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The Fool's Luck™

The Way of the Commoner

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SUMMER MOLT: A FAERY'S TALE

*And you, are you so forgetful of your past, is there
no echo of your poets' songs, your dreamers' dreams,
your rebels' calls?*

— Emma Goldman

Julia suppressed a feeling of impending doom as she drove home from the baronial court. Arawn and Ellawyn held much more in their hearts than they voiced aloud, that Julia could plainly see. Then again, they'd actually been at King Meilge's ball in honor of the High King and Queen; the Baron and Baroness of Vellumton had witnessed firsthand the despair of lovely Faerilyth, the concern of the court and the chivalry of Sir Seif. Julia smiled at that last. Seif had visited Vellumton during the Twilight Criterion bike race and told such marvelous tales that even the normally sedate Ellawyn had cried tears of laughter. Now, thought Julia bitterly, it would be many days before the baroness saw joy again.

As she parked outside her dilapidated house in Athens' historic Normaltown district, Julia saw someone lurking on the porch, sniffing the begonias and idly batting the

wind chimes. Darkness was just starting to fall, but Julia could see her visitor stood on long slender legs covered in downy brown fur. The satyr's tail flicked nervously, and her hooves tapped out an impatient rhythm. The light breeze gently lifted her purple gauze minidress. She dropped a curtsy as Julia stepped slowly from the car.

"Lady Julia Spencer-Drake?" asked the satyr.

"I am she," replied Julia. "May I help you with something?"

To her surprise, the satyr hopped off the porch and eagerly seized her hands. "I'm so glad to meet you! I've come a long way to answer your request."

"Request?" said Julia. "But...."

"In your book. *The Annals of House Fiona*. You asked for people to tell you about history. Well, here I am!" finished the visitor with a wave of her hands.

“Ah, um, so I see. Well, do come inside and let’s get something to drink.” Julia’s good sidhe manners asserted themselves as she led the satyr into the big, high-ceilinged room that served as living, dining and kitchen areas. *Thank heavens I managed to kick most of my crap into the bedroom,* she thought as the satyr looked over the place. *But how on earth did this woman manage to look at my book? It was only sent to a few historians in Concordia, just recently at that.*

The satyr prattled on. “I’m Marina, from the County of Beacon Hills. It’s up on the border between the Duchies of Appalachia and the Triangle. I thought I could help you out.” Marina settled herself on the futon, not deigning to notice the piles of books and dirty laundry littering the room.

Opening the fridge, Julia poured two ginger ales with a splash of grenadine over ice, handing one to her guest. “Well met, then, Marina. You obviously know who I am already. What about my writing brings you here?”

Marina’s voice dropped to a whisper. “It’s no secret, m’lady, that trouble is brewing. Though slow, word does reach even our remote freehold. Our countess is a distant cousin of Meilge and our count a sworn knight of House Gwydion. Already there is tension at home over the state of the High Kingship, and if rumors resound in the tiny realm of Beacon Hills, surely they must be elsewhere. Some of the trolls are honing their weapons already. We need no new wars to tear us apart. I daresay there are wounds left unsalved from the last one. Which bring me to my point in seeing you.” The satyr took a deep breath. “In writing the history of your noble house, you said you were interested in a commoners’ view of the Accordance War. Is this still the case?” Julia nodded, eyes suddenly alight. “Then, I have a plan to propose to you. Did you ever see that TV movie a few years back, about that woman journalist who infiltrated the Playboy bunnies?”

Julia suppressed an urge to giggle. “Um, yes, I saw it; her name’s Gloria Steinheim, and she made quite a name for herself, didn’t she?”

Marina nodded soberly. “As I hope you will, m’lady, when you go among the commoners and write their true history. All of it, particularly that of the Accordance War. You must do it quickly, too, so people can have a chance to see their mistakes before it’s too late. Maybe if all the Kithain can read about what happened when we were a people divided all those years ago, they’ll know better in the present.”

“Well, it’s quite a clever idea,” said Julia, “but I’m afraid I still have one problem dear Gloria didn’t: I’m not a commoner, and I have no way to insinuate myself

into their good graces. Not so quickly, anyway, even if I am of House Fiona.”

“That’s where I come in,” muttered Marina. “I know a person who can...give you a makeover. I don’t mean just a bunny tail either! You can walk among the commoners and really hear what they have to say.” She paused anxiously. “So will you do it?”

Julia walked to the window and peered out. Here was the chance she’d dreamed about and never thought possible. The moon was full that night, and in her heart, she heard echoes of ancient cries of war and death. Could she prevent suffering among all fae by this act? Would exposing the truth of history from the commoner’s perspective cause resentment and anger? Or would it reveal their courage and honor, equal to the sidhe, revealing to the nobles that enmity with the commoners was savage and reprehensible?

Lady Julia of the Drake, historian of House Fiona, turned to the satyr. “I am ready to depart whenever you are.”



Marina asked Julia to lead her to a place where flowers grew. So they ended up at the botanical gardens, a lush setting that housed countless varieties of plants and shrubs. Marina walked to a trellis crowned with sleeping morning glories and twisted a ring on her finger. Julia had noticed it earlier, a lovely piece of work, stacked circles of gold with tiny rubies. The trellis vibrated and shone with inner light as Julia felt the stirring of Glamour. Inside the trellis, another world appeared, one that resonated with ancient power and long-forgotten lore.

“Hurry through; the gate will close in a moment,” gasped Marina, straining with the effort of focusing the ring’s power. Julia wasted no time, and the satyr followed her. The trellis vanished, and now they stood in a beautiful glade of fir trees. Soft light filtered through the evergreens, illuminating rich loamy soil. A few squirrels chattered at them, and Julia laughed in delight as they came closer, begging for nuts.

“Why, this is the Dreaming!” she cried aloud. “You didn’t tell me we were coming here.” The satyr merely smiled. Julia had forgotten how even the Near Dreaming where they now stood changed one’s perceptions; the Mists usually clouded her thoughts when she returned to the waking lands. Marina looked more feral than before; her horns were longer and curlier, her tail more bushy. And there was much more of the satyr to behold, for she had shed most of her clothing save a light silken sarong that barely covered her

breasts and thighs. She was quite captivating, and the sidhe drank in the lovely sight of her.

"We have a long way to travel," said Marina. "Stay on the trod, whatever you see and feel. The Firchlís may pass and change everything, but don't stray from the path! Do you understand?" Julia nodded, and they set off down the silvery road of light that lay before them. It was oh so tempting to run and play with the many creatures she saw, tiny flying horses, singing caterpillars and even rabbits in tuxedos, walking upright. Nothing she saw stayed the same for long. Even the scent and sound of the place was beguiling; the sidhe smelled apple and cherry blossoms and listened to distant music that made her heart ache with a memory just out of reach. If she could only hear more! But Julia followed her guide and did not step off the trod. Presently, a strong wind blew around them, whistling and stirring up sand. The sidhe blinked, and suddenly she stood at the edge of a verdant cornfield. The silver path led through the knee-high stalks, and on the far side, Julia saw a small village.

"We'll go to the inn and see if Aldo is there. We need a stiff drink before we meet with Cruithne," murmured Marina. Julia nodded and followed. Only as she passed by the mill on the edge of the village and stopped to splash her face clean in the water trough did she see her own appearance. Gone were the wire-rimmed spectacles; her eyes gleamed silvery gray, the light of them piercing and bright. Now her dull-brown hair hung in thick waves reaching the earth. Her clothing had changed too; instead of jeans and a tank top, her slender form was clad in a deep burgundy cotehardie embroidered with rampant silver lions and heraldic trumpets. A silver girdle inset with ruby roses circled her waist. If only I looked this good back home, she mused.

Marina had walked ahead to what was clearly the inn; a big sign hung outside the door, proclaiming it "The Dragon's Den: Food and Spirits." A finely dressed boggan smoking a pipe sat on a bench outside; his eyes were pert and his face ruddy and well scrubbed. He jumped up as the satyr approached.

"Well met, Marina!" he said, eagerly kissing her hands. "It has been too many days since you came here."

"There have been many tasks to perform in the waking world," sighed Marina. "But let me introduce my guest, Lady Julia of the Drake." The boggan bowed deeply. "Lady Julia, this is my good friend Aldo, who runs the finest inn this side of Arcadia."

"It is a beautiful place," said Julia graciously, and so it was. The inn was built from dark timbers and neatly daubed walls. A brand new thatched roof crowned the two-story building. Aldo had polished the diamond-pane windows and brass door fittings to perfection. Boxes of bright flowers sat all around the entrance and from inside came the warm scent of fresh baked bread and beeswax tapers.

"Come in, come in," Aldo motioned with his chubby arms. "The best for you, always!"

After a jug of good ale, crusty bread with honey butter and a venison and vegetable tart, Julia felt warm and happy inside. She yawned, a little disheartened by Marina's next words.

"I wish we could stay the night," the satyr said wistfully, "but I would take Lady Julia to the keep before sunset."

"That's wise," replied Aldo, letting a perfect smoke ring rise from his pipe. "Don't want to run into the dragon, especially as you two aren't dressed for battle."

"Dragon?" Julia was wide awake now.

"Oh yes. It's been there as long as I can remember. Don't ask me how the sage manages to avoid it, but he does somehow," shuddered Aldo.

"They have an understanding," said Marina shortly. "So if you're ready, Lady Julia?" The sidhe nodded and shook off her sleepiness. If Marina was taking her to some sort of sage, probably a satyr, she'd have to be alert and on her toes. She thanked the boggan, and the pair resumed their journey. Outside, a cool wind blew, pushing her to wakefulness. The sun was just setting, and for the first time, Julia saw their destination: a mountain fortress that towered above the village. Dark mists had covered it earlier, and it still seemed a foreboding place. But Marina said nothing and just trotted off toward the mountain's lowest crags. Presently, Julia saw that steps were carved into the rocks. Marina climbed easily, and Julia was surprised not to be winded as they reached the summit. Before her stood an old keep, little more than a pair of towers joined by a wall, surrounding a single great hall. Tattered pennons fluttered in the breeze, but Julia couldn't make out the heraldry. Marina seemed to know her way around and walked through the heavy oak door in the nearest tower, leading the way into a courtyard. There were no horses, carts or piles of hay, only gray stone that sang each time their feet struck the ground. The echo against the walls was chilling, and Julia shuddered; she felt someone unseen watching their approach. Presently, they reached the entrance

to the hall, two great wooden doors banded in black iron which swung open unaided as Marina approached them. Inside was a huge chamber where lights from a hundred candles flickered off the walls. Rushes covered the floor, and all around was the smell of wood smoke and dust.

"Up the stairway," motioned Marina, indicating the wide stone steps to one side. Once again, the sidhe followed, from the stairs to the landing, down a hall to a room. The door was open, and from inside came a deep voice.

"Must you lurk all evening outside my chamber? As if I hadn't waited all day for you to arrive!"

Julia crossed the threshold and beheld...a human? The voice came not from an ancient satyr as she'd expected but from some wizened old mortal coot who gave her a cool once over. He seemed to be appraising her not with desire but like a cat looking over its meal. She stiffened her backbone and met his gaze, for no noble of House Fiona ever knew fear, save when a lover was in danger. Something about his eyes was hypnotic; they were deep green with gold flecks and large, dark pupils. His head was nearly bald and what hair he had was wispy and gray; he wore no beard. His robes were rather plain, hanging to the floor, dyed nut brown. She looked away after a moment, noticing for the first time that rows and rows of bookshelves surrounded her. Thousands of volumes must have been in the room; the shelves stretched past the old man and were so tall, Julia couldn't see the far walls.

The old man seemed not to notice her wandering eyes and wasted no time with friendly greetings; he didn't even bother standing up from the desk where he was writing. "I am Cruithne Alexis, a sage renowned for many seasons," he said in a haughty tone. "My good servant Marina has told me that you wish to go among the commoners of the Kithain and write their history. And that you need a disguise, to become one of them in body, in order to complete this task. Tell me, then, why the mask? Why not just be yourself?"

How did he know? thought the sidhe. *Marina has been with me the entire time; surely she didn't have a chance to tell him. And what's this about her being a servant?* "Because," answered Julia aloud, "I want the real history. I know I could get much of the truth if I just went as myself, but there are things commoners would never tell a noble. I want to know how people honestly feel, even if it's not too flattering to me and other nobles."

"But don't you think that such actions will anger the commoners when they find out? Wouldn't they say their words were being stolen, filtered through some sidhe trickster's voice? Will not this make them more resentful than ever?" Cruithne stared hard at her.

"Perhaps. But I will faithfully record their words, both fair and foul, particularly about the Accordance War. Other historians of the Kithain have been too afraid to describe what really happened during those dark years. They were terrible times, the Night of Iron Knives, the death of Dafyll, the Battles of Manhattan. Someone must paint the complete picture for everyone to know what those times were like! Because such destruction must never happen again."

The sage nodded. "I see. And I believe you. I think you will make the best effort you can to write this history. So I am inclined to grant your request and shape you into one of the commoners, that you may walk as one among equals. I must of course consult certain materials first, so wait here. You may browse my library until I return." The old scholar rose from his chair and walked down one of the long rows, vanishing after a few moments.

Julia had never seen so many books in her life, especially not with titles like *The Chronicle of Denbigh*, *The Bestiary of Kelidan* or *The Boke of Wurms of Alban*. Who was this man, and where did he find such tomes, Julia wondered. Certainly he was no Kithain. Was he a mortal sorcerer? After walking up and down several rows and musing on the old man, the sidhe found that the sight of so many books made her head swim, so she looked elsewhere.

On the mantle was the most striking portrait Julia had ever seen. It was a human lady, not beautiful exactly, but someone who surely must have been noble, so proudly she held herself. Her dark brown hair was coiled into braids crowning her head. The woman wore a formfitting scarlet gown decorated at the throat and wrists by exquisite embroidery in gold and green threads; was it a late Norman style? In her white slender hands, the lady held a rose, and her dark eyes glared down in clear challenge. The sidhe stared at the picture "Who was she?" wondered Julia aloud.

"She was, and is, a very great lady," replied her host, coming back into the room and seating himself at the desk again. "We taught each other about the game of chess, many years ago." He smiled, thinking of those ancient nights. "But now, onto your dilemma. I have consulted my references and believe I can accomplish your request. What can you offer me, little faery, in return for what you seek?"



Julia knew this was coming. "I am of the blood of House Fiona," she said proudly. "We are well known for our passion. I would give you a night of my caresses for this feat of magic."

Cruithne laughed long and hard. "And pray tell, what would I do with a night of memories? You're a pretty little thing, I must admit, but I have no interest in sleeping with faeries. What else have you to offer?"

Well, well, thought the sidhe, maybe it would embarrass the poor old fellow. Aloud she said, "We are also known for our prowess in arms. I would be willing to undertake a battle for you, provided it is not against my own kind."

"Again, I have no need for warriors," replied the sage. "Do you have aught else to give?"

Julia was stumped. "What do you want?" she asked finally.

"Marina told me you were a scholar, a writer, a historian," Cruithne said. "Why have you not offered me these skills?"

"I had no idea one of your stature in such things would need one as young and inexperienced as I," answered Julia truthfully. "You have more tomes and writings than any ten Kithain could produce in a lifetime."

"But how do you think I became so wise? You seek love and passion however you find it, yes?" Julia nodded assent. "I seek knowledge in the same manner. I know you have something I would find useful. For example, Marina has told me you were writing a history of your house and that others have done the same. That would be quite sufficient."

"But..." Julia's mind reeled. "These things are for the Kithain. How can a human possibly understand them?"

"Leave that to me," said Cruithne in a cold voice. "Swear an oath that you will bring me your writing and that of the others, and in good faith, I will perform the ritual. You will have a year and a day to complete your work and return here with the materials I have requested. Fail, and you shall forever remain a commoner, and more-



over, I will see that your secret is told to everyone, high born and low. Do we have an agreement?" Julia inclined her head. "Swear then!" He stood and held out his hands which she clasped in her own.

"I, Julia of the Drake, Lady of House Fiona, do hereby swear that I shall deliver unto Cruithne Alexis, as token of services rendered, the histories of the noble houses of the Kithain, within one year and one day. If I should fail to honor this oath, may I forever remain enchanted as one of the common folk and may all the world know my falseness and dishonor."

"And I, Cruithne Alexis, do hear what you freely give and in return will grant the wish of your heart." He released her hands and returned to his desk where he began flipping through several books. "Ah, here is what I was looking for. Marina, run to the larder and fetch a potato for me, along with the bottle labeled *plebeius cruror*." The satyr trotted off to do the sage's bidding. Julia, of course, was not afraid, despite Cruithne's rather devious smile. "Stand there, girl," said the old man, pointing to a space of

floor not covered by carpet. Julia complied, seething at his rudeness as the sage began sketching a rough chalk circle around her. He then pulled out a sharp dagger, spitting on the blade before handing it to the sidhe. Marina hurried quickly into the room, handing Cruithne the potato and a small corked pottery jar. He gave the potato to Julia, then opened the jar and gently poured the red flaky contents around the chalked circle.

"Now, start peeling. Don't stop until I tell you to do so! Make sure the peels fall inside the circle, or this will not work. Begin!"

Julia hadn't peeled too many potatoes in her life, and with those few, she'd used a peeler. The knife wasn't working too well, so the process was slow. Small strips of potato fell at her feet. Outside the circle, Cruithne was chanting in a guttural language as he walked around and around the circle. Sweat began pouring down the sidhe's brow; the temperature was rising quickly. At the circle's edges, the rust-colored dust began to liquefy, running over the rough stone, into cracks, then finally touching Julia's

slipped feet. It burned! The stench of rotting meat filled her nostrils, but still she peeled the potato. Almost all the potato's outer flesh was gone, save for a few black spots which she began cutting away, yet the knife seemed larger than before, or else her hands were smaller and clumsier. Julia kept carving away until she held a perfect, round white potato.

"Stop!" called Cruithne, and she let her arms fall to her sides. Looking at him, Julia realized something was terribly wrong. There was an odd thudding in her heart, and her mouth and throat felt parched. Her hands shook, not from fatigue, but from some other emotion. It was fear, something she'd seldom felt in her life, for unlike most of her noble house, she'd found passion in affairs of the mind, not the heart. There had been no lover in mortal danger to make her heart pound so. Now, Julia couldn't stop the terror she felt watching the old sage, and what was worse, the fear she felt made her *more* afraid. It was awful, and she stood there, shaking.

"You may come out of the circle now," said the sage, in a softer voice. "All is well, and the spell has worked wonderfully well. It's been many a year since I attempted something so extraordinary, but I still have the touch," he chuckled. "Marina, give her the mirror."

The satyr, whose eyes were huge with wonder, handed Julia a round wooden hand mirror. Julia took it; it *felt* heavy and seemed bigger to her, like the potato. She glanced into it and saw...No! It was impossible! Yet it was the wish of her heart, she had to admit. Cruithne had given her exactly what she asked for, no more, no less.

Gone was Julia's fair skin and high cheekbones; they had been replaced by a deeply tanned complexion, plump cheeks and a double chin. Her hair was now tied up in a practical bun, the elegant gown changed into a simple tunic and apron, nonetheless prettily embroidered with

carrots, pea pods and radishes. Where once her hands had been slender and soft, the palms were callused and square, the fingers short and thick. Had she *really* stood over six feet tall before? Now she barely topped four. Julia fought down an overwhelming desire to dust all the sage's books and wondered why the lovely satyr no longer stirred her heart as she assimilated the fact that the transformation had been both physical and mental.

"I asked myself," mused Cruithne aloud, "what would be the best way for you to *help* your fellow fae. And the Dreaming has given an answer. Go now, little boggan, and take with you this token which shall allow you to remember all." The sage handed her what looked like a silvery sheet of mica, about the size of a saucer. "You have a year and one day to complete your work and return here to honor your promise." He nodded to Marina, dismissing them both without a second thought. Julia was only too glad to leave; Cruithne frightened her with his cold ways.

The walk from the old keep took time because the boggan had difficulty keeping up with the nimble-footed satyr. The two said little, until Marina broke the silence.

"So where will you begin? And what should I call you now? 'Lady Julia' doesn't really seem appropriate, does it?"

"Oh, I think I'll use the name Gloria McAlley," smiled the boggan. "It'll do for now. As to where I'll begin..." She looked at the slowly sinking sun. "At the beginning. With voices that will fade ere too much time passes, those who are old enough to remember times before the Resurgence. Those who fought in the Accordance War. Politicos, travelers, farmers. Mostly just anyone who will talk to me."

"I don't think it'll be a problem," replied Marina, helping the new commoner onto the Dreaming's path.



INTRODUCTION: NOT TO THE MANOR BORN

"A shepherd and a harp-player! Fool! Fool!"

— Blodwen Rowlands in Susan Cooper's *Silver on the Tree*

In the years before the Shattering, they were tricksters and warriors, nomads and sages. Then suddenly, they were left behind to cope with a dark and mirthless world. They survived for centuries through thick and thin by learning to live among humans. Then as wonder reawakened in the mortal lands, the nobles returned and challenged them through force of arms to take their proper places as humble subjects once more.

These are the commoners, changelings of diverse kith and deed. Politics, Courts and goals divide them, but one thing binds the commoners together: the fact that they are not of the noble kith of sidhe. Though a commoner may have a title, he's still baser in the eyes of many purple bloods and an uppity pretender to some among his own kind. Commoners thus walk a fine line between honoring the traditions of the distant past and looking towards the promise of change in the future.

The Making of a Common Fae

Don't make the mistake of thinking most commoners are toy makers, bakers or sidhe toadies. Certainly many of them are salt of the earth types, practical in outlook and dedicated to tradition. But just as many are interested in consensus and peaceful reforms, and these folk often work through the Parliament of Dreams, where titled commoners have 20% of the votes and untitled commoners have 38%. Of course, the commoners also have their share of anarchists and terrorists who'd just as soon boot the sidhe back to Arcadia. Other commoners are talented crafters, musicians, mercenaries, healers, teachers and leaders. Among all the commoner kith are many heroes and cowards, sinners and saints.

In terms of numbers, the majority of Kithain are commoners. In fact, they make up about 95% of the changelings in Concordia. The problem with this is that the sidhe population, a mere 5%, controls 42% of the seats in the Parliament of Dreams. Moreover, sidhe monarchs sit on every Concordian throne save one, that of the Kingdom of the Feathered Snake, where the troll Duke Topaz has an uneasy rule. Many commoners are actually quite content with sidhe leadership; the Shining Host is naturally impressive and certainly has the inborn ability to rule. On the other hand, the commoners have lived through the assorted revolutions and ages of enlightened mortal politics. Some of the principles of democracy and equality have rubbed off on them. Too bad the sidhe don't buy into that whole equal rights for all scene.

The Matter of Titled Commoners

Not surprisingly, outlooks on titled commoners are as varied as the Kithain themselves. Many sidhe and not a few commoners take traditional, conservative perspectives on the issue. Moderates who straddle the fence are the second largest group, while extremists at either end of the political spectrum are the smallest minority.

Sidhe

Sidhe Traditionalists have three basic rules relative to titled commoners. Rule one: Once a commoner, always a commoner. Rule two: The sidhe, not the commoners, are meant to rule. Rule three: If you're foolish enough to have doubts, see rules one and two.

Sidhe Reformers, on the other hand, judge people as individuals; if someone has a title, they presume the person deserves it until

she proves otherwise. For now, sidhe do hold most of the ruling positions; however, they can't govern without the will of the people, and that means the support of the commoners. By giving titles to deserving commoners, these sidhe believe they can maintain that strong support.

Sidhe Modernists take a practical tact. They acknowledge that this isn't the ancient world; Traditionalist sidhe and the stodgier commoners need to get with the program and realize that all Kithain are in the same leaky boat on a sea of Banality. Clinging to the distant past will get everyone in trouble.

For more information on sidhe political viewpoints, see **Nobles: The Shining Host**.

Untitled Commoners

Like the sidhe, untitled commoners are sharply divided on the issue of their own people having titles.

Conservatives think having a title might be okay, if it was given for some extraordinary reason such as bravery in battle. But the bottom line is that commoners aren't cut out to be rulers. That's the sidhe's bailiwick, and commoners need to stay out of it and stop being upstarts.

Moderates acknowledge that the sidhe are meant to be the lords and ladies of all the fae; it's been that way since the dawn of time, after all. On the other hand, the ancient ancestors of the Kithain couldn't have predicted events such as the Shattering and the way commoners took up the reins of command. What's needed in these modern times, the moderates say, is a balance between the sidhe, who have the inborn ability to rule wisely and well, and the commoners, who know far more about the mortal lands. Titled commoners can help bridge the gap between commoner kith and noble sidhe.

Radicals have a simple and predictable rhetoric: Commoners are equal to the sidhe in every way, and just as likely to make good rulers. Keeping the commoners down is criminal and must be stopped at once, by any means necessary.

For more information on commoner politics, see **Chapter Two: Natural Orders**.

The Horse's Mouth

So how do the titled commoners themselves feel? Most are accepting and loyal to the Parliament of Dreams and the sidhe, yet low key about the whole affair; they realize they walk a tightrope between denying their roots and using their power for the good of all Kithain. A few are despots. Even fewer keep their titles secret. Scholars of several noble houses have pointed out that no commoner has ever refused a title offered. This might well be true, though why would any sidhe ever admit to witnessing such a refusal?

How to Use This Book

The Fool's Luck: The Way of the Commoner is an overview of the history, politics and social lives of commoners. It's a compilation of useful facts, long-kept secrets and an inside look at the lives of rank and file Kithain. This book also offers a few basic facts on changelings in other parts of the world. Storytellers should become familiar with the contents, and ideally, pick and choose what they'd like to use in their chronicles. **The Fool's Luck** will also be useful to players wanting to get an idea of the commoner mindset. Chapters include:

Summer Molt: A Faery's Tale, a story that sets up the connective thread throughout this sourcebook;

Introduction: Not to the the Manor Born, a brief summary of this book and some suggestions on further reading and ways to set mood for a commoner chronicle;

Chapter One: To Victors, the Spoils, a down in the trenches look at the many long years of commoner history. This chapter also includes a detailed accounting of the years between the Shattering and the Resurgence, along with many vivid tales of the Accordance War;

Chapter Two: Natural Orders, an in-depth guide to the politics and society of the commoner fae, as well as their outlooks on Gallain and Prodigals;

Chapter Three: Flesh and Bone, numerous suggestions for players and Storytellers on creating commoner characters. This chapter includes new Abilities, Merits, Flaws and an Art for commoners, Metamorphosis;

Chapter Four: Harvest of Dreams, material that is meant for the Storyteller's eyes only. This chapter has general suggestions on running a commoner chronicle as well as some potent story seeds to involve commoner characters;

Chapter Five: Names, Faces and Places, a gallery of commoner heroes and villains that can add sugar and spice, or piss and vinegar, to your chronicle;

Chapter Six: Cavalcade of Commoners, a selection of several commoner templates that can inspire players or serve the Storyteller in a pinch; and

Appendix: Piskies and Spriggan, two new commoner kith.

Theme

The overarching theme of this book is the maelstrom of tradition and modernity in strife. Conservative commoners like the protection of the noble sidhe and enjoy whatever rights they're granted; they put their trust in the sidhe's innate sense of fairness and noblesse oblige. Moderates want equal rights for all, administered by whoever is best for the task; logically this has fallen to sidhe in the past, but the future may change all that. David ap Ardry ap Gwydion, the Commoner King, has disappeared, and no one knows what may follow. Radicals want the usurper nobles dethroned, pure and simple; after all, where were all those fancy sidhe when the going got tough in the Shattering? For now, cooler heads prevail, and neither the arch-conservatives nor the radicals can get a clear upper hand over the moderates. But with the disappearance of the High King, what will happen to the steady peace? Traditional commoners may side with their respective nobles while the radicals see this as a perfect time for revolution. The moderates might well be caught in the middle, with darkness on one side and shadow on the other. The future is hopelessly murky for the commoners at present.

Mood

Most commoners want to maintain an even keel, and often this translates into a mood of false optimism. Things are better than ever, really! Are times as unpleasant as in the Accordance War? No. Do all nobles keep power exclusively for themselves? No. But there are more than a few nobles, such as the Beltaine Blade, who would shed few tears if the commoners were completely