

Lords of Gossamer & Shadow

Gossamer Worlds: GlimmerGloom



by Matt Banach





Rite Publishing Presents:

Gossamer Worlds: GlimmerGloom

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Special Thanks to Jason Durall for his help in developing this.

Based on Lords of Gossamer & Shadow by Jason Durall

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GlimmerGloam

“Bumbling backwards down the spiraling crystal staircase, I descended from the starry void to return to the hallway without walls. As I passed by the way I'd come, set into an invisible wall I noticed a miniature Door, sized for a child in a place no child should be. The Door was bruised purple and carved to resemble a half-mad maid, with a knob made of tiny black feathers and a rabbit's skull. I recalled a snippet of the rambling rhyme: “There are places you can't go, but you can go back.” Such nonsense didn't sit well with me, and I should've left it alone.
- Yaeger's Travelogue

Description

GlimmerGloam is a topsy-turvy realm of dangerous nonsense and wicked whimsy, the wonders of its faerie forests and ghostly groves constantly overshadowed with the threat – or promise, if it suits you – of entropy, impermanence and transformation. And, to be clear, it is really, *really* weird. Unsurprisingly, GlimmerGloam is a place where the chaos and constant change of the Umbra blunders about at full strength, trampling egos and expectations at every turn, though, I'll be honest, the place never really seems all that hell-bent on death and destruction – that's just the way things are.

GlimmerGloam is a relatively small gossamer world, perhaps the size of a

kingdom or four, though its topography isn't reliably three-dimensional, its shape is neither that of a globe-shaped planet nor a flat map, and any measurements ever made or postulated about its actual length or breadth or width would, scientifically, be complete gobbledegook. You could probably walk across the whole realm in a week, unless the path looped around on you, which it probably would if you let on that you were counting steps. Landscape-wise, most of GlimmerGloam resembles temperate pastoral countryside, full of rolling hills and tangled thickets, dipping low into grassy plains, boggy swamps, and further down into subterranean burrows so deep they empty out into the sky between the stars. There's a sun and a moon, but you can't visit them and they don't have anything resembling coherent celestial orbits. Also, there are lots of floating islands and castles in the clouds, because that's a thing. There are little villages and big houses, plenty of paths but few roads, and here and there you'll find monolithic standing stones and the ruins of an ancient civilization who the residents will say just stepped out for an errand and will be right back in a moment so make yourself at home and don't mind the mess.

There are *notions* about existence in GlimmerGloam – I won't call them rules, because if they were rules they'd be broken all the time, and if they were broken all the time somebody might care, which nobody does, but nevertheless they're important to keep in mind when trying to understand GlimmerGloam,



Cairn Cottage and The Bungle Cat

which you really shouldn't attempt, but still some things are worth mentioning:

Nothing in GlimmerGloom is just one thing. The flower at your feet may be a red-tipped tulip, but it is also the diminutive nymph Miss Sansia Petalfrock, and also a frog's trumpet, and also a golden dagger fresh with the blood of jabberdrakes. It seems that no being is ever just a single way, and multiple conflicting narratives for a person, creature, or object might be true simultaneously, or oftentimes alternating with the uneven cycles of night and day – a common trigger for the transformation from nice to nasty. In the light, creatures and environments soften and take on a happy hue; when darkness falls, however, the world bends towards the sinister,

smiles turn upside-down, and the knives come out. For instance, the BungleCat is a helpless kitten first thing in the morning, a genteel host at afternoon tea time, a xenophobic stalker at dusk, a slaving predator in the dark, and sometimes all at once in the glow of moonlight. Aside from being terribly confusing, the plethora of shifting identities makes it very difficult to make agreements or trust anyone; a GlimmerGloom denizen can swear fealty without the faintest hint or intention of deception, yet betray that oath in a heartbeat when considering the matter in a different light. It's a tough places to make allies, unless you're accustomed to being disappointed and betrayed.

The world is what you make it. The gossamer reality of GlimmerGloom is

highly mutable, with a scope that can be either regional, local, or even personal. Beings with no conscious knowledge of the nature of gossamer reality or the greater mysteries of the multiverse can nevertheless bend and warp the gossamer reality around them to suit their desires, expectations, and personal paradigms. Some beings in GlimmerGloam walk about in self-prescribed, self-affirming daydream bubbles, oblivious and indifferent to the contrary existences of others. The concept of things being more than one thing at once also applies to history and the twisted arrow of time itself. What you ate for breakfast or how old you are is never a certainty, even though it has already happened; the here-and-now at any given moment depends more on the consensus will of those present and less on anything so confining as an immutable linear chain of past cause and effect. From what I can tell, any changes you imagine or enforce about yourself and your personal history vanish like the nonsense they are the instant you leave GlimmerGloam, so it isn't possible to pretend you spent the last hundred years learning sorcery and have it stick, but I'll warn you that it *is* possible to misremember your existence enough to get seriously stuck. There's at least one wayward Warden of the Grand Stair trapped in GlimmerGloam after a calamitous mishap of playing-pretend, now convinced they are '*the most delicious slice of cake*' and nothing more, so the poor shmuck has been sitting on a saucer for decades waiting to be eaten.

The more things change, the more they stay the same. The Eidolon is present in GlimmerGloam, albeit at a distinct disadvantage; you can feel it struggling, clawing, *yearning* to bring some vague semblance of order and permanence to this madcap world, but usually only succeeding in creating repetitive patterns – echoes, iterations of an ideal, or a memory copied over and over, each destined to be washed away like a perfect little sandcastles at the mercy of the surf. Nothing lasts, but if you see something once you're likely to see it again. Killing rarely ends a conflict with the average GlimmerGloam denizen, because dead creatures are prone to resurrection, replacement by an improbably convenient twin or understudy, or beings may simply ignore the supposed “fact” of their death entirely, blithely showing up the next day as if nothing out-of-sorts occurred at all. Sometimes scenes, days, or entire years repeat themselves like reruns of a half-rehearsed skit, playing out the same as events did the last time or as variations on a theme, spiraling recursively over and over until a foreign observer (as in, a traveler from outside the reality, so probably *you*) takes notice and is rude enough to mention such unmentionables in mixed company – a common yet serious faux pas likely to raise their ire.

If all this sounds confusing, that's because it is.

Typical Denizens

GlimmerGloam is a “faerie” realm of sorts, one of many such fey worlds

scattered up and down the Grand Stair from here to eternity. While the world's confines are populated by a plethora of species of easily recognizable faerie-kin (pixies, changelings, trolls, etc.), this particular gossamer reality twists many expectations of the fair folk one might've derived from other worlds, meaning the only sure thing is that nothing is sure. Or safe. Or sane.

Beastlies are animalistic fey, running the gamut of anthropomorphic animals all the way from talking mice to furry-eared elves with fox tails or goat hooves. This includes bunnybriars, satyrs, kitsune, puca, tengu, molemen, ratkin, bumblebeavers, drakelings, jabberwonks, dodo-boys, and a host of other furry, scaly, and frilly misfits. While an individual beastlie tends to resemble only a single creature (except for the chimericans), beastlies are fond of shapeshifting between forms and are the most prone to changing their seemings and demeanor based on the light of day or the dark of night. Snuggly bundles of beastlies basking in the sun sing merry songs and are as cute as the dickens, but when the gloaming-time comes they hunt in packs and their howls bring nightmares to the land.

Trowls (that's how they spell it, when they spell it at all) are breeds of giant trolls – lumpy, lumbering, horn-headed oafs ranging in height from eight feet to eight stories. They mumble grumpy things like 'I could eat you, puny bug' all the time, but they're lethargic and forgetful, so they rarely bother with attacks or vendettas.



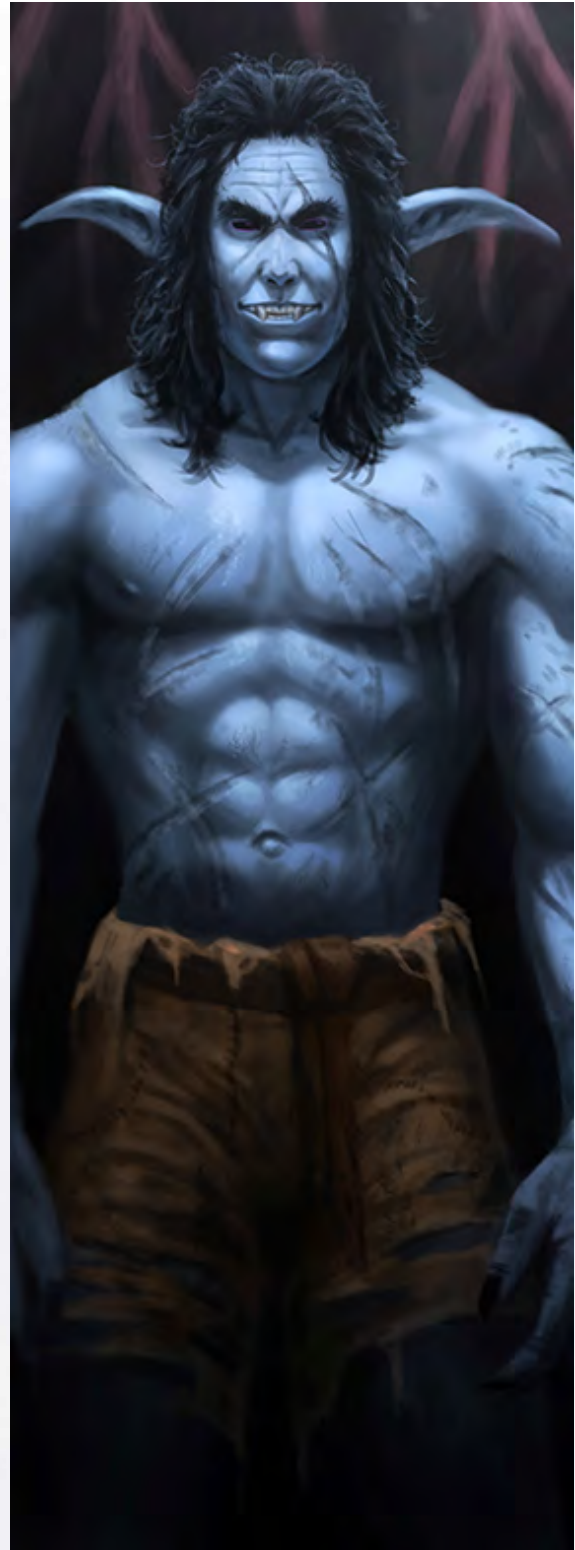
Beastlie

Most trowls are just big dumb goons, and the bigger they are, the slower and dumber they are. The largest trowls can be mistaken for oddly-shaped hills, covered in so much dirt and vegetation that they blend into the landscape, which usually suits them fine since having a hut built on your nose is a nice way to keep company close – until they become bothersome and need to be squished, that is. Trowls are slow to react, reluctant to change, and relatively receptive to the Eidolon, making them far more reliable than the other fey of GlimmerGloom, but these giant lummoxes have their own dangers. While trowls don't change their seemings very much from day to night, and a trowl's mind tends to forget nearly every slight or

harm, a trowl's body quietly soaks up scars, wounds, and thorns until the moment some final straw breaks the proverbial camel's back and the tormented trowl goes berserk, embarking on a suicidal/homicidal rampage. A rampaging trowl is an unrelenting juggernaut of destruction (with the eldest strong enough to overpower a less-than-robust Gossamer Lord), and such a sad and dangerous happening is usually cause for the entirety of the realm to either run and hide or join in murderous rioting to celebrate the occasion.

Snee are the most human-seeming of the GlimmerGloom fey, but that isn't saying much; while they traipse about on two legs in fine clothes and fancy hats, they're freaks and weirdoes to a one. Fond of transforming themselves with radical body modifications, Snee can remove their limbs at will and commonly do, swapping appendages amongst each other, replacing bits with objects, and letting unattached hands skitter about like wayward pets. They tend to be obsessive and controlling, fixating on their appearance, or courtly etiquette, or bizarre collections like broken clocks, poisoned tea cups, or the severed ears of people who like to listen to their jokes. Snee make up the urbane aristocracy of GlimmerGloom, holding leadership roles and courtly positions as they scrape and scheme to gain the favor of their fickle, fractured sovereign, the Rabbit Queen.

Gremlords are sort of like the older, more regal, more evolved cousins of gremlins. Every bit as reckless and



Gremlord

mischievous as their gremlin relatives, instead of being small and misshapen gremlords are physically impressive – tall, muscular, athletic, and perhaps even beautiful depending on your tastes. Typically blue-skinned, gremlords have all-black eyes, short fangs, pointy ears which droop like reeds, and an extra knuckle on each of their long, black-clawed fingers. They're contrary and iconoclastic to a fault, and have the effect of enforcing the social order in GlimmerGloom (that being, perpetual disorder) by bullying bullies and tearing down any too-big-for-their-britches snee institutions they find; rebellious gremlords are constantly in conflict with the Rabbit Queen, who remains a fixture as sovereign despite (perpetual yet futile) gremlord plots to discourage, unseat, or assassinate her. Gremlords have great potential for power, either martial or mystical, and from their ranks you're likely to see GlimmerGloom's next champion of the Umbra and/or full-fledged walker of the Grand Stair.

Threats

The Rabbit Queen is a powerful Umbra Master who seized – or was seized *by* – GlimmerGloom as her personal Domain some time ago, and now she whiles away her days fretting with half-real companions, running through twisted woods, and holding audiences for her motley court of misfits and madmen. Unlike other gossamer-world sovereigns, she isn't a strict homebody and still uses her mastery of the Grand Stair to go wandering, escaping the troubles of her



The Rabbit Queen

realm from time to time, only to inevitably be drawn back. GlimmerGloom *needs* her, though I'm not certain if the relationship is as feared leader, cherished mother, or tormented hostage. Probably all of the above. I met the Rabbit Queen once upon the Stair, and she seemed sweet but damaged, like a gal who's been bitten by one to many dogs to ever trust again. As is the case with most Umbra Masters, the Rabbit Queen has changed her form and appearance several times over her last thousand years, but presently she looks like a teenage human girl with white hair, fond of long knives and cute dresses lined with rabbit fur. She often doesn't act her apparent age, wavering between wide-

eyed baby talk and age-wizened acid wit, asking boldly for personal information and making inappropriate romantic advances just to unsettle folks and keep rivals off balance. It's more than a little creepy, and I've kept my distance. I swear. She always seems a bit distracted, clutching at the golden pendant around her neck or bending her eye toward the mirror on the wall as if she saw a ghost. Her ruling style is very *laissez faire*, as she is reluctant to parcel out queenly decrees and finds administration deathly boring, though she remains lethally adamant that *she* is the one and only ruler of GlimmerGloom, and she's more than capable of lopping off heads, or inventing bizarre tortures to inflict on any subject or challenger who dares besmirch her claim.

The Rabbit Queen

Attributes

Psyche – 85 Points

Strength – 10 Points

Endurance – 35 Points

Warfare – 20 Points

Powers

Umbra Mastery [50 Points]

Master of the Grand Stair [35 Points]

Invocation [20 Points]

Sorcery [15 Points]

Cantrips [5 Points] – Charm, Eidolon
Negation, Glitch, Quicken, Stun

Artifacts and Creatures

Slivver, the Queen's Blade [7 Points] – This long, slim knife has a narrow ivory handle and a blade carved from a shard of mirrored glass.

- **Deadly Damage** [4 Points] – *Slivver* is a vorpal blade, capable of decapitating nearly anything with a single snicker-snack.
- **Named and Numbered Alternate Forms** [2 Points] – shifting in size and shape from tiny needle to gigantic great sword.
- **Limited Mold Gossamer Creatures** [1 Point] – *Slivver* can heal any damage it inflicts within one day of causing a wound, including re-attaching severed heads and bringing the dead back to life.

The BungleBeasts [32 Points] – This dirty dozen of nightmarish monsters obey their queen's command – though she rarely commands them to do anything specific, and even when she does they're notoriously reckless in how they choose to obey. That said, the BungleBeasts *are* fiercely loyal to their queen and their homeland, and can be relied upon to slaughter invaders, watch Doors, and staunchly defend GlimmerGloom from outside threats.

- **Double Vitality** [2 Points]
- **Paragon Stamina** [2 Points]
- **Double Damage** [2 Points]
- **Resistant to Firearms** [2 Points]
- **Psychic Resistance** [1 Point]
- **Mold Gossamer Matter** [1 Point] – a variety of innate magical abilities
- **Regeneration** [4 Points]
- **True Name is Warded** [2 Points]
- **Named & Numbered** [x2 Points] – including the BungleCat, BungleMouse, BungleCorn, BungleShrike, BungleGhost,

BungleFish, BungleMoeba, Bungle-Bug, BungleWisp, BungleKing (not actually the king of anything), and a few more “secret” Bungles who change forms and identities so often it is useless to name or describe them.

Delirium, the Queen's Mirror [22 Points] – the Rabbit Queen's mirror is a potent artifact tied closely to the Queen's relationship with the Umbra, more of an inseparable companion than a piece of property. The Queen rarely uses the mirror consciously, as *Delirium* itself chooses when to become useful, if at all.

- Able to Speak and Reason [2 Points] – *Delirium* is fiendishly intelligent, but usually whispers only to the Rabbit Queen.
- Psychic Neutral [2 Points]
- Extraordinary Psychic Sense [4 Points] – *Delirium* is on alert even when the Queen is distracted, warning of any serious dangers but content to let her suffer lesser pitfalls and indignities.
- True Name is Warded [2 Points]
- Regeneration [4 Points] – *Delirium* repairs from any harm, yet always remains cracked.
- Linked to the Umbra [2 Points]
- Named & Numbered Alternate Forms [2 Points] – *Delirium* shifts form between a dozen different mirror-like objects, most commonly a full-length looking glass, an ivory-handled hand mirror, or a golden locket with a shattered mirror tucked inside.
- Mold Gossamer Reality [4 Points] – *Delirium* channels the Umbra to mold



Delirium, the Queen's Mirror

reality around the Rabbit Queen in accordance with her moods and fears (rarely her wishes), blooming life when she's happy, calling storms when she's worried, and setting the world afire when she's irate.

Stuff

Good [+3 Points]

The BungleCat is the most powerful and most cunning of the BungleBeasts – a wicked, mercurial predator with the genteel manners of a mafia consigliere and the lethal whimsy of a serial killer. He's part cat, part ogre, part dragon, and all demon. I hate this guy. Monsters and madmen I can deal with, but the insufferably smug smile of this feline freak just sets my soul on edge. As soon as you enter GlimmerGloom he's all over you, making bad puns and introducing you around, but as dusk sets in the nasty pranks begin, and then the insane tests, and by the time the night is deep and dark he's tried to kill you thrice over. And the next day, no matter how frothing mad you get, he'll say it was all in fun, and then do it all again if you let him. I'd tell you to avoid this beast at all costs, but he's the most well-connected creature in all of GlimmerGloom and tends to loiter around active Doors, so you just can't avoid him. Alas.

Slizzerphrix “the Throaty Burbler” was once a fearsome jabberwock and walker of the Grand Stair, but now the once-mighty monster exists only as an undead severed head, the victim of a calamitous decapitation suffered while adventuring in some far-off dream realm. Shipped home ignominiously in a coffin-sized music box wrought of lead and cold iron, the undead head of Slizzerphrix now serves as the most insane jack-in-the-box ever constructed. When the music box's handle is cranked – a favorite pastime of GlimmerGloom residents, who *love* to show it off to visitors – a creaky, off-pitch tune plays until the jabberwock's head

The Secret of the Looking Glass

The mirror *Delirium* contains the soul of the Rabbit Queen's sister, whom the Queen sacrificed (murdered) as part of the Queen's ascension to become an Umbra Master ages ago. *Delirium* knows this, but the Rabbit Queen has forgotten due to Umbra-induced amnesia and the soul-shattering trauma of the event. The sister in the mirror sometimes appears as a twisted, red-headed reflection of the Queen dressed in crimson and spattered with blood, or as a fox with a dead white rabbit hanging limp in its teeth. The sister intends on haunting the Rabbit Queen for eternity, so while the mirror oftentimes plagues the Queen with tricks and torments, it/she will defend the Queen from mortal dangers with the utmost ferocity, warning the Queen of danger and augmenting her command of the Umbra to a frightful potency.

The Undead Head of Slizzerphrix, the Throaty Burbler, in a Big Weird Music Box

This can be an artifact with the following qualities: Double Damage [2 Points] (bite and fiery eye beams), Resistant to Firearms [2 Points], Able to Speak [1 Point], and Connected to the Grand Stair [1 Point]. Treat Slizzerphrix's madness-inducing burbling as a hearing-dependent psychic attack with an effective Psyche of 20

pops up, burbling nonsense and blasting cross-eyed rays of fire from its big googly eyes. The cacophonous burbling is a potent psychic attack which inflicts madness and confusion on any who hear it, either whipping victims into a murderous frenzy or reducing them to babbling idiots. However, if you can calm Slizzerphrix down before it retracts back into the box, the lonely and depressed head loves to talk, which is surprisingly useful, if you can understand its rambling jabberwock jibber-jabber; Slizzerphrix once wandered an impressive range of the Grand Stair and still recalls a great deal about ancient traps, secret paths, and forgotten Doors.

Notable locations

The Most-Royal S'posed-to Floating Castle is s'posed to float. It doesn't. Maybe it did, once, and maybe it will again, but most of the time it blunders about the landscape, half-buoyant and half-crashed like some drunken sky-whale festooned with lop-sided turrets and scribbly banners. The trowl-bladder balloons keep popping, the roof-tethered flamingoes have gone on strike again, and efforts to train the staff to all jump at the same time and push at the ceiling are showing promise but are a long way from sustainable levitation. It's a fright. You might ask yourself: how could a powerful sorcerer and Master of the Grand Stair such as the Rabbit Queen have such a crappy castle? The answer is: the Queen doesn't give two shakes of a hare's hindquarters about the castle, but it is a favorite project of her fanatical subjects –

mostly groveling beastlies and obsequious snees – and when pestered by a peon about what they can do to serve the crown, the Rabbit Queen blithely replies, “make my castle float”. The place is a motley of architectural styles and mismatched fortifications, the long-suffering victim of hundreds of incompatible master plans by hundreds of different architects over the ages, all of whom were nuts and none of whom were engineers, pilots, or actual architects. At the front, a fortified drawbridge and crenellated stone wall stand shoulder-to-shoulder with a bank of stained glass picture windows and an open garden patio. At the rear, animated dodo-gargoyles guard the back gate, which is always left open because it's near the kitchen and the sweetmeat pies need to cool, didn't you know. Inside are plenty of wrong-sized tea parlors, unfinished towers which lead up into the basement, and a gorgeous grand throne room tiled like a white and red checkerboard, a vision of gleaming ivory and sumptuous bloodstone. The Rabbit Queen holds formal court in the castle from time to time, and when she does its halls are packed with subjects eagerly dancing to the house band – a severed-head symphony – or awaiting the latest unscheduled execution, which always occurs right on schedule.

The Wisping Woods constitutes much of GlimmerGloom's interior – a tangled forest replete with twisted thickets, winding paths, and dark little hollows carved into the hills. By day, the Wisping Woods can be a joyous place, filled with singing beastlies and seductive



Wisping Woods

nymphs, but by night the woods are a maze of horrors, given over to fell spirits and stalked by the BungleBeasts. Will-o-wisps are abundant, giving the woods its name; these ghostly lanterns love to lure travelers off the trail with the promise of distant lights, or use their echoing voices to convince do-gooders there's someone in trouble out there in the dark. The woods' ever-shifting paths lead everywhere in GlimmerGloom, from Trowl-Tear Lake to the Topiary Plains, from the Upside-Down Mountain to the beastlie warrens and snee torture dens beneath BungleBarrow Hill.

The Cairn Cottage rests on the edge of the Wisping Wood in the midst of a tar-choked swamp which festers near the gap in the HalfShadow Cliffs. The cottage is made from piles of stacked gravestones made from shale slabs from the nearby

cliffs, which would make for a sturdy building if it wasn't perpetually sinking into the tarry swamp, creating an underground tower several hundred stories high – or deep, rather. The Cairn Cottage is the place where denizens of GlimmerGloom put their dead, whether in tight crypts niches carved into the walls, setting their ashes in a teapot on the mantle, or sitting the corpse upright in a chair – you know, in case they wake up after all. The cottage would probably be more full if death were always final in GlimmerGloom, which as I've mentioned it isn't, so the Cottage tends to give back a fair portion of its residents, like the time the snee BarbarySam died, was interred, but then the other snee called takey-backsies the next week and decided to make a new, thinner BarbarySam out of his bones. The place is thoroughly haunted, and is also a favorite resting spot

of the BungleCat, who watches the most commonly-used Door into GlimmerGloom, which is in the cottage's ground floor front door, and which is bound to sink beneath the tar any day now.

Final Thoughts

GlimmerGloom is a frightful mess of nonsense. If you go, limit it to morning tea, or a single afternoon's delight, because it isn't a place you want to get stuck after dark. However, if it *is* the kind



of place you want to get stuck after dark, maybe you and I shouldn't be friends.

~ Yaeger Zane

GlimmerGloom Domain Table

Technology Level:	Medieval
Magic Level:	Magic Replaces Technology
Security:	Kinda-Sorta Guarded [2 Points] (see <i>Veil of Confusion</i> ; the Doors entering GlimmerGloom are “guarded” by the BungleBeasts, but that only half-counts because they let just about everybody through)
Type:	Personal Domain [1 Point] (current owner: The Rabbit Queen)
Control:	Control of Destiny [4 Points]
Influence on the Powers:	Eidolon – Weak Umbra – Powerful Wrighting – Easily Used*
Special*:	<i>Veil of Confusion</i> : While there is no communication barrier preventing Wrighting or other Powers from reaching across the veil of Shadow to or from GlimmerGloom, the communications sent or received are often garbled, twisted, or otherwise confused to some degree. The gamemaster should determine – either randomly or arbitrarily – how much of any given message is distorted, false, or utter nonsense. The same goes for any form of cross-worlds teleportation or other effect; travelers entering or leaving GlimmerGloom through any Power other than a Door may find themselves transported upside down, transformed, stripped, or otherwise discombobulated.