**The Fey**

”Fey” are really just humans, but they have developed and maintained the ability to do magic. Fey can interbreed with humans, though actual “halflings” do not occur – each child born to a Fey/Human couple has a 50/50 chance of having magic capabilities or not. Fey do not have a distinctive appearance: they can be of any of the original Earth races, though by now, there are really considered to be just two races: Human and Fey (both of various skin colors/religions/ethnicities/etc.).

“Fey” was originally an insult, but over time, it’s just come to be the accepted term for those humans capable of magic. Similarly, Fey used to be either shunned or worshipped (depending on the particular human they were dealing with); as time has gone on, society, politics, and law have all found ways of coping with magically-imbued humanity.

At this point, discriminating against Fey is considered racist and is the sort of thing people would look down upon when practiced openly and blatantly. In practice, Fey are always treated somewhat different – sometimes positively and sometimes negatively. Some take advantage of the amount of “Norms” (derogatory name for normal humans) who revere them, and quite a few continue to advocate when Fey discrimination rears its head, but most just want to be thought of as people. It’s not uncommon to hide the fact one is Fey, which is normally easily done unless one has used magic to alter their appearance*.*

Though all Fey are technically capable of all kinds of magic, each individual tends to innately prefer certain things: i.e., one may be better at healing than at fireballs, or may be better at teleportation than flying, etc. Fey scientists (yes, they exist) are still studying why this is, but the current theory is that magic develops alongside personality. Another popular area of study is Banes and/or Boons.

Banes hinder a Fey’s magic, and are different person to person. As an example, Elsa’s gloves (in Frozen) would be considered a Bane. Boons enhance a Fey’s magic or make it easier for them to do. What makes Banes and Boons popular study subjects is that, strictly speaking, they aren’t *really* effective. They have a psychological effect on the subject: because A believes that glasses interfere with her magical empathy, she has to lower/remove them in order to use it. The strength of the belief is the important thing: even though the feather doesn’t help you fly, if you believe it does, then you can’t fly without it.

Breaking someone of their Boon/Bane is difficult, because they have a deep-seated belief that it is necessary/inevitable. It is, of course, possible, but it takes a long time, and not all Boons/Banes are easily determined.

**Essolia**

Essolia is the youngest of the domains on the planet Eretria, having been founded scarcely a century ago by 13 families, nearly all of them Fey. Essolia is a haven for those Fey who have been unfairly persecuted, though there is, of course, a small Human population as well, mostly allies who have not been treated well either, or else just people come to find work. Recent or not, Essolia is still a thriving domain.

Essolia’s crown jewel is Capitol, a beautiful city, well-planned and laid out. It has wide, tree-lined boulevards, and tall, gorgeously designed buildings. In fact, all the buildings in Capitol are tall, because it was built on the banks of the Ess river (both banks – it spans the river), which floods regularly every spring. All houses are therefore built on stilts, and there are elevated walkways that run from building to building – even across the boulevards, which have drainage built into them that collects the overflow and shunts it to the city’s water treatment/power plant (plumbing pipes run up along the stilts into the houses; electrical cables come in from the top).

The city runs on solar, wind, and hydroelectric; most houses have their own windmills and solar panels up on their rooftops, and the city supplements with water power from the Ess. Capitol is, as its name indicates, the seat of government for Essolia.

Essolia has a British-style Parliament, right down to the divisions: the House of Nobles (analogous to Britain’s House of Lords) and the House of Commons (even named the same, there). The House of Nobles is made up of a Senior and Junior member of each of the Founding Families. A Senior’s vote carries double weight, and so is considered to be “two” votes; Junior votes are one each. This gives a total of 39 votes possible, thus ensuring there are no ties. A Senior may split their votes though, most often to make a statement (i.e., “I agree this is a problem (yay) but I do not like this method of dealing with it (nay)). Seniors rarely do this, but it is possible.

Each family appoints their own Senior and Junior to the House of Nobles for each session, but tradition holds that the same Senior will always be appointed until he or she steps down, at which point the Junior will be appointed Senior and a new Junior will step in. Juniors are widely considered to be “in training” to be Seniors, so unless they screw up, the Junior will always be the same every time as well.

The House of Commons is elected by the people. Nobles have been known to run for the House of Commons, but it’s exceedingly rare. The common people tend to think that if you’re not good enough for your family to appoint you, why should they vote for you? A few Nobles have changed their minds though, usually by playing the “I’m fighting for the little guy” card. However, a Noble sitting in the House of Commons is usually a target for scorn from both his/her peers in the Nobility and from their colleagues in the Commons.

All that is required to sit the House of Commons is to be a true-born Essolian citizen (not a naturalized one) and to get the majority of the vote on election day. There are 40 seats in the House of Commons, one for every district of Essolia; the elected vote amongst themselves to decide who is Common Leader (just as the House of Nobles vote among themselves a Nobles Leader). However, unlike in the House of Nobles, the Common Leader only gets a vote if there is a tie (usually due to someone abstaining, or an absence). Thus the House of Commons typically tallies 39 votes as well.

The House of Commons is the only House that can introduce money bills (taxation, usage of public funds). The House of Nobles approves the appointments of the Prime Minister, who is the head of government (and is an elected official, though obviously many Nobles run for –and win- the office). The House of Nobles typically reviews and either approves or rejects bills from the House of Commons, though the House of Commons can reject the Nobles’ veto and send it directly to the Prime Minister (they cannot send it straight to the PM w/o attempting to get an approval from the HoN first; once the HoN rejects it, only then can the HoC override).

In addition, there are 12 Ministerial appointments, selected by the Prime Minister. 12 of the 13 Noble Houses are aligned with the various ministries; thus if a Minister’s presence is required in Parliament and he/she is unable to attend, the Senior of the aligned House will speak on their behalf. The ministers/aligned Houses are:

* Minister of Governance (analogous to Secretary of State) – House Denning
* Minister of Defense (diplomatic talks & agreements, as well as fighting wars) – House Locke
* Minister of Education – House Tenant
* Minister of Water and Power – House Morrin
* Minister of Health – House Venn
* Minister of the Treasury – House Coldwell
* Minister of the Law (analogous to Attorney General) – House Truman
* Minister of Agriculture – House Bakker
* Minister of Commerce – House Stone
* Minister of Transportation – House Rhodes
* Minister of Labor – House McCoy
* Minister of Security (police & fire) – House Keyes

Only the Goren family is unaligned, and they are sometimes ridiculed for their lives of seeming leisure. The Goren family repeatedly maintains that they stepped aside willingly, so there would be no in-fighting amongst the Nobles and that the only other option would be to create a highly unnecessary 13th department of the government. They also point out that they dutifully send a Senior and Junior to the House of Nobles, so it’s not as if they are disinterested in governing.

**Motivism**

The Motivist church started as a movement within an off-shoot of Christianity; by now, it has deviated by a large margin. Also tauntingly called the “Machiavellian” church, the Motivists believe that one’s motives determine goodness and evil, not one’s actions. Killing someone is not inherently evil to the Motivists: it depends on who you killed. As an example, killing a little old lady who never did anyone any harm? Evil. Killing a mass murderer? Good.

Beyond that, the Motivists believe in a single God, but a great number of Saints. They don’t believe in angels, demons, or any sort of Anti-God type figure (Satan, The Devil, etc.). There is no Hell and, technically, not really a “Heaven” to Motivists: there is simply one Afterlife and if you have worked more towards good ends than to bad ones, you will be rewarded. If you have worked more towards bad ends than good, you will be punished, usually by being made to serve the good souls.

To the Motivists, God does not concern Himself with His creation any longer. He created Humanity (and, eventually, the Fey) to take care of themselves. Thus, ridding the world of evil people by killing them really is doing God’s work, or rather, doing the work God intended you to do. God is busy ruling over the Afterlife and ensuring that the good are happy and the bad are miserable. It is up to those still living in this world to tend to mortal affairs.

**The Blood Guard**

The Blood Guard is a secret creation of the Prime Minister to keep the Noble Houses safe. The Academy where recruits are trained is overseen by the Ministers of Education (of course), Governance, Defense and Security (though they have all appointed surrogates to manage the place day-to-day). The Four Headmasters teach their students everything they need to know about Society as well as more martial pursuits. The Academy takes in children as young as 10 (which is extremely young in a population that routinely lives into triple digits) and manages their entire education and training to join the Blood Guard. Going to the Academy is a guarantee that you will join the Blood Guard, though some recruits end up in administrative jobs rather than directly protecting someone.

The Blood Guard is headed by a woman known only as The Phoenix. She is of Asian extraction but refuses to divulge more. Her underlings swear blind that she’s Fey and capable of teleportation, telepathy, telekinesis, and about a hundred other things. She’s an intimidating figure and likes it that way.

Operatives in the field are given codenames to go by (Farrion is Farstrider) and masks to wear. They are to make sure that no one – especially their wards – see them, and are trained in stealth for exactly that purpose. They do not interfere in their wards’ lives unless the ward will be killed or grievously wounded.

The Blood Guard know all the gossip, of course – and they know what’s true from what’s false. But naturally, they don’t tell; they are the ultimate secret-keepers. Most of their families don’t even know their sons and daughters are in the Blood Guard, or even that the organization exists.

**Eretria**

A planet colonized by humans about a thousand years ago. Advances in human medical technology already had humans living very long lives, but something about Eretria extended an already lengthened lifespan. Something about Eretria engendered the Fey, as well; humans have colonized many planets, and so far Fey only come from Eretria. Other humans on other planets have had some changes, of course, but none as sweeping and as… well, magical as the colonists on Eretria.

Eretria is divided into various domains, settled by groups of families. Each domain is governed according to its own rules, though democracies of some sort tend to be common.

Earth species of flora and fauna have flourished on Eretria, alongside native species. Eretria has a type of wheat that is grown in paddies like rice back on Earth, and various indigenous fruits and vegetables. Some visitors have likened it to Eden/Paradise/Heaven/etc. but there are also native pests and predators. For every tasty seaberry bush, there are at least 10 poisonous white ashberry bushes.

**Essolian Nobility**

Those born to Noble families have high expectations thrust upon them: how they should act, how they should think, even what hobbies they should enjoy. While the “accepted” pastimes are not gendered (i.e., both men and women are free to hunt), there is a limited number of interests deemed suitable for the Nobility: things like chess, hunting, horsemanship, any of the arts (sculpting, drawing, and painting are the most usual; photography and pottery are seeing an uptick lately), musical instruments or singing, gardening, birdwatching, etc.

There’s an unspoken but very strict rule about how one behaves in public. Offspring of Nobles must refer to their parents/grandparents/aunts & uncles by their proper title when other people are around (even if they are in the comfort of their own home) and bow deferentially as required. Public displays of affection are considered inappropriate, even for a married couple. Allowed gestures of affection include a hand left on the arm for too long, a smile, things like that. “Dear” or “Darling” are the only allowed petnames, and even those are often considered a sign that one is besotted and/or not thinking very clearly.