

## **Game Pitch – Hertfordshire Changeling: the Lost**

### **For the Hedge is Dark...**

Since as long as anyone can remember, the hedge accessible from Hertfordshire has been black as night and utterly dark. No lights the Lost bring in last for more than a few seconds, whether mundane or magical: electronics fail to light up, chemicals stop reacting, mantles dim and disperse, and flames flicker and die. Even the lights of the Bright Ones and the Fire Elementals grow progressively dimmer over the course of seconds, requiring more and more effort and energy in return for only a few seconds of dim and feeble illumination. The sole exception to this is the pitch-torches carried by the hobs and sold by the goblins, which last much longer; no Lost has ever been able to replicate them or even discover how they are made.

### **...and full of Terrors.**

The darkness of the hedge hides horrors. Anyone who makes their way into the hedge becomes rapidly aware that they are being stalked, silently and ruthlessly. Nothing befalls anyone who stays in the light – all they have to contend with is the usual difficulties the hedge brings – but the moment their light dies is the moment the horrors will strike. Few survivors have ever been found from an expedition which has found itself lost in the dark, and they have been either horribly maimed or entirely insane – and more often than not, both. Even the supposedly sane ones are completely unable to recall anything of what happened to them, aside from an ill-defined sense of being hunted.

Those Changelings who are brave or mad enough to scratch out hollows in the hedge do so by the light of pitch torches, hurriedly weaving together thorn and bramble to form as solid walls as they can manage whilst they cast worried eyes over torches which could gutter and go out any minute. Once complete, they huddle under their roofs and listen to the oppressive silence of the darkness outside, and never, ever open the door without a torch in hand.

### **Gates of Horn...**

Denied casual access to the hedge, the Lost of Hertfordshire have traditionally focussed their attention and expertise on dreams. Whether as a result of deliberate acts over centuries or simply as a natural reaction to the collected presence of the Lost, Hertfordshire gives rise to vibrant dreams and vivid inspiration. Dreams are brighter and more mobile here; even the untrained Lost will find it easy to step through a door and find themselves in a different dream altogether, though it is not always simple to find their way back. Artist and architect alike find their creative juices flow freely in its green and pleasant land, sometimes uncontrollably so.

The Lost are no exception; traditionally Hertfordshire's Changelings hold many of their gatherings in the dreamland of an unsuspecting human or even a willing ally; motleys regularly host each other, each attempting to stun and wow with ever more outlandish and wild decorations and entertainments than the previous hosts could dream up.

### **... and Ivory**

Even this has a dark side. Nightmares are more potent here, and carry more risk both to those who dream them and those who encounter them. This is particularly prevalent and noticeable in those humans who have somehow been exposed to the hedge. If a human is in the vicinity of an open hedge gate – or in some cases even where a gate was previously opened – and they are receptive (a quality which even the greatest sages of Autumn have been unable to quantify with any reliability), the darkness of the hedge can seep into their mind and soul, provoking terrible nightmares that tear at their very being.

Left unchecked, these nightmares can grow and take on a life of their own; it has been known for nightmares to repeat each night, consuming more and more of the dreamer's spirit until one day the dreamer never wakes at all; The savants of Autumn whisper that worse, sometimes it is not the dreamer who wakes. Whatever else the courts may disagree on, they are united in their opposition to the nightmare; Autumn's prophets cast their divinations to guide the Crusades of Summer along the dark paths of nightmare, whilst Winter work to subtly steer humanity away from hedge gates and Spring bring a little light back into the life of those touched by the shadow.

### **The Floating Market**

Operating by an impenetrable and intricate itinerary that is entirely idiosyncratic, the famous Floating Market is unique in that it occurs in the real world. When a given night falls, and a library closes its doors or a supermarket drops its shutters, the goblins come stealing in through gates and paths all of their own, and the Floating Market sets up shop. Stalls and stands are put up with practised ease, and hawkers sell their wares until the dawn comes to chase it all away. If they can find the market (and some among the Free who have more of a knack for it than others), the Lost can usually find what they desire, but they are far from the only folk to wend their way between the barrows, and a changeling would be well advised to be wary of who they are rubbing shoulders with. The market may have rules, but it is far from safe.

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The above should hopefully give you a taster for the type of Lost game that I'd like to run. I'd like to focus the attention away from the hedge and more on to the real world and the dreams that spin off it; I will be looking for players to create characters who are rooted in the real world, and look to tell stories based on the problems that come out of the clash between the supernatural and the mundane, whether literally in the case of nightmares and the shadow-touched, or more figuratively like the problems changelings find trying to live their life in a world to which they are no longer entirely suited.