

Games From Folktales

Transcripts for February 2017

**Self made men
are monsters**

Moral luck

**Sanctuary of Ice :
Labyrith of Lanes**

Playing at ghosts

Thanks

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If you are reading this,
it's because of these guys.

Games From Folktales

January 2017

I've been listening to *The Hero With A Thousand Faces* by Joseph Campbell, and he made an interesting point about mystagogic initiations, that struck me as at the crux of many of our problems in terms of mystery cult play. The man who is self made is idolized by the American and Australia modern societies, but in Mythic Europe, he's almost certainly a monster.

Let's work this through: we think of the term "mystery" as a magical one, but what it means is "secret". It is common in the indentures of medieval apprentices for it to state they will be taught the mysteries of their masters; professions. We, in Ars, have sometimes used this as an excuse to slip in some domestic spellcrafting, but it means, in the real world, the tricks that make the trade possible. For a blacksmith, the colours of heated metal, and the way of striking the metal, are mysteries. Every profession has mysteries.

Every child becoming an adult learns these mysteries, and is tested in them by mystagogic superiors, before being allowed to display the products of the mysteries, or teach the mysteries themselves. The tests can be as difficult as producing a masterpiece, or as simple as sticking the trousers of the beer inspector to a stool, but they exist. Practical knowledge comes through a framework of teaching.

The self-made man, who springs from nothing to mastery, is outside the framework. He is an impossible thing, and a dangerous thing. Later, under Protestantism, his wealth can be seen as a hint he is one of the Elect. Alternatively, in Australia, the assumption is that the wealthy are members of the aristocracy, and the self made man is throwing up two fingers to them. In the Renaissance, many self-taught virtuosos gathered about them legends which suggested they had gained the mysteries through dark, seldom-trodden paths: through sacrifices to devils, or by tricking faeries. Such people could not be trusted with the mysteries, because mysteries hide themselves. Mysteries are dangerous: and that sounds mystical, but it isn't.

Here, I don't just mean spiritually dangerous, although that was certainly one idea widely held. Those who had become masters without grinding effort had a tendency to Pride. The danger is real, and physical, because the mysteries are industrial processes. An unskilled miller may not spot the ergot in the rye flour. A foolish blacksmith can burn down a village. An incautious tanner can spread the flux. Who knows if these prideful prodigies have learned the necessary cautions of their trades?

Just because you are in the visual or performing arts doesn't make you immune to industrial accidents. In Mythic Europe the arts have a role in the raising of the spirit toward salvation, most strongly noted after the Gothic period starts suggesting that the beauty of the world can be used to teach the illiterate. If music can lift the soul to within easy reach of Grace, if a beautiful painting can turn a man from carnality and sordid pleasures, can these techniques, the very keys to the minds of men, be given to people who have bargained for them with the creatures of shadow?

In hearing this, I immediately wondered if this, in part, is what is fuelling the Tremere tendency to recognise far more Redcaps than the House itself does. They presumably know that there is a cult of a new Hermes, which claims sacred blood and recent revelations from a Messianic figure. Its people practice odd, flexible mystagoguery, where initiates tailor their rituals to suit themselves. All of this sounds dangerous to the medieval mindset, where the self made man is not the hero, but the monster a hero must rise to fight.

When the new Hermes is amoral, who will oppose him? The old Hermes, on which the new models himself, and who he claims to be, was a trickster god of merchants and thieves. Even if you do not oppose him, he's no better than Loki or Anansi. He may plunge your world into Chaos simply for amusement. In Mythic Europe, how does a false prophet fall?

Thomas Nagel uses a form of the following example to explain moral luck.

Imagine two people, with two identical cars, who leave two identical parties, and drive home equally drunk. A child darts out into the road before Driver One, and he does not stop in time. No child appears before Driver Two, and he returns home safely. Who has acted more immorally?

The conventional answer is that the guy who killed the child has acted more immorally. Nagel's question is: why is that? If we assume that people are only responsible for their choices, and not for external factors over which they had no control, why do One and Two not share the same degree of moral culpability? What's the difference? Is it just that Two was lucky? Moral luck's a deep topic, that I can't cover in a short podcast, but I'd like to show how it teases out in Mythic Europe.

Nagel suggests the way through his puzzle is to look at different kinds of moral luck. The first is Constitutive Luck, which is to have the good fortune to have physical or psychological characteristics which guard us from situations of moral hazard. These, in *Ars Magica*, are literally called Virtues, and the lack of this style of luck are Flaws. Nagel has a second category, Antecedent Luck, which suggests that the way circumstances have moulded you up to this point influences your performance. This is reflected most

strongly in the Personality trait system, but also in Virtues, Flaws, and Ability experience. Circumstantial luck is modelled though Story Flaws, and the Covenant Boon and Hook system. It encompasses the fortune you have to be born into a society, and in a stratum, where your moral action is easy. Luck of consequent circumstances is the luck Driver Two has above: having done an immoral thing, they have the good fortune to not cause harm, and so to not be culpable. This is an effect of the Virtues that allow re-rolls or allow bonuses on skill rolls, like Knacks. It's also pure luck of the dice: if you make your roll, you didn't do the terrible thing. (Nagel thinks that both drivers are equally immoral, by the way: he sees wrongdoing and harm as related, but separate, things).

In Mythic Europe, there's a complicated relationship between choice, action, result and moral blame. This matters because your characters will be judged after death, and are surrounded by demonic forces that put their thumb on the scale, tempting you toward damnation. Does moral luck, or the lack of moral luck, give demons something new to do?

The obvious first step is for demons to ensure consequential ill luck. A demon pushes the child onto the road, or lets the child out of the house so that it is wandering in the street. Your blameworthy action is due to ill circumstances, but those circumstances are constructed in a way you cannot see (you have circumstantial ill luck). One of the main reasons for the existence of the Dominion is to

keep these tiny demons of ill-luck away from the Faithful.

One set of folklore about one of the dukes of Hell is that he does ill by doing good. He helps you build a bridge that an army will later cross to raze your village. He gives you a ride home, just in time to catch your wife in bed with a neighbour. He sharpens the knife that slips and cuts off your finger. He lends you money, so that you attract robbers, gamblers and temptresses. He doesn't seem to work in Sth Edition, because demons can't plan, but if you accept that the desire to do ill is, of itself, an ill, he doesn't need to. He can hurt you without needing to foresee your choices.

Similarly, demons can generate antecedent ill-luck. Demons which trick you into exercising vices make you more likely to act viciously in the future. This places you in a situation of moral hazard. The demon doesn't make you drink then drive knowing you'll hit a kid, but it does encourage you to drink. It encourages your pride in your ability to drive. It manufactures the preconditions of your moral ill-luck.

To stretch this idea further, let's look at how Mythic Europeans view the ideas around moral luck.

The hardest line on this is a particular reading of Jesus, coming from the Sermon on the Mount.

Matthew 5 is often thought of as one of Jesus' more cuddly outings, because it's where he talks about turning the other cheek, but He also says:

27 "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall not commit adultery.'

28 But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart.

29 If your right eye causes you to stumble, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell.

30 And if your right hand causes you to stumble, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to go into hell.

So, to a hard line follower of Jesus. the desire to commit a sin is itself a sin, even if there is no plan to act on that desire. The desire is, itself, an act. This isn't strictly parallel to the two driver problem given above, but it's a fresh wrinkle. To a hard line follower of Jesus: the sin occurs when the driver decides to get his keys out, not when he turns the ignition or hits the kid.

Oregon is one of my favourite Church fathers, because of his insistence on the universal redemption of everything, even demons, and the possibility that Hell was empty, but his heterodoxy went into the "terrifying the Church" level when, according to Eusebius, he and his followers, taking Jesus quite literally, saw Matthew as a call to self-castration. The Church quickly tells people that this is not what was intended at all, but his idea of the absolute mortification of the flesh to make is a suitable spiritual vessel, bubbles along in the gnostic underground of Christianity.

In 1220 the Perfecti of the Cathars aren't cutting bits of themselves off, but they similarly disdain the flesh, because they think it's a source of immorality. The urges of the flesh, even if you don't act on them, are sins. You don't need to do harm to others to be immoral: you just need to disobey God, thereby harming yourself.

The Church took a view closer to that of modern people: sin is necessarily voluntary. Your sinning eye is just a metaphor for your mental state. If you want to sin, you are sinning, sure, but it's not the same as actually doing stuff. Thoughts can break the law of God, and so are personally harmful to the thinker, but that's not nearly so heinous as deliberately hurting someone else. The literal argument, and the self-mutilation it engenders, are a heresy. Demons can spread that heresy, thereby appearing holy.

Dante is popular later in history, but he has so eclipsed our view of medieval theology that his ideas show up in *Ars Magica*. As his books continue, the narrator tours Hell, and meets people carefully taxonomised by their sins. The punishments they have suit their crimes, in an almost Mikadoesque way. These crimes require acts, and you are basically punished eternally for your single worst act.


Note that your lesser evil acts can't matter. Librarians know this taxonomy problem: if you put a book about feminist views of Mary in the section on feminism, you can't put it in the section on Mariology. Judas is ground in the mouth of the devil

for betrayal: his covetousness of money gets to slide, because you can only be in one classification at a time. In a particularly forgiving view of Hell, you might suggest that a sinner ascends through the punishments as they are purged of their vices. There is still, however, a stratification by acts. You are still classified by your worst day.

If you are judged for what happens to you on your worst day, demons don't have to degrade you into an inveterate sinner. They get to roll the dice on you, day after day, until the numbers finally come up their way. Now, demons can't plan, but they don't need to: they can just rely on the law of large numbers. If every attempt at temptation pushes someone toward constitutive ill luck, then a sort of Brownian motion of tiny demons suffices to damn most people.

I was thinking about this, and the musical *Hamilton*, and Aaron Burr. He's got problems: I'm not saying he's a saint, but as Lin Manuel Miranda notes, he is cautious his whole life except for this one time, where he thinks he's in mortal danger and so he shoots Hamilton. He doesn't repent this for years. He regrets it: he refers to Hamilton as "my friend, who I shot", but it's not until he's an old man that he accept that killing him was wrong, rather than unlucky. In Dante's version, that gets young Burr a spot in Hell, except if his shot misses. Then young Burr still might get in for pride, or wanting to kill someone, but he doesn't get the lower circle treatment. Luck: the good fortune to get what





you want, at the moment of moral weakness, is damning in Mythic Europe.

This means that a demon sticking around Burr can just be persistently helpful. It doesn't need to ask for his soul: it just needs him to fire first, or fire cleanly, or notice that Hamilton is wearing his glasses and link that to him intending to aim precisely. Demons don't need to be metal guys, demanding you sacrifice kittens and write contracts in blood. Many of them like that sort of thing, because they have no self-restraint, but they don't require it to damn people. They can just give you what you want, for free. I can see this as a new character creation Virtue.

How Hermetic Law deals with moral luck is interesting: it cares about outcome, about harm. It does this because it can't know motive. It doesn't know if you are thinking the wrong thing, so it need to find people who have done things and make examples out of them, as a form of societal deterrence.

I'm not sure intention matters much: this may vary by House. In some Greek philosophy, for example, intent doesn't matter. Oedipus kills his father and has sex with his mother by accident. When he discovers this, he destroys himself. His antecedent moral luck is terrible, and it over-rides the modern idea that if you don't know something, you aren't culpable for that thing. Some faeries have a similarly literal interpretation of agreements. Hermetic law forbids acts: you not knowing the consequences may mitigate what a Tribunal

assesses as your penalty, but it's the act, not the motive, that matters.

This is important because the self is less united in Mythic Europe than we like to think. Each person is body, spirit and soul, and there are cases of the spirit acting on its own, or even parts of the spirit acting on their own. I'm not talking a strict Jekyll and Hyde here (although there is the moral question of if Jekyll is responsible for Hyde's action), but there are related cases. If, while you sleep, your spirit takes the form of a wolf and worries cattle, or even eats people, to what extent are you morally culpable? If part of your spirit is sheared off and becomes a monster you must defeat, are you still the monster? In Hermetic law, yes: you are responsible, otherwise House Tylalus could just use their habit of creating false personae to commit crimes, then have the criminal melt away into nothing, unreachable by the law.

This means that all a faerie or demon has to do to damn you in the eyes of the Order is make sure that your consequential luck is bad. Criminality having a moral as well as a legal outcome, your character's lucky Virtues don't just protect from bad in-game events, they shield from the moral consequences of causing harm..

Sanctuary of Ice

THE GREATER ALPS TRIBUNAL

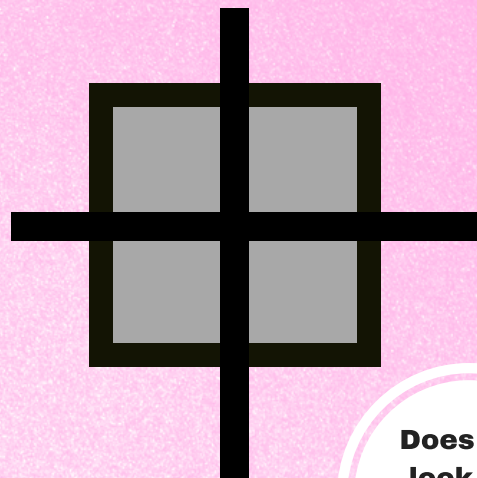
Labyrinth of Lanes

Labyrinth of Lanes was removed from Sanctuary of Ice because it displayed too few elements unique to Hermetic Alpine life. It was therefore the easiest to remove, and the easiest to add to other tribunals.

This small covenant is officially in an extinguished Roman salt mine near Salzburg, but this site is linked to a basement in Vienna by the smallest Hermetic Portal in the Order. Only two and a half feet high, and a little over two feet wide, this Portal has been constructed in miniature so that only animals can use it. Labyrinth of Lanes is an unusual Bjornaer covenant.

Originally this covenant belonged to House Jerbiton, but during one of their introspective phases many members left for larger covenants, and its membership was opened to other Houses. A free-thinking Bjornaer with notions of adapting to urban life, considered somewhat mad by his own House, was one of the recruits. As ordered by his Primus, when the Schismatic hostilities became overt, he retreated to Crintera, and, in his absence, raiders from the Rhineland slaughtered his sodales. Eventually he returned, laid his comrades to rest, and founded a line of Bjornaers interested in living as feral animals in urban environments. Members of his House still think of these Bjornaers as a little touched, but appreciate that Labyrinth of Lanes gives them somewhere safe to stash their eccentric relatives.

A minimalist covenant, like many of the earliest Bjornaer structures, Labyrinth is a series of tunnels extending from an old mineshaft. Although extended, reinforced and beautified over the years, the tunnel complex is far from volumous. The covenant's Aegis extends over a huge area, more than a mile in diameter, because the Bjornaers don't want it to pinpoint the location of the otherwise-disguised covenant. Within the covenant's huge, theoretical borders live a few families of foresters and farmers, who are whisked to the covenant when cleaning needs done.



Does this look too religious to you?

The hope was to show you a new way to play Bjornaers.

Physical description

People were used to magi in castles: that you could hide your covenant this way was newish.

This covenant's chief custom is absence. Magi reside here while studying, but far prefer to live and socialise in Vienna. Although the covenant is never absolutely unstaffed, visiting redcaps often find only a single magus in residence. Sometimes Jerbiton magi visit Labyrinth, to consult the library or because they see it as a model for how all magi might, in some distant future, live. If trusted, these magi are given remarkably free access to the covenant's areas, and some are, for brief periods, left to guard things while the Bjornaer are away.

This highlights the second custom of the covenant: disposability. The Bjornaer progenitor of this tradition survived because he was willing to give up all of his material possessions and flee to Crintera. This lesson has not been lost on the current members. Each is ready to hide, for years if necessary, in animal shape, and travel slowly toward a "safe" site. Useful items have been cached, mainly in Vienna, but also in other locales, for emergencies.

Although attached to their laboratory site, the Bjornaer are willing to abandon it if faced with overwhelming force. Raiding is less tempting than it might, at first, appear. Seasoned Bjornaer are excellent guerrilla fighters, who, if forced to retreat, would seek first re-enforcements, then revenge.

Those members of House Bjornaer who are strongly influenced by pack-mentality heartshapes, or who retain compassion, have a soft spot for members of this covenant, since it's seen as a sort of rest home for the philosophically-challenged. Such Bjornaers might aid their less-than-sane cousins, or seek recompense for their suffering.

Labyrinth is a Winter covenant, because it has few resources, little desire to expand them, and its magi are prepared to abandon their site. Technically, its members are insane, because neither of the social systems to which they adhere, the philosophy of Bjornaer or the Hermetic Code, suggest that being curled up on the lap of an old woman knitting by the fire is a constructive use of time. Legally, It's unlikely be to extinguished, because in the absence of any other claimant, the charter of the Labyrinth of Lanes gives the Primus of Jerbiton the right to appoint a fresh Council, who would continue the covenant. A later amendment allows the Primus of Bjornaer to veto any appointment made in these circumstances.

Customs

This is your invitation if you are a non-Bjornaer.

Elderly Bjornaers, it is to be remembered, turn into animals. They become kaiju in later works.

This is your second invitation to join this site.

Sigismondo follower of Bjornaer

The covenant's leader, such as it has, Sigismondo's heartbeast is feline. Technically an Egyptian wildcat, like most European cats at this time, he's a mackerel tabby. He dislikes the churchmen, since they have a habit of incinerating black cats of Saint John's Day. He has mastered a simple spell which alters his coat colour and, just for the priests, one of his defensive colourations is purely white, with a gold cross on his chest.

Sigismondo has adopted a human family, which he has been tending for almost a century. Gifted children are remarkably common in its many branches, and he has trained several apprentices, while in cat shape. They have entered House Bjornaer when they had an active heartshape, or House Jerbiton if he could not draw a new shape forth. A few Bjornaer train apprentices this way: these new magi have the Stingy Master and Isolated From the Order flaws.

Teca filia John, follower of Bjornaer

A young hawk, Teca has noticed that large cities are filled with pigeons. Why not, then, live in the city? The least dedicated to the covenant's project, domesticating humans, Teca is snappish and territorial. She's skilled at air magic, and has several violent spells mastered, so that she can cast them easily in her animal form. As with many Bjornaer birds, her favoured tactic, in Hermetic combat is to flee to a range beyond human sight, but within raptor, sight. This gives her the advantage of unreturnable fire.

Brett filius John, follower of Bjornaer

Brett is a young stallion, who spends most of his time on the stud of a local nobleman. Let's not dwell on what he does there: apples are involved, apparently. Many magi are aware of his activities, because horses which do not throw magi are uncommon, valuable and available from the stud. Brett claims to have gone on Crusade, and witnessed various battles from beneath the buttocks of influential noblemen. He spends little time in Vienna proper, and spends the most time at the salt mine.

Magi

Cats looked different in the Middle Ages. Blotchy tabbies are an effect of urbanisation.

A German name. It means "defender".

Widespread cat murder dates from slightly later.

None of these people have turned up in later books

This way of reworking Eye range was cutting edge stuff in 1996

A Hungarian name meaning "Reaper"

A name meaning "Breton" or Celt.

It seems sad to me that it was more comfortable for me to put a beastialist in the book than noting forcefully that the lesbian couple are lesbians.

More about this in the podcast.

Antonie fillia Sylvester, follower of Bjornaer

An enormous black cat of indeterminate age, Antonie is rumoured to be Sigismondo's daughter. He candidly admits that he has no idea if she is or not, but doubts it somehow. Touched by the Faerie, Antonie may be related to the Irish Kings O' The Cats, huge black prowlers that can carry a man in their jaws (her heartbeast is essentially a huge panther). She may have the power to cause pneumonia, or enhance the allergic reactions of cats in sufferers.

Antonie is the most likely covenant member to prowl the woods about the mine, seeking little sprites to breakfast upon. She enjoys Vienna because it has cream in it. Hermetic magi speculate whether the irregular mutilations of livestock that occur in this Tribunal are due to faeries or Antonie.

Amalie filia Elmer, follower of Bjornaer.

One of the rare heartshapers, Amalie becomes a warm breeze that whips through an area. She enjoys Vienna because, unlike a forest, it is full of humans with which she makes sensual, intimate contact in her airy form. She's an attention seeker. She picks pockets, steals hats and snatches scarves, tumbling a mortal's possession along the street in a childish game of "catch me if you can". She looks around thirty, but has looked that way for about sixty years.

Clotilde fillia Vannear, follower of Bjornaer

A maga of middle age, Clothide has a subtle but potent ability: because of a Twilight experience, she can command all of the rats in the city where she resides. With the assistance of her magic, she can see through their eyes, hear what they hear, and use them to carry Waiting Spells. Although she prefers her human shape, she needs no grogs while in Vienna, since a swarm of filthy rats shadows her movements in the city's sewers, waiting for her command to surge toward the light and the flesh of her enemies.

Clotilde's heartshape is a mystery. It may be a rat, but rumours in the Tribunal indicate that it's a vast leech or bloodworm. An intriguing alternative is that the swarm of rats who follow her are made from her internal organs. Clotilde has been observed shifting into a variety of shapes, but this may be through silent, gestureless, spellcasting.

A French male name. That was my mistake. The faerie cat lineage was used in Realms of Power: Magic.

Based on the French film Amelie.

A bit rapey, in hindsight.

Heartshapers are no longer a thing.

**Spelling error
This should be
"Clothilde"**

I presume she was influenced by the X-Man Maggot, or Bagabond from Wild Cards?

The magi here simply don't see the point in having covenfolk, except to tidy up a bit. There are humans who perform services for the magi in Vienna, but most of these are simply tradesmen whom include the magi in their clientele. Groggs seem a bit superfluous to the magi here, who can either shift into combat worthy heartshapes, or who can flee at high speed. Groggs need to be fed and housed, and then the buildings for that need to be defended, and it all seems a bit too much bother. The covenant has magical defences which redcaps have been assured are more than sufficient to deal with an army of small or moderate size, but whose precise nature have been left undisclosed.

There are currently no distorted covenfolk at Labyrinth. The distortion recorded in the Jerbiton era was related to saline magic. Certain servants gained a limited form of the Magic Resistance virtue, which protected them from demon-inspired illness, minor curses, befuddling fae and similarly themed Hermetic spells. Several salt-distorted covenfolk are interred in the covenant's depths, their bodies incorrupt. The Bjornaer are aware such corpses could be mistaken for vampires or saints, and so cautiously prevent new distortions.

Covenfolk

Boons and Hooks

In the current edition, a covenant's statistics depend on what the player characters can access, so each covenant could have a several sets, based on individual sagas.

Suggested Boons and Hooks include: Autocephalous, Aura, Council, Difficult Access, Felicitous Tribunal, Hidden Ways, House Covenant, Mystical Portal, Peasants.

Salt has powerful antimagical properties. In certain areas, a sprinkle of salt is sufficient to dispel even powerful illusions. Minor demons find salt irritating, and disease spirits can be kept out of meat, or forced from the body, by its application. Although the current inhabitants of the Labyrinth aren't all that interested in the magical applications of salt, their Jerbition precursors studied the matter at length, and their findings have been retained in the Labyrinth's library. Although they don't take a lot of care of their books, another advantage of living in a salt mine is that the air in the library is extremely dry and almost sterile, which has helped to preserve their collection.

SPRING-HEEL'D JACK:

THE TERROR OF LONDON

In Mythic Europe, faeries are drawn to stories, and to transgressions of boundaries. In the real world, people like to play at being ghosts. How do these two ideas combine? Can pretending to be a ghost cause a haunting?

I recently listened to an episode of the Folklore podcast by Mark Norman, in which he interviewed Dr David Waldron of the Federation University of Australia. Dr Waldron studies folk history around the goldfields, and in this episode he discussed "playing the ghost": the rash of hoaxes in the late Nineteenth Century.

Many hoaxes are quite elaborate productions, but some were simple affairs taking advantage of new (and toxic) luminescent paint. Victoria, in Australia, was a hive of headless horsemen, glowing animals, and people in sheets.

Often the goal was simply to give people, in general or particular, a scare. In Mythic Europe, some faeries feed on fear and may pick up the role. Other motives included crime (robbery, assault and rape also attract faeries), rebellion against the ruling class, and, on a less material level, the release psychological pressures by transgressing social norms.

Dr Waldron tells some lovely stories of "laying the ghost", the tradition of vigilantes seeking out hoaxers to mete out frontier justice. This was a sport, and avoiding hunters was part of the charm of the game for some of the hoaxers. There are many types of Faerie that want to be pursued.

In the following page, I quote reports of Spring-Heeled Jack, a story which may have started as a jape by some bored, wealthy men. His story escalates from costumes to stage tricks, then to supernatural powers. This may indicate a faerie taking up the role, once it has been established by the hoaxers.



Playing
at
ghosts

In the Mansion House Police Court, on 10 Jan., the Lord Mayor announced that he had received five letters relative to an individual who was going about the metropolitan suburbs frightening females to such an extent that they were afraid to go out at night, as they were met by a man, who, under different disguises, would suddenly appear before them, and as suddenly disappear with terrible bounds, which earned him the name of " Spring-heeled Jack," and he inspired such terror, that the recital of the victim had to be taken with caution. Whoever he was, or why he so acted, was never known, as he was never taken ; but, certainly, robbery had no part in his escapades, for he was quite content with paralysing the poor women with fright.

The first facts I can gather about Jack are at the latter end of 1837, at Barnes, where he appeared as a large white bull ; at East Sheen he was a white bear ; he then visited Richmond, and after having terrorised that town, he went to Ham, Kingston and Hampton, where he was clad in brass armour, with large claw-like gloves. Teddington, Twickenham and Hounslow were all visited by him, and at Isleworth we hear of him wearing steel armour, in which he seems to have been attired when seen at Uxbridge, Hanwell, Brentford and Ealing. At Hammersmith he took the form of a huge baboon, and as such was seen in the moonlight, dancing at Kensington Palace, ever and anon climbing over the forcing houses. He varied his localities frequently, one day being at Peckham, another at St. John's Wood, and anon at Forest Hill.

This about brings up to the time of its being mentioned by the Lord Mayor, the consequence of which was that a Committee was formed at the Mansion House for the purpose of receiving subscriptions and deciding upon the best means of capturing this erratic genius. Probably feeling that he had sufficiently terrorised the districts before mentioned, he turned his attention to the East end of London, and particularly favoured Bow.

A case is given in the Times of 23 Feb. A gentleman named Alsop, living between Bow and Old Ford, appeared before the police magistrate at Lambeth Street (then the Thames Police Office) accompanied by his three daughters, one of whom stated that at about a quarter to nine o'clock on the evening of the 21st February, 1838, she heard a violent ringing at the front gate of the house, and, on going to the door to see what was the cause, she saw a man standing outside, of whom she enquired what was the matter. The person instantly replied that he was a policeman, and said, " For God's sake bring me a light, for we have caught Spring-heeled Jack here in the lane."

She returned to the house, and brought a candle, and handed it to the man, who was enveloped in a large cloak: The instant she had done so, he threw off his outer garments, and, applying the lighted candle to his breast, presented a most hideous and frightful appearance, vomiting forth a quantity of blue and white flame from his mouth, his eyes resembling red balls of fire. From the hasty glance which her fright enabled her to get at his person, she observed that he wore a large helmet, and his dress, which appeared to fit him very tightly, seemed to her to resemble white oilskin. Without uttering a sentence, he darted at her, and catching her partly by her dress and the back part of her neck, placed her head under one of his arms, and commenced tearing her clothes with his claws, which she was certain were made of some metallic substance.

She screamed out as loud as she could for assistance, and, by considerable exertion, got away from him, and ran towards the house to get in. Her assailant followed, and caught her on the doorstep, when he again used considerable violence, tore her neck and arms with his claws, as well as a quantity of hair from her head ; her story was fully corroborated by her parents and sisters, and her injuries, which were very considerable, bore unmistakable testimony to the truth of the assault.

At the same police court, on 8 Mar., 1838, a Miss Scales deposed that as she and her sister were walking in Limehouse, about half -past eight in the evening, on coming to Green Dragon Alley, they observed some person standing in an angle in the passage. She was in advance of her sister at the time, and just as she came up to the person, who was enveloped in a large cloak, he spirted a quantity of blue flame right in her face, which deprived her of sight, and so alarmed her, that she instantly dropped to the ground, and was seized with violent fits, which continued for several hours. In this case no violence to the person was done.

He had a literature of his own. I know of three pamphlets on the subject ; one, from which is taken the accompanying illustration, is entitled "Authentic particulars of the awful appearance of the London Monster, alias Spring-heeled Jack, together with his extraordinary life, wonderful adventures and secret amours. Also an account of his horrible appearance to Miss N and his singular letter to the Lord Mayor of London.

There is much more to be related of Jack, but space will not permit ; but, whether too much attention was beginning to be paid to him with a view to his capture, or whether his love of mischief had died out, cannot be told ; but certain it was that nothing was known publicly of this singular being after April, 1838, having kept London in a ferment of excitement and terror for about six months.

Story hooks

Laying the ghost

A merchant's daughter has been groped by the son of a nobleman pretending to be a ghost. He wants revenge, but the difference in social standing makes this difficult. He'd like the player characters to arrange an accident: not necessarily fatal, but enough to encourage a more pious life.

Protecting the brand

A group of young noblemen have been all acting the ghost, but one of them is taking things too and is attacking people. One of the others approaches the magi to ask for a favour: can they discover which one was responsible, and reign him in?

Murderous faerie

A faerie has appeared, taking the role of a ghost that was created for play by a group of noble lads. It has sufficient cognizance to know its role might be changed by the humans playing the role, so it has started murdering them in private. The player characters are contracted to defeat the faerie, before it kills again.

Breaking the guilty

The player characters have discovered a Dark Secret from an enemy, but can't use it publicly. Could they instead use a faux ghost to trick the enemy into confirming the truth of the information they have uncovered.

This has been going on for a while

A line of vigilantes has been acting the ghost for generations in a nearby city, but one of the magic items they have been using has been damaged and needs replacement. The current vigilante contacts the player characters to buy new gear, and is surprised they do not know that the originals were provided by one of their predecessors.

Do the player characters care that one of the elders of their covenant was selling magic items on the sly? Do they want to tidy up after him, by finding his scattered wares? Do they want to find his lab notes and create a league of heroes?



This faerie is within the range of power that suits player characters replacing magi. It could be granted an extra couple of Virtue points to balance it out in some sagas. Alternatively, it could have its sunlight restriction removed and its Traditional Ward swapped for a less restrictive one. It also works best alone, which causes in-play issues.

Faerie Might: 20 (Corpus)

Characteristics: Int +0, Per +0, Pre +0, Com +0, Str +1, Sta +0, Dex +2, Qik +2

Size: 0

Virtues and Flaws: Greater Powers, Increased Faerie Might (major), Faerie Sight, Faerie Speech, Humanoid Form, Improved Initiative, Narrowly Cognizant, Passes for Human, 2 Personal Powers, Restricted Might (major - sunlight), Traditional ward (cannot enter homes)

Personality Traits: Enjoys shocking people +3

Combat:

Clawed hands or gauntlets: Init +3, Attack +14, Defense +12, Damage +5*

***Often chooses to less damage, by attacking clothes.**

Soak: +2, some versions wear leather clothes or bronze armour (for a total of +3 or +5 Soak)

Wound Penalties: -1 (1-5), -3 (6-10), -5 (11-15), Incapacitated (16-20), Dead (21+)

Pretenses: Area Lore 6 (rooftops), Athletics 5 (leaps), Brawl 6 (claws), Faerie Speech 5 (potential victims).

Powers:

Fearful Flaming Eyes*: 2 points, Init 0, Corpus: Completely paralyses a human that makes eye contact with the faerie. The faerie's flaming breath is only ever used to scare people into immobility through shock, so it's considered a visual effect of the Fearful Flaming Eyes power. Costs 15 spell levels (Base 5, +1 Eye, +1 Conc)

Hound: 2 points, Init 0, Corpus: Allows the faerie to know the direction and distance to its human quarry. Costs 20 spell levels (InCo Base 3, +4 Arc, +1 Conc)

Silent Motion: 0 points, constant, Imaginem: allows the character to move without making a noise. Costs 10 spell levels (Base 3 +2 Sun +1 constant, +1 intricacy point for cost)

Supernatural Agility: 5 points, constant: This power allows the character to perform minor supernatural feats when using its Athletics Pretense. These include swiftly scaling walls, leaping from the ground onto the back of a galloping horse, and dropping great distances to the ground without harm. Costs 25 spell levels (Base 10 +2 Sun +1 constant).

Transform Into Animal: 3 points, Init -1, Animal: transforms the character into a specified land animal of human size or smaller. Faeries retain the power of speech in animal form. Costs 25 spell levels (Base 10 +2 Sun, +1 size) to turn into a larger animal, like a horse. This costs 3 Might per use.

Equipment: Often said to wear armour.

Vis: 4, a dead frog.

Appearance: See the excerpt previously for details. Sometimes takes animal form.