

A Midsummer Night's Scheme

A group of faeries has been exiled from the Faerie Court by Oberon for excessive connections to the mortal world, but Titania has persuaded him to give them one last chance to return to the Faerie Realm. They have until dawn to prove that they are not emotionally attached to a mortal, through pranks and games.

Unfortunately for the faeries, each of them *is* attached to a mortal, and the best way to “disprove” the accusation is to target the very mortal they are suspected [rightly] of caring for with the cleverest – or cruelest – pranks they can.

This is a roleplaying game for one Storyguide and 2 or more players. You will also need at least a dozen d8s and pencils and paper. If you wish, there is a character sheet at the end of this document that you can print out (one for each player).

The Mortals

Each player should first come up with the mortal that their faerie is attached to, and the nature of that attachment. In particular, is it reciprocal? A faerie might suffer unrequited love for a mortal woman, or they might be having secret trysts – or the faerie might love her, while she just thinks of the faerie as a pet or companion. Your faerie might:

- *love a mortal*
- *be treated like a mortal's pet*
- *be an artist's muse*
- *be a child's "imaginary" friend*
- *secretly help out an aging cobbler*
- *be mistaken for a guardian angel*
- *secretly inhabit a favorite object to be close to the mortal unobserved*
- *bring to life a doll or stuffed tiger to play with a favorite child*
- *be known to their mortal friend as a faerie*

Keep in mind that faeries' notions of sexuality, gender, and maturity are very vague, so while it might limit how a

mortal responds to them, it probably wouldn't occur to the faerie that a mortal man might not fall in love with a frog-headed goblin. Likewise, a faerie's notion of love probably doesn't distinguish between platonic, chivalric, romantic, and childhood loves. So a sprite that appears as a little winged girl could easily fall in love with a 6-year-old girl, and not understand that the girl's return feelings are purely platonic.

The mortals are all in the same general location for the night of Titania's game. The Storyguide ultimately has the final say when determining why they are gathered, and what their relationships are to each other, but she should of course take the players' desires and suggestions into account. And there is always some interplay between the SG and the players on this matter – if she can't come up with a good explanation for one of the mortal's presence, ask the player. If all the mortals are of a similar age, they could be having a party or ball. If they are of varied ages, they could be a family – or a couple of families visiting. They could all be guests in a hotel, if nothing else works. But the mortals should have interactions independent of the faeries, or the game could degenerate into a series of solo scenes with minimal interactions between the players.

By default, the setting is Elizabethan England. If you wish, any premodern place and time should work equally well, however. It is probably best to stick to eras before firearms and industrial machinery are widespread — this is meant to be a game about the faeries' magic and feelings, not about dodging shotguns filled with iron shot. Such societies also tend to have more rigid social rules for the mortals, which makes it more fun for the players, as they don't have to resort to such extreme pranks to get a rise out of the mortals.

The Faeries

Once you know your mortal, and the nature of their connection, it is likely that you already have some notion of your faerie. I child's best friend is probably small, mischievous, with abilities like invisibility, telekinesis, and shapeshifting. An artist's muse is probably beautiful and almost human-looking, with abilities like glamour or fascination. Feel free to play against type, just make sure that you can explain to the rest of the group how the nature of your faerie and their mortal relationship fit.

In terms of game mechanics, your faerie has eight numbers. One of these is named for their mortal connection, and starts with a rating of 5. Nature rates how connected to the natural (as opposed to supernatural) world the faerie is, and the other six rate the faerie's abilities. Nature and the faerie abilities start at a score of 1, and the player has 20 points to distribute between them. You can also sacrifice 5 points to lower your connection score by 1. No score may start higher than 8. It is recommended that you have at least two of the seven scores higher than your connection score at the start of the game, and you will be at a severe disadvantage if you don't have any of them higher than your connection score.

The six faerie abilities are:

Glamour: The casting of illusions. They have no substance, but fool all mortals. Faeries see them, but are aware they are glammers. Animals do not see them at all. A glamour must be visual, but also include sounds and scents.

Shifting: Changing the faeries appearance. With this ability, a faerie can become any animal or object, but cannot alter their faerie appearance except to be invisible to mortals. While transformed, the faerie must abide by the rules of that object. So a candlestick could fall over, but it could not hop.

Making: The crafting of things. This is not spontaneous appearance — raw materials are required — but it is supernaturally quick, and requires no tools. With this ability a faerie can make shoes, fix broken jars, or turn a basket of raw food into a sumptuous feast.

Wayfaring: Moving from one place to another by a number of means. Faerie trods can cross leagues in but a step. Some faeries can disappear into one tree and emerge from its sibling across the forest. Others fly without wings or can walk through the earth.

Fascination: The charming of mortals. Against animals, all this can do is calm them, perhaps preventing them from giving you away. But against mortals, it is a most powerful enchantment, capable of instilling any emotion in the target, so long as the faerie is near. It can alternately be used to compel a mortal to carry out a single task.

Wildertings: Control over the wild world. The faerie can cause plants to grow and move (though not uproot), and control the actions of animals.

Nature is mechanically like the other Abilities, but instead measures how feral the faerie is. It is used whenever the faerie wants to do something physical, or make use of the animalistic attributes of its form, such as burrowing with claws or flying with wings or climbing with arms and legs.

The Sovereigns

While the players are figuring out the details of their faeries, the SG needs to assign stats to Titania and Oberon. Each of them has 4 Temperaments, named after the four elements of faerie substance: Fire, Water, Air, Earth. As the sovereigns of the Summer Court, no other temperament may be higher than Fire. The SG has 20 points to distribute between the four Temperaments for each sovereign. When the faeries enact a prank, the difficulty to impress the sovereigns is determined by one of these Temperaments. It is possible to impress one sovereign and not the other. Since their Temperaments determine what sorts of pranks will be easier and harder, the SG should not initially reveal them. During the course of the game, the players will quickly figure out the scores, just as their faeries are figuring out what moods their sovereigns are in.

The Play's the Thing

The SG sets a scene, and the players decide how their faeries react to it. It is assumed that all of the faeries are present, but if a player wishes to absent her faerie from a scene she may; there is no mechanical advantage in it. Once the scene is resolved to the SG's satisfaction, the scene is ended and a new one begun. The SG need not include all of the faeries' connections in every scene, but should endeavor to give them all equal exposure, as pranking one's own connection is a significant potential advantage. [If playing with a widely-varied group, such as parents and young children, one way to handicap the game is to put the connections of the younger players' faeries into more of the scenes.]

During a scene, the faeries' players propose actions and the SG adjudicates their results. In every scene a faerie may engage in at most one prank. Once it is clear what a given faerie's prank is going to be for the scene, it is time to roll the dice, so that the player and SG know the result and can play it out appropriately. In many cases, the roll will come towards the middle of a scene, so there may be some time between the mechanical result and the narrative resolution of the prank. A prank may even remain unresolved across scenes, due to the narrative, in which case it only counts in the scene in which it is rolled for.

Scenes are intended to be fairly brief, taking place in one place and over a short span of time. If you are having trouble accepting the one-prank rule, either your pranks are too simplistic, or your scenes are too long.

Rolling the Dice

The SG, with player input, decides which Ability best applies to the prank in question. The player rolls that many d8s and totals them up, comparing them to the difficulty to determine success. If there are any doubles among your dice, you may roll another die and add it in to your total. When targeting your Connection with a prank, subtract that many dice from your regular pool, then separately roll that many dice (of a different color, if you have them).

Difficulties

The difficulty is a measure of how hard it is to impress Titania and Oberon, and depends on the type of prank being undertaken. The difficulty is 5x the sovereign's relevant Temperament.

To determine which Temperament to use, the SG needs to determine what sort of prank the faerie is attempting. A prank may fall into more than one category, in which case the SG decides which is the most appropriate. The categories are based on which way the faerie is trying to prank the mortals.

Cruelty: If the primary goal of the prank is to hurt, terrify, or torment, that's cruelty. It is resisted by the sovereigns' Water.

Satire: If the primary goal of the prank is to embarrass or mock, that's satire. It is resisted by the sovereigns' Air.

Wit: If the primary goal of the prank is to outwit or outtalk, that's wit. It is resisted by the sovereigns' Earth.

Deceit: If the primary goal of the prank is to mislead or entrap, that's Deceit. It is resisted by the sovereigns' Fire.

Results

If the player's total beats one sovereign's total, the faerie gains a point in the faerie game. If the total beats both sovereigns' totals, the faerie gains points in the faerie game equal to the higher beaten Temperament. In addition to these points, if you were targeting your Connection and succeed [with your diminished pool], the highest Connection die that matches one of your regular dice is added to your faerie game score.

If you fail to beat either sovereign's total, your faerie gains a point of Nature or Connection. If you fail when targeting your faerie's connection, they gain a point of Connection, as the faerie has given away their true feelings by pulling their punches in some way. If you fail when targeting anyone else, you gain a point of Nature, as you fail to live up to your faerie heritage and become a bit more a part of the real world.

Forswearing

During any scene, a faerie may forswear something that would otherwise be advantageous, announcing this to the other faeries. "I shall seduce the youngest daughter without using words!" "I shall trick the king into the fountain without the use of Glamour!" Obviously, if the thing foresworn is a Faerie Ability, that Ability can't be used. Regardless of what is foresworn, the player and SG should agree on the significance of the forswearing. The more severe it is, the higher the rating, from 1 to 8. When that faerie's prank is resolved for this scene, any die that comes up with the number that was forsworn is set aside. It does not count towards the total and does not count as part of a double for extra dice.

Extra dice that match the forsworn number are also set aside. Use the remaining dice to determine success or failure normally. Connection dice that are forsworn are simply lost.

At the end of the scene, roll the forsworn dice. Add the highest die to your faerie game score. For each double among the forsworn dice, you may reduce your faerie's Nature or Connection by 1, to a minimum of zero.

All's Well That Ends Well

The game ends when one of the faeries has enough points to win the game or a Connection score of zero. How many points are required to win the game is determined before the first scene, by the consensus of the group. For a very quick game, potentially resolved in a single scene, the winning total is 10. For a typical evening, set the winning total to 30-40. For an ongoing game, try even higher.

At the end of the game, each of the faeries will face one of 3 fates: the Court, mortality, or the wilds. If the faerie has won the game, they may return to the Summer Court, vindicated. If a faerie has not been vindicated, see which is higher, their Nature or their Connection. If their Connection is higher, they are banished to the mortal world, suffering the poetic justice of living out a mortal life with the object of their affections. If their Nature is higher, they are more beast than faerie, and are relegated to the wild places of the world, there to live out a natural life as a [strange] beast.

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