

The Shadowbox Court™



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The Shadowed Court

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Introduction: An End to Innocence

Any dream holds the promise of a nightmare. Indeed, it is often in our darkest hours that we find the greatest truths. Those who are troubled by nightmares eagerly await the dawn. The morning light drives shadows back into temporary submission. Sometimes we remember our nightmares and learn from them. Sometimes we are foolish and forget.

The Shadow Court is an alternative approach to playing Changeling; it is a version of the game for people who tire of sweetness and light — a saga for those who crave the night. Just as beautiful dreams have been known to fade and die, any changeling can — through circumstance, intrigue, or even free will — succumb to the nightmare that awaits within the Dreaming. Those destined to find greatness awaken and learn from what they have seen, but those who never awaken descend to meet their Unseelie destiny.

Shadows are longest when winter is at its coldest, and the world has become cold. Trust and honor are hard to find, and survival often depends on deception and betrayal. Seelie faeries shelter themselves from the evil in the world, but the Unseelie revel in it. They live in a dark world, and they survive by instinct and impulse.

When surrounded by despair and suffering, the Unseelie are at their best. The ruination of others brings them

power. For the darkest of fae, the Winter Solstice and its ritual of Samhain reflect the nature of the world around them. On Samhain, as a taint of malevolence is carried on the wind, Seelie Kithain give in to their Unseelie Legacies for one glorious night, and the Unseelie choose between rebellion and redemption. When the ritual fires of Samhain burn brightest, Unseelie cliques revel in the chaos and madness.

The most contemptuous of the fae, the members of the Shadow Court, are at their strongest on this night. For one evening, they no longer need to hide or deceive. Whispered secrets, unspeakable acts and glorious anarchy are celebrated openly as stories are told around blazing bonfires... until dawn returns and the Samhain Mists force memories from the minds of those who yearn to forget.

We cannot, however, speak openly yet. It is still a time for whispering and treasured secrets. Sit by the fireside with us, as the nobles pose and posture in their elegant throne rooms far away. Drain a flagon of bitter ale, sample a charred piece of meat, and stare into the fire. Soon, you will come to terms with what troubles you. By understanding what you feel in the darkest part of your heart, you will conquer the nightmares that torment you.

How to Use This Book

The Shadow Court is an alliance that hides behind the Unseelie Court. They believe that the Seelie Court has corrupted the society of the Kithain, where changelings masquerade in human forms and revere antiquated morality. They strive to protect the past, but the Shadow Court prepares for a new age. Overthrowing the nobility and destroying the Seelie Court is just the beginning.

Most of its members are recruited from the Unseelie Court, although Seelie have also been known to betray their compatriots and join their sinister brethren. You will find within this book all that you require to bring the Unseelie to life, whether you join the Shadow Court or struggle against it. Understanding and representing the Unseelie requires you to commune with the night, to join the legions of the wicked.

Politics, culture, religion, romance, honor — every aspect of their lives deviates from the norm. The higher ideals valued as humane are only a diversion from the true self, the darker self. Fae who spiral into the intrigues of the Shadow Court are drawn further into madness as they risk spiritual corruption. Fortunately, the journey does not have to end with annihilation. Heroes overcome this test and escape, while antiheroes and villains find perverse bliss in the midst of their nightmares.

The world itself reflects the fates of these fae. Either the balance will be restored, or the world will descend into the beauty and majesty of eternal night.

Contents

Chapter One offers the bleak origins of the Shadow Court and reveals their ideal of Endless Winter. Their goals are best summarized by the Manifesto, which guides them toward their Unseelie destiny.

Chapter Two expands on what is to be Unseelie. Many aspects of Unseelie culture are presented, including the importance of the Pageant. Factions of the Unseelie Court, secret societies allied with the Shadow Court, and the three Unseelie noble houses are also detailed.

Chapter Three explores Unseelie spirituality and gives more details on their calendar. This culminates with the events of Samhain, as shown in Chapter Seven.

Chapter Four provides more detail on Unseelie characters, including more information on Unseelie seemings

and kith. The Thallain, the not-too-distant cousins of the Kithain, are revealed at last.

In **Chapter Five**, the Dark Arts practiced within the Shadow Court are revealed, as well as new horizons for Ravaging.

Chapter Six renders assistance to Storytellers who are preparing Shadow Court adventures. You'll find expanded rules for Ravaging, a slightly different approach to Bunks, and ideas for incorporating the Shadow Court into chronicle structures.

Chapter Seven explores the full importance of Samhain. All of the aspects of this most important holiday are revealed in this chapter.

Chapter Eight presents a rogue's gallery of fallen fae, including sample characters and historical Shadow Courtiers, ranging from childling assassins to the Forsworn Prince.

Theme

The world is out of balance, even though changelings struggle to maintain harmony. Each changeling struggles to determine her own destiny, balancing the noble ideals of his Seelie Legacy against the treacherous path of her Unseelie nature. Every hero holds the potential to become a horrible monster; every villain has a chance at redemption. Your hero may only briefly experience her bleaker nature, or she may decide to turn away from the lies of honor and chivalry forever. Those who descend further and faster seek out the courtiers of the shadows. Victims who are trapped forever in the depths of the Shadow Court are never able to recapture what they have lost. Without the balance between light and darkness, order and chaos, the world is lost. The Shadow Court works to destroy that balance.

Mood

The mood of a Shadow Court adventure should reflect the moods of the Unseelie. They live in a world of deception and intrigue, passion and deceit. There's humor, but it's black. There's hope, but it always has a price. There's always the chance to conquer, but it never comes without struggle or sacrifice. And just as the Unseelie destroy their adversaries to bring about change, the world around them is constantly changing. Allied with your clique and armed with your instincts, you are opposed by a world of darkness. Let the games begin!

