. Finding a doorway out of the Hedge can be frustrating — they've long lost sight of the real world behind the Thorns, and now much of that world blends or hides behind this veneer of bramble dreams. Scrabbling to find a way out — as odd animals howl in the distance and the flora shifts and twitches as one passes by — has to weigh on the mind more than a little. Make them feel it.

If you want to add a little more to this scene, you can add encounters or events from the earlier scene, "Into the Thorns."

Character Goals: Exit the Hedge. It's that simple.

Actions: Information on finding an exit out of the Hedge is on pp. 216–219 of **Changeling: The Lost**. In this case, the Intelligence + Investigation + Wyrd roll likely requires one to three hours per roll (the area is close, but unfamiliar) depending on your need to ratchet tension (the "three hours per roll" element obviously shifts tension quite a bit).

Characters need a number of successes depending on how long they've been in the Hedge, which is likely one to eight hours, thus requiring them to achieve five total successes.

A secondary goal of this scene might be to deal with Cancer John. If he accompanies them or they let him go earlier, he may return in this scene to try to take advantage of their frustration, once again making a move to steal the child. (Note that he cannot use his token cloak, as it can only be activated once per day.) However, if he feels that he might gain greater advantage by emerging back into the ritual space where his Keeper is likely attacking, he may do so — and then aid the True Fae.

Consequences: Escape the Hedge, hopefully with child. They discover the doorway back into the ritual space. They emerge into the midst of the Sharp-Knife Man's attack. (See the scene, "The Others Attack.")

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Scene: The Others Attack

MENTAL ••• **PHYSICAL —** **SOCIAL •••**

Overview: During the ratcheting social tensions and squabbles after the boy was stolen into the Hedge, the True Fae known as The Sharp-Knife Man exploits the chaos and attacks the gathered Lost.

Description: As the other Lost squabble and bicker, the air grows heavy. The mist rises slightly off of the ground and seems to take on a kind of thickness — the fog is by no means solid, but those hoping to move through it find that they are somewhat hampered.

The mist holds you like a pair of ghostly hands — you can pull away, but it's harder than it should be. The fog's diaphanous grasp is imperfect but determined. Other Lost still yell and bicker at one another, unaware of how the mist is rising and gaining a life of its own.

(This effect is due to The Sharp-Knife Man's "blessing" known as Nightmare Aura, which can be found under his character information in the "Allies and Antagonists" section.)

Storyteller Goals: The other Lost are non-combatants for this scene. Why? Because the characters should be given the chance to rout the invading Keeper. Remember that this story is about them. They are the dynamic ones, and thus should be the ones who have the chance to take down the Keeper. Now, certainly if they're failing at that task due some bad rolls or unfortunate strategy, you can offer them some help from the gathered Lost.

Red Wren cannot leave her ritual circle, but it's not impossible she could contribute some damage at a distance. That said, leave the killing blow (or at least the blow that sends the Other packing) to one of the characters.

Note that, should the characters have gone into the Hedge, they may emerge into the *middle* of this scene if you so choose it. In this case, they emerge and witness The Sharp-Knife Man roving through the panicked Lost, cutting and slashing with his gleaming knives. His Health pool should be halfway filled with lethal damage if you choose to go this route. (The other options are to have the characters emerge and *then* begin this scene at, appropriately enough, the beginning… or instead to skip this scene entirely if you feel that it might be heaping too much on. Remember, it's okay to lose scenes for the sanctity of the adventure.)

Character Goals: Keep the child safe (if he's present), defeat the Other.

Action: Defeating The Sharp-Knife Man — either by destroying him outright or by doing enough damage to send him fleeing into the woods — almost surely demands combat. The characters may attempt to cut a deal with the True Fae, and if it's juicy enough he'll listen — but, do they really want to make a deal with him in front of the other Lost? (Perhaps, if it means saving the life of Joey Duncan and other children.)

Alternately, the characters may lead the Lost into the Hedge as an escape: fine, but the Keeper will follow them into the Thorns. (Moreover, Red Wren will not leave the ritual circle unless she's dragged out.)

Detecting the Coming Keeper

Dice Pool: Wits + Composure

Action: Reflexive

The Lost yell at one another. Some grow weary. Others grow venomous. Social chaos ensues. And The Sharp-Knife Man intends to take advantage of that chaos:

In the orange glow of the torchlight, the faces of the gathered Lost bear the telltale signs of frustration: red cheeks, furrowed brows, lips flecked with spittle. They aren't paying attention. They don't see how the mist rises up around them, wreathing their limbs, even coiling about the torchlight and dampening the glow. They don't see the tall shadow stalking the edge of the clearing.

Then, movement: the shadow emerges swiftly, a tall man with a jaundiced face beneath a teetering tophat, and there is a swift motion: two razors reflecting moon and torch, and then there is blood.

So much blood.

Pick a changeling from the roster of attendees. The Sharp-Knife Man attacks one of them. You can control the level of damage done,

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either by rolling for it or simply by arbitrating a level of damage (even enough to cause death).

However, this action can prevent that from occurring. By succeeding on this action — which is not contested because the Keeper isn't being stealthy — a character has the chance of winning Initiative and stopping the attack. (Or, at the least, yelling a warning to the target.)

Obstacles: Mist (-2), character involved in some other action or argument (-3)

Assets: Character sits away from the crowd by 10 feet or more (+1), Danger Sense Merit (+2)

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: It is impossible to get a dramatic failure on this roll.

Failure: The character fails to detect the surprise attack by the Keeper.

Success: The character detects The Sharp-Knife Man before he appears out of the mist to attack: the character may join Initiative and attempt to stop the attack.

Exceptional Success: As above, except the character automatically leads the Initiative for this one turn (next turn, however, he must roll, but receives a +2 to his score for this scene).

Consequences: Detecting the surprise goes a long way — it can save the life of another changeling, which is no small thing. That changeling may very well seek to repay the debt of his saved life, whoever it may be.

Combat with the Keeper

The Keeper wantonly wades into the crowd, slashing with his razors left and right. Why is it that the characters are largely the only ones actually making attacks? Because the rest are frightened out of their minds. A True Fae has just violated the sanctity of their space. Many are still scarred (physically and mentally) from their times kept in Faerie. Hence, they flee. Or hide. Or make meager attempts that do no damage (flinging stones, branches, waving torches around). Some duck into the trees. Some dive for the door to enter the Hedge.

Round for round, it's chaos —bodies colliding, torchlight shifting, the desperate screams of fear from those fresh out of Faerie. What this means is, depict both bonuses and penalties. Colliding bodies and movement in the mist and half-darkness incurs penalties from -1 to -3 on combat rolls — and that applies to the characters *and* The Sharp-Knife Man.

Some bonuses apply, too. As The Sharp-Knife Man focuses his efforts on dragging his razors across the face of some shrieking changeling, a character may get behind him and get in an attack that stops the Keeper's Defense from taking away dice. Or, a character might endeavor to use the mist to his advantage, crawling along the ground and using it as cover.

If you want other Lost to make attacks against him, most are bashing attacks: sticks, punches, kicks. Which means that, by and large, such attacks are useless. Again, the characters should be the one who rout or destroy the Other, if given half-a-chance. Red Wren may make successful attacks if needed. Moreover, once the Keeper recognizes that it is the characters who are doing the most harm against him, he will move to attack them ahead of any other changelings.

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A few things to remember during the fight:

• Speed is halved due to the Keeper's "Nightmare Aura." This applies to everyone except the Keeper.

• Bashing damage fails to affect the Keeper.

• If the child is present, the Keeper will go after the boy upon realizing it.

• If Cancer John is present, he does not engage in combat unless he has to — however, he will take advantage of the fracas and try to kidnap the boy once more. (This may require a Foot Chase, see p. 65, **World of Darkness Rulebook**.)

• The Keeper has a frailty, a minor bane in which he assumes damage from spoken prayer. (He fancies himself a medical man, after all, even though he is not a doctor nor is he a man.) How might a character know this? Perhaps another changeling offers a quick prayer and a character notices that the Keeper flinches. Or, maybe a character will shake down Cancer John for a weakness — and, under the threat of physical harm, he'll speak up. Note that the Others are immune to bashing damage except in the instance of a minor bane: it causes bashing damage to the Keeper regardless of the mundane immunity.

Consequences: Successfully killing or rebuffing the Keeper's assault is a huge moment — one that could earn the characters some Court Goodwill or even Mantle if they played their cards right. Alliances may be formed. They should be considered heroes, if only for a time.

This means that their voices are even more likely to sway those on the fence about the Children's Contract. Their words become paramount on this night, and what they say happens, goes. Red Wren won't agree, of course, but with the freehold acting against her she'll have little choice but to go home with her tail between her legs.

Alternately, in choosing to continue the ritual, they earn a favor or two from the Autumn Court witch.

Of course, the characters have also just put a big target on their backs. Every freehold has its changelings who have a bit too much of their Keepers in them: they're petty, callous, cunning. They may seek to knock the motley down a notch to ensure they don't get too much power (or any at all). Or, they may seek to manipulate them and use the motley's earned goodwill for their own purposes.

And then you have the Others. If The Sharp-Knife Man survives, assume that he will return as a persistent antagonist. If he is destroyed, the other True Fae still perk up and take notice. They may start moving their chess pieces — likely other changelings and ensorcelled — against the motley.

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Scene: Writing the Contract

MENTAL ••• **PHYSICAL —** **SOCIAL •••**

Overview: This is the culmination of the adventure, whereupon the performance of the Children's Contract hinges on the characters' decision, and where final complications may come into play.

Description: This scene goes one of two ways, depending on the actions and decisions of the characters. In simple terms, either the Contract happens or it doesn't.

If the Children's Contract occurs, it's likely because the characters or another motley has brought the boy back unharmed and sent The Sharp-Knife Man back into the Hedge or to an early grave. The gathered Lost — tense, but silent — once again encircle the ritual space as Red Wren and Henry stand the child up in the center of the circle.

The last part of the Children's Contract involves her frightening the boy by bringing his own fears to bear against him. In systems terms, Red Wren intends to use Contracts of Fleeting Autumn to discern his fear (Witches' Intuition) and then use Tale of the Baba Yaga to focus that fear and force the boy to cower (these abilities can be found in Chapter 2 of **Changeling: The Lost**). If you feel that an 11th hour conflict suits the tension of the game, then Wren's plan hits a snag:

Red Wren gazes into the child's eyes, searching the deep dark of his irises. Searching and searching, she grows flustered. She looks back over the crowd, her face the countenance of a cornered lion. She looks again into his eyes, but even now you can see just how dead his eyes have become.

The boy has shut down. Perhaps he's seen too much. Perhaps there's something wrong with him. But his face is tight, emotionless. His empty gaze yields nothing for you, and you can see that Wren's own attempts are falling short, as well.

This either occurs because the boy is autistic or simply because he's overloaded. (Frankly, half of what he's seen already is far more frightening than anything than Wren could conjure at this late stage, thus making it hard to frighten him).

Alternately, if you decide this late-game conflict will either slow down the denouement or you just don't have time for its inclusion, skip it. Red Wren's fear-making works:

You don't know what it is that Wren sees in his eyes. You don't know what it is that she whispers in his ear. You only know that the boy's knees go weak and he tries to turn and run — but Henry and Wren hold him fast. The tension goes out of him and he drops to the earthen floor of the ritual space, curling into a fetal ball. Wren turns to you all and sweeps her arms in a grand gesture, saying loudly, "And so the Contract is written, and so the children are safe."

If it goes that the characters protest the Children's Contract before it can continue, they find support from most corners. The other Lost back them up and urge for the end of the ritual before its completion. Wren is, of course, not happy with this. She doesn't attack them, but she has to be physically removed from in front of the boy and out of the circle. She curses the characters:

"You've made a grave error tonight," she says, her voice a cold hiss. "You've doomed dozens of children to suffer the whims of the Keepers. That may sit well with you, but it doesn't with me. Don't think that I'll forget this. On behalf of the stolen children, I promise to make you pay for what you've done."

Storyteller Goals: This scene comprises both an 11th hour conflict and the final denouement of the adventure. The key here is, unless they're happy to passively watch the ending, the characters remain a critical part of the Children's Contract. It's their voice that determines whether it happens or stops, because for the moment they've earned the credit to make that decision. Also, if you invoke the conflict where the child feels no fear, let *them* have a crack at it — they may just find success.

Character Goals: Determine the fate of the ritual, and perhaps invoke the final step of the Children's Contract themselves by causing the child great fear.

Actions: The only action characters may need to take in this scene is to deliver fear unto the boy, Joey Duncan.

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Fear-making

No single method is the right way to cause fear in the boy. Characters can explore a number of options, some of which are listed below (though be prepared for creative solutions that aren't written here; players conjure solutions that Storytellers never consider).

• An Intimidation or Subterfuge roll might be enough to incur fear, either by threatening the boy or by lying to him about something that would cause him great anxiety ("We're going to kill your parents and take your dog away," or "We're going to lock you in a closet forever").

• Fleeting Autumn Contracts. Sure, they don't work for Red Wren, but that's because Joey Duncan's Composure score is unusually high (five dots) for a child and she can't seem to pierce it. Characters might have greater success.

• Creeping Dread, the first clause in the Contracts of Darkness, is a low-level ability that can significantly reduce Joey's resistance to fear.

• It's possible that one of the characters scared him in the past, likely during the trip in the Hedge (consider that a changeling's mien is in full view inside the Hedge, and Joey would've seen a character in all her beauty… or horror). That character may have an easier time invoking fear, gaining bonuses (up to +3) to frightening him.

• If there's time, certainly two figures frighten Joey: Cancer John and Doll. If either of them could be brought before him once more, it would increase efforts to frighten him significantly, giving Wren or the characters a +3 to any roll used to frighten him.

Consequences: If characters cause the boy fear, they earn Wren's respect even more than then what she might have given them before. They can consider her an ally, and she will even make overtures to get them into the Court of Fear if they are not already courtiers. (She seems stung if they refuse, but this doesn't damage the alliance, ultimately.)

If characters fail to cause fear, it's disappointing to her. You can determine whether or not she is able to make the ritual work at the last minute, or if another motley steps up and offers help. Otherwise, the ritual fails and it cannot be re-attempted until the next Autumnal Equinox.

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Aftermath

The final scene represents the denouement to the adventure, but should "The Fear-Maker's Promise" be a part of a larger story — either as a chapter in an ongoing chronicle or as the launching point to one — then you have to consider the aftermath.

• **Red Wren:** Wren is not a woman who straddles the fence. After this adventure, she either has reason to love the characters or loathe them. She can be their best friend, even at a distance, or their worst enemy.

• **Joey Duncan:** Assume that the fate of Joey Duncan is placed in the hands of the characters. Their patron or Wren asks that they handle his return to the world, which means somehow getting him back to his parents. Certainly by now there have been police reports, so they can't just drop him off. However, what if he remembers their faces? Could he inadvertently bring trouble back to their doorsteps? Consider too that perhaps The Sharp-Knife Man took out his wrath upon the boy's parents — and the motley returns him to a house covered in their blood. Now what do they do with an orphaned child? (And has he inadvertently become ensorcelled by his exposure to the Hedge and his part in this awful ritual?)

• **The Others:** The motley's actions may have placed big targets on their backs when it comes to the Keepers. The True Fae may step up efforts to hamper the lives of the characters, maybe even going so far as to summon up their own actual Keepers to try to "reclaim" them for Faerie. If The Sharp-Knife Man escaped with his life (or what passes for "life" among the Others), then he'll damn sure be back to wreak havoc upon the characters and their lives. He's a so-called doctor, and he likes to dissect bodies and lives.

• **The Lost:** This adventure had the potential of being socially volatile. At the end, it's possible that the motley came out as the heroes, but the acceptance of the characters' heroism is surely not shared among all the gathered Lost. Some will hold grudges. Some will move against the characters politically or socially, attempting to take the air out of their accomplishments. Remember that some of the Lost bear the callous whim of their Keepers, passed like a cruel memetic virus during their durance: they sometimes bring this capricious cruelty against one another in very creative ways.

• **The Children's Contract:** Simply put, it works. It was not for naught, should it have been allowed to occur. During the next year and one day, *no* children under the age of 12 are taken by the True Fae.

Experience

Playing out "The Fear-Maker's Promise" should take between one and three chapters. At the conclusion of each session, players should be rewarded an experience point for their participation in the adventure. Moreover, check out p. 216 of the **World of Darkness Rulebook** for other in-game reasons that may warrant the reward of experience points.

When the adventure is complete, you may consider giving more experience based on the following levels of participation and success:

+1 Success. Navigating to the end of the adventure and keeping the child alive is considered success. It matters little which side they're on — if they survive and keep the child alive, then that's worth the point.

+1 Finesse. Changelings are, as a group, cunning creatures. Certainly engaging in combat will resolve this adventure by defeating those who oppose the characters, but it's not a particularly inventive way of finishing "The Fear-Maker's Promise."

However, if the characters reach the end by some kind of clever maneuvering or manipulation (playing factions off one another, lying, bargaining, using tricks), then they earn this point.

+1 Change. The characters should learn something about themselves or see some kind of change within. The moral quandary at the center of "The Fear-Maker's Promise," involving a somewhat callous "cost-versus-benefit" situation, should engage players' emotions (and, by proxy, their characters).

Ask the players what they've learned about their characters (or feel free to ask the characters directly — in other words, make them answer "in-character"). If they've got something good, give them this point.

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SCENE: Entering the Forest

MENTAL —
PHYSICAL •
SOCIAL •

HINDRANCES

No major hindrances. Information is available to the characters.

Hiking rolls might be hampered by mist (-1) or rough ground (-2).

HELP

Characters can communicate with other changelings nearby who are making the same trek to the ritual space via distant deer trails snaking through the forest.

Hiking might be ameliorated with good boots (+1) or a walking stick (+1).

STs Atmosphere. The mist-shrouded forest should evoke mystery and tension.

PCs Get to the ritual space, perhaps communicating to others along the way.

SCENE: Ritual Space

MENTAL •
PHYSICAL —
SOCIAL ••

HINDRANCES

Canvassing the Crowd:
Character is Courtless
or without Court Goodwill (-1)

HELP

Canvassing the Crowd:
Court Goodwill with
more than one Court (+1)

STs Make NPCs come alive, without sacrificing a quick pace.

PCs Meet, and investigate, the other Lost.

SCENE: A Grim Necessity

MENTAL ••
PHYSICAL •
SOCIAL —

HINDRANCES

Sensing Cancer John:
Mist (-1), Darkness (-1)

Stopping Cancer John:
John has Impossible Counterpoise (-5)

HELP

Sensing Cancer John:
Character is already suspicious (+2);

Stopping Cancer John:
Exceptional success to sense John (+1),
Character has Speed 13 or higher (+1)

STs Evoke the weird spectacle of the Lost, without making them unsympathetic.

PCs Identify the foe and choose who to side with.

SCENE: Taken!

MENTAL •
PHYSICAL —
SOCIAL •

HINDRANCES

No mechanical hindrances, but the characters must face a troubled decision of how to act. Go after the boy? Stay and mediate? Avoid conflict and hope it resolves itself?

HELP

The Patron's initial directive may help. Others may urge the characters to some action (Red Wren may plant a suggestion in their ear to go after the boy).

STs Create a dramatic, thrilling turning point.

PCs Pursue the child or confront the Lost.

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SCENE: Push-and-Pull

MENTAL •••
PHYSICAL —
SOCIAL •••

HINDRANCES

Identifying the Thief:
Loud crowd (-1),
Distracting presence (-2), Mist (-2);

Fishing for Information:
Target is of opposing Court (-1),
Character and target have
a past history (-2)

HELP

Identifying the Thief:
Flashlight (+1), Night-Vision Goggles
(+2), Common Sense Merit (+2);

Fishing for Information:
Court Goodwill with the target's Court
(+1), Bribe or bargaining chip (+2),
Torture implement (+2)

STs Create the feeling of many individuals in conflict, acting on and reacting to the characters.

PCs Uncover vital information, steer the decisions of the Lost.

SCENE: Into the Thorns

MENTAL •••
PHYSICAL •••
SOCIAL •

HINDRANCES

Tracking Cancer John:
John crossed the fissure (-1), Hedge shifts
toward characters' own Seemings (-2),
characters failed to enter
the Hedge swiftly (-3)

HELP

Tracking Cancer John:
Earlier success on "Identifying the Thief"
roll (+2), Cancer John is bleeding (+2)

STs Create an atmosphere of mad beauty and constant danger. Dial up the tension.

PCs Track. Explore. Stay sane and alive.

SCENE: Found!

MENTAL —
PHYSICAL ••
SOCIAL •••

HINDRANCES

John might seem like an easy nut to crack, but he's volatile, dirty, and would sell his own mother's organs to save his own skin.

Tracking the Child:
John keeps talking and nattering (-1),
Thorns are reacting to John
and characters' Wyrd (-2)

HELP

The characters have a number of ways to handle John. Both a Social and Physical approach could yield some fruit and help them locate the child.

Tracking the Child: Exceptional Success on tracking Cancer John (+1), John showed them where the boy went off-path (+2), Joey is bleeding (+3)

STs Make Cancer John intriguing, creepy, and dramatic.

PCs Get John to talk... then decide if he can be trusted.

SCENE: Doll's House

MENTAL ••
PHYSICAL •••
SOCIAL •••

HINDRANCES

Sneaking into Doll's House: Hollow Wards 1 (-1), Elvis song ends while sneaking (-2 for turn), Doll tipped off previous round (-2 for turn)

HELP

Sneaking into Doll's House: Dark clothing or mien (+1), Soft shoes or barefeet (+1)

STs Make Doll into a palpable, weird and volatile obstacle.

PCs Get Joey back from an insane changeling.

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SCENE: The Great Egress

MENTAL ••
PHYSICAL —
SOCIAL —

HINDRANCES

Finding a way out isn't always so simple. The longer they've been in and deeper they go, the harder it gets.

HELP

That said, this isn't a completely alien part of the Hedge, either.

STs Escaping the Hedge is like finding a door in a dark room.

PCs Escape the Hedge!

SCENE: The Other's Attack

MENTAL —
PHYSICAL ••••
SOCIAL —

HINDRANCES

Detecting the Coming Keeper: Mist (-2), Character is talking or not paying attention (-3)

HELP

Detecting the Coming Keeper: Character sits away from crowd (+1), Danger Sense Merit (+2)

STs Showcase the alien threat of the Others.

PCs It's an attack. Time to step up.

SCENE: Writing the Contract

MENTAL •
PHYSICAL —
SOCIAL •

HINDRANCES

Provoking fear in an autistic boy who's on the cusp of completely shutting down his emotions is difficult, but creativity is key.

But how does this affect the characters morally?

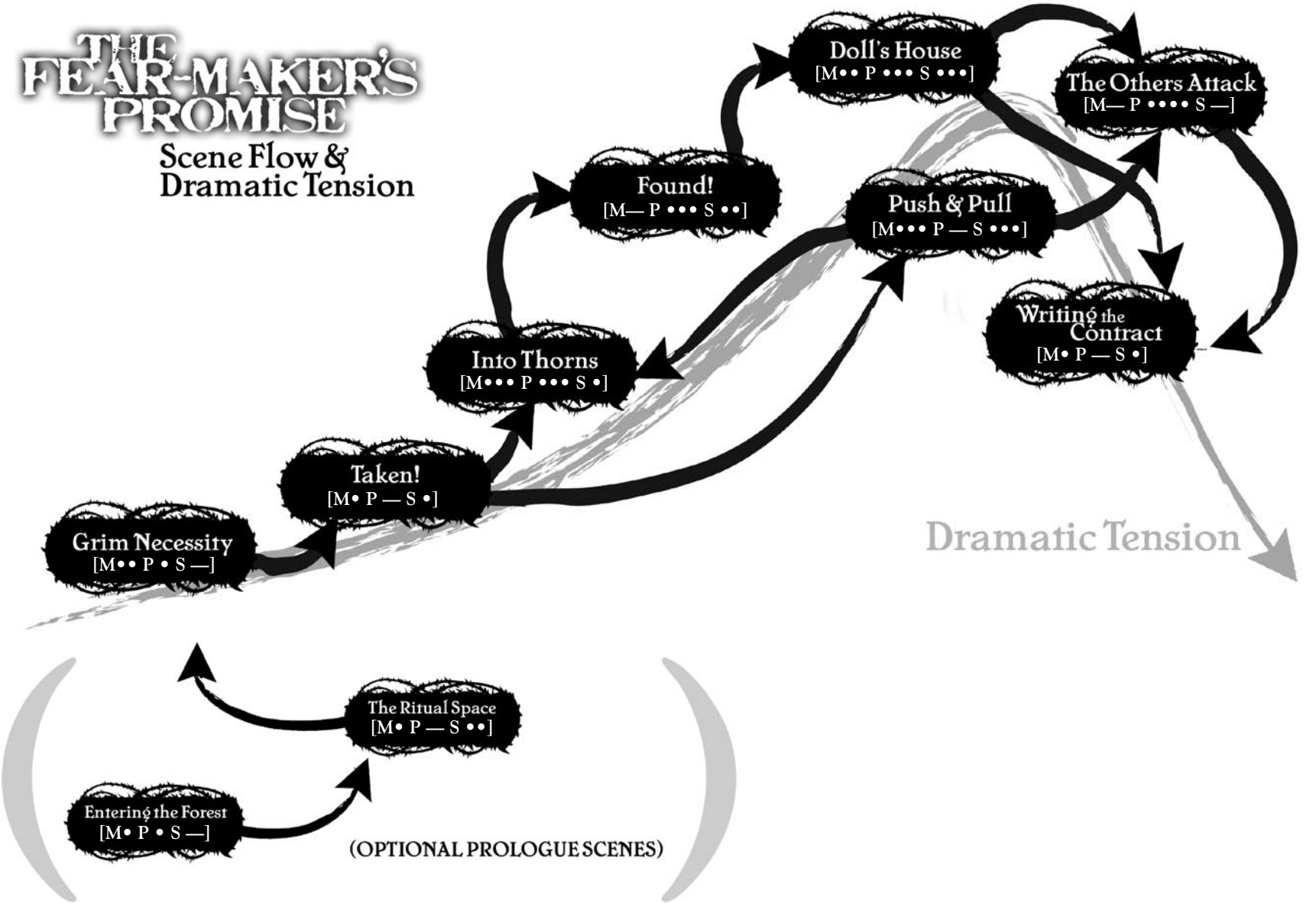
HELP

Red Wren is no slouch.

STs Make Cancer John intriguing, creepy, and dramatic.

PCs Complete the ritual… or put a stop to it.

Frank Bittle (order #527774)



Frank Bittle (order #527774)

Frank Bittle (order #527774)

Changeling: The Lost

Name: Red Wren	Concept: Mystic Contractor	Seeming: Elemental
Player: Storyteller Character	Virtue: Faith	Kith: Woodblood
Chronicle: Fear-maker's	Vice: Pride	Court: Autumn

Attributes

Power	Intelligence:	●●●○○	Strength:	●●○○○	Presence: ●●●○○
Finesse	Wits:	●●●○○	Dexterity:	●●○○○	Manipulation: ●●●●○
Resistance	Resolve:	●●●●○	Stamina:	●●○○○	Composure: ●●●●○

Skills

Mental
(-3 Unskilled)

- Academics ●●○○○
- Computer ○○○○○
- Crafts ○○○○○
- Investigation ●●●○○
- Medicine ●○○○○
- Occult ●●●○○
- Politics ●●○○○
- Science ○○○○○

Physical
(-1 Unskilled)

- Athletics ●●○○○
- Brawl ○○○○○
- Drive ○○○○○
- Firearms ○○○○○
- Larceny ●○○○○
- Stealth Forest ●●○○○
- Survival ○○○○○
- Weaponry Staff ●●○○○

Social
(-1 Unskilled)

- Animal Ken Birds ●●○○○
- Empathy ●○○○○
- Expression ●○○○○
- Intimidation ●●●○○
- Persuasion ●●○○○
- Socialize ○○○○○
- Streetwise ○○○○○
- Subterfuge Greater Good ●●●●○

Other Traits

Merits

- Allies (Adoption Agency) ●●●○○
- Court Goodwill (Spring) ●●●○○
- Harvest (Emotions) ●●●○○
- Holistic Awareness ○○○○○
- Mantle (Autumn) ●●●○○
- Resources ●○○○○
- ○○○○○
- ○○○○○
- ○○○○○

Flaws

Contracts

- Dream ●●○○○
- Elements (Wood) ●●●○○
- Fang and Talon (Birds) ●○○○○
- Fleeting Autumn ●●●○○
- Smoke ●●○○○
- ○○○○○
- ○○○○○
- ○○○○○
- ○○○○○

Pledges

- Pledge of Ensorcellment (Henry)

Health

●●●●●●●○○○○○○○○○
□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□

Willpower

●●●●●●●●○○
□□□□□□□□□□

Glamour
4 per turn

□□□□□□□□□□□□
□□□□□□□□□□□□

Wyrd

●●●●○○○○○○

Clarity

10	○
9	○
8	○
7	○
6	○
5	●
4	●
3	●
2	●
1	●

Seeming Blessing:

Seeming Curse:

Size:	5
Defense:	2
Initiative Mod.:	6
Speed:	9
Armor:	
Experience:	

Attributes: 5/4/3 • Skills 11/7/4 (+3 Specialties) • **Seeming:** Choose 1 free Skill Specialty in Athletics, Brawl or Stealth; Record Blessing and Curse • **Contracts** 5 dots • **Merits** 7 • (Buying the fifth dot in Attributes, Skills or Merits costs two points) • **Health** = Stamina + Size • **Willpower** = Resolve + Composure • **Size** = 5 for adult human-sized • **Defense** = Lowest of Dexterity or Wits • **Initiative Mod** = Dexterity + Composure • **Speed** = Strength + Dexterity + 5 • **Starting Clarity** = 7 • **Wyrd** starts at 1 dot • **Glamour** starts at 1/2 maximum (determined by Wyrd).

Frank Bittle (order #527774)

Changeling: The Lost

Name: Cancer John	Concept: Sickly Kidnapper	Seeming: Beast
Player: Storyteller Character	Virtue: Fortitude	Kith: Skitterskulk
Chronicle: Fear-Maker's	Vice: Greed	Court: Autumn

Attributes

Power	Intelligence:	●●○○○	Strength:	●●●○○	Presence:	●●○○○
Finesse	Wits:	●●●○○	Dexterity:	●●●○○	Manipulation:	●●●●○
Resistance	Resolve:	●○○○○	Stamina:	●●○○○	Composure:	●●○○○

Skills

Mental
(-3 Unskilled)

Academics		●○○○○
Computer		●○○○○
Crafts		○○○○○
Investigation		●○○○○
Medicine		○○○○○
Occult	True Fae Lore	●●○○○
Politics		○○○○○
Science		○○○○○

Physical
(-1 Unskilled)

Athletics		○○○○○
Brawl	Dirty Fighting	●●●○○
Drive		○○○○○
Firearms		○○○○○
Larceny	Shoplift	●●●○○
Stealth		●●○○○
Survival		●○○○○
Weaponry		○○○○○

Social
(-1 Unskilled)

Animal Ken		○○○○○
Empathy		○○○○○
Expression		○○○○○
Intimidation		○○○○○
Persuasion		●●●○○
Socialize		●●●○○
Streetwise		●●○○○
Subterfuge	Adaptability	●●●●○

Other Traits

Merits

Allies (Pawn Shops)	●○○○○
Contacts (Drug Dealers)	●○○○○
Mantle (Autumn)	●○○○○
New Identity ("John Kelos")	●○○○○
Token (Cloak of Light-Shy)	●●●●○
	○○○○○
	○○○○○
	○○○○○
	○○○○○

Flaws

Addict

Contracts

Fang and Talon (Bugs)	●●●○○
Hearth	●○○○○
Mirror	●●○○○
Smoke	●○○○○
	○○○○○
	○○○○○
	○○○○○
	○○○○○
	○○○○○

Pledges

Knight's Oath to His Keeper

The Sharp-Knife Man

Health

●●●●●●○○○○○○○○○○
□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□

Willpower

●●●○○○○○○○
□□□□□□□□□□

Glamour
3 per turn

□□□□□□□□□□
□□□□□□□□□□

Wyrd

●●●○○○○○○○

Clarity

10		○
9		○
8		○
7		○
6	Avoidance (mild)	○
5		●
4		●
3		●
2		●
1		●

Seeming Blessing:

Seeming Curse:

Size:	5
Defense:	3
Initiative Mod.:	5
Speed:	11
Armor:	
Experience:	

Attributes: 5/4/3 • Skills 11/7/4 (+3 Specialties) • **Seeming:** Choose 1 free Skill Specialty in Athletics, Brawl or Stealth; Record Blessing and Curse • **Contracts** 5 dots • **Merits** 7 • (Buying the fifth dot in Attributes, Skills or Merits costs two points) • **Health** = Stamina + Size • **Willpower** = Resolve + Composure • **Size** = 5 for adult human-sized • **Defense** = Lowest of Dexterity or Wits • **Initiative Mod** = Dexterity + Composure • **Speed** = Strength + Dexterity + 5 • **Starting Clarity** = 7 • **Wyrd** starts at 1 dot • **Glamour** starts at 1/2 maximum (determined by Wyrd).

Frank Bittle (order #527774)

Changeling: The Lost

Name: Doll	Concept: Broken Toy	Seeming: Elemental
Player: Storyteller Character	Virtue: Prudence	Kith: Manikin
Chronicle: The Fear-Maker's	Vice: Envy	Court: None

Attributes

Power	Intelligence:	●●●●○	Strength:	●●●○○	Presence: ●●○○○
Finesse	Wits:	●●●○○	Dexterity:	●●●○○	Manipulation: ●○○○○
Resistance	Resolve:	●●●○○	Stamina:	●●○○○	Composure: ●●●●○

Skills

Mental
(-3 Unskilled)

Academics		●○○○○
Computer		●○○○○
Crafts	Toys	●●●○○
Investigation	Objects	●●●○○
Medicine		●○○○○
Occult		●○○○○
Politics		○○○○○
Science		●○○○○

Physical
(-1 Unskilled)

Athletics		○○○○○
Brawl		●●○○○
Drive		○○○○○
Firearms		○○○○○
Larceny		●●○○○
Stealth	Hedge	●○○○○
Survival		●●○○○
Weaponry		●●○○○

Social
(-1 Unskilled)

Animal Ken		○○○○○
Empathy		○○○○○
Expression		○○○○○
Intimidation		●●○○○
Persuasion		○○○○○
Socialize		○○○○○
Streetwise		○○○○○
Subterfuge	Dispassionate	●●●○○

Other Traits

Merits

Eidetic Memory	●●○○○
Hollow Amenities	●●○○○
Hollow Size	●○○○○
Hollow Wards	●○○○○
Token (Baby Cat's Eye)	●●●●○
	○○○○○
	○○○○○
	○○○○○
	○○○○○

Flaws

Contracts

Elements (Plastic)	●●●○○
Artifice	●●●○○
	○○○○○
	○○○○○
	○○○○○
	○○○○○
	○○○○○
	○○○○○
	○○○○○

Pledges

Health
●●●●●●●○○○○○○○○○
□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□

Willpower
●●●●●●●○○○
□□□□□□□□□□□□

Glamour
3 per turn
□□□□□□□□□□
□□□□□□□□□□□□

Wyrd
●●●○○○○○○○

Clarity

10		○
9		○
8		○
7		○
6		○
5	Obsessive Compulsion (severe)	○
4		○
3		●
2		●
1		●

Seeming Blessing:

Seeming Curse:

Size:	5
Defense:	3
Initiative Mod.:	7
Speed:	11
Armor:	
Experience:	

Attributes: 5/4/3 • **Skills** 11/7/4 (+3 Specialties) • **Seeming:** Choose 1 free Skill Specialty in Athletics, Brawl or Stealth; Record Blessing and Curse • **Contracts** 5 dots • **Merits** 7 • (Buying the fifth dot in Attributes, Skills or Merits costs two points) • **Health** = Stamina + Size • **Willpower** = Resolve + Composure • **Size** = 5 for adult human-sized • **Defense** = Lowest of Dexterity or Wits • **Initiative Mod** = Dexterity + Composure • **Speed** = Strength + Dexterity + 5 • **Starting Clarity** = 7 • **Wyrd** starts at 1 dot • **Glamour** starts at 1/2 maximum (determined by Wyrd).

Frank Bittle (order #527774)

Changeling: The Lost

Name: The Sharp-Knife Man	Concept: Mad Other "Doctor"	Seeming: Other
Player: Storyteller Character	Virtue: Temperance	Kith: Other
Chronicle: The Fear-Maker's	Vice: Lust	Court: Other

Attributes

Power	Intelligence:	●●●●●	Strength:	●●●○○	Presence:	●●○○○
Finesse	Wits:	●●●○○	Dexterity:	●●●●○	Manipulation:	●●●●●
Resistance	Resolve:	●●●●○	Stamina:	●●●○○	Composure:	●●●○○

Skills

Mental
(-3 Unskilled)

Academics		●●●○○
Computer		○○○○○
Crafts		●○○○○
Investigation		●●●●●
Medicine	Dissection	●●●●○
Occult		○○○○○
Politics		○○○○○
Science	Anatomy	●●●●○

Physical
(-1 Unskilled)

Athletics		●●○○○
Brawl		○○○○○
Drive		○○○○○
Firearms		○○○○○
Larceny		○○○○○
Stealth	Plain Sight	●●●○○
Survival		○○○○○
Weaponry	Razors	●●●●○

Social
(-1 Unskilled)

Animal Ken		○○○○○
Empathy		○○○○○
Expression		○○○○○
Intimidation	Torture	●●●●●
Persuasion		●●●○○
Socialize		○○○○○
Streetwise		○○○○○
Subterfuge		●●●●○

Other Traits

Merits

Ambidextrous	●●●○○
Danger Sense	●●○○○
Encyclopedic Knowledge	●●●●○
Fast Reflexes	●●○○○
Fighting Style: Two Weapons	●●○○○
Harvest (Dreams)	●●○○○
	○○○○○
	○○○○○
	○○○○○

Flaws

Frailty: Spoken prayer (minor bane)

Contracts

Dream	●●●●○
Mirror	●●●●○
Smoke	●●●●○
Vainglory	●○○○○

Special Abilities

• **Unearthly Flesh:** This True Fae is immune to mundane sources of bashing damage (fists, cars, falling, etc.). Bashing damage from supernatural sources deals damage as normal. Cold iron weapons cause aggravated damage to this creature.

• **Hunter's Aura:** All changelings within 50 yards of the Fae find their Speed cut in half (rounded down). Here it manifests as mist coiling around legs and arms, making movements sluggish and difficult.

• **Vice Over Virtue:** Like all Keepers, the Sharp-Knife Man regains Willpower contrary to the ways of mortals and changelings. He regains one Willpower point from indulging his Virtue, but refreshes his whole pool when satiating his Vice.

Health
●●●●●●●○○○○○○○○
□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□

Willpower
●●●●●●●○○○
□□□□□□□□□□

Glamour
5 per turn
□□□□□□□□□□
□□□□□□□□□□

Wyrd
●●●●●○○○○○

Clarity

10	○
9	○
8	○
7	○
6	○
5	○
4	○
3	●
2	●
1	●

Seeming Blessing:

Seeming Curse:

Size:	5
Defense:	3
Initiative Mod.:	9
Speed:	12
Armor:	1/1 (Heavy Dark Coat)
Experience:	

Attributes: 5/4/3 • Skills 11/7/4 (+3 Specialties) • **Seeming:** Choose 1 free Skill Specialty in Athletics, Brawl or Stealth; Record Blessing and Curse • **Contracts** 5 dots • **Merits** 7 • (Buying the fifth dot in Attributes, Skills or Merits costs two points) • **Health** = Stamina + Size • **Willpower** = Resolve + Composure • **Size** = 5 for adult human-sized • **Defense** = Lowest of Dexterity or Wits • **Initiative Mod** = Dexterity + Composure • **Speed** = Strength + Dexterity + 5 • **Starting Clarity** = 7 • **Wyrd** starts at 1 dot • **Glamour** starts at 1/2 maximum (determined by Wyrd).