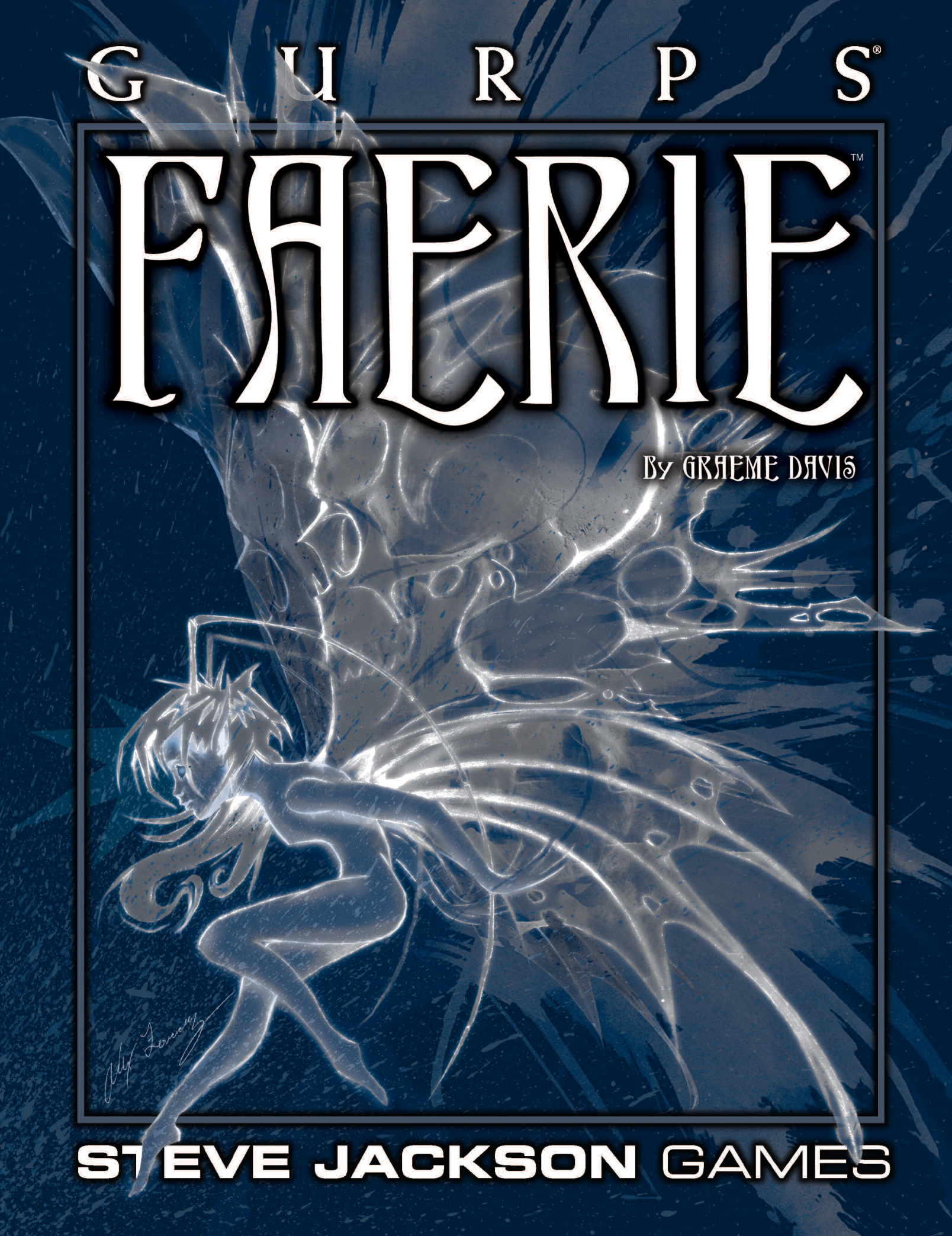
GURPS®

FAERIE™

By GRAEME DAVIS



STEVE JACKSON GAMES

THE FAIR FOLK

They lie, steal, kidnap, maim, and kill . . . and we put them in nurseries. They have been described as gods, demons, fallen angels, and ghosts – even aliens – but no one truly knows what they are. All through history, all around the world, they have been in the shadows, behind the trees, beneath the hills – and yes, even under the bed.

Some are pretty, delicate little people with gossamer wings. But others are ten feet tall with a taste for human flesh, or wizened horrors with blue skins and claws of iron. Some strike down those who unwittingly break their laws. Others kill just for fun.

GURPS Faerie is a complete guide to the Other Folk, covering traditions from around the world. It describes their magic and worlds, and provides templates for different faerie types and for the mortals who know them. You can incorporate the beautiful and sinister Fair Ones into almost any existing game setting, or create a new campaign set in the Unseelie Realms and beyond.

Just keep cold iron and scripture close to hand, believe the opposite of what you hear, and don't trust anything you see.

And whatever you do,
don't eat their food.

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GURPS Basic Set, *Third Edition Revised* and ***GURPS Compendium I*** are required to use this supplement in a ***GURPS*** campaign. The information in this book can be used with *any* game system.

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Introduction

Faeries. From the charming Little Folk of childhood stories to the unpredictable and murderous bogeys of folklore, these creatures are magnificent, fascinating, and terrifying. ***GURPS Faerie*** is a guide for including faeries of all kinds in your ***GURPS*** games. It examines various conceptions of the fey races and the faerie realms, etiquette and taboos which must be observed to avoid offending them, their different abilities and vulnerabilities, and the places where they are traditionally found. It continues the work of ***GURPS Spirits*** and ***GURPS Undead***, covering this intriguing class of creature and associated lore, as reflected in traditions from around the world and from many periods in history.

GURPS Faerie contains templates for many different kinds of faeries, with detailed notes on faeries from around the world. Although the word *faerie* is medieval Anglo-French in origin, the creatures that it denotes are found in almost every culture and period of history. There are also guidelines for adding faeries to ***GURPS*** campaigns in many settings, from fantasy and fantastic historical settings to horror and cyberpunk. Finally, templates are presented for a number of mortal characters with faerie connections; like the racial templates, they are suitable for use for both PCs and NPCs.

Like ***GURPS Undead*** and ***GURPS Spirits***, this book aims to be more than just a specialized bestiary. In addition to presenting game statistics for faerie creatures and discussing their possibilities in roleplaying games and campaigns, ***GURPS Faerie*** examines the worldwide phenomenon of belief in faeries and faerie-like creatures in all its aspects, sorting regional and cultural variations from common elements that seem to unite the whole of humanity. The consistency of some of these elements has been taken by some as an indication that faeries are real, or at least that they spring from the deepest and most ancient parts of human racial consciousness. Like spirits – with whom they are sometimes identified – faeries are a part of almost every human tradition.

Using This Book

To skip right to the rules part of this book, Chapter 3 has information on the abilities of faeries and how they are represented in ***GURPS***. Chapter 4 has racial templates for many different classes of faerie, including notes on variant types from traditions around the world. Chapter 5 has templates for mortal characters who may be found in association with faeries and connected phenomena, along with advantages, disadvantages, and skills for mortal characters. Chapter 6 discusses the characteristics of faerie magic and suggests ways this can be represented using the ***GURPS*** rules.

To use ***GURPS Faerie*** as a source book, start with Chapters 1 and 2, which discuss faerie races and faerie realms, then see Chapter 7 for ideas on how to incorporate faeries into campaigns in various settings, and a discussion of the issues and possibilities of each case.

About the Author

Apart from writing ***GURPS Vikings*** and ***GURPS Middle Ages 1,*** and contributing to various other ***GURPS*** books, Graeme has worked as a writer and editor on ***Advanced Dungeons & Dragons, Vampire: the Masquerade***, and ***Warhammer Fantasy Roleplay***, among others. He has also worked in the computer game industry. He lives in Colorado with his bemused but understanding wife Gina, and two very spoiled cats.

About GURPS

Steve Jackson Games is committed to full support of the ***GURPS*** system. Our address is SJ Games, Box 18957, Austin, TX 78760. Please include a self-addressed, stamped envelope (SASE) any time you write us! Resources include:

Pyramid (**www.sjgames.com/pyramid/**). Our online magazine includes new ***GURPS*** rules and articles. It also covers ***Dungeons and Dragons, Traveller, World of Darkness, Call of Cthulhu,*** and many more top games – and other Steve Jackson Games releases like ***In Nomine, Illuminati, Car Wars, Toon, Ogre Miniatures,*** and more. *Pyramid* subscribers also have access to playtest files online!

New supplements and adventures. ***GURPS*** continues to grow, and we'll be happy to let you know what's new. For a current catalog, send us a legal-sized or 9"×12" SASE – please use two stamps! – or just visit **www.warehouse23.com**.

Errata. Everyone makes mistakes, including us – but we do our best to fix our errors. Up-to-date errata sheets for all ***GURPS*** releases, including this book, are available on our website – see below.

Gamer input. We value your comments, for new products as well as updated printings of existing titles!

Internet. Visit us on the World Wide Web at **www.sjgames.com** for errata, updates, Q&A, and much more. ***GURPS*** has its own Usenet group, too: rec.games.frp.gurps.

GURPSnet. This e-mail list hosts much of the online discussion of ***GURPS.*** To join, point your web browser to **www.sjgames.com/mailman/listinfo/gurpsnet-l/**.

The ***GURPS Faerie*** web page is at **www.sjgames.com/gurps/books/faerie/**.

Page References

Rules and statistics in this book are specifically for the ***GURPS Basic Set,*** *Third Edition*. Any page reference that begins with a B refers to the ***GURPS Basic Set*** – e.g., p. B102 means p. 102 of the ***GURPS Basic Set,*** *Third Edition*. Page references that begin with CI indicate ***GURPS Compendium I.*** Other references are CII to ***Compendium II***, M to ***Magic***, MI to ***Magic Items 1***, MAO to ***Middle Ages 1***, R to ***Religion***, RU to ***Russia***, SH to ***Shapeshifters***, SPI to ***Spirits***, T to ***Technomancer***, VC to ***Vampire Companion***, VI to ***Vikings***, and VO to ***Voodoo***. The abbreviation for *this* book is FAE. For a full list of abbreviations, see p. CI181 or the updated web list at **www.sjgames.com/gurps/abbrevs.html**.

They are present in almost every human tradition. They are lurking in the forest, hiding in the barn, leading travelers astray, playing tricks, stealing babies, and even killing on occasion. They are to blame when something is not where you *know* you left it, but turns up somewhere you would never have put it. They are the unexplained noises in the house at night, the rustlings in the bushes by the moonlit roadside, the half-heard music on the breeze.

The Little People, Our Good Neighbors, Themselves: they are called many things, but the wise are careful not to name them, for fear of drawing their attention. They are the faeries.

Fairy, Faery, or Faerie?

The word is always pronounced the same, but strong preferences have arisen, especially in the last few decades, over how it should be spelled.

Through the 19th and 20th centuries, *fairy* was the accepted spelling, and it is still the most common. However, since the late 1960s, there has been a growing trend among folklorists and students of the paranormal toward the *ae* spellings, *faery* and *faerie*. They argue that the *ai* spelling has become debased by overuse during the last couple of centuries.

The meanings of the word *fairy* are various, and mostly derive from Victorian romanticism. One use of *fairy*, still current in places, is an unflattering term for a male homosexual, based on the delicate nature of Victorian faeries and implying effeminacy. Another meaning – now disappearing, and generally regarded as cloying and over-sweet – is as an adjective to denote that something is exceptionally small and dainty. (This is as opposed to the use of another folklore term, *dwarf*, which implies small size but not daintiness.) *Fairy* in this usage is most common in natural history, which gave us, among other things, fairy shrimp and fairy penguins. And so-called fairy grottoes are still found in some cave systems open to the public, their natural formations often enhanced by colored lights.

Even today, the word *fairy* still conjures up the Victorian image of a tiny, ballerina-like figure with a magic wand and gauzy wings, rather than the more ambivalent and all together more dangerous creature of folklore. Elves and dwarves have regained some of their former dignity, thanks in large part to the work of Tolkien and those who came after him, including the designers of many fantasy games. But faeries, to many people, remain locked in a prison of safe and cozy Victorian cuteness. They are beautiful but not sexual, magical but not dangerous, embodying the whole Victorian romantic notion of clean, perfect, and divinely ordained nature.

The faeries of folklore are altogether different. They kidnap, steal, and kill. And while some things are certain to bring down their wrath on the heads of hapless mortals, there is little or nothing that guarantees their favor. Worst of all, their fondness for invisibility means you can never be sure they're not around, watching your every move and preparing to play a trick on you that might be humiliating, painful, or even deadly. Their genius for illusions means that you cannot tell if anything is what it seems – even your spouse or child might be a stock or a changeling, left by the faeries when they kidnapped the original.

It is incongruous at best to apply the *fairy* spelling, with all its Victorian connotations of sweetness, to such dangerous and unpredictable creatures. Many people have preferred to use the more archaic spellings, *faery* and *faerie*, when referring to the faeries of folklore rather than those of the Victorian garden and nursery. Some prefer *faery*, pointing out that the Elizabethan spelling *faerie* is reminiscent of Edmund Spenser's poem *The Faerie Queene*, which in some opinions began the process of romanticizing and trivializing the faeries.

All debate aside, the *faerie* spelling is used throughout this book, as it is in ***GURPS Spirits*** and elsewhere.

What Are Faeries?

The origins of faerie lore are lost in the mists of time. In Europe, there are hints that faerie beliefs predate the coming of Christianity; elsewhere in the world, startlingly similar beliefs exist across almost all human cultures, suggesting that faeries are rooted in the very core of the human imagination. Or, perhaps, they are real . . .

Faerie lore has been handed down from one generation to the next for millennia. Scholars have studied faerie lore and other folklore since the 16th century – first as a curiosity, then as a social science. Faeries, in various forms, have appeared in literature and popular entertainment from Homer to Harry Potter. Despite this – or perhaps because of it – there is no general agreement about what faeries actually *are*. Some say they are the remnants of a shamanic-animistic pre-Christian religion, while others claim that they are the spirits of the dead. Still others see them as nursery bugbears (a term that itself originated in faerie lore) used to frighten children into good behavior, and in recent years some theorists have contended that they are a pre-industrial rationalization of alien abductions. There is no shortage of opinions, but very little agreement.

The following pages present several possible explanations for the origin and nature of faeries. The GM should choose whatever explanation, or combination of explanations, best fits his campaign. Faerie lore is still living and growing, and the only consistent fact about it is that there are no consistent facts. This is only fitting, after all; faeries are changeable by their very nature, and beyond mortal understanding.

Small Gods

Faeries are often associated with wild places, untamed by mortals and untouched by Christianity – or whatever else symbolizes civilization at the time and place in question.

The woodfeys and water-nymphs – the *dryads* and *undines* of Greek mythology, the *dames vertes* and *lamignacs* of France, the *nixies* and *asrai* of the Celtic lands, the *skogsrå* and *fossegrims* of Scandinavia, the *leshiy* and *rusalka* of Russia, the *aghoy* and *catao* of the Philippines, and countless others – certainly have many of the attributes of nature spirits. They are each concerned with a particular part of the natural world, and they must be placated – or at least, not be offended – or dire consequences follow.

The Seelie and Unseelie Courts

In some later faerie lore, the distinction is made between the Seelie Court and the Unseelie Court. According to some commentators, these two factions encompass all of faerie.

The Seelie Court embodies all that is good and noble about faerie. All its members are good-natured, good-looking (or at least cute), and well intentioned toward mortals. The Unseelie Court, on the other hand, is made up of all the ugly, evil, and solitary faeries, including goblins, imps, and all manner of hostile creatures. Some accounts go so far as to claim that a fair and virtuous Faerie Queen rules the Seelie Court, while the Unseelie Court is ruled by the Devil or one of his senior demons.

A few folklorists – and some modern fiction writers – take the moral dimension out of the equation, making the Seelie Court good-looking and civilized while the Unseelie are crude and ugly, but stopping short of making one group good and the other evil.

The GM can decide whether to use this division, according to the needs of a campaign. In a romantic-chivalric faerie campaign, the Seelie and Unseelie Courts provide a ready-made conflict with clearly defined sides, for PC faeries and favored mortals to fit right in.

On the other hand, this division can be no more than an artifact of mortal perceptions. It is quite possible that mortals have given the name Seelie to those faeries with whom they have had positive dealings, and Unseelie to those with whom they have not – unaware, in all probability, that they have sometimes put the same individual in both categories. Another possibility is that those humans who had regular dealings with the faeries – village wise-women, for example – invented the distinction in the Middle Ages to separate the "good" faeries they consulted from evil beings such as imps and lesser demons, bound into service by malevolent witches. They may have hoped that by drawing this distinction they could avoid the wrath of the witch-hunters.

There is little evidence that faeries regard themselves as being involved in a massive conflict between good and evil. Indeed, there is plenty of evidence to suggest that good and evil, in mortal terms, mean very little to them – not least, the theory that they are fallen angels who were fit neither for Heaven nor for Hell. Certainly earlier European faerie lore, and that of regions outside Europe, regarded the faeries as capable of both good and evil, according to their whims.

Here are a few ideas for interpreting the roles of the Seelie and Unseelie Courts, according to different theories of faerie origins and different campaign styles:

Small Gods: The Seelie and Unseelie Courts are descended from two separate and mutually hostile pantheons. The Seelie advocate peaceful coexistence between humans and the forces of nature, but are not above punishing transgressors. The Unseelie are bloodthirsty creatures more interested in terrorizing mortals into obedience.

Moral Enforcers: In this type of campaign the Seelie and Unseelie Courts simply represent the forces of good and evil. Alternatively, they are "good cops" and "bad cops" policing the same moral code. In this case, the Seelie are more lenient in their punishments, while the Unseelie seize upon any transgression as an excuse for brutal retribution.

Parallel Races: The Seelie and Unseelie Courts are broad alliances of races like those of Tolkien's War of the Ring, with elves, dwarves, and other fair and just races opposing goblins, orcs, imps, and other dark and evil races.

Fallen Angels: The Seelie Court is composed of those faeries who entertain hopes of getting back into Heaven, while the Unseelie have either thrown in their lot with Hell or given up hope and embraced their in-between existence. In this case, the Seelie hate the Unseelie for giving all faeries a bad name and undermining their efforts to reconcile themselves to God. The Unseelie, for their part, regard the Seelie with contempt, as dreamers and sycophants.

Aliens: The Seelie and Unseelie Courts are descended from two separate factions within their parent alien society, or separate groups of aliens who encountered each other on Earth and are trying to thwart each other's plans. Another answer is that the strong but ugly Unseelie were originally a slave race of the beautiful, refined Seelie. The Unseelie rebelled and are trying to set up their own free territory. Humans, meanwhile, have the choice of being regarded as potential slaves by the Unseelie, or as zoological specimens by the Seelie.

The Dead: If the faeries are the spirits of the dead, the Seelie are the good and noble souls while the Unseelie are the evil and mean-spirited ones. The Romans, for example, made a distinction between the *manes*, shades of the dead, and the *lemures*, hostile ghosts. Or both groups are denied passage to the afterlife, and find themselves in positions similar to the *Fallen Angels* above.

Folk Memories: When humanity first encountered the peoples it was destined to replace, both friendly and hostile interactions resulted. Those who regarded humans as a threat and resisted them from the outset became the Unseelie, and carry on their fight from the remote fastnesses into which they have been forced over the millennia. Those who tried to establish mutually beneficial relations became the Seelie, and although they have learned to be wary of humans, they still hope to find some way to coexist with them.

Korred and Korrigans

Also known as *korrs*, the *korred* are a dwarflike race associated with the many dolmens and standing stones of Brittany. Like many dwarves, the korred are tremendously strong for their size; it is said they carried the great stones on their backs and placed them in position, living underground beneath them.

The korred are a small and shaggy people, with red eyes and dark skin. They stand one to three feet tall, with hunched bodies and goats' hooves; their hands are equipped with catlike claws. They love to dance on and around their stones, and do so with such vigor that grass burns under their feet. They normally dance on Wednesday, which is their holiday. Mortals are not welcome, however – men are forced to dance until they die of exhaustion, and women will bear a child nine months later, bearing a resemblance to someone in their village with whom they have never slept.

The korred may be related to the *spriggans*, who live in the English county of Cornwall and are also associated with standing stones. Both peoples guard immense treasures, and know the location of any treasure buried in their territory. The korred are also powerful magicians, and some say it is they who taught the druids.

Campaign Seed: The Power of Belief

The faeries do not merely rely on mana to power their magic – they cannot *live* without it. This can be a form of the Dependency disadvantage (p. CI81), or it may be something subtler.

The trouble is, the world is running out of mana, and has been ever since the late Middle Ages. The culprit is not religion, but reason – mana is produced by the belief of mortals in the possibility of the supernatural, and for centuries, that belief has been declining in most parts of the world. Although it is in the area of religion that believer-created reality has been most studied, the fact is that it is a widespread phenomenon, and to the faeries it is the difference between survival and extinction.

The faeries have gradually been driven back to a few mystical sites – such as Stonehenge and places like it – which are surrounded by enough mystery to keep mortals wondering, believing, and creating mana. Even so, they have become smaller and weaker than they were centuries ago. Births are exceedingly rare, and the rate of birth defects has increased, leading to what mortals call goblins, hags, and ogres outnumbering the true-bred noble faeries.

In Europe and America, the last few decades have seen an increase in the general public's interest and belief in the supernatural, from the Findhorn experiment of the 1960s to present-day TV psychics. Perhaps fantasy games, along with the expansion of fantasy fiction and movies, which have accompanied their history from the 1970s onward, are part of this movement, intended to bring traditional folk beliefs back into the minds of mortals at large. (In such a world, this book itself can be a part of the process!) Satan gets all the press, but what if the faeries are really the ones behind the roleplaying hobby?

In any case, the faeries have been encouraging mortal belief in the supernatural in an attempt to increase the mana supply, or at least keep it stable. Recently, a dispute has arisen over the best way to do this.

A radical faction, generally known as the Unseelie, has begun staging what it calls "reality attacks" – resulting in various kinds of paranormal phenomena such as UFO sightings, phantom or miraculous sightings, and crop circles.

Their intention is to so shake the notion of reality in the minds of the mortal population that they no longer know what is real and what is not, or even what "real" truly means. By this means, they hope to create large amounts of mana – locally at first, but spreading throughout the world so that faeries can once again be assured of survival, and even expand back into the mortal world.

To the conservative faction, which calls itself the Seelie, this policy invites disaster. Many of the Unseelie's reality attacks have resulted in unplanned side effects or phenomena running out of control. Dangerous entities, ranging from old-school demons to Things Man Was Not Meant To Know, have entered the mortal world in places where the fabric of reality has been strained and torn by Unseelie stunts. In many cases, the Seelie have been able to contain the damage, but several dangerous entities are still at large.

The Seelie try to police the Unseelie, prevent their attacks, and repair any damage they cause. They are also, in a small way, trying to counter any sudden or widespread growth of belief among mortals through their control of certain tabloid newspapers and websites. They have also pervaded the mortal sciences with concepts such as Heisenberg's Uncertainty Principle, quantum mechanics, fuzzy logic, and superstring theory, and have worked to promote those Eastern philosophies that see reality as an illusion. This has turned out to be a double-edged sword, requiring constant adjustment; the mortals' belief must not be reduced, but its growth must be managed.

More worrying is the possibility that some intelligent mortals will realize what is going on. Once mortals discover the link between popular belief and the faeries' ability to exist, the consequences are unthinkable. The vast majority of mortals, after all, are much like sheep, buying what the advertisers tell them to buy and believing what the government-controlled media tell them to believe. If prosaic rationality becomes fashionable again – especially with knowledgeable mortals controlling it – the faeries and many other creatures will be driven to extinction very quickly.

A third force, comprising the majority of faeries, is known as the Gray Elves, or simply the Gray. These faeries have taken the fatalistic view that their time on Earth is over, and are working to create new territory within and adjacent to existing faerie realms. Their plan is to evacuate to these strongholds before the Earth runs out of mana, and seal the gates so that they need never worry about mortals again.

PCs in this campaign can take the role of Unseelie tricksters, setting up reality attacks and slowly creating small islands of belief that provide a tolerable amount of mana. Alternatively, they can be Seelie troubleshooters, sent out to prevent such attacks and deal with any unpleasant or dangerous consequences. They can also be ambassadors for either side, sent to persuade the Gray Elves not to abandon the Earth, or to win recruits from among them. Or they are sent to exploit (or contain, according to their allegiance) mortal mystics and cults that have realized the truth, or guessed at something close to it. Finally, they can be just the sorts of freewheeling anarchists who give the Unseelie a bad name.

faerie magic; this can lead to the creation of areas where reality is twisted and aberrations of various kinds can be created – or enter the world from Outside. It may drain areas of mana permanently, while the magic use of the faeries is sustainable and allows mana to be renewed. They have been using magic for a long time, after all.

In many traditions, magic is something that the faeries regard as exclusively their own, and guard jealously. They may just be *saying* that mortal magic causes supernatural pollution, and staging manifestations to back up their claims, in order to persuade mortals to drop the use of magic. To them, it is like a rogue state developing nuclear weapons.

Perhaps mortal magic use has been deliberately enabled by a renegade group of faeries – anything from a fanatical doomsday cult to an unscrupulous political faction – to unbalance the status quo for various reasons. The fallout created by the Hellstorm may provide a level of magical noise they are using to cover their own activities, or they are encouraging the mortals to wipe themselves out in a magico-nuclear holocaust, so that faeries can reclaim the Earth. Or perhaps they simply want to destabilize the world so that the rest of their kind have their hands full keeping it from destruction, and have no time to investigate or thwart the conspirators' plans . . .

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