

Status, Positions, & Oaths Houses Rules

Disclaimer

It is not the purpose of this or any other Backbeat Ballad document to replace the information gained by purchasing a copy of any official *Changeling: the Dreaming* resources. Our goal is offer only what information is strictly required to communicate the House Rules and setting of the Backbeat Ballad chronicle. As such, far more detail can be found in the primary setting resource, *Changeling: the Dreaming 20th Anniversary Edition* and its various supplements.

Status

What Is Status?

Changeling society is strange, in that it remains mired in the feudal trappings of nobility, vassalage, and strict ranks while still being inspired by the egalitarian and innovative cultures of the modern human world. This dichotomy is often represented in practice by the application of Status. Untethered from nobility, Status is a measure of how respected, well-known, and accomplished a changeling is within Kithain society. Simply achieving lofty goals or becoming noticeable aren't enough to earn much Status—one has to combine personal excellence with widespread *recognition* of that excellence.

Unlike Title, which denotes explicit rank and privileges, Status has more to do with cachet and credibility. Therefore, Status is usually taken into account in matters of one's honesty, wisdom, and popularity. If a character has a lot of Status, they still are considered subordinate to someone with a higher amount of Title; however, in a circumstance

where the high-Status character's reputation or word is in conflict with that of the high-Title character, Status will win out.

How Does Status Work?

- Every character has a Status rating which starts at 0 and has no functional maximum. Even with the Background rated at 0, every changeling has the Status Trait *Fae-Touched* to represent their role as neither a full human nor a full creature of the Dreaming. This Trait can never be removed by any means (**note:** changelings can *always* automatically recognize one another as changelings unless magic is concealing their nature)
- The Status Background can be purchased during character creation with a Perk, but a character can never purchase more than 5 levels of this Background. Status awarded to a character by others or by gaining a Court position (see below) does not alter the character's Status Background rating
- Each dot of Status receives a descriptive "Status Trait" to more specifically outline your character's reputation. Examples include
 - *Regal*
 - *Mighty*
 - *Famous*
 - *Respected*
 - *Trusted*
 - *Influential*
 - *Beloved*
 - *Admired*
 - *Connected*
- In addition to "positive" Status, a character can earn Negative Status Traits. These are not represented by dots and exist solely as descriptive Traits. They are counted against a character's Status total, and they may be called-out by opponents in Status Challenges exactly like regular Negative Traits (see *Laws of the Night: Revised* for more details). Examples include
 - *Gross*
 - *Dishonest*
 - *Violent*
 - *Uncouth*
 - *Reckless*
 - *Selfish*
 - *Whiny*
 - *Predatory*
 - *Vain*

- Status Traits can be loaned to others, and they can be temporarily expended. In both of these cases, the Status Traits are restored to their original holders at the end of each game session
- While a character's overall social standing is represented by their Status total, in cases of directly attempting to make their reputation work for them, a character must win a Status Challenge. This functions exactly like a regular Challenge, except that the only retest possible is to expend a Status Trait for the rest of the game session (such Traits return the next day). Like other retests, this can only be performed once per Challenge per opponent
 - Status Challenges almost always have a victory condition along the lines of "the crowd takes my side," and having more Status than another character does not give one *authority* over that character (though it can be wise to cultivate the respect of those with a lot of Status, as they're more capable than most of *awarding* Status)
 - Status exists independently of Court, House, and Title, meaning an Unseelie commoner would generally *recognize* that a Seelie noble with a lot of Status is well-connected. While it's rare for Status to be outright ignored, trying to win a Status Challenge to gain the support of a group largely composed of one's enemies (e.g. if that Seelie noble used a Status Challenge against the Unseelie commoner to convince a room full other Unseelie commoners that he was in the right) will usually incur a 1-to-3 Bonus Trait penalty
- Another common victory condition of a Status Challenge is to remove a Status Trait from one's opponent. Any character with a Status total of at least 1 can attempt this, but the effect only lasts for the remainder of the game session. In order to *permanently* remove Status from an opponent, one must win a Status Challenge against

them and then spend Status Traits equal to the target's current Status (therefore, such social maneuvers usually involve borrowing Status from allies before the attempt). Additionally, certain political positions allow a character to remove Status Traits from others in some circumstances. Any time a character is able to remove a Status Trait, they may elect instead to inflict a Negative Status Trait instead

- Yet another use of Status is to *award* Status to others to recognize their outstanding achievements (although this practice is almost always discouraged by those among Kithain nobility). To do this, 1 or more changelings with positive Status totals must expend enough Status Traits to equal twice the recipient's Status total (ignoring any Negative Status they might have) and then choose the name of the new Status Trait. This must be performed in front of at least 3 witnesses who also have positive Status totals (as well as a member of the Staff to record the Status gain). Some political positions also grant a character the ability to award Status Traits

Courtly Positions

How Do Positions Work?

To the untrained eye, the Seelie and Unseelie Courts couldn't be more different from one another (and many members of those Courts would agree with this truism). Yet—however much they might object to saying it out loud—they have much in common. One of these mutual characteristics is their reliance on an orderly delineation of authority and duties. While they might employ different names for them, both Courts tend to appoint favored members to the same sorts of positions.

Having a position grants a changeling a modicum of power and the Status Traits required to back up that power with the authority of the Court

itself—so long as they stay in favor. Whenever a position grants Status to a changeling, that Status cannot be removed by any means until it is the only Status they possess (other than *Fae-Touched*, which can never be removed). Once a character loses (note that expending those Traits willingly does not count as “losing” them) 1 or more of the Status Traits conferred by a position, the legitimacy of their position is called into question. This has 2 effects:

- 1:** The character can no longer use any powers granted by that position
- 2:** The character that appointed them to this position gains the Negative Status Trait *Incompetent* as long as their appointee remains in the position

If a position-holder loses *all* the Status Traits conferred by their position:

- 1:** They no longer hold that position at all
- 2:** The character that appointed them to this position gains the Negative Status Trait *Incompetent* for 2 months

List of Positions

Note that each of the positions below might go by any of several possible names (some common names are included), but they always have the same mechanical functions within a Court—Seelie or Unseelie.

Liege (a.k.a. Monarch, Governor)

The Liege is the highest authority in a Court, and they are almost always the changeling present with the highest level of Title. Unlike other positions, the role of Liege *cannot* be turned-down by one who has more Title than all other candidates, as nobility comes with responsibilities. If more than one candidate shares the highest rank in Title, they must settle among themselves who will be Liege. Regardless of who sits the

throne, a Liege must hold Court at least once each month—if they fail to do so or to have an Advisor do so in their place, they lose their position immediately and gain the Negative Status Trait *Profligate* for 2 months.

- **Powers:** first and foremost, a Liege has all the powers granted to other positions within their Court (with the exception of the Fool, whose power stems from *not* having authority). Only a Liege (or an Advisor acting on the Liege's behalf) can appoint members of their Court to the positions listed below. Furthermore, if an appointee loses their position due to Status loss or scandal, the Liege gains the Negative Status Trait *Incompetent* for the next 2 months. If an appointee only loses *some* of their position's Status Traits, the Liege who appointed them gains *Incompetent* until they are removed from the position by the Liege (if they're removed by further Status loss or someone else's actions, the Liege keeps *Incompetent* for 2 months as detailed above). In both of these cases, the Negative Status is imposed on the *current* Liege, even if another originally appointed the position-holder. A Liege is the only member of a Court that can issue new proclamations and laws, though these only extend to members of their Court, and they cannot directly oppose the rules of the Escheat (though a Liege can find ways to *effectively* counter the Escheat through clever proclamations). Only a Liege may issue a sentence of death or exile from a Court, and even then they must expend 3 temporary Status Traits to do so. Finally, a Liege can grant a member of their Court 1 permanent Status Trait by expending 2 temporary Status Traits of their own. This can only be done to a given changeling once per month.
- **Status:** *Sovereign, Revered, Honored, Upright*

Advisor (a.k.a. Aide, Sage)

As Arthur needed Merlin's guidance, so too does any good Liege need their Advisor. Part counselor, part wise one, and part lieutenant, the Advisor is the second most powerful member of any changeling Court. Of all the positions, this is the one most often left empty (after all, exalting a rival or untrustworthy changeling to this position can spell the undoing of any Liege), but a Liege who chooses to do so can find themselves without a Court at all. If the Liege is not present to hold Court at least once each month, their authority automatically extends to their Advisor. If an Advisor has not been appointed (or is also not present), the Liege loses their title immediately.

- **Powers:** the Advisor is able to settle any dispute between members of their Court or a member of their Court and an Envoy of the opposing Court. Their decision only has weight if they dictate a "fair" trial of some sort (though the definition of "fair" is largely up to the Court holding the trial)—usually either by hearing testimony or by some sort of ordeal (e.g. trial by combat, ordeal of pain, etc.) and see it through. A punishment must generally fit the scale of the crime (though, again, this is dependent on the whims of the Court holding the trial), and it can never remove more Status than 3 (1 for each position Status held by the Advisor). Additionally, an Advisor can throw the Bomb in Social Challenges to convince the Liege of something or to wield the authority of the Liege against others members of their Court.
- **Status:** *Informed, Judicious, Eminent*

Fool (a.k.a. Jester, Buffoon)

While the Liege is technically responsible for appointing a Court Fool, this position derives much of its authority from the Dreaming itself. A Liege who attempts to have a Court without a Fool often finds themselves the

target of malicious chimera or arcane curses—the world of the fae *abhors* matters too serious and orderly. The Fool enjoys a certain degree of social impunity, though this derives from being so low and silly that they are beneath the notice of their betters. Still, despite their humorous antics, most Fools take their role most seriously—the high and mighty always need a check to remind them of their fallibility, and any Court session that proceeds from start to finish without anything going wrong isn't worth attending.

- **Powers:** a Court's Fool is able to throw the Bomb in any Challenge in which they are making a member of their Court who acts (or is seen as) important look foolish. Additionally, once per game session, a Fool can interject when Status is lost (or Negative Status gained) by any member of their Court. If the Status loss is not a direct punishment for a crime, the Fool can expend their *Senseless* Status Trait to cancel the loss of 1 Status Trait (or the gain of 1 Negative Status Trait). If a Fool attends 2 Court sessions in a row that have no objections, out-of-order rulings, or other disruptions, the Fool gains the Negative Status Trait *Boring* until they play a particularly clever prank.
- **Status:** *Senseless*

Sergeant-at-Arms (a.k.a. Beadle, Constable)

There are some who claim that all authority extends from violence, and it's certainly true that most ruling bodies have a martial arm to call upon when needed. For a changeling Court, this role is filled by the Sergeant-at-Arms, a position traditionally held by a Knight. Even when they do not have a specific task to pursue, the Sergeant-at-Arms often tries to exude an aura of control, authority, and menace—after all, just the *threat* of violence works to keep most wrongdoers in line.

- **Powers:** as the champion of the Liege and their Court, the Sergeant-at-Arms is always welcome to openly wear weapons and armor to Court (even if the Liege has otherwise forbidden this practice for others). The Sergeant-at-Arms can physically remove unwelcome beings (for instance, chimera and changelings that are not members of the Court) from a Court session, and they can throw the Bomb in Challenges to do so. Furthermore, the Sergeant-at-Arms is always able to declare themselves the stand-in champion in any duel where a member of their Court is a participant. Only the dueler so replaced or the Liege can refuse the Sergeant-at-Arms this right.
- **Status:** *Dire, Able*

Herald (a.k.a. Crier, Harbinger)

In many respects, the Herald is both secretary and parliamentarian—they announce the opening and closing of Court, and they govern the procedure from one to the other. Because the rules of feudal Courts have seen so many variations and interpretations over the years, the Herald has far more leeway than other positions on how they execute their duties. The Herald must recognize each speaker to hold the floor (usually by calling out their name and well-known accomplishments or Status), silence those who speak out of turn, and adjudicate whether any given petition or motion is in- or out-of-order. The Herald cannot, however, completely silence a member of the Court from speaking at all or making a petition. While having one or two members of the Court consider their rulings unfair is probably manageable by most Heralds, it is rare for any changeling to possess enough social acumen and clout to run roughshod over the rights of multiple members of their own Court.

- **Powers:** the Herald is able to throw the Bomb on any Challenge to enforce a procedural ruling, and they can remove Status Traits from

those who commit more than 1 breach of procedure during a single session of Court (though this requires the Herald to expend 1 temporary Status Trait for each Trait so removed). Once per Court session, when announcing a petitioner or speaker, the Herald may grant them +2 or -2 Bonus Traits for Social Challenges for the remainder of the session by giving them a particularly glowing or damning introduction.

- **Status:** *Prominent, Well-Known*

Envoy (a.k.a. Ambassador, Legate)

Uniquely, an Envoy is a position chosen by the members of the *opposing* Court. For instance, when the Seelie are in power, the highest ranking Unseelie appoints an Envoy (which can be themselves, of course). The Envoy's role is to attend the Court in power and observe its events to report back to those of their native Court. An Envoy also has the responsibility to petition the Court in power on behalf of members of their own Court (as a Seelie changeling, for example, wouldn't have the right to petition an Unseelie Court themselves). The Escheat dictates that hospitality must be extended to any changeling, regardless of their Court, and the use of Envoys is often considered to be a fulfillment of that dictum.

- **Powers:** an Envoy is as welcome at an enemy Court as a full member of that Court. An Envoy *can* be removed from attendance at a Court, but only if they commit a clear and severe violation of the rules (and even then those who eject them risk reprisal). The Envoy has all rights and privileges extended to members of the Court they attend, and they are allowed to petition the leadership of that Court on behalf of any member of their own Court who so desires. In order to have your Envoy represent you at an enemy Court, you must loan that Envoy 1 Status Trait as a show of trust

until they have submitted your petition, at which point the Status reverts to you.

- **Status:** *Welcome, Esteemed, Exemplary*

Guardian (a.k.a. Custodian, Warden, Curator, Freeholder)

Unlike the previous positions, the Guardian is not a post granted by a leader (although in many Courts, the Liege's recommendation for the job carries a great deal of weight). A Guardian is not associated with a Court at all—they are instead given authority by and over an individual Freehold. The Escheat is clear that Freeholds must be located, maintained, and protected. These are the duties of the Guardian. To become a Guardian, a changeling must simply locate a Freehold and swear an oath to protect it. Unless the Freehold already has an active Guardian, this compact is thenceforth binding. Because Freeholds vary so much in both size and nature, the role of Guardian is one without strict customs as to how it is executed. That being said, there are some basic powers bestowed by this authority that nearly all changelings agree upon.

- **Powers:** a Guardian is the arbiter of who is allowed to sleep in the glow of a Freehold's Balefire (its magical heart), thereby regaining Glamour. If anyone attempts to regain Glamour in this way without the permission of the Guardian, they find themselves unable to dream. Glamour can be forced from a Balefire via a process known as "Reaving," and this does not require the permission of the Guardian; however, if the Freehold is subject to an attempted Reaving, the Guardian is immediately granted a reflexive test of Perception vs the Reaver's Wits. If the Guardian wins, they are alerted that a Reaving is being attempted (but not necessarily by whom). While within the borders of their Freehold, the Guardian of a Freehold receives 1 Bonus Trait per level of the Freehold to any

action taken to defend the Freehold or themselves from immediate, direct damage. Additionally, a Guardian can expend 1 temporary Status Trait to remove 1 Status Trait from someone who has verifiably damaged the Freehold in a non-trivial way. This must happen in front of at least 3 witnesses. By ancient laws of hospitality, a Guardian *must* allow any changeling, chimera, or Kinain to stay safely within the boundaries of the Freehold, should they request it and agree to follow its rules. This hospitality also requires the Guardian to provide food, drink, and lodging. It does not, however, extend to the right to interact with the Balefire, nor must it last longer than 1 night (although it is rare that a Freehold turns away a peaceful creature of the Dreaming in these days of increasing Autumn perils). Finally, a Guardian's relationship to Courtly politics is somewhat complex. If a higher-ranking changeling (either one with more Title or one with more Status) enters a Guardian's Freehold, they each have authority over the other in various ways best left to the interpretation of experts in Politics and Gremayre. As a rule, a Guardian is subordinate to the same rules of rank as any other changeling in all matters not directly affecting the safety and disposition of a Freehold's resources. However, a Guardian on their own turf receives 1 Bonus Trait per level of the Freehold in any Social or Status Challenge to assert their authority when it comes to following the rules of the Freehold or punishing those who break them. While this means that a Liege is often motivated to endorse a candidate for Guardian who is likely to cooperate with them, only a foolish Liege would risk losing face by challenging a Guardian's authority within their own Freehold for any but the most dire of causes.

- **Status:** *Trusted*

How Does Court Work?

Much like the positions within a Court, both the Seelie and the Unseelie tend to follow the same traditions when it comes to how they actually *hold* Court (though each group has their own interpretations of the best methods). Almost every region within the Kingdom of Concordia hosts a Court at least once each month, and even the busiest Courts don't meet more than once a week. While all changelings are welcome within a territory by virtue of the Escheat, formal Court sessions are customarily attended only by those Kithain who are members of that Court (or Envoys to it). Although every Court is run somewhat differently, a session can generally be broken down into seven phases:

Preparations

Agents of the Liege spread word that Court will soon be in session. Those who wish to be announced or petition the Liege might approach the Herald to let them know (though this is not often required—it's just considered polite). The Liege and/or Advisor summarizes their plans for Court with the rest of the Court's officers.

Example: The new Sluagh, the angry Troll, and the respectful Sidhe each wait their turn to bend the ear of Henry Herald. The Sluagh whispers that he has just moved to the city and wishes to let everyone know about his antiques shop in the arts district. The Troll demands that time be set aside for his grievance against an Unseelie Redcap that has stolen his beloved tea kettle. Finally, the Sidhe lets Henry know that she's come to the city with news from a neighboring County, and she wishes to read a letter from her masters to the city's Seelie changelings.

Opening Ceremony

The Herald calls Court formally to session and introduces the Court's officers, finishing with the Liege. Typically, this involves saying at least

one complimentary thing about each introduced party. Only in the most egalitarian of Courts, however, does the Jester get a formal introduction.

Example: Henry taps a gong, signaling everyone to fall quiet as he lays down a Sovereign Cantrip to ensure an orderly event. “Hear ye, hear ye! I, Henry Horace Haversham, Herald of the Court of Podunk, Illinois, do hereby call to order the Seelie Court! I am accompanied by the Sergeant-at-Arms Sally Smith the Steadfast, Satyr Squire of House Scathach—the slayer of the slaving slime snails of San Salvador; the esteemed Eshu Eric Everett, Envy of the Unseelie and Count of House Aesin; and Amanda Anderson, Admirable Advisor and adept arcanist. Presiding over this Court is our beloved Liege, Duchess Danielle Dufresne ap Dougal, devoted disciple of the divine and distinguished director of the Downtown Academy of Dentistry.”

Salutation

The Liege welcomes everyone and makes comments about the occasion.

Example: Duchess Dufresne smiles and gestures widely. “Welcome to Podunk, Seelie Kithain. I am proud to say this is our 6th consecutive month of meeting in the new Freehold, and I would like everyone to pay special mind to this months decorations, generously donated by Stefan the Selkie. Let’s hear it for Stefan!”

Introductions & Boasting

New Court members and visitors to the region are announced, and the Liege usually asks them a few questions about their background or allows them to say a few words about themselves. This is followed by established members of the Court touting their own recent accomplishments (more common among the Unseelie than the Seelie) or those of their friends (the Seelie Court’s usual way to avoid seeming like braggarts). Those who have news they wish to share with the entire

Court may speak up at this point. This is also when Status is generally awarded to those who have made exceptional accomplishments.

Petitions & News

Every member of the Court has the right to petition the Liege for recompense, justice, recognition, or permission to take actions within the territory that would be considered large enough to *need* permission. While they usually warn the Herald beforehand, petitioners can announce themselves at this point (but only to the Herald, who must in turn announce each petitioner to the Court before they are allowed to approach the Liege and be heard). A Liege can refuse to hear a petition, but they must offer some reason why, and this risks their reputation among fans of tradition. Matters of dispute between two or more changelings are most often handed over to the Advisor, who determines a method for settling the debate.

Closing Remarks

The Liege is entitled to closing remarks, which are typically brief and on the topic of what has taken place during Court. After this point, the Herald will signal that everyone may disperse and talk among themselves. Note that this does not formally *end* the Court session—that comes nearer the end of the gathering, when the Liege is preparing to leave.

Adjournment

Unlike the previous phases, the Adjournment of a formal gathering is almost always open to every changeling in attendance, regardless of their Court affiliation. The Liege will share any news they feel is relevant, and they will offer a final bit of advice or appreciation. At this point, the Herald will formally end the Court and announce when it is to be next held.

Oaths

What Are Oaths?

Oaths are promises sworn among changelings and backed with the power of Glamour. They form the pillars of the semi-feudal structure of changeling society. From the Oaths made between liege and vassal (common in mortal history during the Middle Ages) to Oaths reflecting personal codes of honor, such as those often sworn by Trolls, Oaths serve to strengthen the fabric of changeling society by weaving together those who swear the Oaths. In addition, the Oaths themselves give tangible substance, in the form of threads of Glamour, to the ideas they uphold.

Oaths create a network of ties among Kithain. Both Seelie and Unseelie changelings take their Oaths seriously. Indeed, breaking an Oath and becoming forsworn stands as one of the greatest social crimes for members of either Court.

How Do You Swear an Oath?

While the act of swearing an Oath may involve complex ceremonies (such as elaborate marriage or betrothal rituals) or simple statements (such as a strong promise from one changeling to another), the structure of the Oath itself involves only a few steps (Oaths sworn using the Contract Art follow the rules of that Art rather than these):

- 1:** The members involved in the Oath taking must gather in one place.
- 2:** The Oathtakers must craft and use the exact working of the Oath and speak the appropriate words.
- 3:** Either the taker of the Oath, the Oath's holder, or all those involved must call upon the Dreaming and invest at least 1 point of Glamour to activate the binding nature of the Oath.

What Happens if You Break an Oath?

Some Oaths will “expire” once they no longer apply (e.g. an Oath to remain true to one’s Motley will cease to exist if the Motley breaks up), and in those cases the Oath is not considered broken. But what if an Oathsworn changeling fails to fulfill an Oath’s terms or actively betrays them?

Firstly, we must consider how it is determined that a changeling has broken an Oath. As all Oaths require at least one witness to be sworn, when the Dreaming senses a changeling has broken an Oath, it initially reaches out to that witness for justice. The witness is approached by a Narrator and given a Simple Test. If the witness wins or ties this test, they receive a strong hunch that the Oath has been broken. They do not gain any insight into *how* it was broken or by whom (although Oaths between only a single party and a witness leave no room for guesswork), but they do have a strong instinct that the Oath has been violated. Additionally, the Dreaming might reach out to the changeling’s peers, adding a rumor to the rumor cards available at the beginning of the game session that hints at the betrayal.

In other cases, an Oathbreaker must be accused by one who has witnessed them violating (or *appearing* to violate) the terms of the Oath. Most changeling Courts will then require some form of trial (almost always decided by the Court’s Advisor) before guilt is determined. Among certain commoner groups, this trial will take the form of a public debate decided by popular vote.

Once a changeling is known to break an Oath (including those created using the Contract Art), the Oath terminates (and all those who swore it suffer the effects that were originally dictated should the Oath be broken). Additionally, the changeling (or changelings) found most responsible for the breaking of the Oath are given the Negative Status

Trait *Oathbreaker*. This Trait is special: it cannot be removed by anything other than some sort of quest of atonement, and it counts as 2 Negative Status Traits when determining a changeling's total Status for tests.

Finally, breaking an Oath is always a Banality Trigger for the one who broke it, in addition to any other penalties for breaking the Oath and regardless of whether or not they have been *caught* breaking the Oath.

Common Oaths

This is a list of Oaths so common in Kithain society that they have become recognized by the Dreaming itself. They can be sworn by any changelings without the need for the Contract Art.

The Oath of Clasped Hands

The Vow: *Blood for blood, bone for bone, life for life, until none walk the Earth save we alone, I place my life into your hands, my blood in your veins, my bones as your bones. Hold me well, as I hold you, and I will lend you my strength. Break your bond, and may we both perish. I swear to you friendship by this oath of clasped hands and shared hearts.*

System: One of the most serious Oaths possible for a changeling, second only to an Oath of Marriage (if that). This Oath belongs only to those changelings who feel a bond for a friend beyond that of mere friendship. To undertake the Oath, the Oathmakers clasp hands around a double-edged blade while saying the words, each player spending 1 point of Glamour to empower the Oath. The mixing of the blood welds together the bond between the two Oathmakers, strengthening and affirming their friendship. At the completion of the ceremony, the Oathmakers each gain 1 Willpower point. If either party breaks the Oath, both of them lose 2 Willpower points. (Note that their lives do not actually end; some of the Willpower perishes in a symbolic loss of vitality.) In some changeling circles, the breaking of this Oath may lead to ritual suicide,

but this happens only rarely, and only when such practices are part of historic tradition.

The Oath of Fealty

The Vow: *In the name of the Dreaming, I swear my loyalty to you, my lord/lady [sometimes the actual name of the lord or lady is inserted here]. As the moon rules the tide, as the rain refreshes the grass, as the sun imparts life to all, so your will becomes my desire. As you command, I will obey; as you request, I will comply. May my service always please you, and may my eyes lose their sight if I invoke your wrath. My heart, my mind, my hands are yours from now until you release me from this Oath.*

System: The words of this Oath constitute the formal Oath of Fealty used in investitures, knightings, and Sainings. This Oath requires the player to spend 1 Willpower point, as well as make a full obeisance that lasts at least as long as it takes to speak the Oath and receive a reply to it. This usually entails the speaker of the Oath bending one knee in the classic pose of a Knight receiving their title. After the Oath takes effect, the Oathsworn gains +2 Bonus Traits in all tests to resist any type of mental domination to act against the Liege to whom they swore it. Breaking the Oath results in the loss of 3 Willpower points (only inflicted on the changeling who swore Fealty). Extreme cases may result in the Dreaming striking the character blind for a year and a day.

The Oath of Escheat

The Vow: *In the name of the Dreaming, I take you [name of vassal] as my vassal. As the stones, the trees, and the grass belong to the Earth, so do you belong to me as one of my house and hearth. I promise to hold you, to guard you, and to keep you. I pledge to honor your service as it deserves, to reward loyalty in kind, and to assure you of shelter in times of need and plenty. As the moon to the seas below, so is my will to yours. With these words, I pledge the Escheat to you.*

System: With these words, a ruler formally accepts another fae as a vassal. Usually spoken in connection with and as a response to the Oath of Fealty, it may also serve as the acknowledgement of another fae as a member of a House. When these words are spoken, the speaker loses 1 point of Glamour and a chimerical gold coin stamped with their visage appears in their hand. The Oath becomes binding when the speaker offers and the vassal accepts the coin, which remains in the vassal's possession so long as they keep the Oath. Breaking the Oath signifies a departure from the ways of the fae and inflicts the breaker with 1 Banality point. Those bound to the Oath, even if only to one vassal, gain an extra Willpower point per month.

The Oath of the Accepted Burden

The Vow: *Lay down your burden, and I will take it up. No matter how long the road, how dark the night, or how dangerous the peril, I shall bear this for you or share it with you until all roads come to an end or the need is over. I shall [the task is described here], else may the road cease to lie beneath my feet.*

System: Similar on the surface to a geas, this Oath represents a promise to fulfill a certain act, regardless of how large or how small. The Oath is made to another person and verifies that the taker of the Oath will perform the task desired. Both taker and receiver gain 1 Willpower point. If the Oath is broken, each participant loses 2 Willpower points. This Oath requires the expenditure of 1 Glamour point.

The Oath of Guardianship

The Vow: *As the sun guards the Earth by day, and the moon and stars protect the Earth by night, so shall I serve thee with all my might, my heart, and my honor. This, my duty I will not abandon [state the object of the oath], else may the stars vanish from my sky and forever haunt my sleep.*

System: This strong Oath binds the Oathtaker to guard a single object, place, or individual, keeping the object from harm, even at the cost of one's life. This is a fearful Oath, never taken lightly. Those who do not keep the Oath are destined never to spend 2 nights in the same bed for 100 years. The Dreaming honors this Oath without the expenditure of Glamour. The Oath of Guardianship is most often taken by Trolls, but is not exclusive to that Kith.

The Oath of True Hearts

The Vow: *I give to thee the gift of myself, heart, mind, and soul. I offer it freely; freely take it, forever hold me in your keeping. I swear my love unto you, and thus, to you, I pledge my troth. May those who watch over love watch over this Oath and those who keep it. May we ever stay faithful to our promise and never find fault in the eyes of the Dreaming.*

System: The meaning of this Oath is obvious. Two (or sometimes more) lovers speak the words in unison. The binding takes the form of a chimerical songbird perching on the shoulder of each speaker, and visible only to those taking part in the Oath. This costs 1 point of Glamour from each participant. If the Oath is broken, the bird immediately falls silent and becomes visible to all, perched on the shoulder of the Oathbreaker as a sign of betrayal. Every member of the Oathcircle gains 1 point of Banality. Upholding the Oath grants 1 additional point of Glamour from any Rapture in which the lovers participate. This Oath has served as marriage vows and, with a few changes, as an Oath taken by those forming an Oathcircle.

The Oath of the Long Road

The Vow: *I swear that I shall [name of the quest], or lose my home, that I shall [name of quest] or lay down my sword, and that I shall [name of quest] or Dream no more. I swear this before the earth and sky and before you, who witness my Oath.*

System: The Oath of the Long Road is the most potent Oath known to the fae on this side of the Dreaming. It represents the voluntary acceptance of a quest and usually requires some blood from both the Oathtaker and their witnesses. This Oath may be taken by more than 1 individual and requires at least 1, but preferably 3 witnesses. The Oathtaker or takers receive an extra Willpower and Glamour point. The consequences of failure are severe. Simply failing the quest costs 3 Glamour and 3 Willpower. Abandoning the quest altogether strips the Oathbreaker of *all* temporary Glamour, causes the oath breaker to lose 1 Willpower *dot*, and adds 2 Banality points.

The Oath of Crossed Blades

The Vow: *Where two stand, only one shall remain. I swear enmity unto thee until the last sun rises, shines, and sets forever. May my heart cease to beat, my hand lose its strength, and my eyes grow forever dim should I ever show thee favor. May the Dreaming, the stars, and the bones of the earth be my witnesses.*

System: Usually taken only by Trolls and Sidhe, this Oath represents an extreme step in the dance of Courtly intrigue. Such an Oathtaking usually accompanies feuds and vendettas and may involve an entire House, a particular family, or a lone individual. The individual swearing this Oath trades 1 Willpower point for 1 of Glamour and gains +2 Bonus Traits in all tests involving his enemy. Should they break the Oath, the Oathsworn loses a Willpower *dot*, and a scar in the form of 2 slashes appears on their face, labeling the person as an Oathbreaker.

Should both parties desire to call off the Oath, they must both agree to undertake a quest of atonement, usually involving the taking of the Oath of the Long Road at its beginning. Most of the other Kiths eschew this Oath, believing that announcing one's enmity toward someone or some

people is counterproductive to carrying out plans to that person's detriment.

The Oath of Hoi Polloi

Note: the Hoi Polloi are being phased-out in an upcoming rules update

Despite its trappings of chivalry and *noblesse oblige*, Kithain society exists in the modern world. Struggle with the concepts of individual liberty, equality, and social justice is inevitable—the end of the Accordance War was merely one step on a long road to reconciliation between the noble and commoner Kiths.

Among the myriad points of contention between the changelings within and without the Noble Houses are the magical compacts with the Dreaming that fuel the “Boons” and “Flaws” exclusive to members of those Houses. While most of the nobility believe that commoners' envy is a good thing that leads to excellence and competition, some commoners have grown resentful enough that they wouldn't accept kinship from their so-called “betters” even if it was offered.

Calling themselves “Hoi Polloi,” these commoners reject the very concept of nobility. To them, an accident of birth has nothing to do with one's worth—all Kiths are born equal. Revolting against one of the most ingrained principles of changeling society (that everyone should aspire to higher rank) isn't without its challenges, though; foremost among these challenges is the fact that Noble Houses confer upon their members powers no commoner can match.

Since the turn of the 21st Century, scholars and mystics of the Hoi Polloi had bent their considerable talents to replicating the special abilities of the great Houses. Some say it was an Autumn Sidhe that had rejected his birthright that finally cracked the code, but most believe it was a rabble-rousing Sluagh who first came up with the Oath of Hoi Polloi—the occult

vow that sets the true believers apart from those who are just sympathizers to the plight of the commoner Kiths. Only the most committed members of the Hoi Polloi would ever swear the Oath, for it forbids the Oathsworn from *ever* gaining Title for the rest of their lives. Because this ban runs so deeply against the norms of changeling society, many commoners believe the entire Hoi Polloi movement to be nothing more than a conspiracy of Unseelie nobles tricking their enemies into remaining lowborn forever.

Vow: *I shall ever live like common people. I shall ever do whatever common people do. I shall ever fail like common people, and should I ever watch my life slide out of view, I shall ever dance and drink and screw, because there's nothing else to do.*

System: To swear the Oath of Hoi Polloi, a changeling must first publicly eschew any claim they had to Title in Kithain society. Then they must join a motley of fellow commoners who are willing to pledge themselves to the burgeoning movement—for if even a single member of the motley refuses to swear the Oath, no member may benefit from it. If an Oathsworn Hoi Polloi ever leaves their motley, they lose all benefit of the Oath (though they are not considered an Oathbreaker).

While the Oath remains in effect, the Oathsworn receives both a Boon and a Flaw, as though they were a member of a Noble House. The **Boon** of the Hoi Polloi grants the Oathsworn a free retest in any Challenge where they are being ordered, controlled, or silenced by a member of the nobility. This often comes into play when they are trying to resist the effects of the Sovereign Art. The **Flaw** of the Hoi Polloi is that should they ever accept even a single level of the Title Background, however, they lose these effects forever and are branded an Oathbreaker (with the usual penalties).

Ch-Ch-Ch-Ch-Change Log

11/19/23

- Added note that the Hoi Polloi will be phased-out soon