

# FAERIE CIRCLE

A freeform game about new identities  
for up to four players

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# INTRODUCTION

You woke up this morning and realized you are fae. Maybe this realization has been building for a while. Maybe it came on all at once. Maybe you've known for years, but have just now found the courage to do something about it. Regardless, today begins your awakening, the start of your life as your true, complete self.

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## SETUP

### **BEFORE PLAY BEGINS, YOU NEED TO:**

- Print and cut up the slips from the back of this text.
- Shuffle them into four separate stacks as marked.
- Invite one to four interested players, including yourself.
- Find a comfortable table for your group, preferably in a public place.
- A copy of this text, printed or in pdf. You will need to pass this text around.

*Take turns reading each paragraph aloud to the group, following prompts and answering questions as needed. Please note that though this text is written for a group, it is entirely possible to play this game by yourself.*

# WARMUPS

## MEMORIES

Re-enact one of your favorite childhood memories in the play space. You don't have to draw attention to yourself, but to interact with your environment and involve the other players (though they will be re-enacting memories of their own). Re-enact until your story is over, and then join the other players in their re-enactments as best you can. Return to the table together.

## I HAVE SOMETHING TO TELL YOU

Recount for the group a time when you had to tell somebody something that you were hesitant to share; a secret, a piece of news, a confession of your feelings, a private experience, or something else. Go into however much detail you like, but do say how you felt before hand, how you decided to tell them, how they responded, and what happened after.



# BRIEFING

This is a game where you play a version of yourself. You are free to invent or re-contextualize events from your past to suit the story, but your starting point is you as you are today. When asked to consider the events and relationships of your life you will consider the actual events of your (the player's) life and not imagined events or relationships of a fictional character. In the likely event that you already know some of the people you are playing with, it is best for the purposes of play to pretend that you do not. Players will meet for the first time when play begins.

## DISCLAIMER

**This is a game designed to build empathy.** It takes elements from the authors lived experience, experiences of the author's friends, and some news stories. Some people may find that the situations described closely mirror their own life. While this doesn't prevent one from playing, such people should use caution. If you find yourself having an intensely emotional response that you are unprepared or unwilling to explore in play because of this, stop play immediately and proceed to the debriefing if you are able. **Your well being is more important than any game.**

# WHAT ARE FAE FOLK?

The Fae Folk (the broadly accepted proper term) are a subset of the human race accounting for no more than 1% of the total population. A true population count is difficult as widespread societal prejudice causes many fae folk to be reclusive, or to suppress their true nature altogether. Visibility has been increasing in recent years thanks for prominent fae celebrities, but with visibility comes increased conservative backlash.

## WHERE DO FAE FOLK COME FROM?

Nobody knows for sure what causes a human to be fae. Some speculate about a goblin ancestor far back in a family tree, or a child exposed to too much pixie dust in the womb, but none of these theories has any conclusive evidence to support it. All that is known for sure is that fae folk are born that way, no matter how many years they spend under the mistaken assumption that they are mundane.

## HOW CAN YOU IDENTIFY FAE FOLK?

There are many subtle physical indicators that mark the fae folk: the shape of the ears, the hue of the eyes, or certain elongated bones to name a few. For some, these features alone are not enough to give them away, but typically the fae folk themselves, or those familiar with them, can recognize them and thus often know one another on sight. Some people's fae features are more obvious than others. The only sure sign that someone is fae is their navel, which bears a glittery, shimmering mark from their mystical essence spilling forth when they embraced their true self.

Years of living in a mundane shell have leaves fae folk unable to naturally produce the aether necessary to manifest their true selves. Luckily, synthetic aether is relatively inexpensive to manufacture, but it is tightly regulated and cannot be legally obtained without a prescription. With it, you feel like yourself. Without it the world loses it's color and you suffer from lethargy and depression. Think about your current health care situation. Some insurers cover aether, others don't. Even if you do have coverage, most doctors know nothing about it and have no idea how to prescribe a proper dosage, and some outright refuse to prescribe without you undergoing a psychological evaluation. Many are forced to turn to black-market pharmacies to meet their needs.

# HOW ARE FAE FOLK VIEWED BY THE WORLD AT LARGE?

At this time, **go around the group, and everyone say at least one thing you know about the fae from stories or legends.** Combine these 'facts' with the following to get a sense for what sort of beliefs or stereotypes exist about fae folk.

- "Fae folk like to kidnap children and replace them with fairies."
- "Fae folk are naturally deceitful, always looking to trick mundane people into making one-sided deals."
- "If you are alone in a room with a fae person there is nothing stopping them from dragging you to Arcadia, never to return."
- "If a fae person offers you something to eat or drink, it might be poisonous."

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## PLAY

### YOUR NAME

Finally, everyone must choose a name. Names have important symbolic power for fae folk. Picking a new name represents embracing your new identity. It doesn't need to be anything fancy; for every Titania or Rumpelstiltskin there are many Theodores or Sarahs. What matters is that it feels right, and you are free to try several different names until you find the right fit.

On the other hand, your old name will become a curse. Hearing it will cause you physical pain, especially when used to refer to you. This effect will fade over the years, but it will never fully disappear.

### SCENES

Play occurs in scenes that take place around a table. When you are at the table you are in the community space, interacting with the other players and talking about your lives and struggles and joys. When you are away from the table, you are alone and facing the world at large.

Play begins with all players around the table. Introduce yourselves to one another, and discuss your hopes and fears about the future as one of the fae folk, and proceed as described above. Play ends after the card from stack four is drawn and it's prompts acted upon.

When you feel a scene around the table has reached a conclusion, or otherwise wish to leave it, take a card from the first stack (then second, then third, then fourth) and move away from the table. Do not draw from the same stack twice. With fewer than four players some cards will remain.

Read the slip and follow any instructions on it. Once all players have left the scene a new scene begins, and you have three options:

You may monologue in response to your card.

You may return to the table prepared to discuss your card with the other players.

You may hold your card in your hand and try not to think about it.

## **MONOLOGUES**

When monologuing, a player may face towards the other players or away from them. (Play experience will likely be most fruitful if other players can hear your monologue, but it is not required.) While a player is monologuing, any player current at the table may approach and lightly touch the monologuing player on the shoulder. This is known as reaching out, and it serves as an invitation for the monologuing player to join them at the table.

## **DISCUSSION**

The scene at the table begins once any monologues have finished. The purpose of the discussion is to share your experience and feelings and to support one another emotionally. At any time you may reach out to a player away from the table by lightly touching them on the shoulder. In this way you can invite others to join the conversation at the table.

## **PUTTING IT OUT OF YOUR MIND**

If you take the third option, you cannot set the slip down until you have addressed its content in some way, or until play has ended.

# DEBRIEFING

The dead player will lead this debriefing. If you are comfortable doing so, sit in a circle holding hands.

Now that we have found a new place, it's time to resume the people that we were before we began play.

## THANK YOU FOR PLAYING!

- Everyone, take turns sharing your favorite moments of each character. Just remind us of the scene and what was happening. "Favorite" could mean whatever you decide it means.
- Think about your lifestyle choices. Would your fae self have been able to make those same choices? Would those choices have been complicated by the realities of fae life?
- Which parts of play were most different from your actual lives?
- How did the stereotypes outlined in the beginning affect how you answered and discussed your card prompts?
- Were there any card prompts that you have never had to think about before?
- The prompts are taken directly from experiences of trans people. Were you aware of these experiences? What do you think about that?
- Are there trans people in your life? Are you even aware of their experiences? If you aren't, why do you think you aren't?
- Reflect on what your Fae self wanted most; of all things, large or small, what was the thing that was most important to them? Now, imagine that your actual self is a friend of your Fae self. Imagine that you don't know much about their day to day life. Would you impede or enable that for them? How? What would it take to do one or the other?

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# CARDS

## 1A

*In the next 6 months*

This is a big change. If you're at all close with your parents you'll have to tell them one way or another. Your only other option is to break off contact and never see them again, which might be your best option. Think about your parents, and how you'd expect them to respond to a big revelation like this. You may have different expectations for each parent. Then look at the player to your right and to your left (or nearest people if you are playing by yourself or with only one other).

### **If the player to your left is taller:**

They take it better than you expected. They may still make mistakes from time to time and say something that hurts you out of ignorance, but at the very least they don't let this change your relationship with them. They may even be eager to support you in whatever way they can.

### **If the player to your right is taller:**

They respond worse than you expected. At best they are reluctant to acknowledge your change, at worst they respond angrily or violently. If you happen to live with one or both of your parents, you will likely have to find a new place to live, if only to escape the awkward atmosphere.

## 1A

## 1B

*In the next 6 months*

You are walking down the street when you see an old friend. You've drifted apart over the years and haven't seen each other since shortly after your awakening. You smile and say hello, but they keep walking as if you're not even there.

## 1B

## 1C

*In the next 6 months*

Think about a friend you've known for a long time (over a year at least); someone who you've had a lot of fun hanging out with, but don't necessarily have a deep emotional relationship with. How does their response to your awakening make it uncomfortable to hang out with them? When do you realize that your friendship is over?

## 1C



## 1D

*In the next 6 months*

**If you are currently in a romantic relationship** (If you are in more than one, focus on the longest):

How does your partner respond initially when you tell them you are fae? How do they respond to the changes you are going through? How long until they tell you that they just don't have the same feelings for you anymore? Do you stay friends?

**If you are not currently in a romantic relationship:**

You may be single now, but living as your true self gives you a sense of confidence that you've never known before, so who knows what the future may bring.

## 1D

## 2A

*In the next year*

You are having coffee with someone you've just recently met. Is it a date or are you just friends? Either way, things are going well and both of you are having a great time. The other person says you should do this again some time. Since they seem so open-minded, you decide to mention that you're fae. They politely excuse themselves. You do not hear from them, and they do not return your calls.

## 2A

## 2B

*In the next year*

You make a new friend. They seem to notice that there is something unusual about you. How do you steer the conversation to find out what they think about fae folk? They have no idea what fae even means, and they don't seem to care. Do you try to explain it to them, or is it enough that they like you for you?

## 2B

## 2C

*In the next year*

You've made an appointment for a routine physical. However, at the doctor's office the physician informs you that they "only know how to treat normal humans" and you'll have to "find someone who specializes in your kind." The idea that your physiology is significantly different from anyone else is absurd. Do you make a scene, or leave quietly? Do you search for another doctor, knowing the same thing could happen again? Do you file an official complaint, knowing it is unlikely that anything will come of it?

## 2C

**2D**

*In the next year*

You have developed an illness that has lasted for over a month. It isn't debilitating, but you decide to see a doctor just to be safe. The doctor listens to your symptoms and speculates that it might be related to the aether you take. They suggest you stop taking it for two weeks and come back if it doesn't improve. Do you argue with your doctor to try to find the real cause? Do you follow your doctor's direction and stop taking your aether, knowing what that will do to your mental and emotional health? Or do you just ignore the problem and hope it goes away on your own?

**2D**

**3A**

*In the next 2 years*

You have just been contacted by someone who said some very hurtful things in response to your awakening. Someone you haven't heard from in years. Is it a family member? They say they want to reconnect and apologize. Do you trust them enough to give them the chance? Is it worth the risk?

**3A**

**3B**

*In the next 2 years*

You are reading a news story about a fae woman who was murdered by her mundane boyfriend. Was it someone you know? The boyfriend is claiming he was so shocked when he learned the woman he was dating was fae that he lost control of himself, and is not accountable for his actions. You know such defenses have historically worked in the murderer's favor.

**3B**

**3C**

*In the next 2 years*

You are attempting to use a public restroom. Another person inside sees you, screams, and attacks you with a steel bell. Do you defend yourself, knowing that if the police get involved you are likely to be the one arrested? Or do you run away and try to find another restroom?

**3C**

**3D**

*In the next 2 years*

You are walking in your neighborhood at night when you are stopped by the police. After a few degrading questions, you are arrested for planning to commit a child abduction. At the station the holding cells are already occupied, so they handcuff you next to the toilet "for the safety of the other detainees." In the morning you are released without charges.

**3D**

**4**

You have died. How did it happen? Did you yourself end it, or did someone else take it upon himself to snuff out your life in defense of his own twisted masculinity? When the local media reports on your death, do they use your true name or your old, mundane name?

Once you have decided, as dispassionately as possible narrate the circumstances of your death to the other players as if you were reading from a news report.

Once you are done, place this card back on the table so the other players can follow their prompt. Leave the table and find a place of your liking to debrief. The others will join you shortly.

### **OTHER PLAYERS**

Continue the scene around the table for a short while in the dead player's absence. How do you respond to the news?

Whenever you are ready, you may leave the table. Go find the dead player (wherever they wandered off to) and join them for the debriefing.

**4**