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## A Field Guide to the Irish Fantastic; A Study in Concept Art

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# FIELD GUIDE TO THE IRISH FANTASTIC

WRITTEN AND ILLUSTRATED BY ELIZABETH GOSS

# FIELD GUIDE TO THE IRISH FANTASTIC

WRITTEN AND ILLUSTRATED BY ELIZABETH GOSS

THERE IS NO DOUBT AT ALL BUT THAT THERE'S  
THE SAME SORT OF THINGS IN OTHER COUNTRIES;  
BUT YOU HEAR MORE ABOUT THEM IN THESE  
PARTS BECAUSE THE IRISH DO BE MORE FAMILIAR  
IN TALKING OF THEM.

-LADY GREGORY

CONGRATULATIONS ON YOUR ACQUISITION OF FIELD GUIDE TO THE  
IRISH FANTASTIC. THIS BOOK CONTAINS THE VERY LATEST  
INFORMATION ON BOTH THE INDIVIDUAL FAIRIES AND TROOP FAIRIES  
CURRENTLY POPULATING IRELAND. WE ARE CERTAIN YOU WILL FIND THIS  
BOOK TO BE AN ESSENTIAL PART OF ANY JOURNEY TO THE EMERALD  
ISLE AND WISH YOU THE BEST OF LUCK IN YOUR TRAVELS. WE WOULD  
LIKE TO TAKE A MOMENT TO REMIND YOU THAT THIS BOOK IS NOT  
DESIGNED TO BE USED AS A WEAPON AND WE ARE NOT RESPONSIBLE  
FOR ANY DAMAGES YOU OR YOUR COPY SUSTAIN IN THE FIELD. HAPPY  
TRAILS!

-sincerely, the editors

# The BANSHEE

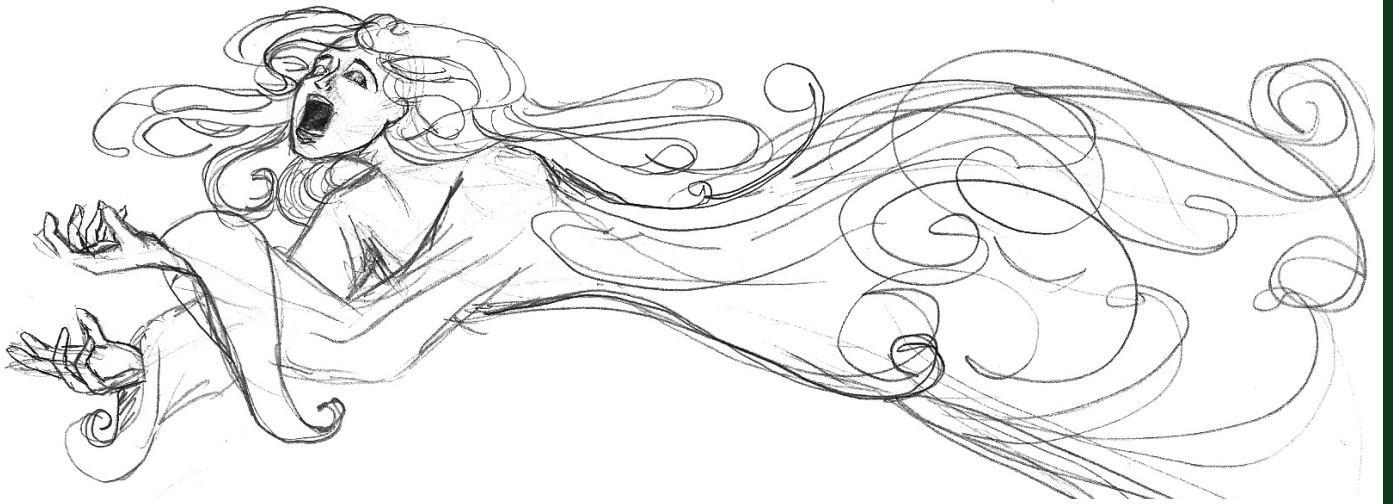
**ABOUT:** ARGUABLY THE RAREST OF THE IRISH FEY, THE BANSHEE, OR BEAN SÍ, IS A LONELY FAIRY WHOSE MOURNFUL CRIES HAVE BEEN HEARD IN ALMOST EVERY CORNER OF IRELAND. THESE SORROWFUL SPECTERS SERVE AS THE DEATH HERALDS FOR THE MOST ANCIENT AND NOBEL OF IRISH FAMILIES. THERE IS GREAT DEBATE OVER WHICH EXACT FAMILIES QUALIFY FOR BONDS WITH BANSHEES, BUT IT IS LIKELY THAT NO MORE THAN 10 FAMILIES HAVE EVER BEEN CONSIDERED WORTHY. WHEN THE LAST MEMBER OF ONE OF THESE BLOODLINES DIES, THE BANSHEE IS RELEASED FROM HER DUTIES AND, USUALLY, DISAPPEARS. A FEW BANSHEE, HOWEVER, HAVE RESOLVED TO CRY FOR THEIR APPOINTED FAMILIES FOR ALL TIME. ALTHOUGH THE ORIGIN OF THESE EXCLUSIVELY FEMALE FAIRIES IS UNKNOWN, IT HAS BEEN SPECULATED THAT THEY ARE PROFESSIONAL CRIERS GIFTED WITH LIFE AFTER DEATH TO CONTINUE SERVING THE FAMILIES THEY LOVE SO DEARLY.

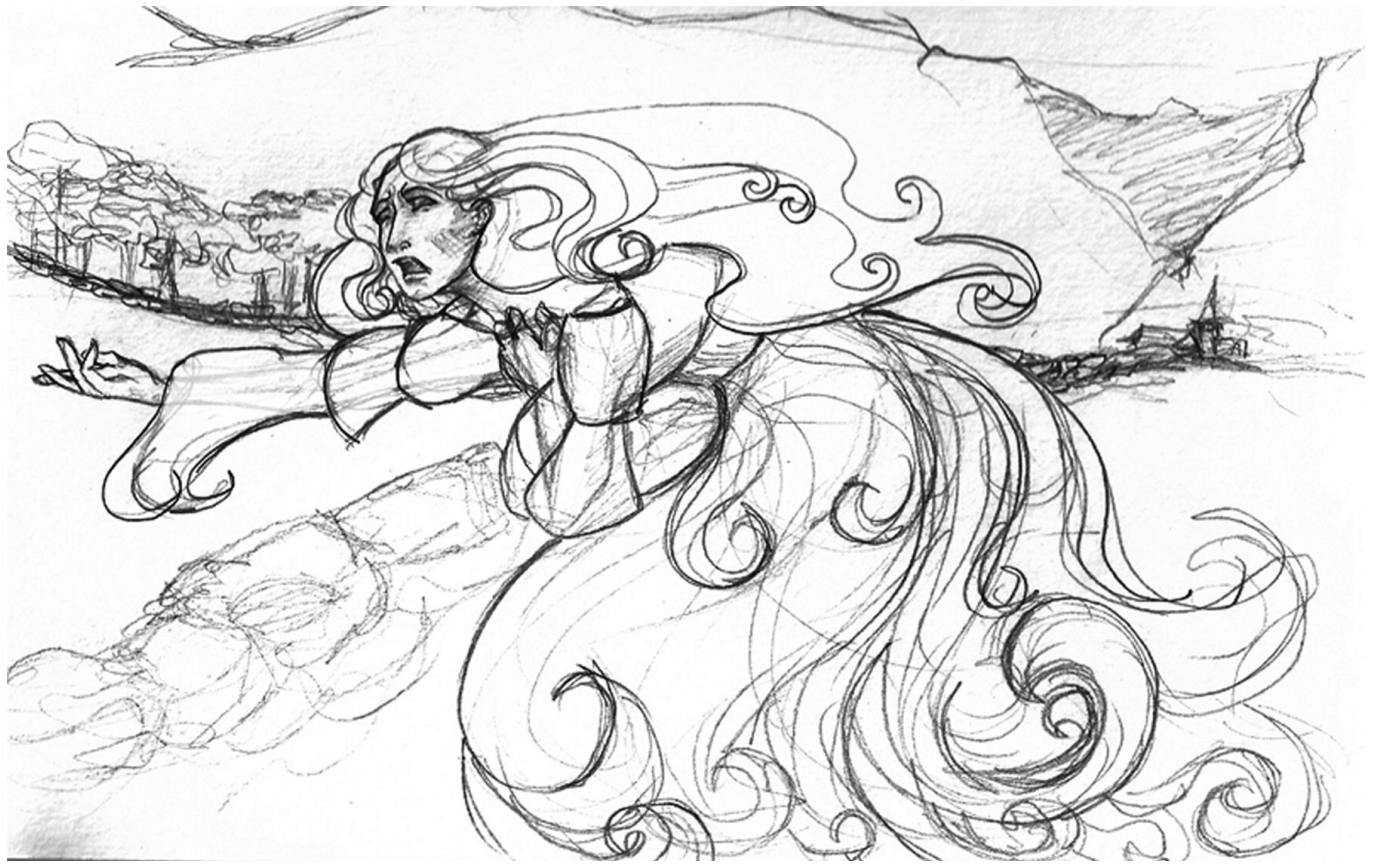
**IF YOU MEET ONE:** IDENTIFYING A BANSHEE IS RELATIVELY SIMPLE. YOU ARE LIKELY TO HEAR THIS FAIRY BEFORE YOU SEE HER. SHE ALWAYS APPEARS AS A PALE WEEPING WOMAN WITH A MISTY FLOATING QUALITY ABOUT HER PERSON. SHE MAY APPEAR YOUNG OR OLD AND USUALLY GIVE OFF A SENSE OF PROFOUND CALM.

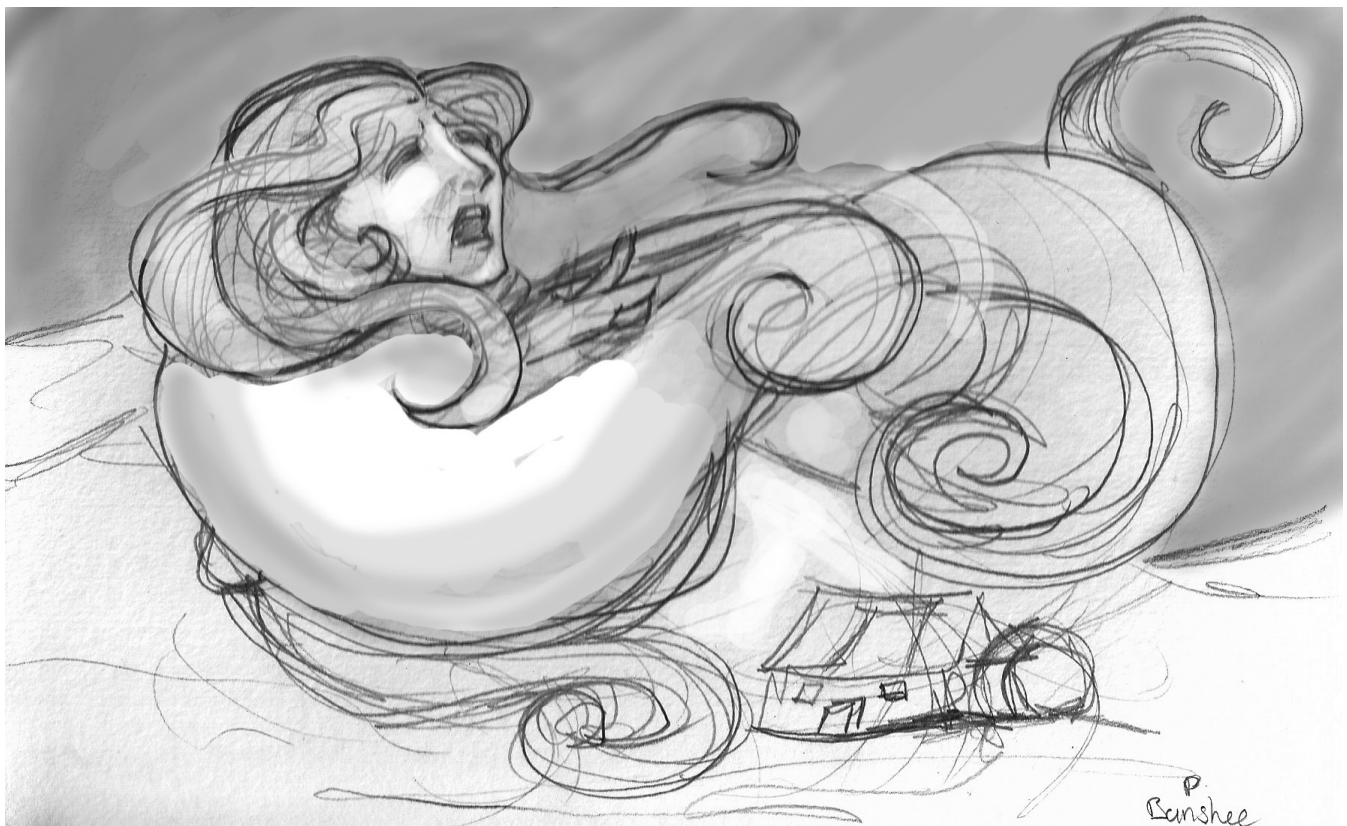
IF YOU CHOOSE TO APPROACH A BANSHEE, BE SURE TO NOTE HER MOOD. A BANSHEE FOUND CRYING AND COMbing HER HAIR IS IN A GENTLE STATE OF MIND AND MAY BE SAFELY ENGAGED.

IF HOWEVER, THE SPECTER APPEARS TO BE WASHING SOMETHING, YOU SHOULD LEAVE HER ALONE. ALTHOUGH THE BANSHEE IS A PEACEFUL CREATURE BY NATURE, SHE CAN BE UNDERSTANDABLY IRRITABLE WHEN WASHING THE BLOODY CLOTHING OF HER DYING CHARGE.











i would  
stand bare  
footed in  
the snow  
listening  
to the tune  
she had, so  
nice and  
calm and so  
mournful.

-old simon





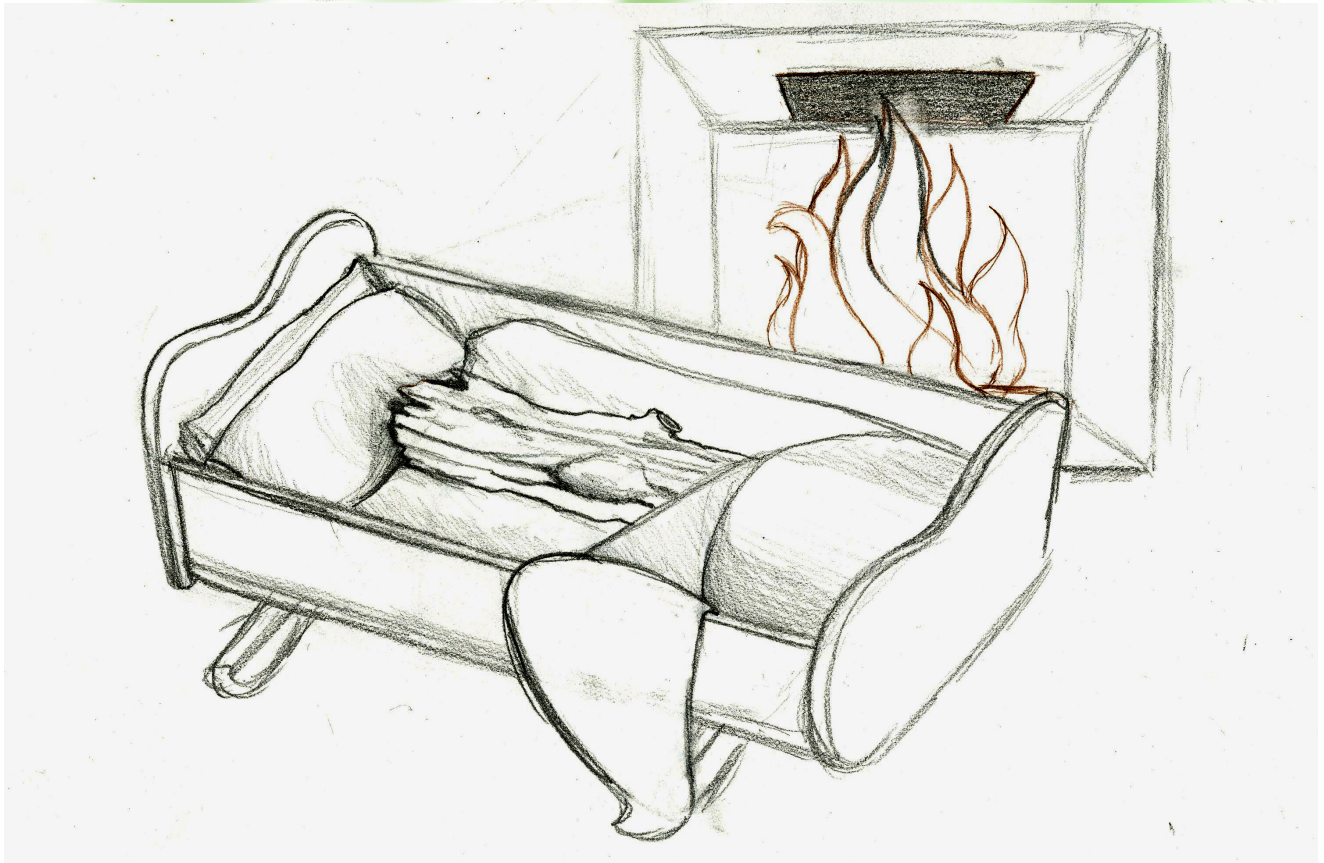
# CHANGLINGS

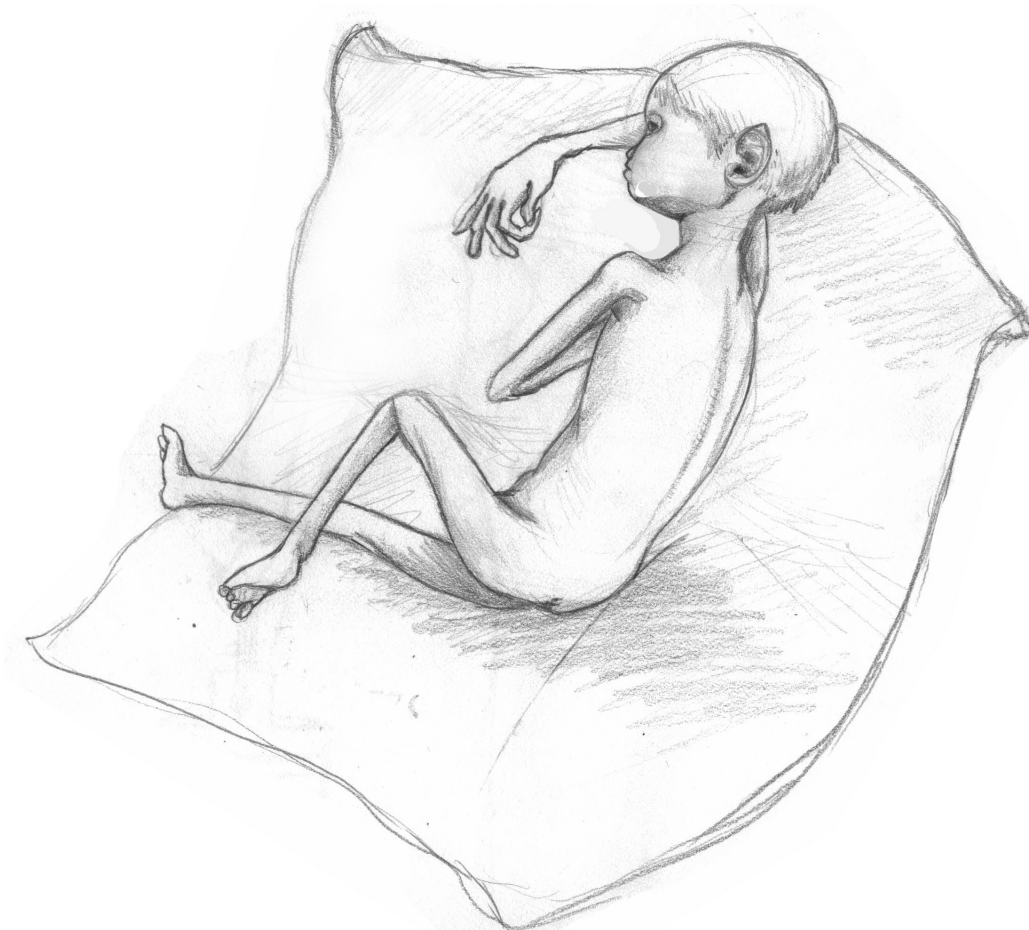
**ABOUT:** when a human being is particularly beautiful or talented, the fairies will often steal him away and leave a substitute, or changling, in his place. enchanted objects, stunted fairy children, and elderly fairies may all serve as replacements for "taken" humans, but no matter what they may actually be, changlings always behave the same way. sour tempered, disobedient, loud, aloof, and argumentative, these fairies bring nothing but sorrow to the families they join. in addition to having unpleasant personalities, changlings are notoriously ugly and unlucky. a family struggling to deal with a changling may go to extreme measures to remove the creature. one of the most common changling cures is to poison the fairy with foxglove. although this treatment may be horrifying, if a changling can be driven from the home, the person it replaced will return. most families, however, wait for the changling to die on its own.

**IF YOU MEET ONE:** changlings are masters of disguise and should be approached with caution, but they are not dangerous to travelers. if however, you stay in a town where changlings are common, it would be best to take precautions against being taken by the local fairies. children are especially susceptible to being taken, so if you are traveling with a young person, be sure to have him wear something made of iron.









AND IN THE  
PLACE IT WAS  
BURRIED  
THEY FOUND  
NOTHING BUT  
THREE PLANKS  
OF WOOD. . .

-MRS. FEENEY







# The DULLAHAN

**ABOUT:** the DULLAHAN, OR GAN CEANN, is the most gruesome of the Irish fairies. A collector of souls, he takes orders only from Death himself and usually appears in the form of a headless man on an enormous black horse. The DULLAHAN carries his rotten disembodied head with him as a lantern and uses a human spine as a whip. He is also known to bring a bucket of blood with him as he rides. Anyone unfortunate enough to have this blood thrown into his face is doomed to die. In some parts of Ireland, the DULLAHAN has been seen driving a silent black coach and following the cries of the Banshee to the homes of his victims. This master of death has only one weakness: gold. Where most fairies are terrified of iron, the DULLAHAN lives in fear of pins, coins, and other gold objects.

**IF YOU MEET ONE:** realistically, if the DULLAHAN has been sent out to fetch your soul, there is no real hope of escape. If, however, you just happen to end up in this fairy's way, you do have a reasonable chance of surviving the encounter. When you see a DULLAHAN, get down on the ground and cover your eyes. Being headless, the DULLAHAN has a particular dislike for people with good eyesight and will strike out your eyes with his whip if you give him the opportunity. When traveling in DULLAHAN territory, make sure you always have something made of gold on your person, and be sure to stay inside on the Celtic feast days.









AND he  
FOLLOWED  
the BOAT A  
GREAT WAY,  
BUT she SAID  
NOTHING. BUT  
A GOLD PIN  
THAT WAS IN  
her HAIR FELL  
OUT AND INTO  
the SEA. . .

then it  
disappeared.

-MARY MORAN





# THE GREYMAN

ABOUT: THE GREY MAN, SOMETIMES CALLED FAR LIACH, APPEARS AS A MAN WRAPPED IN THICK FOG OR MIST. HE RELISHES HUMAN SUFFERING AND OFTEN VENTURES INTO CITIES TO FEED ON CHIMNEY SMOKE AND SPREAD PESTILENCE. HE HAS A SPECIAL FONDNESS FOR PORTS AND, AFTER WREAKING HIS FILL OF HAVOC IN THE CITY, THE GREY MAN WILL OFTEN HEAD OUT TO SEA AND USE HIS FOGGY CLOAK TO HIDE ROCKS FROM INCOMING SHIPS. IN THE COUNTRY, THIS NASTY FAIRY SPOILS FOOD STORED FOR WINTER AND POISONS ANIMALS WITH HIS FOUL BREATH. IN SOME PARTS OF IRELAND, GREYMAN IS SUCH A FEARED CREATURE THAT SPECIAL PACHS HAVE BEEN CREATED TO ENCOURAGE HIM TO TRAVEL AWAY FROM HUMANS.

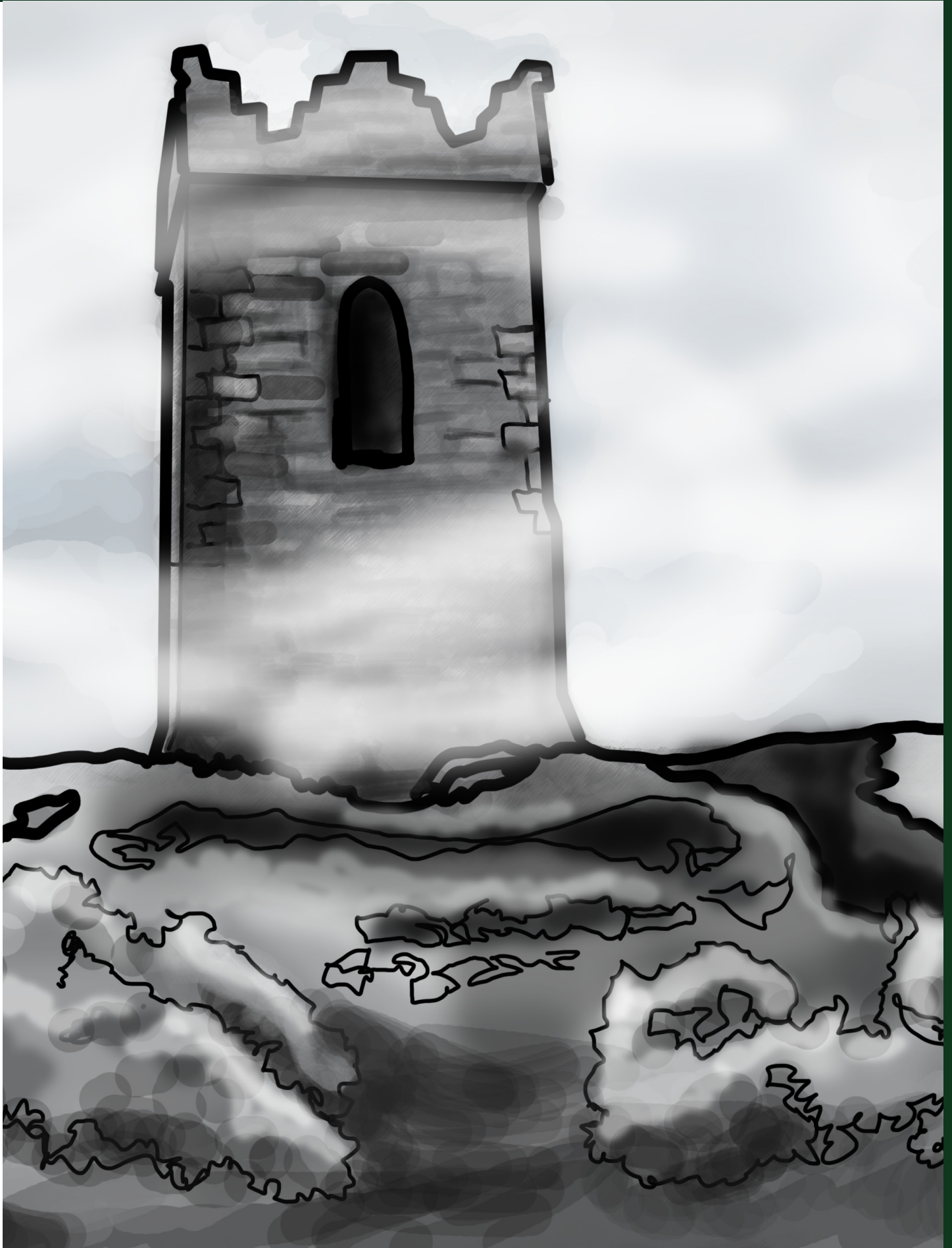
IF YOU MEET ONE: THE GREY MAN IS A VERY MEAN SPIRITED CREATURE AND CAN BE DANGEROUS. HE IS DIFFICULT TO AVOID BECAUSE OF HIS SIMILARITY OF COMMON FOG, BUT YOU CAN USUALLY TELL WHEN THE GREY MAN IS NEARBY BECAUSE OF THE SCENT OF DEATH LINGERING IN THE AIR. SAYING "GOD BLESS YOU" MAY DRIVE THE FAIRY OFF FOR A SHORT TIME, BUT HE NEVER LEAVES FOR LONG. WHEN IN FAR LIACH COUNTRY, SPRINKLE HOLY WATER ON ANYTHING THAT CAN MILDEW OR ROT AND YOUR BELONGINGS WILL BE PROTECTED.











EVERYONE OF  
THEM WAS BLACK  
AND NOT FIT FOR  
EATING. FAR  
LIATH HAD  
TOUCHED THEM  
AND HE HADN'T  
MISSED A SINGLE  
POTATO.

-JOHNNY AHERNE





# The Leprechaun

**ABOUT:** widely considered to be the patron fairy of Ireland, the Leprechaun is the shoe maker of the fairy world. appearing in the form of a small grouchy man, the Leprechaun can usually be found smoking a long pipe and working earnestly on beautiful leather goods and shoes. they tend to be foul-mouthed, a condition not helped by their love of beer and whiskey, and high spirited.

Remarkably clever, these plucky fairies are in charge of guarding the gold of other fey creatures and they take great pleasure in outwitting humans who would steal it from them. when not gainfully employed in shoe making, leprechauns have a tendency to cause chaos on local farms. some of their favorite pass times include stealing horses, robbing wine cellars, and breaking places. while they may be mischievous, leprechauns are also very honorable creatures and they reward humans almost as frequently as they trick them.

**IF YOU MEET ONE:** leprechauns are not dangerous, but they are tricky. solitary by nature, leprechauns believe that humans are silly and shallow, a perspective not helped by humanity's continuous pursuit of leprechaun gold. your chances of actually running into a leprechaun are slim, but if you do happen upon one, be polite and try to discover if he needs any help. offering to do a favor for a leprechaun without expecting a reward is very good luck, but be careful not to promise anything before you know what you are agreeing to.











they'll NOT  
do you much  
harm if you  
leave them  
ALONE.  
-MARTIN KING



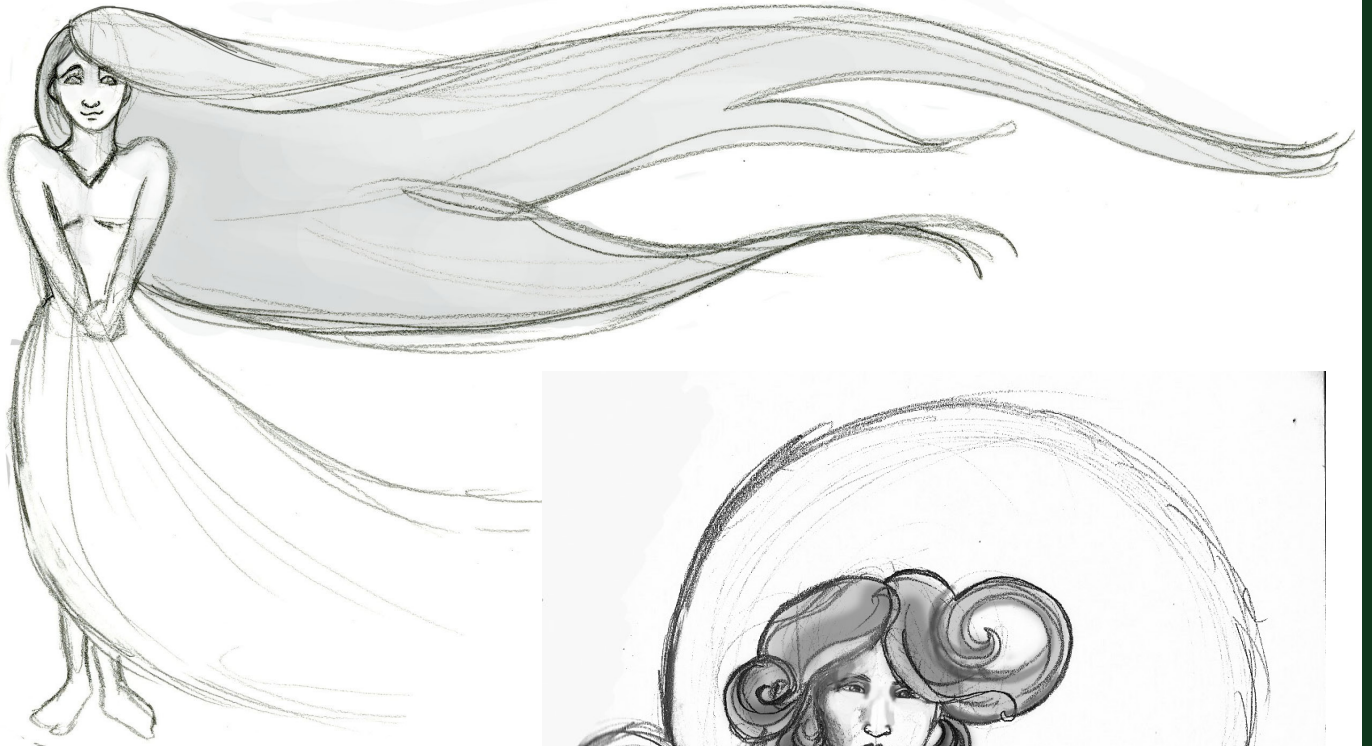


# LIANHAN shee

**ABOUT:** the LIANHAN shee is a DEMON of desire; A CRUEL COQUETTE who plays with MORTAL EMOTIONS FOR HER OWN AMUSEMENT. this BRUTAL FAIRY ASSUMES WHATEVER FORM IS MOST DESIRABLE TO HER INTENDED VICTIM AND THEN BEGINS A LONG AND THOROUGH SEDUCTION. she is BEAUTIFUL, GENTLE, LOVING, AND DEADLY. the ARRANGEMENT IS SIMPLE. if the LIANHAN shee's INITIAL ADVANCES ARE REBUFFED, she BECOME the DEVOTED SLAVE OF the MORTAL who spurned her. however, if her FLIRTATIONS ARE ACCEPTED, the MORTAL GROWS MORE AND MORE DEVOTED TO her UNTIL he IS CONSUMED BY LOVE AND DIES. ARTISTS ARE ESPECIALLY SUSCEPTIBLE TO her CHARMS AND MANY A MUSICIAN HAS WITHERED AWAY SINGING OF his LOVE FOR the LIANHAN shee.

**if YOU MEET ONE:** the LIANHAN shee is DEFINITELY A FAIRY TO STAY AWAY FROM AND SHOULD BE CONSIDERED VERY DANGEROUS. COMMON SENSE IS THE GREATEST DEFENSE AGAINST this FAIRY; if YOU MEET A WOMAN who seems TOO GOOD TO BE TRUE, she PROBABLY IS. FORTUNATELY, there IS ONLY ONE LIANHAN shee IN ALL the WORLD so ENCOUNTERS WITH her ARE RARE.



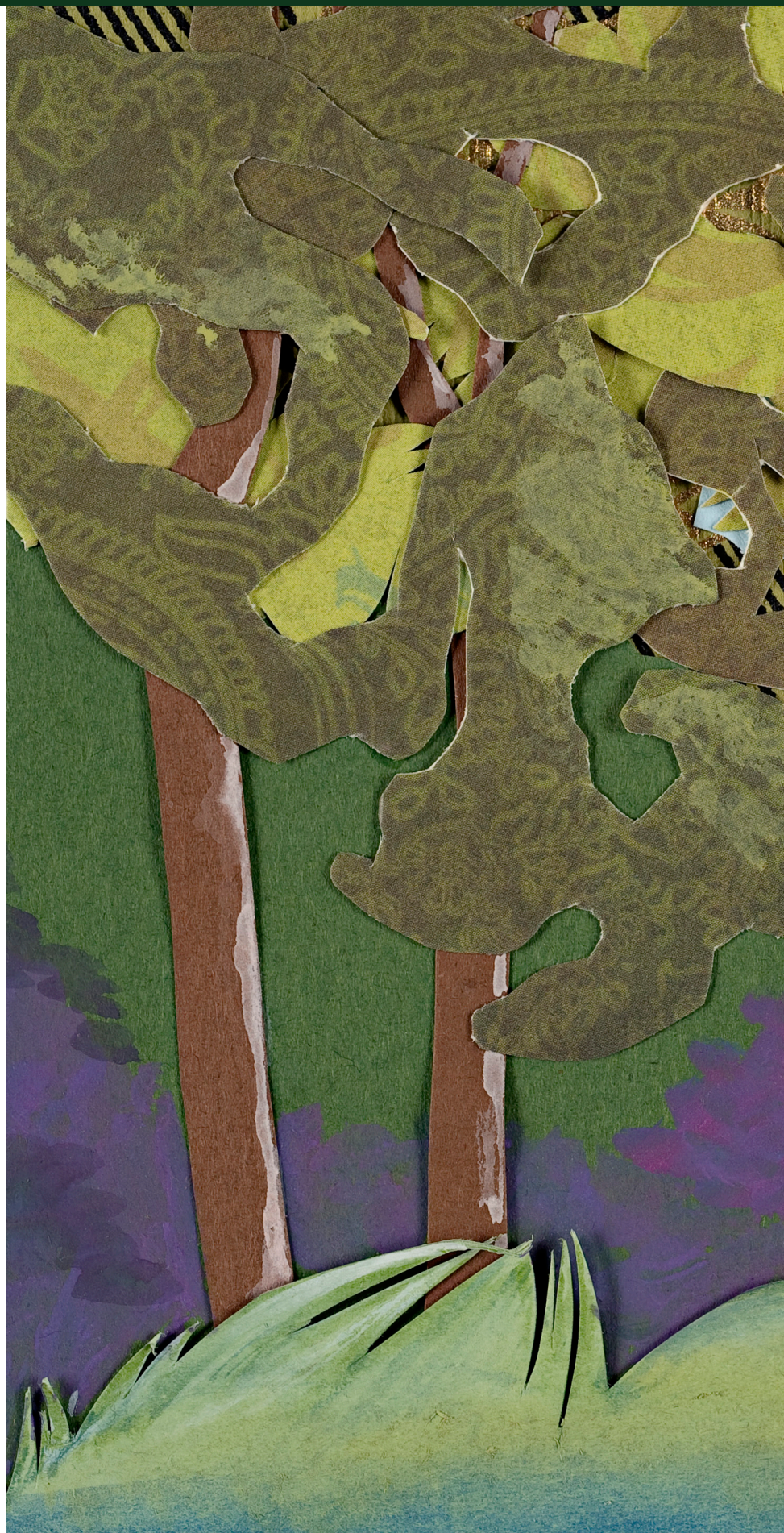






the  
HANDSOME  
they like,  
AND the  
GOOD  
DANCERS.

-MR. SAGGAARTON







# MERROWS

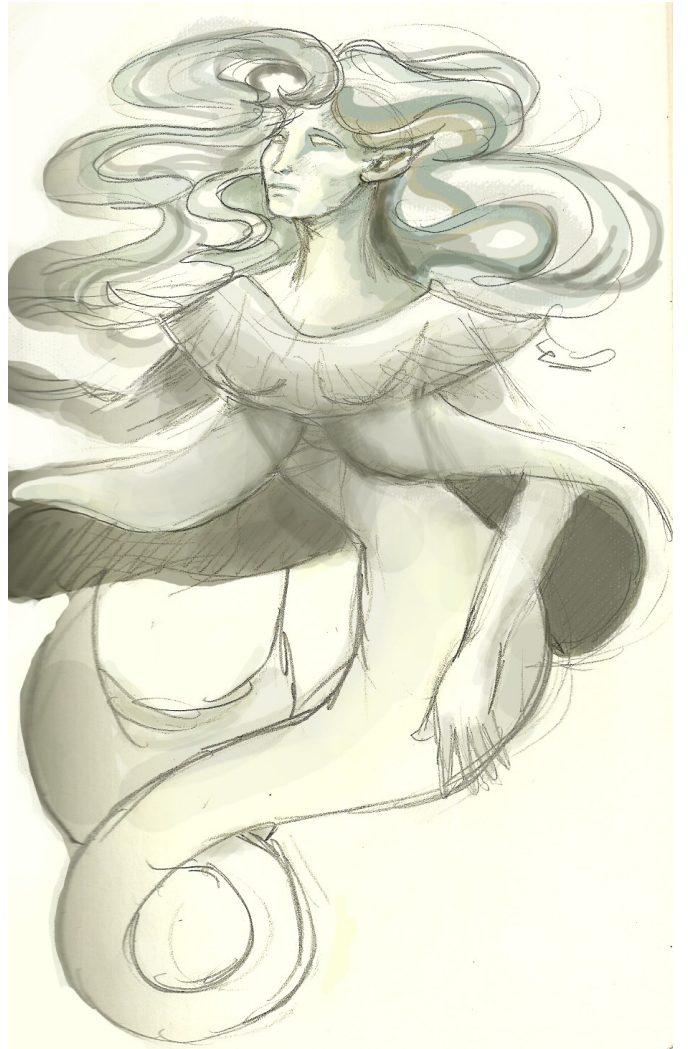
**ABOUT:** MERROWS HAVE TWO GENDERS AND CAN BE FOUND IN GREAT NUMBERS ALONG THE COASTS OF IRELAND. THE MALES ARE UGLY BUT JOVIAL AND ARE BRINGERS OF GOOD LUCK. THEIR LOVELY FEMALE COUNTERPARTS, HOWEVER, ARE SURE SIGNS OF STORMS AND DELIGHT IN TAUNTING SAILORS. FEMALE MERROWS ARE VOLUPTUOUS WOMEN WITH FISHY TAILS. CALLED MARA-WARRAS OR MAIGHDEAN MCHARAS, THESE SENSUAL FAIRIES ARE FAMOUS FOR THEIR VANITY. THEY SOMETIMES WEAR RED CAPS AND MAY SPEND LONG HOURS ADMIRING THEMSELVES ON SUNNY ROCKS. IF A MERROW'S RED CAP IS CAPTURED BY A MORTAL MAN, SHE WILL BECOME HUMAN, FORGET HER LIFE IN THE WAVES, AND BE HIS OBEДИENT WIFE UNTIL THE END OF HER DAYS. UNFORTUNATELY HER HEART NEVER SETTLES INTO LIFE ON LAND AND IF SHE EVER DISCOVERS HER CAP, SHE WILL ABANDON HER MORTAL FAMILY WITHOUT A BACKWARD GLANCE.

**IF YOU MEET ONE:** MALE MERROWS ARE CLEVER AND ENGAGING FAIRIES WHO LOVE TO HAVE A GOOD TIME. ENCOUNTERS WITH THEM ARE VERY REWARDING AND SHOULD BE SOUGHT OUT IF POSSIBLE. TO MAKE A GOOD IMPRESSION ON A MALE MERROW, ALL YOU NEED DO IS PRESENT HIM WITH A KEG OF BRANDY.

FEMALE MERROWS ARE RATHER HAUGHTY AND CAN BE UNPLEASANT, BUT THEY ARE MORE MISCHIEVOUS THAN MALICIOUS. THEY ARE HIGHLY RECEPTIVE TO FLATTERY AND WILL OFTEN PROVIDE VALUABLE DIRECTIONS AND INFORMATION IN RETURN FOR SWEET TALK.









there is NO  
LUCK if YOU  
MEET A  
MERMAID  
AND YOU  
OUT AT SEA  
BUT STORMS  
WILL COME OR  
SOME ILL WILL  
happen.

-JOHN CORLEY





# The pooka

**ABOUT:** the pooka is a remarkable creature with the ability to shape-shift. sometimes it appears as an eagle or a black goat, sometimes it is a goblin or a donkey, but its preferred form is that of a great and terrible horse. the pooka smells of sulfur and it speaks irish and english in a deep booming voice.

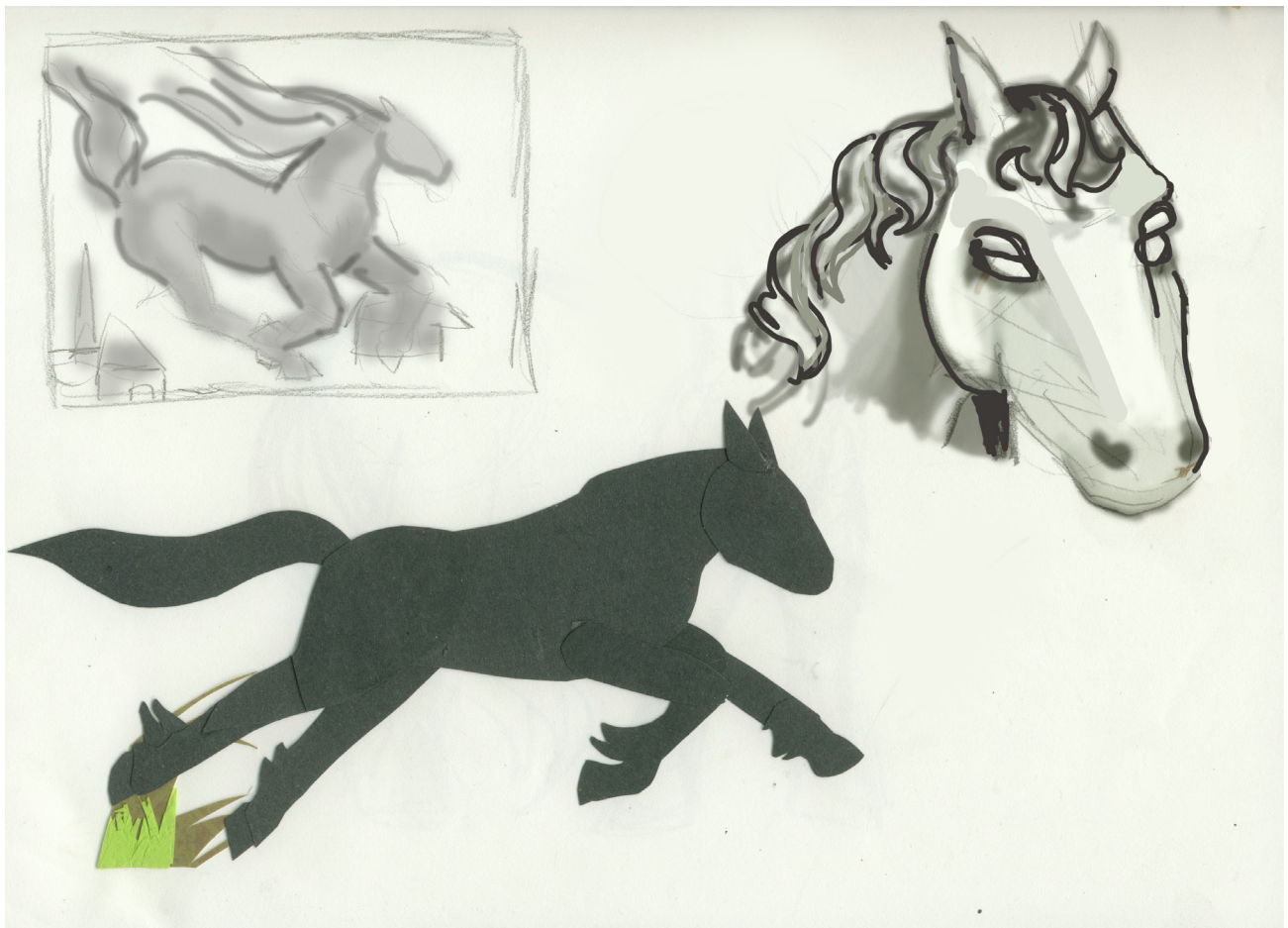
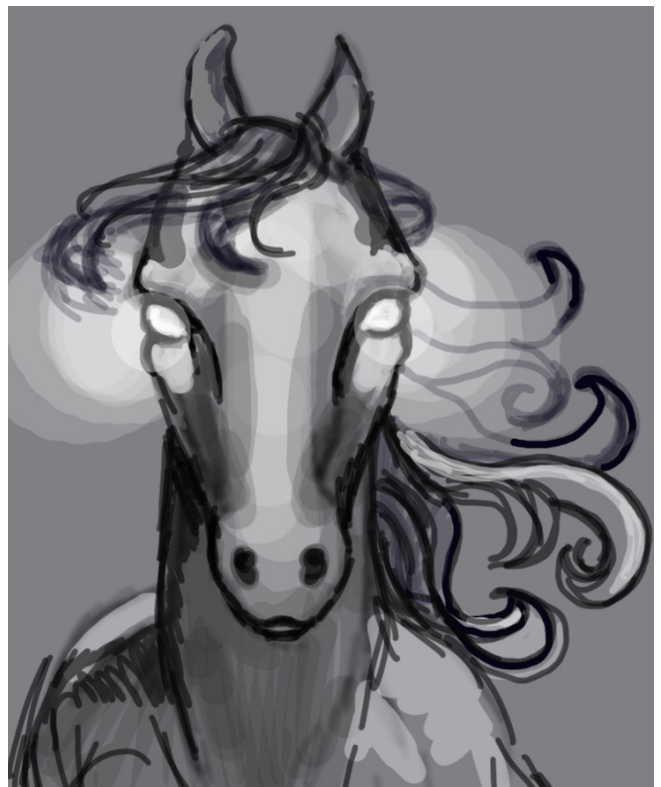
nothing pleases this fairy more than dashing back and forth across the whole of ireland with an unfortunate human being clinging to his back. these unlucky people either die of fright, or if they survive to make multipul journeys, waste away from lack of sleep. the pooka causes insomnia, eats crops, destroys land and buildings, and loves every minute of the chaos. long ago, the pooka swore an oath to brian boru, the high king of ireland, to never harm an irishman or harrY a good christian. in the years without the good king's influence, the pooka has partially forgotten his promise. he still menaces the irish people, but he mostly focuses his attention on drunks and the cruel hearted.

**IF YOU MEET ONE:** interacting with the pooka is not for the faint of heart, but if you are daring, he can be a powerful positive force. the pooka often gives advice in return for offerings and has the gift of prophecy. as with all irish fey, however, it is important to be polite when speaking to the pooka. a rude human may well find himself carried off into the the night or worse.











every night  
she went  
out and she  
got thin and  
tired like.  
-NORA WHELAN



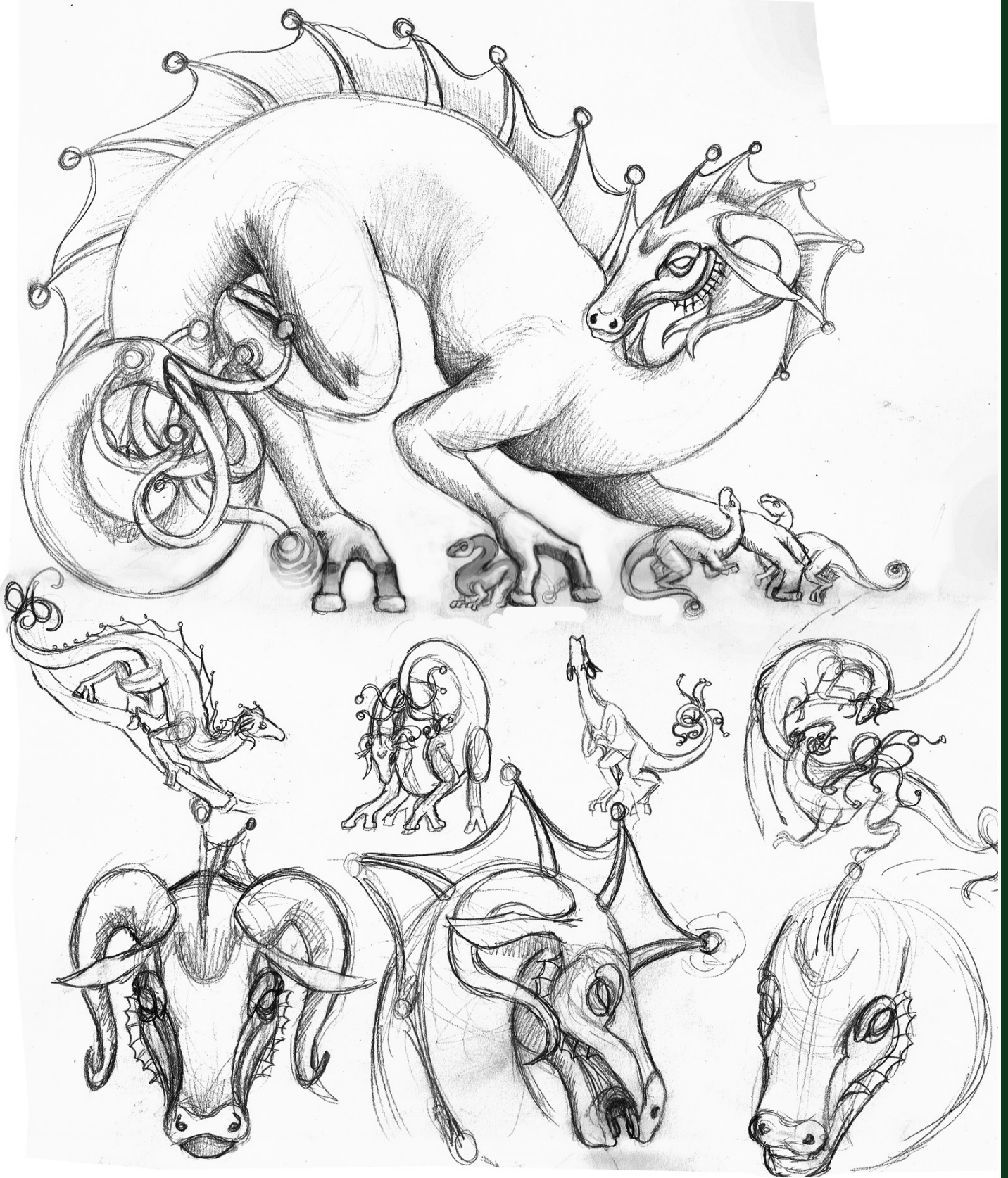


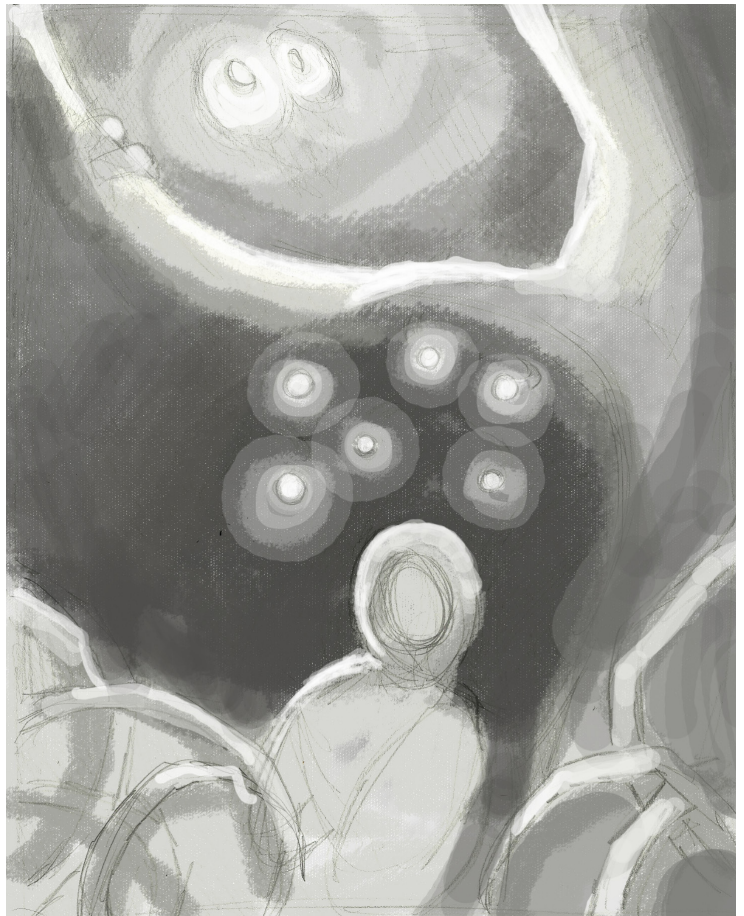
# will-o-the wisps

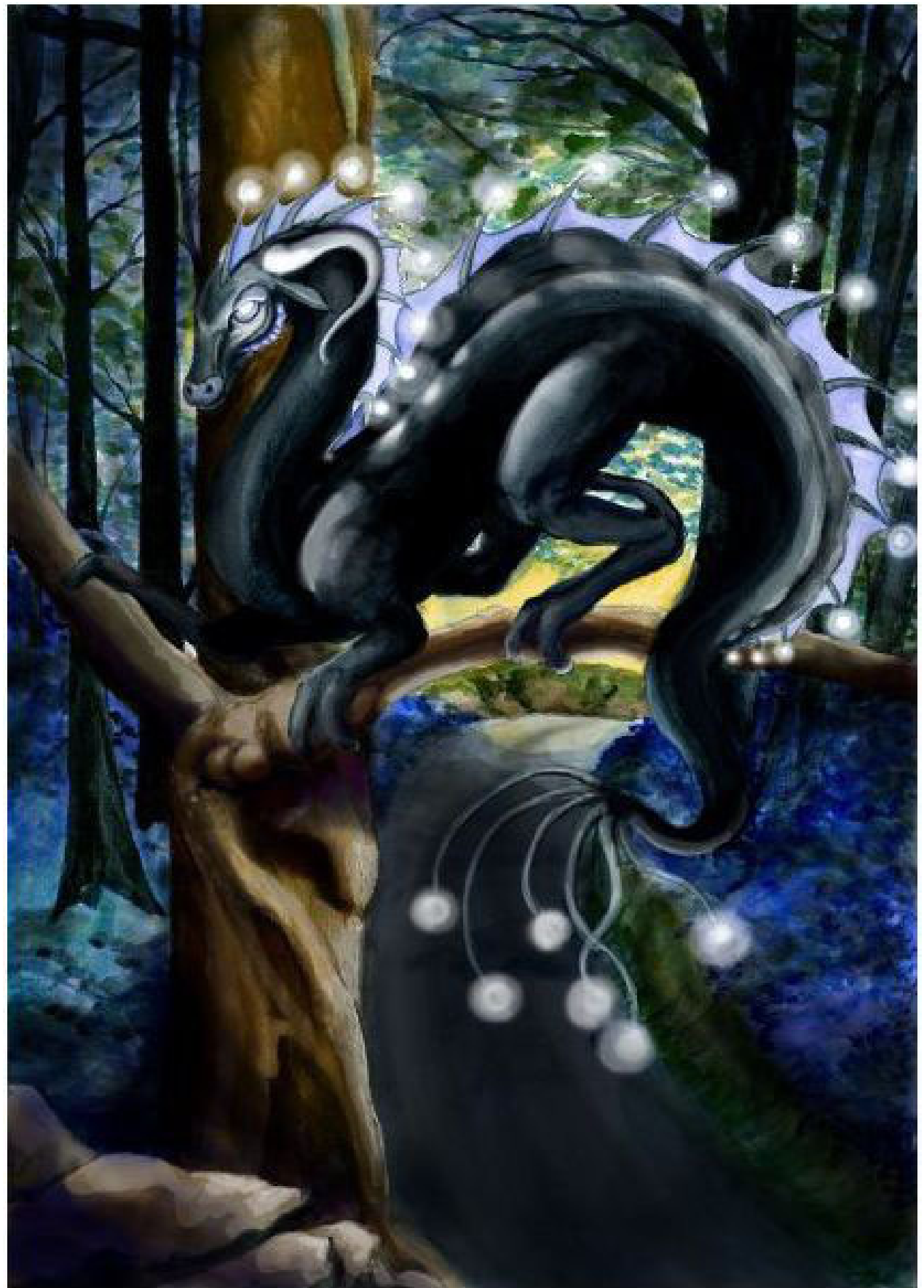
**ABOUT:** the will-o-the wisps is a gentle and reclusive creature. often confused with the sheerie, evil lights on land and water that lead people astray, the will-o-the wisps appears as a group of floating lights and helps travelers find their way in the dark. the will-o-the wisps has never been seen during the daytime and this field guide is the first to include images of what the creature actually looks like. they are quiet social animals who feed on swamp weeds and grasses. their lights always appear in densely wooded areas at times of great need and are helpful to all who can see them. while the reason behind the will-o-the wisps's interest in aiding human beings is unknown, their efforts are deeply appreciated.

**IF YOU MEET ONE:** it is important to be able to distinguish between a will-o-the wisps and a sheerie. the simplest difference to identify at a distance is that the sheerie make a high pitched whining sound while the will-o-the wisps are entirely silent. will-o-the wisps are also known to emit a light that is both brighter and bluer than the sickly corpse-light of the sheerie. will-o-the wisps are not dangerous and are safe to approach and follow.



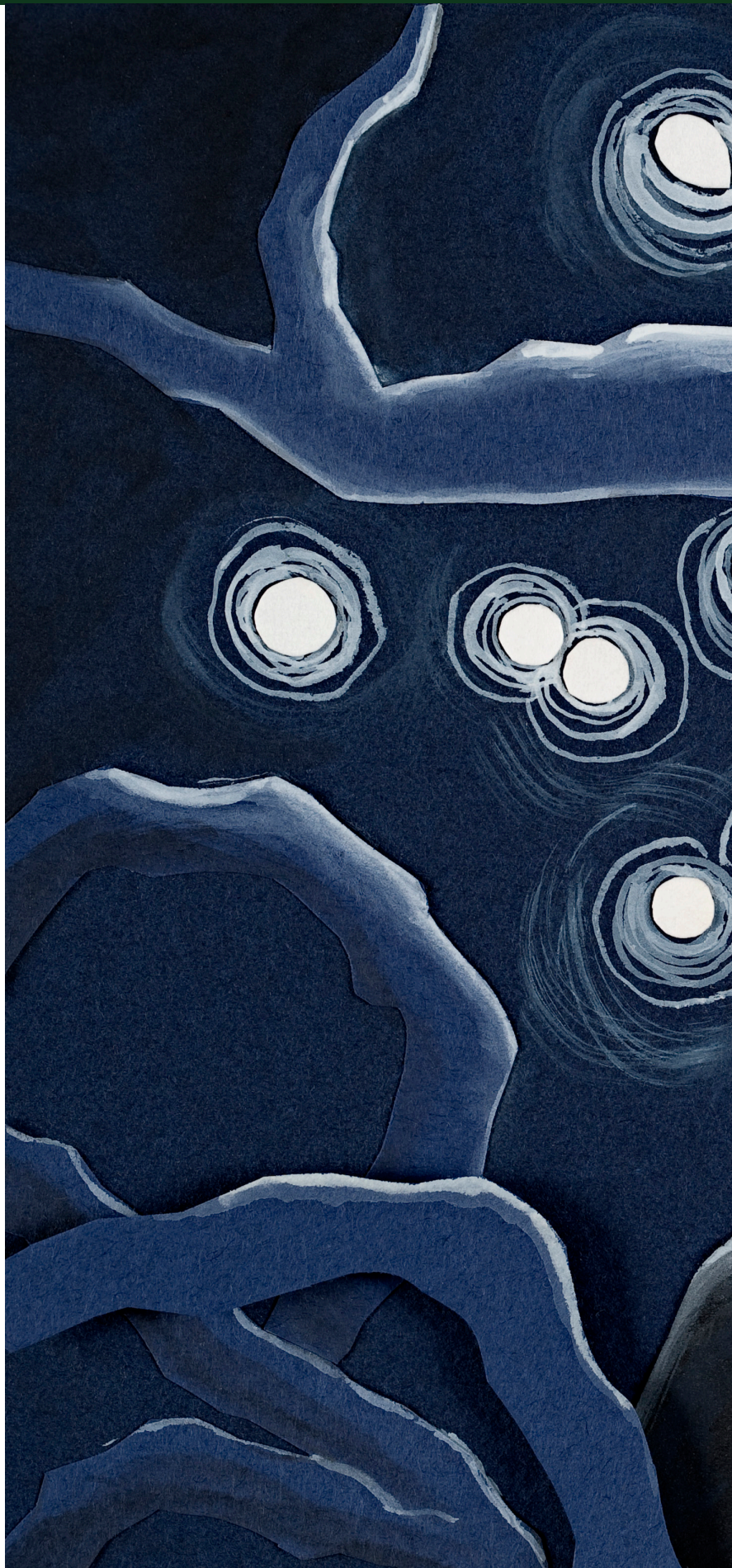








THERE WAS  
A BIG STAND-  
ING STONE.  
.. which i  
HAD TO PASS  
ON MY WAY  
HOME EVERY  
EVENING. THIS  
TIME IT WAS  
ALL Lit up  
with  
DANCING  
LIGHTS.  
-MAN FROM COUNTY  
LIMERICK





# The sidhe

**ABOUT:** the sidhe are the most common fairies in Ireland. these are the fairies referred to as the folk, the people, or the dunonian. these are the fairies who steal young mothers and children, who give the evil eye, who with a single touch can make a healthy man lame, but they are also the fairies who throw great feasts, help with field work, and heal the sick. all who live have friends and enemies among them. the sidhe live in clans under mounds of earth. each mound is ruled by a queen and a fool. the queens are human women who have been taken from the mortal realm, but the fools are always pure fey. they are a tall and handsome race with beautiful angular features and incredible powers. like most fairies, they have a terrible fear of iron and enjoy playing tricks on mortals.

**IF YOU MEET ONE:** the sidhe are not violent or malicious by nature, but they do demand respect from mortals. if you encounter one of the people, you should do your very best not to antagonize him. they are incredible musicians and throw wonderful balls and feasts which you may be invited to attend if you make a favorable impression. be aware however, that if you ever eat fairy food, you will be unable to leave the sidhe mound and will be at their mercy until they choose to release you. the sidhe often roam about the land invisibly, so it is best to never speak ill of them. they are a generous people and will not do you harm unless you give them reason to.

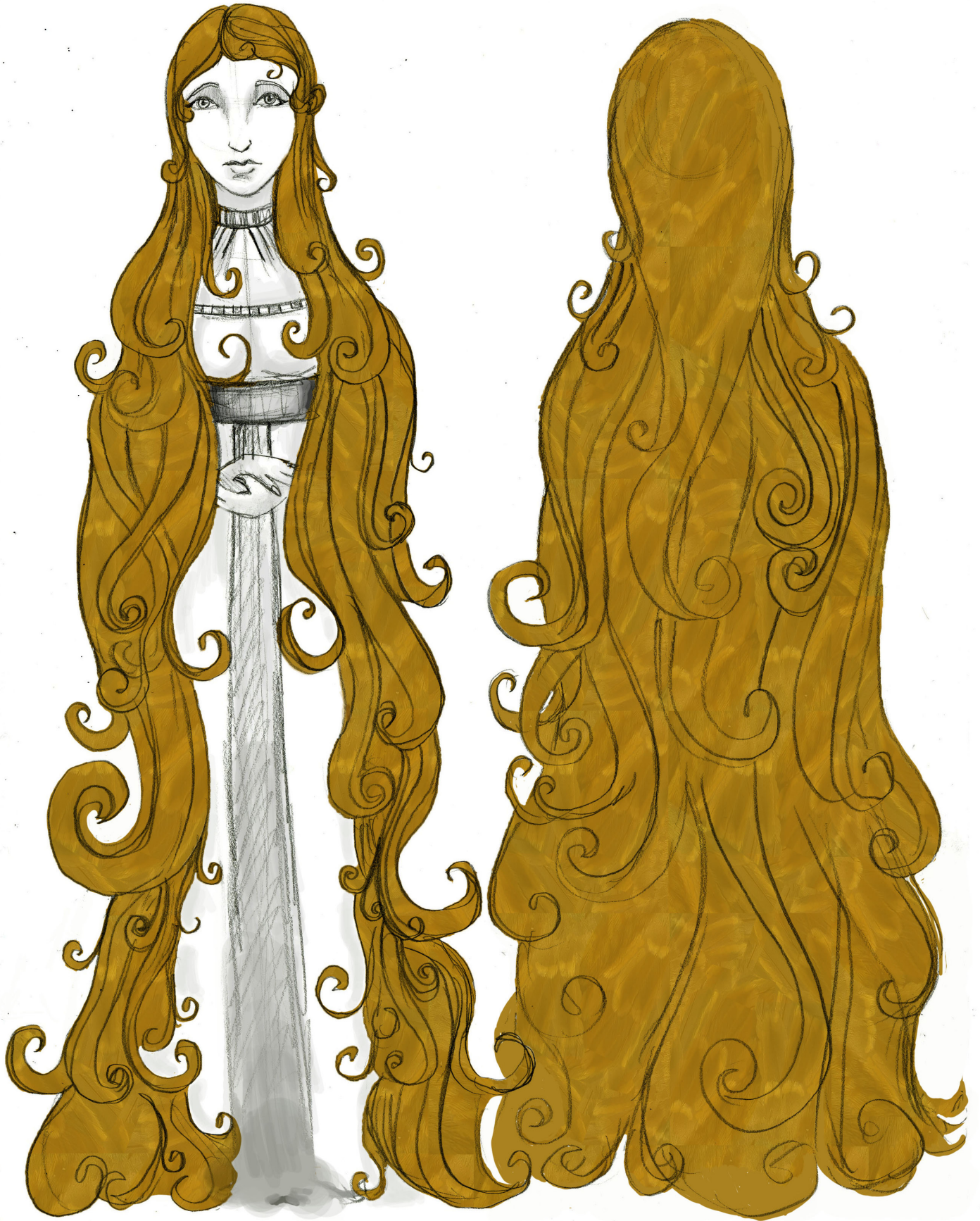




the sidhe CANNOT MAKE THEMSELVES VISIBLE TO ALL. they ARE  
SHAPE CHANGERS, they CAN GROW LARGE OR SMALL, they CAN  
TAKE WHAT SHAPE they CHOOSE. they APPEAR AS MEN OR WOMEN  
WEARING CLOTHES OF MANY COLOURS, OF TODAY OR OF SOME OLD  
FORGOTTEN FASHION. . . they ARE EVERYWHERE.

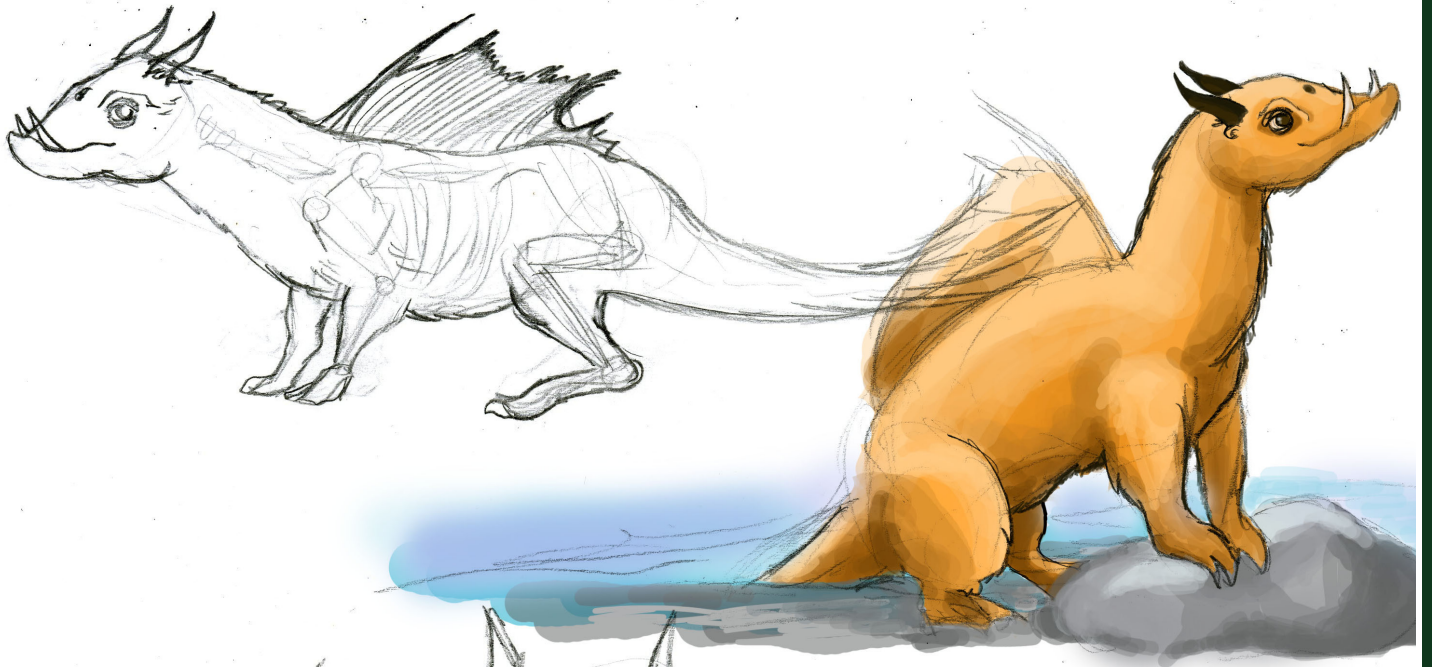
-LADY GREGORY





Although the sidhe usually appear in a human like form, they have been known to use their magic to take the shape of any number of strange creatures.











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