

EX3

E320





# O

*nce upon a time,  
two girls lived in a dark place:  
a place of stagnant water  
at the bottom of the world.*

Above them were stacks of ancient buildings; new buildings, piled up upon the old; and endless criss crossing walkways, so many you could hardly see the sky. The sun was just a distant glitter. The moon's faces, just the same.

There in that place the sea was still; its waters were stopped up, its currents were broken. The sluice-streets down in the bottom-most layers did not run wet and then dry three times a day, like in the better districts, but simply sat there pooling, seeping, gathering bugs and gunk and plague. They who lived there were scarcely recorded by the men and women who kept the books in Heaven. "Some number of little people reside below," they'd say, or write, "—and bugs," and nod their heads.

When Suzu, the younger of the two, was four, she went out into the sluice-streets to play; only, instead of dying to the hungry dead, or falling into the hands of some flesh-taker, scavenger, or priest, she found a white pig (that her father said was likely sacred), with an earring that was a bell. She'd led it home, she'd loved to keep it, she'd ridden on it and confided in it and drawn great swirling patterns of black ink upon its flesh. She'd tugged on Sabriye's sleeve—that was the older girl—and told her all about it, and it was a precious pig to little Suzu, and come the winter when they cut it open they found oracles in silvered letters on its bones.

Sabriye grew older. She left, and she came back changed. There was all manner of consternation among the book-keepers in Heaven at that change; it provoked great flurries of paperwork, anguished tugging of the beards, and Heavenly commotion—for in some moment, while they had not been paying attention, Sabriye had joined the ranks of legends; had done some great unrecorded deed and won Exaltation: drawn down into her body a portion of the essence of the divine Unconquered Sun. It was a legacy and a power that had been Liam Island-Tamer's before her, and Red Dove's before him, on back to the beginning of the world.

They'd found it burnt into the tapestry of fate that they kept in Heaven: no longer was she "Sabriye, a gutter-urchin," but rather, "of the Solar Exalted."

Such a to-do! And she scarcely even had records.

...for who in Heaven even bothered to track the gutter-folk of Wu-Jian?

Sabriye had been named a Solar in the books of Heaven but of course this datum had not reached her. Not one of the memos that flew about was even addressed to her.

She understood only that she had changed. That her steps had lightened, her eyes gone clearer, and a sun-mark glittered on her brow. If she were to try to explain it—...there was no explaining it. Words would fail her. Was it some sun-borne curse? The blessing of some small god of river, grass, or tree? Was she, as the Immaculate Faith would surely tell her, shamed and shameful beyond all measuring: indwelt, possessed, inhabited by some Anathematic demon-god?

If she knew the truth of it, deep in her soul, then to her mind it yet remained a mystery: a secret that lived beneath her tongue and in her throat. That stuck there, that weighed her down, that pooled in her like stagnant water.

The words would not come out.

And so, like anyone who has words they cannot speak, she sought out a kindred spirit to not say them to. She returned to Wu-Jian, hunting for the nameless house on the nameless street that her cousin had used to live in—rehearsing as she searched for Suzu all the words she would not say.

In this, she was not alone.

Ten floors above her, at that time, and three wards left, Jin chewed. Jin swallowed. "I don't even know how to describe this," Jin said. He put down his meat bun. He made an ancient finger sign against evil—most specifically, against Anathematic demon-gods—in its general direction. His partner Toad Rat snorted a laugh. "I want to describe it," said Jin, "but—there are no words."

"The Anathema aren't exerting a sinister influence upon your lunch, Jin," Toad Rat said.

"All I ever wanted—" Jin started to say; but then he sighed, and cut the thought short, and shook his head.

He stared at his meal. He shrugged, and picked it up again, and took another bite.

"One day," he said, around it, waving the meat bun with a hand, "we will die, if we keep doing this. If we keep hunting these sun-marked monsters down. If we keep going to these terrible places. For what do we do this, Toad Rat, Eastern Star? Why do we risk our lives for things like this—for cities like this, where you can't even get a half-decent meal?"

And he was looking at Eastern Star when he said this, because she was the one who'd dragged them there; but it was Toad Rat who'd answered.

“I

*think we are drawn to  
what we want least in life,” he said.*

*“... That is courage.”*

*Let us speak of deeps and gutters;  
of starlight hidden in the darkness;  
of city piled on city:*

*Of Wu-Jian.*





Its roots sink into the ocean, unto the beginning of the world. It hides that glory, shelters it like a watchman covering his red lamp up; you cannot see it when you sail nigh. Rather the jagged piles and stacks that comprise Wu-Jian heave up from the horizon and give the impression, not of ancient grandeur, but of a slum of beggars' slouching hovels, all leaned and tumbled over one against the other: written large.

Yet it began in the first days, nearly the very first days, as the outcast islands.

They roamed free.

They swum like a pod of whales playing in the ocean. They knew no stability and no order. They drifted on the currents and the waves. Red Tiger tells us that they were renegade humans who had cast off the shackles of their subservience, grown tall as the smaller mountains, tossed their heads, proclaimed their anger at the earth, and swum off into the sea. The Scholar Clad in Irons tells us, rather, that they were untethered, unrooted, but... ordinary... islands, in the keeping of unruly gods. They did not rebel against the order of things, but partook in it neither; therefore, the great demon-gods and goddesses, the "Anathema," came out to bind them to the sea.

Do they not groan now, in remembrance of that awful day? Do they not heave, and shudder, and tremble, because the city weighs them down?

The demon-gods came for them—so the Scholar writes. They stood upon the surface of the water and they were clad in vestments of gold.

The chiefest of the islands roared out a challenge. It came at them on the lip of a tsunami, hung over it like a ship at wave's-edge, and then plunged down; its fists were like the boulders of a landslide, like a trampling of great oxen, they tumbled down one after another and they were crested by the foam of waves. Not two of them but hundreds rather, each a writ of war and murder—but a young and slender demon-god, standing towards the front of them, took his pipe from his mouth, reversed it, and blocked each fist consecutively with its slender end. The island flew past him, lost its balance, flipped itself over like a turtle flounders and it was helpless then; in that moment of its defenselessness he replaced his pipe, seized a shaft of sunlight from the sky, made it gold, and plunged it like a pillar, like a needle, like a spear, through the body of

the island, through the stone and through the sea beneath the island, and made it anchored to the ocean floor.

Each and all of them, then, all the wild islands: they pinned them with nails of jade and sun and shining metal until they ceased to move.

Such were the deeds of the "Anathema," before the Dragon-Blooded cast them down.

Atop that dusting of pinned-down land amidst the endless waters they built a crisscrossing maze of bridges, an iridescent web and stronghold, rising, falling, slanting, sloping, reminiscent in its many angles of a broken-legged spider crouching, injured, on the sea.

Lesser builders would later build their work upon it; would spread their warrens and their rookeries upon it; until the iridescent spires were hidden behind rough and modern structures, wood and stone. They burdened the islands down with city, weighted them down as if under a prisoner's yoke with it, and the city spread until the islands blurred with one another and the sea-lanes were as the sewers beneath the fortress: beneath Wu-Jian.

\* \* \*

"Ten thousand dragons rule the world," Sabriye's aunt had said. "When a flight of them comes to Wu-Jian, its towers shudder underneath the weight of them."

"Where the dragons rule: civilization; beyond that: barbarity—

"And, Wu-Jian, somewhere in between."

Ten thousand dragons ruled the world... rather, ten thousand Dynasts with the blood of dragons, ten thousand infused and blessed by that Exalted gift—

Their legions stomped down the earth. Their navies' sails made white the seas.

"But Wu-Jian was too much for them," she'd always say; and Sabriye and Suzu had listened, eyes opened wide. "They couldn't keep our towers up; the islands shifted, the islands groaned, and our buildings shuddered and knocked about. They couldn't keep our people down—not the Scarlet Empress of 'em all herself—'cause to conquer the folk of Wu-Jian, well... that's worse than rootin' out the rats."

Sabriye had loved this tale best.

"We'd dug down," Sabriye's aunt had said. "They came in and they were wreathed in animas of wood and fire, earth and water, wind—they had armor forged in the ancient days and weapons that could shatter buildings in one go—but we dug down, we hid ourselves; we gnawed and nested at the roots of their great grand house like rats. Hated and despised we were, but we were the unconquerable gold; raised up our bosses, us, to extort from them, our thief-kings to steal their goods from them and made our priests and murderers our saints. And in the end they gave in to us. They didn't have the steel in them to burn us out, to uproot Wu-Jian, and lose their great grand port in the western sea."

She'd grinned with the missing teeth of her, and glee.

Years later, Sabriye would remember that grin; hesitating, uncertain, on a roof not far from Suzu's one-time door, she would remember it, and match it with a smile of her own:

"The demon-gods could tame the sea," her aunt had said, "and the Dragon-Blooded cast them down—"

Jin and his heavy spear crashed down; shattered her reverie, burst the roof that Sabriye crouched on, tore through it as she rolled aside. A mantle of wind swirled up around him, sped his movements, he was already up and lunging at her again, striking in time to the sounds of crickets as she reached her feet... took three quick-steps back. She seized the spear, tried to unbalance him with it, but the thatch of the roof betrayed her: it was untended, slightly wet and moldered, and when she tried to shove the weight of him both feet pushed through the thatch instead. Acceptable, she thought; threw herself into that movement: twisting, falling, bursting through, and crashing down onto the mud-soaked mattresses below (and to the outrage of the toads).

She was up again and dashing through the rotten door. Her ankle turned on a slippery stone; she staggered to one of the eccentric, half-tended bridges that spanned across the sluice-streets below. The wind knocked her against the ropes that bound it, swung a lantern—her shadow wobbled like a dervish dancer—and gave him half a second to catch up. His next blow struck her cloak, it fluttered from her; he stabbed through it, but she was nowhere. He searched, he spotted her three floors up from him; the wind carried him to her side.

Her open palm struck his chest, but he was armored: awful, terrifying armor it was, black steel inlaid with jade. It rang with it, he brought his spear around, but she was too close to him, she writhed like an escaping cat, and he reached for her, but it was never clear to him, not even afterwards, what happened, save that her forehead glittered and she arced like a fish and her belt knife was out and he reached for her and he flinched from the knife and her weight fell on his forearm and on his hand and despite all his best intentions he found himself twisting in a fashion that nature had not intended for him to twist and his bone was snapping and his hand was numb like it was struck by lightning and his spear went clattering to the bridge. He lunged for it, trying to recover it before he died, but the girl's knife was in his face, or, rather, almost in his face, half an inch shy of being in his face, and he twisted, and he stumbled, and it wove in the air before him like a snake and for just a moment—when the knife wasn't directly in between them—he found himself lost inside her eyes. His heart beat hard and he was honest:

"All I ever wanted," Jin said, in that long slow moment—"All I ever asked for, out of life... was that I never have to hunt down and battle an invincible demon-goddess of war, and a good pork bun. Now and then."

She gave him a curious look. "Did you get the pork buns?" she asked him.

He spread his hands.

"Ah," he said. "But... this is Wu-Jian."

Two seconds ticked by. The crickets sang. An outraged civic pride bloomed slowly on her face. Then:

"You're just saying that," she said. "People just say that. Some pirate just said that, like fifty years ago: 'You can get anything in Wu-Jian but an honest fence, a smoke-free house, or a meat bun worthy of the name.' But no. Just, no. They're fine."

Jin eyed the knife at his neck. "...OK?"

Her eyebrow twitched, and perhaps she might have spoken further, then, or perhaps just killed him; but Jin's partner Toad Rat—who'd never wanted anything more from life than to have his name well-regarded in society, and, never to have to hunt down and engage in battle with an invincible demon-goddess of war—had reached a decent vantage point at last.

Crouched precariously above them between a mossy overhang and a support beam, he drew out his great jade bow; in the same breath fired; and the stillness between the girl and Jin was broken.

Her hand lashed out. She caught the arrow. Another two came down. She leaned to avoid them. A fourth, and a fifth; the lean turned into a tumbling, flipping backwards roll. Space opened before Jin and he scrambled for his spear.

The girl steadied on her feet; caught her breath.

The crickets sang.

"Noodles," she argued. It took Jin a moment to recollect the topic she was on. "Can't go half a block up there without finding a decent noodle shop, or a perfectly acceptable black pepper soup."

He had his spear again, he took a stance again, he felt the rightness of that movement pull straight and set the broken bone.

(Such were the benefits of the blood of dragons.)

"I don't slurp noodles," he said. "I am a hero of the Realm."

"But you could," Sabriye argued. She jinked a half-step back, forward, and forward again, as arrows passed before her face, behind her spine. "Because there's nothing actually wrong with Wu-Jian cooking. There's just the stuff that people say."

An arrow came down; she caught it, spun, and threw it; Toad Rat gave a strangled cry; "I am trying to talk here—" Sabriye said.

Foolish to spin, he thought. He struck mid-motion, came in behind her, moved with the swaying and the creaking of the bridge as the wind blew; but her knife hand had come up behind her back to block him with unlikely speed.

The knife fell from her hand—

It was an awkward movement—

But she was already back facing towards him, had already finished up her turn.

"You synchronize your attacks to the ambient noises," she noted. "You ought to stop."

"...what?"

Then she moved. His balance shifted in what should have been a counter, if she were just a little slower, except she wasn't. If anything she was a little faster, and she had hooked the back of his leg with hers...

—no.

That is inadequate to describe it. To speak of the positioning of her legs, her hips, her hands, would be inadequate to describe it; in that moment, her Essence surged, a radiance—an anima—of sunlight flared up around her, and the whole of her Solar prowess became more than its individual parts.

She moved, and it was as if he were seized up by a giant hand. His stance shattered and his breath blew out; his armor seemed to slam tight around his chest; an absurd admiration welled up inside him as inexorably, impossibly, he was lifted up into the air, bent over double, and then slammed down straight.

The demon-gods could tame the sea, Sabriye's aunt had said, so many years ago; and the Dragon-Blooded cast them down—

But they could none of them not stand one whit against the people of Wu-Jian.

And Jin passed out.

•••••

Once upon a time, there was a girl who lived in a high and holy place: a place of gods and golden towers somewhere far beyond—above—the world. Her name was Eastern Star; she was a creature of Heaven: a book-keeper, tapestry-minder, and assassin. She was fed on nectar and ambrosia and the mark of the stars was upon her brow and she hated girls like Sabriye.

Not so much because a Solar Exaltation had descended onto a lowly gutter-girl—

But for the Exaltation, in itself.

The Solar Exalted had ruled the world, and the age of their rule had been incomparable—her teacher, a dragon-horse, had said.

"If there is something in the world that you do not like," he'd told her, "then you may rest assured that it was handled better then. If you grow frustrated with the tiresome bureaucracy of Heaven, or angered by the lax and wayward gods; if you wake up one day to find that monkey-spirits have made off with your favored quill and ink-stone, or that children no longer respect their elders; that farmland is failing, that barbarians use the libraries of old to wipe their bums—well, there was an age when it was not so. When we had great rulers. When we had righteous rulers, who'd held the mandate of the Unconquered Sun. Only, it was a burdensome thing to have such power, such perfection; the knowledge of it consumed them, the limitlessness of their own strength devoured them, and they sank into corruption or went mad."

That had irritated Eastern Star. "That's hardly a better handling of things," she'd said.

"Ah?"

The smirk of their imagined perfection had haunted her; she'd snarled at it. "I hate them," Eastern Star had said, when she was young.

Now she was older, cunning, strong.

Now, when she sped through the wards and warrens, in the shadows and the dank, on her way to kill the Solar, she did not think of it in terms of hatred.

It is lamentable, she thought. She let herself indulge in the poetry of that thought; rephrased it several times in her head in the language that they speak in Heaven. It is lamentable, she thought: for she is one who will break the orders of empires and gods upon her fists, and build up wonders upon wonders lost to the darkness of fallen ages, and raise up the world again to meet the glory of the sun—and yet I must kill her before she blossoms to such greatness, lest that glory then destroy us all: burn men and nations and history itself to ash.

She passed an alchemist beating his apprentice.

She passed an old man playing chess with his wife (long dead)... unaware, it seemed, of what would happen when he'd lost the game.

She passed a knot where the clotheslines-web between eight buildings had given rise to a little spirit—an elemental of wood, a laundry-spider—and she ducked its fangs, curled through its web, and plummeted towards a gallery four floors below.

She must die as an "Anathema," thought Eastern Star, before the world learns to recognize her as a hero; and she did not for even a moment let the words "I hate them" reach the surface of her mind.

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Jin startled awake.

He took in a deep breath. His life had been passing before his eyes, he thought. He had just gotten to the good part—only—

"I'm not dead," he observed.

"My own uncle used to make perfectly good meat buns," Sabriye sulked. "And us poorer than untended graves."

He tried to move. It was not quite as possible as he'd expected.

"Tell me you did not leave me alive so you could continue arguing about meat buns," he said.

She was staring off at the city—her eyes had just caught a glimmer of distant light—and she did not answer, but only vaguely waved a hand.

"I have to kill you," Jin observed. "When I can stand up again, I mean."

"Oh, hush," she said.

"Have you even had a pork bun, here?" he asked. "It's fair to wonder where you even get your pigs, you know, out here at sea. I have, ah... suspicions... that—"

"That is a foul slander," she snapped.

She sulked, for a moment, which he didn't mind; perhaps, he thought, he could gather enough strength to move—

"I do not think it is good to kill," she said. "You know? —I have been blessed in the arts of war, I know this, but... I do not think that it is good to kill. How can you call me

Anathema, even with this sun-mark—how can I be a demon-goddess, when I don't even want to hurt you, much? I've never even drenched myself in the blood of children and dreamed to do impious things."

They will twist you with their words, Eastern Star had warned him; so he ignored the bulk of this.

"...it's fine to kill," he reassured her. "I kill monsters like you all the time."

She raised an eyebrow at him.

"Occasionally," he corrected, uncomfortably. "Sometimes."

He licked his lips.

"...once," he admitted. "And I'd got there sooner. Before he'd really figured out how his powers worked. But I'm just a Jin, you see: he's just a Toad Rat—"

Sabriye moved.

She was so terribly fast. It appalled him. She twisted sideways, her hand grasped at something in the air, he could train all his life and not move so fast—

But it was not fast enough to catch a certain needle, not before its poison found her neck.

"—she, though," Jin admitted, "has killed your kind... thrice?"

There were footsteps on the bridge; and Eastern Star was there, all ragged grin and lank unkempt hair; her sword was hanging from her hip. Her eyes flicked to Jin, went up to Toad Rat, and then back down, as Sabriye staggered.

Sabriye fell.

—Eastern Star did not stop.

She drew her sword, she moved, her blade traced amaranthine light upon the air, she struck; the Solar caught her wrist between two feet, twisted it, diverted it, bent the blow to the bridge's rail but her reactions were still off; the Solar's upper body flopped like a fish between the bridge and rail—dangled there for a minute, held up only by her feet, then slipped away to fall into the muck.

It didn't help.

The woman was like a descending comet; when Eastern Star landed the water of the sluice-streets burst up in every direction and the wounded girl was washed to slam against and through a wooden wall. She twisted out of sight, vanished through the building's rotten back, and was halfway down a mucky street when the woman closed the distance—or rather didn't close the distance; the girl turned a corner and the sword was just there, in front of her, and swinging.

Sabriye ducked. Her right leg gave out. Her knee twisted and she howled.

With a bit of broken board she'd seized up from a wall Sabriye blocked the next strike; bent her stance with it to keep the board from splintering in her grasp, lunged up and under and tried to spear the woman's stomach.

There was a shadow over them, in that moment; it was the shadow of the pig.

The gods of standing water are not kindly gods; rather, they arise from the water like a miasma, like a pestilence. They may be your friends, your patrons, or your servants if you have an edge to you that suits the sharpness of them, a rot to you that suits the sickness of them: they may be allies of a sort—

But they are not kindly or gentle gods.

It came upon them like a white cliff in the light of the moon; it was tangled, covered in rotten wood and vines. Its teeth were wooden, like the roots of trees, and its body blurred into the water. It towered above them, standing seven of the eccentric half- and third-stories that made up the unbalanced levels of the lowest layers of Wu-Jian.

I do not like, said the pig, said the boar, said the sluice-street god, to see the Solar Exalted once again.

There was a long silence, then.

"Haha," laughed Sabriye, and glanced to the woman. "Is that what you are, then, a 'Solar Ex—'"

Eastern Star unfroze.

She took a step to the side, turned to watch them both, and opened her mouth to snarl something—but the snort

of the pig drowned out her words like an avalanche's rumble might've done.

The snort carried in it the words of the pig:

I do not like to see the Lawgivers of old, it said. With your sun-marks on your brows. Go. Go, girl. Go. And take your little lackey with you.

"Screw this," muttered Eastern Star; moved; sliced in a great overhand blow at the bulk of the pig, but the sword was missing from her hand.

"Sorry," Sabriye said—*sotto voce*; thrust the woman's own sword out to gut her; found her wrist blocked, her foot pulled out, her body rolling to the ground; saw the woman skittering back, heard a needle sink into the pig's great eye; a roar of anger, then, as the pig began to charge.

Sabriye struggled to her feet—only, everything was tilted, her legs confused.

"Bye," saluted Eastern Star; leapt—and stumbled, Sabriye clinging to her belt rope, surfing away from the path of the pig's charge, finding a foothold; effort reddened Sabriye's face, tightened her muscles, and blazed up in a golden anima around her as the Solar swung the woman round to slam against the great tusk of the boar.

It did not even daze the pig.

It swept past where they had been. It shook its head, the woman fell. It turned; the bridge shivered and Jin found himself sprawled, in what he considered an unnecessary complication to an already thoroughly difficult day, upon its back; he reached for his spear, thinking he could at least use it to anchor himself in place, but the world adjusted itself in a flicker of starlight and the woman was beside him, her belt slipped off, her robe now shapeless, Jin's own spear held in her right hand. She hurled it down to pin the girl's arm, right through its wristbones, into the muck-brown street.

Jin slid.

The boar turned. It scuffed its feet. It charged, and in that moment, Jin thought that he and Sabriye would die; and Sabriye saw a path of escape for her opening and closing in an instant:

I could pull my arm free, she thought. And stagger there, against that wall, and be safe;

But the woman had found her sword again; had reached the street again; was charging, wreathed in her own anima's violet glow, her sword sheathed again and her hand upon it, readied to draw and kill... not the Sabriye of here, not the Sabriye of then, but to kill the Sabriye who would wrench herself free and reach that shallow cover, and thus survive the pig.

And Sabriye thought—I wonder why it said those things. The pig.

The woman moved. The woman drew her sword; in that gesture, cut.

Sabriye was not there.

The sunlight was blinding. It roared out from her, towered in a great pillar above her like a flame, filled the lower levels for the first time in decades if not centuries; the dawn spilled golden and glorious out into the space the woman cut—

But Sabriye was not there.

Sabriye was braced against the metal floor, standing, straining, shining, burning: holding the pig's great tusk with both her arms: upending it, and swinging it—the whole great and limitless bulk of it—to slam into the woman; the hero; the bridge; the buildings; and on and on and past them to the ancient twisted wall of metal that in that place was holding back the sea.

'Solar...' she was thinking, somewhere deep inside her; 'Lawgiver...?'

And: ...oh.

And it seemed to her, in that golden moment, like she might understand the secret that lived beneath her tongue; what it might be that she could tell her cousin Suzu—if she still lived there, if they ever met—before the great wall burst, and she saw the ocean beyond it, and the dawn; and water came rushing in to the sluice-streets, swirling, pouring, flowing, sweeping, pounding, raising her and all that muck towards Heaven like some great paean to the sun.

金  
剛





Exalted<sup>3</sup>

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Many tales were recounted then  
of the Iron Princess who rode  
at the head of her army,  
and some were true  
and some were not.  
She was a mighty witch,  
she could take no wound,  
demons marched  
in the ranks behind her;  
she covered her face  
because one look from it  
would scald with fire or  
turn to granite or melt as with  
acid any who beheld it,  
though others said  
she was so beautiful  
no man could watch her  
and not lose his wits,  
and that one of her smiles  
could darken the moon  
and one frown could kill the sun.

—Tanith Lee, *Night's Master*



Nearly all men  
can withstand adversity,  
but if you want to test  
a man's character,  
give him power.

—Abraham Lincoln

W

ind at her back, Novia Claro raced across the rooftops of Nexus, her boots making no sound as they slid across the worn mud-brick. The crumbling remnants of Old Hollow stuck out like boulders in a sea of gems—great towers of clay and earth watching over the brightly colored market awnings like sentinels. Novia bounded past them like a swift hare, letting the wind guide her as she leapt from one rooftop to the next with supernatural grace.

Nexus was her city, her domain. She had walked each street, path, and alley from the slums of Firewander to the sprawling palaces of Bastion, and there were few establishments she hadn't set foot in, whether by invitation, clever ruse, or brute force. She held influence in nearly every syndicate, working the ranks for personal gain and using her resources to protect the wretched city she called home.

Nexus was her city, and she intended to keep it that way.

It didn't take long for her to reach the barely-standing warehouse at harbor's edge, padding across the thatched roof like a great cat. The building was supported more by the stacks of crates inside than the original structure, but the westernmost side provided a suitable perch as she crouched low to survey the goings-on of the harbor below.

As she'd anticipated, a large merchant ship flying Realm colors had docked just moments before, and already the Lawgiver was calculating her approach.

A cluster of deckhands passed close to the warehouse doors, providing the perfect cover as Novia dropped to the docks below. After securing her footing on the warped planks, she sauntered toward the ship, eyes fixed on the lone watchman stationed at the gangplank, a dogged master-at-arms (she imagined) dragging on a slender pipe.

Though well known throughout the city, Novia was more than adept at passing herself off as welcome in any situation. She knew better than to make a show of things, but if she was going to find a way aboard, she was at least going to have a bit of fun with it.

She slid out of the shadows and into a curtain of smoke, a smirk playing at her dark features as she drifted up to him, moving with the smoke as it wound through the air. She

curled around him, light as air and dark as shadow, her hands sliding over his chest, her breath warm in his ear. He blinked, disconcerted, perhaps feeling the lightest caress of the breeze, and then dismissed it. As a fresh line of smoke shot from the dragon's nostrils, the Lawgiver drifted away, as unnoticed as the eddies from his pipe.

Novia crept up the gangplank with careful steps, moving only where shadow would allow. Though she'd stolen past the guard, she had only a small window of time to get in and out while avoiding altercation. A lone patrolman paced the deck, the blade at his side glinting in the afternoon light. The Lawgiver followed his movements carefully, willing that no sound would come from the rustling of her coat or her heavy steps across the creaking planks of the salt-worn vessel. With a rush of Essence her surroundings grew quiet, each sound swallowed into nothingness.

Her hand was first a flash along her waist, passing over the brace of knives on her hip, and then it was a whip rising faster than the eye could see. A blade flashed through the air. With a loud crack the rigging nearest the guard snapped, sending the sail careening wildly upward, narrowly missing the patrolman. When he turned to look, the Lawgiver slid through the cabin door and into the captain's quarters.

Knowing she had only moments to secure her prize, Novia gathered the captain's log and the ship's rutters and began scouring the room for anything of worth. The documents would hold the true value, but jade was a better currency for pleasure seeking, and she planned on an evening of celebration.

A steady barrage of footsteps told her that she had only moments before the ship's officers discovered her, but she had retrieved what she'd come for and left a costly spark for those that might pursue her—a final word of warning to any that thought to use the Realm's leverage to sabotage Nexus trade. If sabotage was what they wanted, it would be at her hand.

Grinning as the cabin door opened, Novia blew past the guards like a sudden wind. Light on her feet even as she vaulted over the rail to the docks below, she vanished into the shadows as flames climbed the masts like sails, kissing the sky with fire.





## ***Introduction***

# **The First and Final Days**

It has been said that Creation is doomed.

The world was raised from chaos, and one day it will fall just the same, returning to the chaos that birthed it. All the works of men and gods and all the spirits of Creation will be no more. This is how the story ends, they say, and none, not even the mightiest of the Chosen can change it. This is the tale of woe that is the capstone of this fallen era; this is why the world now lives in an Age of Sorrows.

But it was not always that way.

### **The Age of the Exalted**

In the time before record, in the blank vastness of prehistory, the gods of Heaven created champions to carry their power and glory, wage wars in their name, and fight the battles they never could. These heroic men and women were called the Exalted, for they had been uplifted. For their service, the gods gave the Exalted rule over all Creation—over all the peoples and the beasts and the spirits dwelling there. All the lands which they could see and grasp were theirs. Having done this, the gods of Heaven retired to Yu-Shan, the Celestial City, and left the world of man to the Exalted.

The Exalted were many, their powers as diverse and unique as the gods who bore them. However, one caste of Exalted—the Solar Exalted—rose through the ranks of the Chosen to become their masters. With unsurpassed skill and power, the Solars conquered every corner of Creation. With unmatched magic and sorcery, they raised up a glorious First Age.

The First Age was an age of wonders and glories long lost to the current age. These splendors flowed from the hands and

minds of the Solar Exalted, who ruled the world, its gods, and its Chosen as benevolent masters for five thousand years.

But then something went terribly wrong.

The Solars had labored for millennia under a great curse lain upon them by the vanquished enemies of the gods. In time the Solars grew wicked, deceitful and mad; their magnanimity turned to spite, their justice to tyranny. They began to turn against their subjects and each other, and the world was soon threatened by the very sorceries and machinations the Solars had used to protect it. As civil war loomed, the other Exalted saw no choice but to remove their masters. The Dragon-Blooded rose up against the Solars and slew them as they feasted the turning of the year.

Most of the Solars were murdered and their Essences sealed away in a jade prison—for such was their power that they could reincarnate upon death. But some escaped this initial ambush, and in the decades that followed the survivors waged terrible wars against the host of the usurpers. During that time, much of the magic of the First Age was lost—expended or destroyed in cataclysmic acts of revenge. In time, the last of the Solars were hunted down and killed, and with them died the First Age.

Nothing lasts forever.

The fall of the Solars left their Realm a smoking ruin. The curse that had eaten away at them had also eaten away at their works. Without the Solars to steady the sorcerous mechanisms that ran their world, the Realm began to disintegrate. This was no slow winding down, but the agonized throes of a beast mortally wounded. Cities collapsed. Mansions rained brimstone on farmlands. Mountains buried themselves, dragging down nations with them. Whole islands were blasted from the seas as the sorceries that

birthed them unwound themselves. The Sidereals, allies to the Dragon-Blooded, helped to steady the world against the First Age's dying. In the end, the world survived, yet it was vastly reduced.

In the ruins the Dragon-Blooded set up a military government and ruled for centuries. Their rule was without the grandeur of the Solars' shining Realm, but also without the horror and madness that heralded its fall.

The Sidereals, a powerful group of Celestial Exalted, were the authors of the Usurpation. After helping the Dragon-Blooded rise to power, the Sidereals erased themselves from the pages of history, destroying records of their own existence and twisting the very stars in the sky to bring about a forgetting. To maintain their influence, the Sidereals spun the Immaculate Philosophy, a religion that teaches the inherent spiritual perfection of the Dragon-Blooded. Posing as monks and servants of the Philosophy, the Sidereals wove themselves into the shadows of Dragon-Blooded politics.

The Sidereals kept a close watch for the few Solars who continued to be reborn into the world. With powerful astrology and mystical instruments of detection, the Sidereals guided armed strike forces of Dragon-Blooded to destroy newly emergent Solars before they had a chance to gain power. Such groups came to be called the Wyld Hunt, and their inquisitions became inseparable from the Immaculate religion. For centuries, the Wyld Hunt rode down, captured and slaughtered the Solar Exalted with impunity.

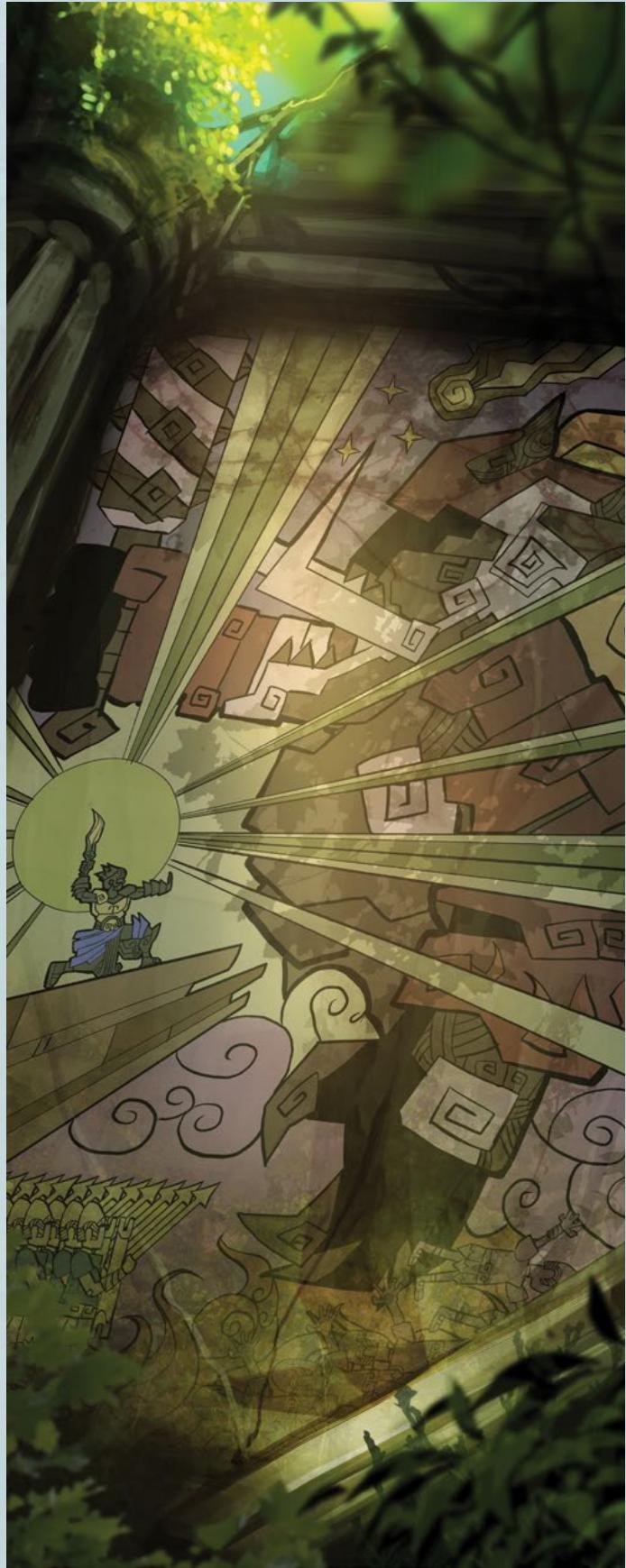
### The Doom Out of the Darkness

Then the Great Contagion came.

A virulent disease that traveled by blood and by lung, the Great Contagion spread a black blanket of death across Creation. Nine tenths of all people and animals perished. There was no cure and no one to burn the bodies. Cities were draped and filled with corpses, and the screams of the bereaved soon gave way to silence. Those left alive believed it their darkest hour. They knew nothing.

Creation, it has been said, is doomed to fall into the chaos that birthed it. The Wyld—chaos, the inchoate precursor of reality—surrounds Creation. Creation floats upon it like an island. The Wyld licks at the borders of the world, forever nibbling away at its edges, always held back by the solid substance of human beliefs and mystical armaments that were remnants of the Solar Realm.

The Great Contagion put paid to these. Entire nations fell to ruin, and those who were charged with unleashing the



defensive sorceries of the Realm had died at their posts. The borders of Creation cracked and fractured, and the Wyld flooded in. With it came the armies of the Fair Folk, who had always lurked beyond the edges of the world: watching, waiting, and hungry.

The Fair Folk swept across the lands in endless legions, and Wyld storms and vortices of pure chaos came with them, rending apart the landscape. Vast stretches of Creation crumbled and were lost forever. The lands and seas were reshaped, and everywhere the Fair Folk camped, Creation was left twisted. The beleaguered and sick-ravaged Exalted expended even more of the lost First Age's magic in trying to throw back the legions of chaos. Even the mighty Lunar Exalted, the former mates of the Solars, could do little more than slow their monstrous advance.

As the armies of the Fair Folk marched toward the center of Creation, a lone Dragon-Blooded officer braved the nigh-impenetrable defenses of an ancient Solar weapon system. By luck or by fate, she took control of one of the mightiest weapons the world has ever known, awakening it from its slumber. With the power of the Realm Defense Grid, she annihilated the Fair Folk hosts and sent them screaming and boiling back out of Creation.

With control of the Realm Defense Grid, the officer was now the mightiest being in Creation. There was little left of the old shogunate—the shogun whom she had served, and most of his children and children's children were gone. With fire and fury, she wrested the remnants of her world from the hands of her enemies and cowed oaths of fealty from the rest. From her isle at the center of Creation, she consolidated allies and resources and named herself Empress.

### The Birth of the Realm

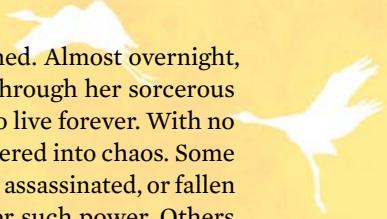
Through alliances and coups, the Scarlet Empress brought her enemies to heel. Through marriages and liaisons, she gave birth to a dynasty of heroes, who formed lesser and greater houses through which the Empress could filter her power. To keep her place, she set her children against one another in endless bids for power, resources, and favor. In time she seeded her legions with soldiers and commanders from her own household and from the houses of her closest children. In a matter of decades, her forces marched out into the Threshold—all the lands that were not her island—and forced her enemies to kneel.

One coalition of heroes in the East managed to resist her conquest. Of the rest, only the most remote barbarian

kingdoms of the Lunar Exalted escaped her rule. Vowing fire and steel to her enemies, the Empress threaded the boundaries of her empire with legions and set about draining conquered lands of their resources so that her Realm could grow mighty and wroth for a return.

Throughout the centuries, the Empress kept the Sidereals close at hand. Their advice and protection afforded her great advantages in governing her mighty nation. In return for their service, she made the Immaculate Philosophy the state religion of the Realm, and through the Immaculate Order the Sidereals maintained the Wyld Hunt. In all the 763 years of her reign, the Wyld Hunt never once faltered, and the Dynasty grew vast and powerful on the yolk of Creation.

### Into the Time of Turmoil



Five years ago the Empress vanished. Almost overnight, the Realm began to deteriorate. Through her sorcerous might, the Empress had planned to live forever. With no order of succession, the Realm entered into chaos. Some thought that the Empress had been assassinated, or fallen prey to the fell magic that gave her such power. Others believed she was watching from the shadows to see who might try to take her place, or that she had reached a state of perfection and had left her Realm behind. There were rumors without end, but only one thing was certain: the Empress was gone, and her throne sat empty.

The Great Houses of the Scarlet Dynasty—each longing to place one of their own on the throne—began to summon their forces. Legions were recalled from the frontiers, satrapies were bled for every obol, and the heroes of the Realm were called home from vigil and from quest to take up the banners of their families.

A political stalemate saw a figurehead Regent placed on the throne while the Houses marshalled their resources and maneuvered their forces, built alliances and seeded the feasting halls of their enemies with spies and traitors. Forests were stripped to build siege weapons and ships, war machines were constructed, the old spells were chanted, and old warstriders rose from torpor to shake off their rust.

Meanwhile, the massive recall of Realm forces left certain borders of the empire manned by skeleton crews, often consisting of poorly-trained citizen soldiers and conscripts forced into service at spear-point. Sensing the mystical and military defenses of the Realm had weakened, many of the Dynasty's subject states began to withhold tribute, while others fell into open rebellion. At the same time,





the Lunar Exalted, who had fought a long and bitter war with the Dragon-Blooded, began escalating their attacks.

Barbarian hordes emerged from the outlands of the Threshold to test the might of the remaining legions, while the Realm's ancient enemies unveiled new fighting forces from states beyond the Realm's borders.

But the Empress's disappearance presages even more dire consequences than these.

In the dark heart of the Scavenger Lands, the Deathlord called Mask of Winters rose on his living corpse-mountain throne to march an army of the dead against the city-state of Thorns. It was sacked and taken. A tributary of the Realm, its Dragon-Blooded defenders died to a man, and their bodies were dragged into the corpse-flesh kingdom of the Deathlord's thrall.

Far and near, the enemies of the world have begun to rumble and quake, testing the chains of their bondage. The Fair Folk, still fuming from their last bitter defeat, have begun to speak war words and sing the chaunts of battle, from their septs within Creation and from within their halls in the deep Wyld, while the dark lords of the Underworld unleash horror and cataclysm never before seen.

## The Return of the Solar Exalted

After a millennia of vigilance, the Wyld Hunt has lapsed.

This is the world into which the Solar Exalted have returned. After centuries of imprisonment, the doors of the jade prison have been kicked open, and the heroes of old have come again.

It has been said that Creation is doomed.

The world will end in fire and flames. Darkness will descend. The seas will dry up and the land will crumble into the maw of chaos. Nothing can stop this.

Nor could the Solar Exalted slay the enemies of the gods.

Nor could they master the sorceries which wrought the world.

Nor could they ever return from their endless death amongst the stars.

This is the world into which the Solar Exalted have returned—but will they save the world, or will they destroy it?

As the tale of the Exalted continues...

## INTRODUCTION

This section introduces the basic concepts and terminology of the game, as well as explaining its overall premise. You're reading the introduction right now.

### CHAPTER ONE: THE EXALTED

There are many kinds of Exalted. This chapter discusses the histories, themes, and skills of a number of Chosen. Note that this book only contains the rules you'll need to play a Solar. Consider the other entries in this chapter a preview of future books.

### CHAPTER TWO: THE AGE OF SORROWS

This chapter discusses Creation, the world of **Exalted**.

### CHAPTER THREE: CHARACTER CREATION

This chapter provides instructions for how to create a Solar Exalted.

### CHAPTER FOUR: TRAITS

This chapter describes in detail the characteristics of the Exalted.

### CHAPTER FIVE: SYSTEMS AND CONFLICT

This chapter contains the core rules of **Exalted Third Edition**, from combat to social drama.

### CHAPTER SIX: CHARMS

This chapter details the mystic might of the Solar Exalted.

### CHAPTER SEVEN: MARTIAL ARTS AND SORCERY

Creation is an ancient world that has not yet forgotten its secrets. This chapter discusses magic and the powers of the martial arts.

### CHAPTER EIGHT: ANTAGONISTS

The enemies of the Exalted are numberless and fierce. This chapter contains descriptions and rules for many of the game's threats.

### CHAPTER NINE: THE GRAND PANOPLY

This chapter details the weaponry and armor of the Exalted, and introduces Evocations—magic drawn from deep within the souls of artifact weapons and armor.

## How to Play This Game

**Exalted** is a roleplaying game for two to eight players. In a roleplaying game, players cooperatively work with one another and the game rules to tell a memorable story—in

**Exalted**, this will be a story set in an ancient and forgotten age of magic, mystery, and danger.

Each player (with one exception—see below) creates a character to play during the game—one of the Solar Exalted, a hero granted the blessings and power of the Unconquered Sun. Each player dictates what their character says, does, and thinks throughout the course of play.

The final player takes on the role of the Storyteller—they describe the world the other players’ characters move through, and create and control all the other individuals, gods, and monsters that populate that world. The Storyteller’s job is to challenge the other players’ characters, embroil them in dramatic situations, present interesting people for them to encounter, and otherwise to help weave a story around their exploits. The Storyteller is also the final adjudicator of the game’s rules, applying them to keep the story moving and to keep things unpredictable and exciting.

**Exalted** play sessions generally last between three and eight hours—it’s something you get your friends together to make an afternoon or evening of. Sessions are sequential—you pick up the story again where it left off next time you play. Most groups like to meet once a week, or every two weeks, though there’s certainly nothing stopping you from playing more (or less) frequently. Some groups will keep a game running until they resolve a single major storyline. Others may continue developing their characters and the complex stories around them for years.

Unlike most games, there’s no fixed way to “win” **Exalted**. The goal isn’t to advance your character to some ultimate victory-point; rather, the goal is to have fun telling an engaging story with your friends. As long as everyone at the table had a good time during the session, you’ve won.

## Lexicon

**Age of Sorrows, the:** See *Second Age, the*.

**Anathema:** The term used by the *Immaculate Order* to refer to the *Solar*, *Lunar*, and recently the *Abyssal Exalted*. Immaculate doctrine describes the Anathema as persons who have become conduits for dark power and whose souls have been forever tainted by the influence of evil spirits. This doctrine is typically accepted in the *Realm* and anywhere the *Dragon-Blooded* hold power, as well as *Threshold* states where the Immaculate religion holds sway, places the Lunar Exalted have terrorized since time out of mind.

**Anima:** All living things are surrounded by a colorless, invisible aura called anima. When one of the *Exalted* uses *Essence*, the power often spills into her anima, making it visible. As a result, an Exalt who expends a great deal of power is usually engulfed by a display of anima that can range from a soft glow to a pillar of heatless flame bright enough to see for miles.

**Artifact:** An object imbued with magic and generally forged of the *magical materials*. Many artifacts created in the *First Age* have been lost or destroyed, and those that remain are fiercely coveted in the current day.

**Aspect:** Many of the *Exalted* are divided by *Castes*, but some are known by their *Aspects*. Typically said of the *Dragon-Blooded*, an Aspect points to the nature of the *Chosen*’s power, in how it manifests and how it behaves, as well as how it shapes the Exalted’s appearance and personality. A *Dragon-Blooded* of the *Fire Aspect* may be an aggressive, flashy warrior or a passionate statesman. He may have fiery red hair, and wisps of smoke might follow his words when he is in a rage. A *Dragon-Blooded* of the *Wood Aspect* may be more at home with nature, better able to deal with loneliness, more capable at medicine and survival. She may have green hair and patches of bark on her skin. Chosen who share Aspects are usually much broader-ranging in their personalities and proclivities than those who share Castes, such that two Chosen of the same Aspect might have completely different roles and responsibilities.

**Blessed Isle, the:** The great island-continent at the center of *Creation*, once the home of the gods and now the homeland of the *Realm*.

**Caste:** Many *Exalted* are divided by role or aptitude into Castes—for example, *Solar Exalted* are Dawns, the greatest warriors to have ever lived; Zeniths, inspirational priest-kings and holy men; Twilights, great savants and engineers; Nights, thieves, thief-takers, spies, and assassins; and Eclipses, heralds, diplomats, merchantmen and troubleshooters. Almost all such Exalted display their roles via the *Caste Marks* upon their brows.

**Caste Mark:** Most sorts of *Exalted* bear a mark upon their brow indicating their *Caste*, which illuminates as their *animas* flare. Each Caste of each sort of Exalt bears a different mark, and the *Immaculate Order* teaches how to identify different sorts of *Anathema* by Caste Mark.

**Celestial Exalted:** The *Exalted* champions of the mighty gods of the sky—the *Solar*, *Lunar*, and *Sidereal Exalted*. The Solars are the mightiest of the Celestial Exalted, but their lesser kin are also the inheritors of enormous power.



**Charm:** The *Exalted* express their inherent magic through Charms. The Charms of the Exalted are as different as the powers and natures of their divine patrons. *Solars* express the invincible, inexorable nature of the *Unconquered Sun* through their Charms, while the *Lunars* manifest the ferocity, weaponry, and forms of *Creation's* greatest beasts.

**Chosen:** See *Exalted*.

**Circle:** A Circle is a group of *Exalted* brought together by oaths, pacts and sorcery, often as the collective answer to a terrible question. While memories of past incarnations sometimes guide reincarnated *Solars* back into the company of their fellows from previous lives, many Circles are creations of the current Age. Regardless of cause, most *Solars* will find themselves as part of a Circle at some point in their lives.

**Creation:** The world of *Exalted*. *Creation* is a flat world floating on a sea of chaos called the *Wyld*. Once, in the *First Age*, a great civilization spanned *Creation* entire, but in the fallen *Age of Sorrows*, shattered city-states scrabble to survive, struggling under the oppressive boot of the *Realm*.

**Cult of the Illuminated, the:** A *Creation*-wide mystery cult devoted to worship of mysterious saviors who will return the world to righteousness. Though they did not inspire it, *Sidereal Exalted* of the Gold Faction have covertly encouraged its spread across *Creation* and now use it to channel newly discovered *Solar Exalted* into their protection and influence, while the *Immaculate Order* deems it heresy and seeks to stamp it out.

**Daiklave (DY-klayv):** The traditional weapon of the *Exalted*, each daiklave is a one-of-a-kind *artifact* sword, usually oversized, forged from *magical materials* and imbued with a unique *Essence* from which its *Chosen* wielder may learn to call forth *Evocations*. Other types of artifact weapon exist, such as direlances, grimscythes, and powerbows, but daiklavas are the most iconic and famously cited when discussing the war arsenals of the Chosen.

**Deathlords, the:** A cadre of powerful ghosts who have ruled kingdoms in the *Underworld* for centuries. Recently, several have become more active in *Creation*, fielding undead legions and releasing horrors from the bowels of death's darkness. Each is a monster of horrific power and nature, selected and upraised by the *Neverborn*. Erudite priests and sorcerer-kings, the Deathlords are behind the emergence of the *Abyssal Exalted*. The Deathlords may be the most powerful beings to walk the world in this Age.

**Demesne (di-MAYN):** An enchanted place, a location where magical currents eddy together to create a natural

vortex of power. Demesnes are rich in energy for beings who know how to harvest it. Most *Exalted* harness this power by constructing a *manse* on the site of a demesne.

**Demon:** Spirits of alien majesty and deadly guile, demons are the sworn enemies of the *Exalted*. Demons are the countless inhabitants of *Malfeas* and the servants of the *Yozis*. However, they are trapped in service to the *Exalted* due to an oath they swore long ago. A demon who is in sorcerous thrall to one of the *Exalted* is unable to harm his master directly or indirectly, but may still work cunning wickedness to doom his master to courses of action that will imperil the *Exalt's* soul. Demons range in power from the lowliest of spirits to the world-shaking incarnations of a nightmarish and primordial *Creation*.

**Dynast:** A *Dragon-Blooded* related to the *Scarlet Empress* through descent or marriage. Dynasts are the ruling class of the *Realm*.

**Elemental:** A *spirit* arising from the five elements of the natural world. Elementals labor to cycle *Essence* through *Creation*. They are physical beings that live in the same world as men and beasts.

**Elemental Poles, the:** The Five Elemental Poles are the anchors of material existence that border the world and hold it together. The icy Pole of Air borders the North, the Pole of Fire lies to the furthest South, the Pole of Water defines the uttermost West, and the Pole of Wood rises from the farthest East. At the center of the world, the Pole of Earth pierces the heavens in the form of the Imperial Mountain. The Pole of Earth is the omphalos and axis of *Creation*, around which the world moves. It is dormant and steady, balancing the elements of *Creation* into a stable harmony. As one travels away from the Pole of Earth and closer to one of the four active poles, the active pole's influence grows stronger and stronger. Eventually the elemental effects are so strong that only the mightiest of the *Chosen* can survive them.

**Essence:** A current of energy that moves through all things, *Essence* is the creative charge from which all wonder springs. To channel *Essence* is to wield the power of the gods, and the *Exalted* channel the *Essence* of the mightiest of the gods.

**Evocation:** Miracles awakened within certain *artifacts*, generally weapons and armor, by the bond between the artifact and its wielder. The nature and power of an artifact's *Evocations* depends on the circumstances of the item's creation, the *magical materials* used in its construction, its relationship with its wielder, and the artifact's history of use through the years or centuries.

**Exalted:** The Exalted are mortal men and women blessed with the power of the gods. Once they were uplifted to fight the enemies of the gods, and for this service they were given rule over *Creation*.

- **Abyssal Exalted:** Strange new *Exalts* never seen before the Scarlet Empress's disappearance, the Abyssals have emerged from the *Underworld* as champions of the *Death-lords*. They come with the old laws of the dead, bringing ghost-fire and doom wherever they walk. Mysterious harbingers, warrior-poets and sacred priests, the Abyssal Exalted have rocked the world by slaying *Dragon-Blooded*, *Exigents*, and even *Lunar Exalted*, and each is easily a match in single combat to one of the *Solar Exalted*.
- **Exigent:** Those *Exalted* and empowered by the *Exigence*, the Exigents are a whole category of different types of *Exalts*, chosen by gods of field and river, vengeance and hope. Very few gods possess the strength to empower more than one *Chosen*, even with the power of the *Exigence*. As such, the Exigents represent a vast array of eclectic and unique heroes, many of whom are being seen for the first and last time. For a time, no new Exigents were created, but recently the *Exigence* has begun to flow and grant new champions.
- **Liminal Exalted:** Existing in small numbers since the end of the *Shogunate*, the Liminals are the mysterious Chosen-elect of a remnant of the *First Age* that sank into the darkness of the *Underworld* long ago. It is believed that they result from passionate attempts to raise the dead. The Liminals search for meaning in their new lives while compelled by their dark mother to police the boundaries between life and death. They are most commonly seen tracking rogue ghosts, fighting wicked spirits of death and plague, and hunting the undead.
- **Lunar Exalted:** The Chosen of *Luna*, the Lunars are shapechangers and iconoclasts. The *Usurpation* chased them to the edge of the world, where they now rule their own tribal dominions, waging unceasing war against the *Fair Folk* to one side and the *Realm* to the other. The Lunars look upon the *Solar Exalted*'s return with uncertain hearts—during the *First Age*, the Lunars were the slaves, seconds, and consorts to the Solar Exalted. Their bond to the *Lawgivers* has been broken, but many yet fear a return to servitude.
- **Sidereal Exalted (sy-DEER-ee-ul):** The Chosen of the *Five Maidens*, the Sidereal Exalted are the stewards of fate and *Heaven*'s agents in *Creation*. In the *First Age*, they served as advisors to the *Solars*, but when they began to see indolence and madness in their rulers, they threw down the *Solar Exalted* and raised the *Dragon-Blooded*

up in their place. Politically the Sidereals are divided between the Bronze Faction, who supported the *Usurpation*, and the Gold Faction, who argued against it and now move to support the returning Solars. Masters of fate, the Sidereals are unmatched prophets and viziers, and their attunement to the movements of destiny make them the practical embodiments of all the tenets of martial arts.

- **Solar Exalted:** The mightiest of the *Exalted*, Chosen by the *Unconquered Sun*, the Solars are mortals with great potential and ambition gifted with the power to fully realize their own excellence. They are warriors, orators, engineers, spies, and diplomats without peer. In the *Time Before*, they served as both the generals of the Exalted armies and the greatest heroes of the gods. Through fire, combat, and peacemaking, they rose above the Exalted to become their rulers. Through their unmatched sorcery and powers of invention, they raised up the *First Age*, but over time the *Great Curse* drove them mad. The Solars were overthrown by the *Dragon-Blooded* and their Exaltations imprisoned by the *Sidereal Exalted*, but now they have returned to try to save *Creation* from doom.

- **Dragon-Blooded:** The Chosen of the *Five Elemental Dragons*, and also known as *Terrestrial Exalted*, Dragon-Blooded are weaker than the *Celestial Exalted* but more numerous. Their power does not reincarnate, but passes on through the blood—the children of Terrestrial Exalted may themselves Exalt. They draw their power from the five elements. The greatest current lineage of Terrestrial Exalted is the *Scarlet Dynasty*. The Dragon-Blooded were convinced by the *Sidereals* to rise up and murder the *Solar Exalted*, an event that marked the end of the *First Age*. Almost no Dragon-Blooded living today knows the true history of these events.

**Exigence, the:** The *Exigence* is a force of divine fire and creative inspiration established by the *Unconquered Sun* so that lesser gods might have their own *Exalted* champions. Gods who tap the *Exigence* do not learn the secret of making *Exalted*, but through interaction with the Sun's medium, they are able to exude new kinds of *Chosen* from their own unique *Essence*. Some gods who petition to create an *Exigent* are destroyed by the process; they are simply too weak to produce a *Chosen* without spending their own lives. Others are powerful enough to make a single champion, though this effort leaves them drained and vastly reduced for a time. Still others may produce a single *Exigent* without wavering, while a truly mighty god might bring forth multiple heroes from his own *Essence*.

**Fair Folk:** Beings of unreal chaos native to the *Wyld*, the fae look with resentment at *Creation*, which defines itself



as the center of the universe and imposes its own context on all that is, was, or might be. Those Fair Folk who venture into reality survive by eating dreams or souls. Many claim to seek the dissolution of the world, though a few seem happy to play at life among mortals. At the end of the *Great Contagion*, the Fair Folk mounted a great crusade against Creation, and were on the verge of destroying all the lands of shape when they were turned back by the heroism of the *Scarlet Empress*.

**First Age, the:** The golden age when men wielded magic far greater than the petty scraps they hold today. The First Age was raised up by the magic and genius of the *Solar Exalted*. It was an age marked by periods of enlightenment, peace, and discovery, but it ended in horror, murder, war, and the *Usurpation*.

**Five Elemental Dragons, the:** Children of *Gaia* and with power to challenge the *Incarnae*, the Five Elemental Dragons are the patrons of the *Terrestrial Exalted*. Each dragon embodies one of the five elements, and is a creature of immense size and unfathomable power. It has been said that the Five Elemental Dragons were most active when the world was new, but over time they have grown distant and tired, and have fallen into slumber, allowing their power and wisdom to seep into the substance of the world. The *Immaculate Order* venerates the Elemental Dragons as the apotheosis of spiritual development of the Terrestrial Exalted.

**Five Maidens, the:** Mercury, the Maiden of Journeys; Venus, the Maiden of Serenity; Mars, the Maiden of Battles; Jupiter, the Maiden of Secrets; and Saturn, the Maiden of Endings are the Five Maidens of Destiny. Among the *Incarnae*, they are the overseers of fate and destiny, of what will and must come to pass, and of what *Heaven* desires. They speak rarely and impart their secrets to few. Among the Incarnae they chose the fewest champions—the one hundred *Sidereal Exalted*. Though *Luna* is not numbered among them, she is considered their equal in power.

**Gaia:** A spirit of vast creative force, she is the mother of the *Five Elemental Dragons*. It is said that Gaia was one out of the tribe of the enemies of the gods, but she allied with the gods out of love for *Luna*.

**Ghost:** A dead soul pulled out of the cycle of reincarnation by lingering attachments to the world, dark magic, an inauspicious death, or improper burial. Most such shades dwell in the macabre and foreboding *Underworld*, but some find their way back up to *Creation*, particularly in *shadowlands*.

**God:** A *spirit* acting as a divine representative of a place, thing, or concept. While all gods are formidable, they range from the little gods of road and field to mighty spirits of war and death. Lesser gods dwell in spirit-sanctums and temples in *Creation*, while the mightiest of gods reside in *Heaven*, ruled over by the *Incarnae*.

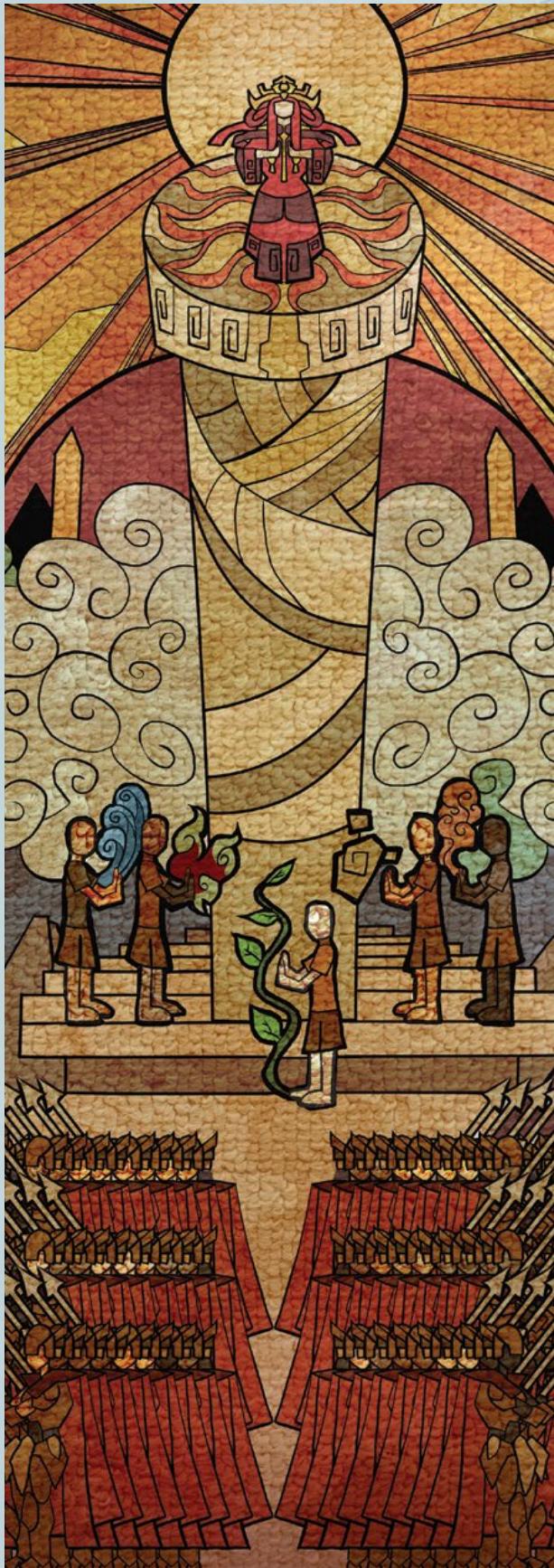
**Great Contagion, the:** Centuries into the *Second Age*, a catastrophic plague brought low the *Shogunate* of the *Dragon-Blooded*. Crossing species boundaries, it killed nine out of every ten living creatures—fish and fowl, man and insect, leaving endless fields of desolation. Those with mastery over *Essence* were resistant, but were immediately faced with the invading hordes of the *Fair Folk*.

**Great Curse, the:** As they died, the enemies of the gods pronounced a curse against the *Chosen*. The Great Curse is unknown to all beings—save perhaps Jupiter of the *Five Maidens*—and though it has dogged the *Exalted* throughout history, it fell most heavily on the shoulders of the *Solar Exalted*.

**Great House:** The *Scarlet Empress* has divided her *Scarlet Dynasty* into Houses, each headed by one of her many spouses or children, eleven of which currently claim the status of Great House. The eleven in power now have not always been so; in the past she has engineered the fall of those she deemed too powerful, and raised new ones up in their place. Each House oversees a number of satrapies, raising legions for her armies, managing elements of her economy, and ruling portions of her *Blessed Isle*. As she never announced a successor, the heads of the Houses, long-accustomed to her pitting them against each other, now prepare to decide who will take her throne—raising taxes on their satrapies even as they call armed legions back to their homelands at the center of the world.

**Guild, the:** An association of mortal tradesmen and plutocrats, the Guild spans *Creation* entire, moving drugs, slaves, and sundries across the world. One of the most powerful economic forces in the *Age of Sorrows*, the Guild is governed almost entirely by mortals. They maintain the silver standard of the dinar and promote economic stability worldwide even as they push opium on entire nations and enslave entire tribes. Based out of the *Scavenger Lands*, they are at times opposed to the *Realm* and at times work in concert with it.

**Hearthstone:** In the heart of every *manse* forms a hearthstone, a token of solid *Essence* that grants its wielder some supernatural power. Rarely, hearthstones may also be found in the wild, usually to mark a place where a demesne had once existed.



**Heaven:** See *Yu-Shan*.

**Immaculate Order, the:** The state religion of the *Realm*. The Immaculate Order teaches its adherents that the cycle of reincarnation leads in an upward spiral to oneness with the *Five Elemental Dragons*, from animals through mortals through *Dragon-Blooded*. It also teaches that *spirits* are celestial functionaries, and worship is a dangerous activity fit only for the *Dragon-Blooded*—spirits follow *Heaven's* plan, so those spirits who demand worship are tyrants or con-artists, while mortals who expect better treatment through worship are deluding themselves or committing bribery. Immaculate monks learn martial arts that they might keep unruly spirits in line and combat *Anathema* wherever they're found.

The Immaculate Order is the vector through which the *Sidereal Exalted* control the *Realm*.

**Incarna:** The greatest of gods and rulers of *Heaven*, the *Incarnae* are the gods of the great celestial bodies visible in *Creation's* sky. See *Unconquered Sun*, *Luna*, and *Five Maidens*.

**Luna:** The Changing Lady is an *Incarna*, the goddess of the moon and the premier goddess of night, luck, iconoclasm, and change. She is a legendary huntress and trickster and the patron of the *Lunar Exalted*. As the mistress of *Gaia*, Luna made her Chosen bestial, the children of her greatest union.

**magical materials:** Artificers recognize five magical materials particularly suited for the channeling of Essence—*orichalcum*, a superheavy gold attuned to the *Solar Exalted*; *moonsilver*, fluidic silver attuned to the *Lunar Exalted*; *jade*, a stone attuned to the *Dragon-Blooded*; *starmetal*, rare metal from the sky attuned to the *Sidereal Exalted*; and *soulsteel*, a metal mined from the *Underworld* with which the *Abyssal Exalted* seem to have an affinity.

**Malfeas:** Hell. A nightmarish kingdom of brass and obsidian under a sickening green sky. Malfeas sits outside the world, surrounded by an endless desert at the ends of eternity. The *Yozis* were imprisoned here with their *demon* legions after being vanquished by the *Exalted*. When a demon is summoned from Malfeas by a sorcerer, it may cross the sands of eternity in just five days, departing five days in advance of the sorcerer's call.

**manse:** Sorcerous construction created to channel the power of a *demesne*. Manses are often temples or fortresses, and in addition to forming *hearthstones*, they channel the *Essence* of their demesnes to work magical effects, from the frivolous to the useful to the dangerous.



**Neverborn:** Through the Exalted the enemies of the gods were slain and became the Neverborn, vast chthonic ghosts dreaming in the deepest part of the *Underworld*. Their whispers shape the afterlife, and their magic empowers the *Deathlords* and the *Abyssal Exalted*. They were the masters of the universe until the gods raised mortal champions against them. Whether they seek to drag the world into death so they can rule it once more, or obliterate it entirely to escape its fetters and find a final rest, none can say.

**Old Realm, the:** The government of *Creation* during the *First Age*, overthrown in the *Usurpation*. The *Scarlet Empress* suppressed usage of the term—she legitimized her claim to rule by insisting her *Realm* was a continuation of the old, and proclaims false any distinction between the two. Old Realm also refers to the oldest language of *spirits*, every syllable of which is charged with sorcerous power.

**outcaste:** Those *Dragon-Blooded* who do not claim fealty to the *Realm*, either by membership in one of the Dynasty's *Great Houses*, service as a monk of the *Immaculate Order*, or soldier in the legions are labeled outcasts. *Creation* holds many outcaste lines, from Lookshy's Seventh Legion to the Forest Witches of the deep East.

**Realm, the:** The mightiest empire in *Creation*, based on the *Blessed Isle* and ruled by the *Scarlet Dynasty*, the Realm controls hundreds of satrapies across the *Threshold*, nations under *Dragon-Blooded* boot. The Realm extorts taxes and tribute from almost the whole of the civilized world.

**Scarlet Dynasty, the:** The ruling class of the *Realm*, composed of those *Dragon-Blooded* who are descended from the *Scarlet Empress* or have married into her lineage. Organized into eleven *Great Houses* and many smaller houses.

**Scarlet Empress, the:** Until her disappearance five years ago, the woman called the Scarlet Empress was the unquestioned autarch of the *Realm* and the most powerful political ruler in *Creation*. At the climax of the *Great Contagion*, she took control of the *Realm Defense Grid* and single-handedly ended the worldwide invasion of the *Fair Folk* and the plague devastating the world. She then used her new weapon's power to crush all rivals to her throne and, through centuries of political maneuvering and conquest, founded the *Scarlet Dynasty*, which to this day serves as the ruling class for the greatest empire in *Creation*.

**Scavenger Lands, the:** The Scavenger Lands are the territory in the near East of the *Threshold* who proclaim independence from the *Realm*, having resisted multiple

invasions. Its heart is the River Province, a region containing a series of mighty, loosely allied city-states lining the mighty rivers that run through the heart of the region.

**Second Age, the:** All the time since the *Usurpation* is marked the Second Age of Man, where mortals and *Exalted* war amid the ruins of the great fallen civilizations of the *First Age*. The Lunars call this era the Fallen Age, while savants call it the *Age of Sorrows*.

**Second Breath:** The moment of Exaltation, so called because infant mortals gain their souls at the moment of their first breath following birth.

**shadowland:** Where the *Underworld* touches *Creation* there are shadowlands, places where no barrier exists between life and death, and the living may treat with the dead. Those who leave a shadowland during the day find themselves in *Creation*, while those who leave its borders at night enter the *Underworld*.

**Shogunate, the:** The military dictatorship set up by the *Dragon-Blooded* in the wake of the *Usurpation*, which crumbled away in the face of the *Great Contagion*. The Shogunate was marked by endemic warfare between *Dragon-Blooded* daimyos and the catastrophic loss of *First Age* magic. Many *Terrestrial Exalted* savants lionize this period as an age of heroes and a flowering of *Dragon-Blooded* culture.

**sorcery:** While the *Exalted* use *Essence* reflexively and instinctually as *Charms*, savants of the *First Age* codified its manipulation into more rigid but powerful forms. Sorcery can be shared between *Exalted* of different types.

**spirit:** Divine beings of *Essence* and will. *Gods, elementals, demons, and ghosts* are all spirits.

**Terrestrial Exalted:** The *Dragon-Blooded*, the weakest and most numerous of the *Chosen*.

**Threshold, the:** The lands between the Inland Sea and the *Wyld* make up the Threshold, all those parts of *Creation* that are not the *Blessed Isle*. The Empress considers all of *Creation* just a precursor—a Threshold—to her home at the heart of the world.

**Time Before, the:** A nebulous span of time that includes all history from the dawn of existence to the rise of the *First Age*.

**Unconquered Sun, the:** The greatest of the *Incarnae*, the Unconquered Sun is the god of virtue and will, war and enlightenment, the day and the night, and excellence.

He is the King of Heaven and the patron of the *Solar Exalted*. It was he who led the gods in rebellion against their masters in the *Time Before*. At the height of the *First Age*, he turned his face from *Creation* in anger at the excesses of the Solars.

**Underworld, the:** The lands of the dead, floating on the sea of the void, the Underworld is a shattered reflection of *Creation* and a capstone over the tombs of the *Neverborn*. Those who die and are unable to move on become trapped in the Underworld, where the souls and Essence of dead things have congregated, giving rise to malady and horror. The Underworld is where the *Deathlords* keep their kingdoms. In service to death, they have built their fortresses into *Creation*; in every direction, the spires of a Deathlord's citadel peers out over the skies of a shadowland.

**Usurpation, the:** When the armies of the *Dragon-Blooded* and their *Sidereal Exalted* allies overthrew the *Solar Exalted*. The backlash of this event was catastrophic and weakened the world against what would come later.

**Wyld, the:** Chaos and entropy, the infinite precursor to reality. *Creation* was raised up from the Wyld, and the Wyld was bound and subsumed into its substance. The Wyld still exists beyond the borders of the world, pressing inward and ever threatening to dissolve the lands of shape back into shifting unreality. Strange lands and strange things dwell within and emerge from the Wyld, including the *Fair Folk*. Pockets of the Wyld exist in *Creation*'s interior, remnants of the Fair Folk's invasion long ago.

**Wyld Hunt, the:** A Wyld Hunt is a group of *Dragon-Blooded* who band together to hunt and kill the *Anathema*. The Wyld Hunt has been weakened by the impending war for the Realm's throne. It will not stay that way.

**Yozi:** Demon princes and lords of Hell, the Yozi are the enemies of the gods, who peer out at *Creation* with lust and hatred. Once they were the masters of the universe, but fell to the might of the *Exalted*. Those of them who were slain by the Solars became the *Neverborn*. The Yozi are imprisoned in a blasted kingdom of iron and black marble beneath a cold green sun, called *Malfeas*.

**Yu-Shan:** Heaven. The celestial city of Yu-Shan is home to the gods and the *Incarnae* who oversee the management of Heaven, *Creation*, and fate through a grand bureaucracy. Of the *Exalted*, only the *Sidereal Exalted* call it home.

## Suggested Resources

### FICTION

#### *Night's Master*, Tanith Lee

*Night's Master* and the rest of Lee's Flat Earth series were instrumental in the making of **Exalted**. *Night's Master* is set in a world pervaded by weird magic, full of apathetic gods, wicked spirits, and wicked men, from which a tale of triumph may still be told.

#### *Hawkmoon*, Michael Moorcock

*Hawkmoon* was another major influence in the making of **Exalted**. It gives a great example of a sorcerous empire hell bent on conquest. It also features strange, sorcerous mechanisms that are imperfectly understood, even by the few sorcerers who have a prayer of using them. The character Count Brass from the *Jewel in the Skull* is a perfect example of a Solar Exalted.

#### *The Complete Pegāna*, Lord Dunsany

Lord Dunsany's gods were a major influence on the character of spirits in *Creation*. The Maidens of Destiny owe much to the gods of *Pegāna*, and more than one Yozi echoes the threat of Mana-Yood-Sushai, while certain Third Circle demons can often be compared to beings such as Skarl the Drummer, whose drum beats the rhythm of time and existence. *Pegāna* also takes a cynical view towards holy men, particularly in a world where gods exist and are indifferent to prayer at best, or hostile at worst.

#### *Imajica*, Clive Barker

A man awakens to his long-lost divinity and remembers lost lives and lost loves. With unmatched sorcerous talent, he travels across the broken landscape of the universe to unite all worlds as one, and bring magic back to Earth. A must-read for the battle that occurs inside the world-sized body of Hapexamendios, God and creator of the Five Dominions.

#### *The Black Company*, Glen Cook

The powerful, large-scale magic of this series was a major source of inspiration for **Exalted**'s sorcery. It also has great character development, and takes place in a gritty world, unromantic in its depiction of the lives of common men—something *Creation* shares.

#### *A Song of Ice and Fire*, George R. R. Martin

This revolutionary series provides a great example of how politics, lore, and geography all come together to set the stage for major events, some of which were set in motion years, generations, or centuries before.



### *The Coming of Conan the Cimmerian*, Robert E. Howard

Solars owe a lot of their DNA to Conan, an ostensibly mortal man who yet demonstrates superhuman might, quickness, and resistance to injury. The sorcerers of Conan played a major part in the reconceptualization of sorcery in **Exalted**. Thoth-Amon's thrall is a good example of a blood-ape, while Yogah in "The Tower of the Elephant" is a good example of an ancient spirit or a pre-human sorcerer from the Time Before.

## CLASSICS

### *The Iliad*, Homer

Achilles is sulky, self-centered, quick-tempered, and undefeatable. Watch the fate of the known world depend on how he feels on any given day.

### *Journey to the West*, Wu Cheng'en

This story details the exploits of Sun Wukong, born of the Five Elements, master of many divine secrets, who uses cunning as much as his divine power. It serves as a limitless source of ideas for a world understood through spiritual pretexts and divine (and martial) allegories. Its first seven chapters are also the primary inspiration for Yu-Shan, **Exalted**'s Heaven.

### *The Book of Judges*

This book of the Bible focuses on a number of divine heroes who led the children of Israel in victories against enemies who were vastly more powerful. While Samson gets most of the attention, one should not overlook Shamgar of Anath with his ox-goad, or Deborah whose leadership and cunning crushed the enemies of her people.

## MANGA

### *Inuyasha*, Rumiko Takahashi

The yokai in this series provide an example of spirits and sorcery in Creation. It's also good inspiration for Artifact weapons. It can be a good source for more light-hearted takes on **Exalted**.

### *Claymore*, Norihiro Yagi

This manga deftly illustrates life in a world of predatory supernatural beings, where gods and heroes are usually only stirred to help by lavish bribes. The titular Claymore monster-hunters are reminiscent of the Liminal Exalted.

## ANIME

### *Ninja Scroll* (1995)

This anime heavily influenced the Charms and supernatural martial arts of the Exalted. *Ninja Scroll* deftly reconciles a world of supernatural magic with a world driven

by money, politics, and mortal men, by putting that magic in around the margins. Also, the fight scenes are a great example of what combat in **Exalted** looks like.

### *Howl's Moving Castle* (2004)

Howl is a great example of a Twilight Caste sorcerer. His castle played a large part in conceptualizing sorcerous projects. Howl also gives a good example of what it's like to deal with a Solar who is acting out a Virtue Flaw.

## TELEVISION AND MOVIES

### *The Bride With White Hair* (1993)

A wuxia classic, this film is condensed **Exalted**: a hero moved by his passion to guard a magical mountaintop for years on end, a "wolf woman" heroine that serves as great Lunar inspiration, demonic sorcerers, and impossible mystical kung fu, all woven around a story of romance and politics.

### *Rome* (2005)

A spellbinding look at Rome at the end of the reign of Julius Caesar, *Rome* shows off the decadence, filth, and corruption of the ancient world's most enlightened government. It's a must-see for players who are interested in Realm politics, social influence, political maneuvering, or showing how assassins and strongmen can have a huge influence on rule.

## VIDEO GAMES

### *Dynasty Warriors* series, Koei Tecmo

Based on the classic Chinese epic *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*, this series is a good visceral representation of the power of **Exalted** characters. Few other sources get across the sheer impact of an Exalt on the battlefield quite as effectively.

### *Final Fantasy VII*, Square-Enix

Though the technology is far beyond Creation's, *Final Fantasy VII* features a world run by a powerful military government, with superhuman agents who derive their powers from a celestial being. A life force moves through all things and eventually returns to the Planet. The empty unsettledness of the world is thrown into stark contrast by almost anachronistic elements of basic technology: in all the world there's only one small airplane, and a single rocket ship makes up the entirety of the space program. The Planet seems almost as if it were recovering from an unspoken apocalypse.

### *Dissidia Final Fantasy*, Square-Enix

*Dissidia*'s heroes wield giant weapons and over-the-top magic that fits right in with **Exalted**. Its agile, cinematic battle system was the single largest influence on Third Edition's combat rules.

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or long centuries the claws of the storm had been tearing at the temple. The ordinary storms, the great storms, and the storms which were seen only every century or so, and which are never seen today. Those terrible primal things could tear a man to pieces with their force, or thresh him to the bone with their fearsome hail. Twelve times had they torn at the fabric of the temple. They had consumed the decorative surfaces in seven ravening visitations. For the last five such storms, they had gnawed hungrily at the jade and granite fabric of the manse, but to little avail. After each storm, the manse had dried, the clouds and the winds had receded, and the monument to the Unconquered Sun still slept under the vastness of the sky.

Every corner was rounded, every high place worn down. When Perfect Soul arrived, she came with the sense that she was making a final, perfunctory stop on a long and bootless errand. She had uttered many pointless beseechments, made many futile pleas; this would be her last. Some spirits had seen her, and spurned her or demurred her entreaties. Others had left her standing in her finery in the midst of empty shrines. All were wary of the Immaculates.

Perfect Soul entered the temple of the Unconquered Sun, a deity almost unknown in the present age. Too mighty for attention, in the Second Age it was the custom to consider him unapproachable and accord him no special devotion, certainly not enough to maintain a priesthood in his holy places. That you have a temple at all chokes me, thought the amirah, feeling a flash of anger at the feckless apathy of gods. But the First Age had been a different time, and they had taken the cult of the Unconquered Sun seriously then.

Before the wind-scarred altar, she placed the bowl and poured out the wine of the sacrifice. She lit a cone of incense and the heavy smell of burning herbs filled the space. The room grew larger around her, and she dismissed it as the effect of the fumes.

*Unconquered Sun, Father of Morning, Reborn and Unvanquishable, hear my prayer. The Empress has disappeared and the Dragon-Blooded have discovered artifacts in my lands. Nothing restrains their depredations. They destroy what they please to excavate in the capital, and their demands for tribute have become outrageous. If I set my people against the Realm, they will be massacred and*

*I will be deposed and slain, and some amenable cousin put up on the throne in my place. Aid me, Unconquered Sun, give me the strength to lead and defend my people.*

And the four-armed statue, seemingly made of porcelain yet untouched by the centuries that had passed since the end of the First Age, unmarred by terrible storms, regarded her silently. Its face was set in a mute expression of fierceness and effort. It mocked her, another uncaring god, the heavens themselves set against her, the little gods terrified of the Immaculates, the great gods vast and uncaring.

"Damn you and your silence," she hissed, clenching her fists until the nails bit and her blood speckled the floor. "Lord of ruins, you are as empty and pointless as your shrine!" Her anger and despair welled up out of her like a torrent. She screamed at the idol, grabbed her scepter and swung it with both hands against the effigy's head.

And her blow shattered the head of the idol that twelve times had withstood the winds called Adorjan's Sighs, the wind which had gnawed the granite of the shrine down to storm-smoothed arcs, without so much as the marring of its colorful paint.

Perfect Soul was Exalted at that moment, and the power of the Unconquered Sun entered her and remade her into a vessel of utmost power. Great was the event, total the remaking of her Essence, yet it happened in an instant, as if it were the opening of a lock. And then the Unconquered Sun spoke to her:

"You who struck my likeness, I have seen your plight and felt your despair. You whom the gods have abandoned, your courage, your wrath, and your pain has made you one with the King of Heaven. Once, I felt the sting of betrayal. In my wrath I turned my face from Creation. Now I turn it back. Go forth from this place and know that my light goes with you, for the fate of all the world is yours to decide. Be now the hand of celestial vengeance, and bring righteousness to the world as you know best."

And thus, in a wasteland shrine torn by the ages, was Perfect Soul made a servant of righteousness, and received into the Zenith Caste. Few marked the event at the time, but it was one of great moments, and its echoes would resound through the Time of Tumult.



## Chapter One

# The Exalted

The world needs heroes. It always has, and it always will. Sometimes mortal heroes rise from the ranks of humanity, beating back the petty evils of selfishness and greed. But sometimes mortal heroes are not enough. That's when the Exalted rise.

The Exalted are mortal champions chosen by the gods to wield divine power. A virtuous teacher is empowered by the Unconquered Sun to spread enlightenment to the masses. A tenacious villager becomes a scion for the spirit of the fields, taking on the god's very nature to protect her people from invaders. An ambitious young noble thrills to the fire that ignites in his blood, cleansing and invigorating him. All are Exalted.

Heroes who wield the power of the five natural elements are known as Terrestrial Exalts, individually the weakest but also the most abundant, while heroes who wield the power of the sun, moon and stars are known as Celestial Exalts, the greatest among the Chosen. In between are heroes of every imaginable stripe, from those who wield the terrifying magics of the dead to those bursting with the energy of the animistic spirits that exist in all things.

The Exalted are set apart from the mortals they once were in many ways. They can live for centuries or even millennia, they naturally heal even the most grievous of wounds, and they will never die of a mere passing sickness. But the most wondrous of these is the power to channel the fundamental force of the universe, called Essence. Essence ebbs and flows in all things—in living creatures, in rivers and mountains, in the patterns of storms and fate. It composes human beings and ripples with their every act, but most people cannot command it. It takes an Exalt to direct these raw, nescient forces into miracles.

Some of these miracles are innate talents, such as the Zenith Caste's ability to cremate the dead with holy fire. Some are magics that must be learned over time but come naturally to an Exalt, called Charms. Charms allow the

### EXALTED LONGEVITY

#### How long do the Exalted live, on average?

The answer varies. Those Chosen who strongly cultivate their Essence can exceed the “normal” lifespan of their kind by decades, or even centuries in the case of the Celestial Exalted. Some Exalts seek out magical anagathics with which to further extend their lives.

The Dragon-Blooded live 250–300 years on average, though those with truly refined mastery of Essence, as well as those employing rare and expensive magical regimens, may live significantly longer. For example, the sorceress Mnemon, eldest surviving daughter of the Scarlet Empress, will soon celebrate her 400th birthday and is still in her prime.

The Solar and Lunar Exalted both have an average lifespan in the range of 2,000–3,000 years, although this is, again, subject to significant variance—particularly in the First Age, when much research was devoted to anagathic sorcery, artifacts, and mystical drugs.

The Sidereal Exalted live 3,500–5,000 years. Life-extending magic which benefits the other Exalted seems curiously ineffective on the Maidens’ Chosen.

As for the other Exalted, it’s hard to say—the Exigents vary greatly from one to another, while Liminals seem oddly inconsistent in the span of their days and the ways in which they cease to be, although several are known to have been active for many centuries. The Abyssal Exalted may have the potential to live forever—this is the promise uttered by the Deathlords—but no one can say for certain, since none have been Exalted for longer than five years.

Few Exalted die of old age—they’re much more likely to die by violence, misadventure, betrayal, or even accidents (particularly where sorcery is involved) than to expire peacefully in bed. Regardless, the Chosen retain the appearance and vigor of youth for most of their great lifespans—the marks of advanced age don’t appear until an Exalt’s waning decades, and they remain spry and physically capable until their final few years.

Exalted to perform all manner of amazing feats, from leaping mountains and singlehandedly defeating a hundred men in battle, to swaying the minds and hearts of a nation, to unlocking mysteries never meant to be revealed. All Essence is not created equal. Its character changes depending on its source and purpose. The Essence of the great elemental dragons is wild and primal, while the Essence of the dead is harsh and chilling. The Charms of the Exalts who channel these various flavors of Essence reflect their temperaments.

Exalts dedicated and willing enough to devote themselves to a difficult endeavor can delve into the occult secrets of reality itself, bending Essence to an even more world-shaking purpose known as sorcery. The spells of a sorcerer can re-write the very laws of Creation, calling down storms of acid or commanding powers from beyond the world's rim.

But Essence is a limited resource for the Exalted, whose mortal bodies were not designed to wield such power. They can absorb the ambient Essence of the natural world around them, but this is a gradual process. If an Exalt uses up all of her stores of Essence, she becomes little more than mortal for a time. Once her stores are replenished, though, her enemies would do well to take heed. With Essence at her disposal, an Exalt can challenge the gods themselves, and even greater adversaries, for the fate of all Creation.

## Exaltation

Mortals in the world of **Exalted** are granted a soul with their first breath. It is telling, then, that the Chosen generally refer to the moment of their Exaltation as “The Second Breath.” Exaltation is a moment of empowerment, but also a renewal, a rebirth. It doesn’t re-make the Exalt, but rather uplifts her, makes her a chain in a legacy of greatness stretching back to the dawn of human history.

But who does Exaltation come to? When? How?

Solar Exaltation is unpredictable, though a few generalizations can be made. Solars are often men and women who have already accomplished great things and displayed excellence in some discipline or other. This isn’t universal—sometimes a Solar is simply a person of enormous potential who has never had the opportunity to exercise it, or who is possessed of greatness of spirit. Although it’s rare for cruel blackguards to gain the Unconquered Sun’s blessing, there’s little consistency in the morality of those that are Chosen. Many consider themselves righteous, but their definitions of righteous behavior vary widely enough

to have brought the Solar Exalted to war in the past—and will again.

Solar Exaltation usually arrives in a moment of great stress, danger, pressure, or turmoil. The Solar feels a great rush of energy suffusing her, and begins to instinctively draw on her Essence for the first time. Her Caste Mark erupts on her brow, and her anima banner quickly builds to the fullness of its radiant splendor—a state in which it will remain for several hours. Often the Solar finds herself facing a difficult or insurmountable trial of some sort, and Exaltation grants her the power necessary to survive or triumph. Solar Exaltation could bless anyone of sufficient mettle at any time and station of life—it has uplifted princes and paupers, children and great-grandfathers, savants and sell-swords, saints and assassins.

Solar Exaltation is normally wordless—the Solar finds herself with the boundless power of Essence roaring in her soul, but is given no mandate, instructions, or explanation. The Zenith Caste is an exception—each Zenith’s Exaltation is accompanied by a short proclamation from the Unconquered Sun which echoes in the Exalt’s mind and soul. He explains why the Zenith is worthy of his blessing, and exhorts her to go forth and make the world a righteous place, as best she knows how.

Exaltation is similar for many other Exalts, but there are always key differences. The Dragon-Blooded experience the Second Breath because they carry at least a trace of Terrestrial blood in their ancestry. The Elemental Dragons never speak during their Exaltation—it falls to their society and religion to explain their place in the world. By contrast, Lunar Exaltation behaves much as Solar Exaltation, save that the goddess Luna personally attends the Second Breath of each of her Chosen. Sidereal Exaltation is slow and subtle, unfolding over a matter of days or weeks, accompanied by strange omens, waking dreams, and mystical portents. Those few Abyssals who have been willing to speak of their Black Exaltation insist it occurred in a moment when they stood at the cusp of life and death, and that they faced a choice between taking the Second Breath... or their last. Liminal Exaltation is stranger yet, while Exigents vary tremendously.

## Essence Feuer

Commanding Essence is a heady experience. It’s not like speaking an incantation, turning a key, or flipping a card. To be aware of Essence is to feel—to always feel—a new part of yourself, a part that is *alive* and *active* and *burning with power*. The Essence of the Exalted is as much a part of them as their blood or thoughts or breath, and young Exalts ache to use it.

### THE CHARACTER OF ESSENCE

To a Lawgiver, channeling Solar Essence brings a myriad of feelings and sensations. It is a kind of pure cosmic transcendence that is the order of the divine. It is soaring triumph and limitless joy; it is the harmony of all things, a song that lifts and lifts the soul, and the hum of raw, limitless power; it is a making and unmaking of the self, and an ecstasy of understanding.

To a deathknight, channeling Abyssal Essence also brings a plethora of emotions. Abyssal Essence is pure unmitigated love of the darkness, the thrill of the endless night, and the certainty of death that begets a calming focus. It is an undying romance, the embrace of the grave. Death is a lover, and her touch holds no fear. It is the hymn of the dead impelling one's greatness, and a heightening of the real, such that colors burn brighter, scents are stronger, tastes are sweeter, and all living things radiate with beauty and glory before the eyes of the reaper.

Because an Exalt's Essence is a part of them, this takes the form of the urge to *act*. Most Exalted would never say "I use my Essence," any more than they would say "I use my muscles." A swordsman fights his enemies. An orator speaks words of revolution. Essence suffuses these acts.

Older Chosen know this phenomenon as Essence fever, (or, more dramatically, Essence possession). Solar Essence cries out for heedless glory, imparting a great desire to *act, to do, to grasp and wield their newfound power to seize longstanding dreams, settle old grudges, and otherwise recklessly impose themselves on the world*. If greatness is in the nature of the Solar Exalted, then their Essence pushes them to seize that greatness *now*. It's neither irresistible nor insurmountable, even for the very young—but the urge is there.

As a Solar gains experience with his power—generally within a span of months or years—he tames his Essence, quiets the voice that speaks out and urges him onward, *to glory, to victory, to more*. He makes that impulse serve him, rather than letting it drive him.

Other Exalted are subject to their own Essence fevers. Indeed, lessons on mastering one's Essence are a vital part of the educational curriculum of young Dragon-Blooded, and of the teachings of the Immaculate Philosophy in general. Without such rigidly-instilled discipline, the powerful elemental urges of the Terrestrial Exalted likely would have torn the Realm apart long ago.

### Caste Marks

The Celestial Exalted possess symbols known as Caste Marks, which naturally appear upon their foreheads when their Essence burns hot. These marks signify the duties the gods wish to impress upon their Chosen, and in the First Age, acted as symbols of pride and badges of office; an Exalt can cause her Caste Mark to appear with only the slightest bit of concentration and exertion, should she wish to announce her nature to men or gods.

Dragon-Blooded lack Caste Marks, instead bearing a variety of markings expressing their elemental aspect. Such marks might include brilliantly red hair or eyes that glow like embers in dim light, for Fire Aspects; or a green tinge to the eyes and lips, or hair that smells of roses, or fingernails of living wood, for Wood Aspects; or tempers that manifest as localized winds, for Air Aspects.

Other Exalted vary. Some Exigents have sacred marks like the Celestial Exalted, while others bear physical indications of their divine station like the Dragon-Blooded, while yet others have no particular markings at all. Most disturbingly, the Abyssal Exalted display Caste Marks appearing as blackened versions of the Caste Marks of the Solar Exalted...

Caste Marks can manifest variously, depending on the circumstances and the mood of the Exalt. An Eclipse quietly revealing himself at the beginning of negotiations with a proud spirit might will his Caste Mark to fade slowly into full visibility upon his brow, announcing the legitimacy of his presence. On the other hand, an enraged Dawn Caste revealing the folly of those who have challenged him might have the arms of his sun-burst Caste Mark slam into visibility in rapid succession, each accompanied with a boom like thunder.

### The Tools of the Chosen

An Exalt's command of Essence extends beyond the miracles of Charms and sorcery. The Chosen have long bent themselves to the study of the world and how to harness its Essence through mystic tools and structures. Most Chosen seek to bedeck themselves in mighty artifacts—miraculous arms, armor, and trinkets forged of the magical materials and wondrous rarities, which lend them magical blessings. The Exalted take particular pride in their weapons and armor, and often establish a deep rapport with their martial panoply, learning to awaken special miracles within the union of warrior and artifact, known as Evocations.

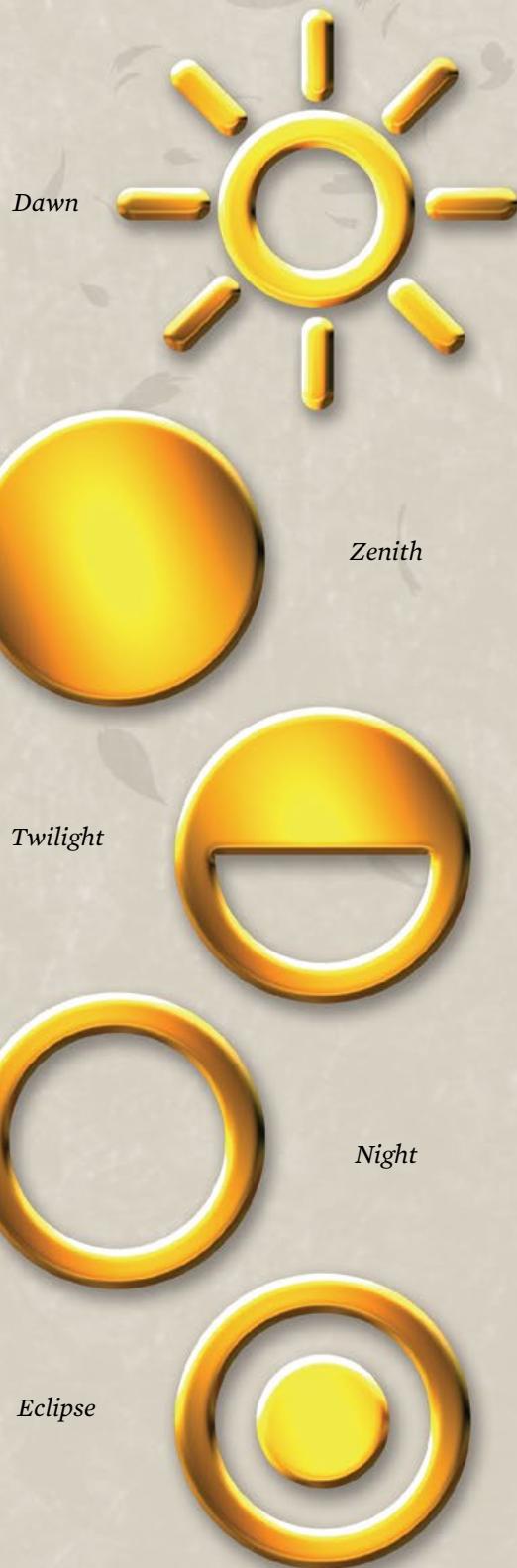
In the First Age, most Exalted owned a number of such wonders. Alas, many artifacts have been lost to the ages, and so today the Chosen fight and die for control of those that remain. The few artificer-smiths among the Exalted, those who have not forgotten the ancient ways of forging mighty daiklaves, imperishable armor, flying boots, or other wonders, can command whatever prices they desire—assuming they make their services available at all.

Even more coveted than wondrous artifacts are those rare places of power in the world where Essence pools and gathers, known as demesnes. Demesnes are often strange, uncanny places, and the strongest demesnes are easily identifiable as such even by mortals. Demesnes are often marked by an intensity of elemental power, featuring roaring waterfalls, glorious crystal caverns, fire-blackened trees which yet live and continue to grow, and similar prodigies.

An Exalt who has attuned herself to a demesne may partake of the thunderous outpouring of its Essence to empower herself, but this isn't the reason most Chosen covet demesnes. A properly trained geomantic architect may refine and harness the power of a demesne through the construction of a magical fortress, palace, or tower known as a manse. A manse's sacred geometry channels the untamed flow of a demesne into evoking particular miracles, which may render the manse into a home of unmatched luxuries and wonders, an impregnable magical fortress, a wide-reaching weather-control station, or any of a number of other uncanny designs. Some manses are designed to concentrate all of a demesne's power into a single point, where it crystallizes into a hearthstone—a magical crystal or jewel capable of empowering the mightiest and most complex of artifacts, fortifying their bearer, or radiating potent blessings or curses.

### The Roll of the Chosen

What follows is an overview of the most numerous Chosen of the Age of Sorrows. It's not a complete list—there are more Exalted than the seven types detailed here, which will be spoken of in future supplements. **Only the Solar Exalted are playable using this book.** The other Chosen will become playable in upcoming books, the first of which is **Dragon-Blooded: What Fire Has Wrought**. Simplified rules for using non-Solar Exalts as antagonists may be found in Chapter Eight.



# THE EXALTED





# The Solar Exalted

*Forged from the power of the greatest of gods, the Solar Exalted are the spiritual mimesis of the sun and all it represents: glory, magnanimity, power, relentless, inspiration, creativity and ascension. As the sun dominates heaven, so too do the Solars shine brighter than their peers. They are natural-born leaders, scholars, warriors, and builders, brought forth from the greatest heroes of mankind and set on high as the Unconquered Sun's own champions.*

*The Solar Exalted are the greatest of all the Chosen. Be they benevolent or tyrannical in their courses, the Solars' natural mastery of the world and their ability to uphold the loftiest principles has earned them the sobriquet of the Lawgivers.*

## THE SOLAR CASTES

The Unconquered Sun selected his champions to reflect all aspects of his majesty, and to express the totality of human excellence. As such, each Solar belongs to one of five Castes:

- **The Dawn Caste:** These Solars are the mightiest warriors and most fearsome strategists to have ever walked Creation.
- **The Zenith Caste:** Holy men, priests, leaders of men, founders of religions, and uplifters of nations, these Solars seek to make the world a righteous place, as best they know how.
- **The Twilight Caste:** Craftsmen, wise men, and binders of occult forces, these Solars are the most erudite savants and mightiest sorcerers to have ever lived.
- **The Night Caste:** These Solars walk unseen among the wicked, bending the tools of darkness to the service of Creation as assassins, spies, and thieves.

• **The Eclipse Caste:** Forgers of accords between the powers of the world, these Lawgivers are far-ranging diplomats, socialites, merchants, and adventurers.

## Masters of the Martial Arts

All styles of combat with weaponry or fists become suffused with miraculous power when practiced by the Solar Exalted. With effort and proper tutelage, Solars are even capable of ascending into the ranks of Heaven and learning the greatest and most esoteric expressions of martial systems—Sidereal Martial Arts.

## Masters of Sorcery

Solars are possessed of the greatest will to power ever known. The First Age was built on the back of their unmatched sorcerous prowess.

## Masters of Evocations

Master artisans and warriors alike, the Solar's journey is one of spiritual expression through physical means. In touch with an Essence greater than all others, the Solar may evoke the greatest of powers sleeping within their immortal panoplies.

## Masters of Creation and Beyond

The greatest age of prosperity and grandeur the world has ever known was brought forth by the vision and leadership of the Lawgivers. Their passion drives the rise of nations, and their acumen brings forth wealth and reforms. The Solar Exalted can even forge new lands to conquer, raising them from the chaos beyond the world.

## PLAY ONE OF THE SOLAR EXALTED IF YOU WANT

- to be a reborn hero of legend, forging a new destiny.
- to be a master of martial arts, sorcery, or Evocations.
- to be a forger of nations, armies, religions, wonders, or even worlds.
- to face enemies on all sides, and struggle against an ancient curse.
- to be mightiest among the Chosen.



# THE ABYSSAL EXALTED



*Conjured from the depths of a forgotten history, the Abyssal Exalted are the champions of death. They ride forth from the Underworld wearing the finery of long-buried kings, or clad in armor forged from forfeit souls. Funeral incense is their perfume. They are mighty warrior-poets, and their battle prowess, dark sorcery, and elegant words are a match for the Solar Exalted themselves.*

*The Abyssals represent a new threat to Creation—the Realm and its Sidereal masters can find no historical records which speak of these beings, not even those forbidden tomes dating back to the First Age. These deathknights first appeared at the siege of Thorns where they cut down the city's Dragon-Blooded defenders. Now they openly claim manses in Creation's shadowlands, and attend the courts of the Deathlords. Their purpose is clear: They are Death's Lawgivers, come to impose a new order.*

## THE ABYSSAL CASTES

The Abyssal Exalted bear Caste Marks identical to those of the Solar Exalted, save that Abyssal marks appear as black brands rather than icons of radiant glory. Their Castes, likewise, seem bleak mockeries of the stations accorded to the Unconquered Sun's Chosen:

- **The Dusk Caste:** These Abyssals are vicious warriors, elegant duelists, or battlefield reapers fighting amidst storms of blood and severed limbs.
- **The Midnight Caste:** Evangelists of the grave, speakers for the ancestor cult, and lords of the dead, these Abyssals exalt the glories of death and bring its blessings to Creation.
- **The Daybreak Caste:** Craftsmen, necrosurgeons, funerists, and forgers of souls, these Abyssals are wise in the forbidden lore of the Underworld and absolute masters of dread necromancy.
- **The Day Caste:** These spies and assassins walk unseen among the living, stealing the secrets of Creation for the benefit of their masters, and bringing swift and sudden death to their foes.
- **The Moonshadow Caste:** Masters of the old laws which bind the Underworld together, these Abyssals act as their masters' emissaries and formalize accords between the living and the dead.

### Deathknights

When the Abyssals ride forth from their bleak citadels, it is most often as agents of the Deathlords. Most of the Abyssals have sworn fealty to one of these dark lords of the Underworld, and in turn have been raised high in their master's ranks—armed and armored in grim wonders, given estates in the shadowlands, and tutored in the mastery of death's black miracles. Other Abyssals forsake this master-apprentice relationship, riding alone and following their heart's urgings.

### Rot and Beauty

The grave's touch marks the Abyssal Exalted. Many become pale as alabaster, dark as obsidian, or the delicate gray of old ash. Exaltation's mark is more extreme for some Abyssals: they become exemplars of the elegant beauty of death, with raven hair

and rose-petal lips, while others embody the grave's decay, becoming drawn and withered, or even blooming into full and eternal rot.

### The Romance of the Grave

Though they are death's champions, the Abyssals yet live, and feel the desires of the living. Some deathknights are moved by a strange romance, finding beauty and joy in the bleak silence of graveyards, the howling of wolves raised up to a cold and shining moon, the delicate work of spiders, the mournful arias of the dead. They may know love, perhaps even for one of the living.

But none should count on love or joy to save them when Death's Lawgivers come riding. Many Abyssals see only death in death, and are pleased by cruelty and blood.

### Masters of Necromancy

Abyssals carry a natural authority over the dead. They bind ghosts to their service as a routine matter. When they march to war, it is often at the head of legions of animated corpses, supported by ingenious war machines of bone and sinew.

### The Chivalry of Death

Classically trained Abyssals are given a code, which speaks to the truth of the grave. This truth is instinctive, and resonates even in those deathknights who forsake the Deathlords to walk alone.

Despair, futility, hopelessness in heroes and leaders and the hearts of men spread the Essence of the grave far more effectively than wholesale slaughter, which tends to renew vows of perseverance, survival, and commitment to the gods. Kill a wife and spare the husband, and you may have made an enemy for life, but you have also made the man questionable to everyone around him forevermore. And so the Abyssals sometimes stay their hands. They let their enemies live. They preach bleak sermons and move on without incident. They let the world move in its own course, touched by their darkness. This is the chivalry of death.

Few living individuals understand the chivalry of death, even when a deathknight patiently explains it. Who can say why one man or village is spared, while another is cut down or razed to ashes? Why does an Abyssal let his foe live with the

memory of defeat in one battle, and slay him in the next? The Abyssals are untroubled; they know, in their hearts, when they should stay their hand. They are unhurried; they know death's triumph to be inevitable.

### PLAY ONE OF THE ABYSSAL EXALTED IF YOU WANT

- *to walk with death as your constant companion.*
- *to be a warrior-poet of macabre passions and dark romance.*
- *to be a master of necromancy.*
- *to be a champion of the dark lords of the Underworld.*
- *to uphold the chivalry of death.*



# The Dragon-Blooded

*To be Dragon-Blooded is to inherit greatness.*

*It is to know that your parents were heroes, and their parents before them, in a line stretching back to the Ten Thousand Dragons who fought for men in a world of gods and monsters.*

*The Dragon-Blooded exude the talents and traits of their legendary forebears, trained from birth to sharpen their innate excellence into sublime perfection.*

*If a Dragon-Blood's lineage gives her a great deal to live up to, then the breath of the Dragons conveys the sheer might to be equal to that task.*

*Terrestrial Exaltation is the kiss of the elements — it challenges the Dragon-Blooded to cultivate the resilience of mountains, the patience of the river, passion like fire.*

*Untamed, this power is little more than a chaos of the spirit; wedded to a hero's cultivated excellence it becomes the directed fury of the breaking storm.*

## THE DRAGON-BLOODED ASPECTS

The five elements dream in the heart of each Dragon-Blooded. Though a Terrestrial may harness any of their ways and lessons, she has a powerful affinity for one element above the others, and is greatly influenced by its nature.

• **Aspects of Air:** Heroes of quick thought and learned contemplation, Aspects of Air are as subtle as the breeze and dynamic as the thunderstorm.

• **Aspects of Earth:** Bastions of patience and stability, these resilient Exalts are the solid pillars holding up the Realm.

• **Aspects of Fire:** Passion and energy incarnate defines these Dragon-Blooded on the battlefield and in the court.

• **Aspects of Water:** Masters of adaptation and left-handed ways, Aspects of Water are deep as the ocean and relentless as the flood.

• **Aspects of Wood:** Beautiful as orchids and deadly as nightshade, Aspects of Wood share a deep affinity with the living world.

## Dynasties of Power

The Dragon-Blooded organize themselves into ancient lineages of Exalted power. In the Realm, these are the Great Houses; in the wider world, there are the gentes of Lookshy, minor Realm offshoots, and small gatherings of hinterlands nobility. To be Dragon-Blooded is to live in a society of Exalted peers, and to be caught up in the machinations of centuries-old still-living ancestors.

## An Ancient Arsenal

As the rulers of the world by right of conquest, the Dragon-Blooded hold the lion's share of all surviving First Age weapons: their greatest ships mount implosion bows and lightning ballistae on the bows; their most elite soldiers go into battle clad in ancient Dragon Armor; in the event of absolute calamity, the Realm and the Seventh Legion may even awaken and deploy their scant handful of unstoppable warstriders.

## Inheritors of Evocations

The ancient Solars cultivated their soldiers for mastery of miraculous arms and armor, and modern Dragon-Blooded are the beneficiaries of these regimens. Most Terrestrials carry heirloom artifacts, and—with great effort—may build deeper bonds of rapport with their storied daiklaves and invincible jade armor than any other Exalts, save the Solars themselves. A rare few, including the Scarlet Empress, have even learned to draw forth secrets intended exclusively for the Solars alone.

## Princes of the Earth

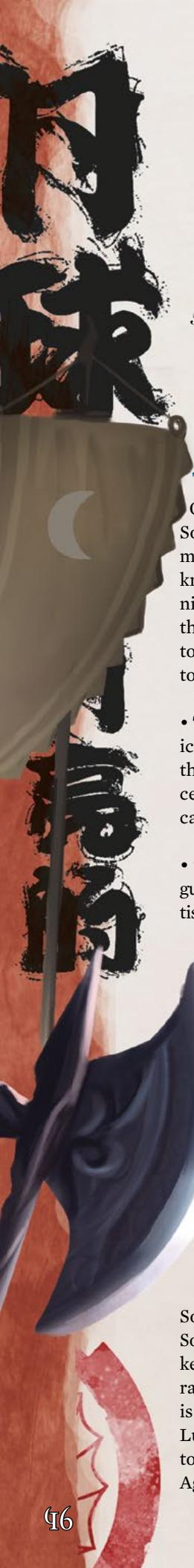
Dragon-Blooded lead charmed lives. Scions of the Realm are born to wealth and power, their inborn nobility acknowledged by all. Even those outcasts born to lost threads of the Dragon's blood in the rude hinterlands of the Threshold are openly recognized as Exalted heroes. No Dragon-Blooded needs hide his elevated station from the world, as the hated Anathema must do.

## PLAY ONE OF THE DRAGON-BLOODED IF YOU WANT

- to challenge the five elements that move in your blood
- to be embroiled in the intrigues of a dynastic family.
- to be the mighty scion of a world-spanning empire.
- to be openly venerated as a Prince of the Earth.



# The Lunar Exalted



*The Chosen of the moon were forged in the chains of bondage but Luna only chooses those with the power to free themselves. Like the moon, they represent a struggle against form and definition, and a primal connection to the unfinished world. They wear the stolen forms of their foes. They bravely walk the tattered edges of Creation, where horrors tread. But they remain caught on the fangs of the past, and until they escape it, they cannot truly claim the freedom Luna has promised them.*

*Though they may live as legendary thieves, peerless hunters, opulent scavenger princes, terrible living gods, seekers of the world's secrets, bloody-handed warlords, and more, all Lunars feel the weight of the past.*

*Once the Lunars were the guardians of the Old Realm, matching their specialized guile to the raw magnificence of their Solar lords and spouses. That time ended in blood and flames, and now the Lunars wage a crusade against those who stole the world that was theirs to protect.*

## THE LUNAR CASTES

Once, the Lunar Exalted matched their aptitudes to their Solar counterparts, the better to protect the world they made. They were priests and courtiers, spies, observers, knives in the night. The Lunars shed those narrow definitions long ago, leaving them behind in the fallen ruin of the First Age. Lunar mystics developed three new Castes to replace them, each broadly powerful and better-suited to enabling Lunar survival in a hostile world:

- **The Full Moon Caste:** These Lunars rely on raw physical prowess to answer the challenges and enemies given them by the world. They are warriors among warriors, certainly, but they are also athletes, rugged survivors, and capable of thriving in otherwise unlivable environments.

- **The Changing Moon Caste:** Changing Moons rely on guile, cunning, charisma, and overwhelming animal magnetism to overcome their foes and take what they want from life. What they cannot overawe with their sheer majesty, they can trick and blind with lies and misdirection.

- **The No Moon Caste:** These mystics rely on cleverness and wisdom to outwit their opponents and solve the world's challenges like the riddles they are. No Moons tease power out of the spirit and meaning of things, and are the greatest sorcerers of the Lunar Exalted.

## Broken Bonds

The Lunar Exalted were created to be the Solars' seconds, their spouses, and the sacred guardians of the Old Realm. The bond defined the Lunars; it sang within their very Essence.

So too did the bond's destruction. The Old Realm fell; the Solars were murdered, their spirits banished beyond Lunar ken. The Lunars *changed*. They're still changing. A deep rage lives in their Essence, and a deep wound. Their sleep is tormented by visions of loss, of murder, of the past. The Lunars are compelled to shatter the chains binding them to the past—to tear down the stolen remnants of the First Age, to raze the Sidereal and Terrestrial hegemony that

dares to wear the ancient name of the Realm. The Silver Pact exists to facilitate this.

Some Lunars resist the primal howl that shivers in their Essence. They harness their rage to fight for that which they cherish, or bend their powerful instincts to their own benefit as they walk another road. There is tension between these Lunars and the Silver Pact traditionalists, but also common bonds; the two trade favors and mark debts more often than they shed one another's blood.

The return of the Solars changes everything for Luna's Chosen. Neither Lunar camp seeks to turn back the clock, nor wishes to return to defining themselves as the shadows cast by the Chosen of the sun. Something stirs in the Lunars' hearts, but none can yet say what it is or what it means.

## Walkers in Ten Thousand Forms

Every Lunar is an accomplished shapeshifter. By drinking the heart's blood of man or beast, a Lunar learns to wear its skin. By unleashing the rage deep inside, Lunars may evoke monstrous battle-forms. Many learn to refine their shape-shifting talents even beyond these versatile blessings.

## Terrors in the Night

Driven by vivid recall of the ancient past and a nagging ache of the spirit, Luna's Chosen wage war against the usurpers' Realm. Their preferred weapons are fangs in the night, massed forces of barbarian screamers, and terrifying miracles dredged from the hidden corners of the world and beyond.

## Gods of the Untamed

The Lunars make themselves the champions and living gods of those the Realm despises. They protect and strengthen men living in the wild lands, arm them in iron and fervor, and seek to turn Creation's rim into a ring of claws and blades encircling their enemy.

## Armored in Silver

The Lunars lock their Castes with moonsilver tattoos shortly after Exaltation, lending stability to their chaotic power and armoring themselves against the Wyld. Thus the lands of chaos become the lairs and safe havens of Luna's Chosen.

## PLAY ONE OF THE LUNAR EXALTED IF YOU WANT

- to be a master shapeshifter, wearing a thousand stolen forms.
- to be the inheritor of an ancient vendetta, empowered by rage to be nearly unstoppable.
- to walk the length and breadth of Creation with a freedom few others can claim.
- to be treated as a living god by barbarian tribes.



# The Sidereal Exalted

*The Sidereal Exalted don't exist. Long ago they removed themselves from the world of men and the courts of the little gods, erasing the record and memory of their passing. When someone turns up an ancient manuscript mentioning the Sidereal Exalted, it vanishes soon after. When rumors spring up mentioning the Sidereal Exalted, the details twist and change until nothing is certain.*

*Once, so the legends and whispered conspiracies go, the Sidereal Exalted were the loyal seers, mentors, and advisors of the Solar Exalted. Then they betrayed their lords, vanished into legend, and became hidden puppeteers pulling the strings of destiny and history. But now the Sidereals' pawns run amok, and the Solars have returned from their deathly exile. The Sidereals must emerge into the open once again if they are to tame a world sliding into chaos.*

## THE SIDEREAL CASTES

Rumor has it that each Sidereal belongs to one of the five Maidens of Destiny, focusing on that goddess's domain as part of the greater task of tending to fate.

- **Chosen of Journeys:** Set on the path of Mercury, these Sidereals concern themselves with travelers, roads, paths, and movements of people and forces throughout the world, ensuring that all things arrive in their proper places at the proper times.
- **Chosen of Serenity:** Celebrants of the ways of Venus, these Sidereals ensure that love, marriage, and joy bind together those things which must be bound together, or cleave apart those things that must be set apart.
- **Chosen of Battles:** Militants under the banner of Mars, these Sidereals oversee the march of armies, the swirl of conflict, and the outcome of wars, ensuring that all bloodshed furthers the needs of the world.
- **Chosen of Secrets:** Sworn to the silence of Jupiter, these Sidereals keep destiny's secrets from the eyes of men and gods alike, allowing that which is hidden to come to light only in the moment when destiny demands it be so.
- **Chosen of Endings:** Harbingers of Saturn's quiet footsteps, these mournful Sidereals ensure that all things end when their fated hour arrives—be they lives, nations, or even the vast sweep of an age.

## Masters of Fate

Records which mention the Sidereals at all name them the weakest of the Celestial Exalted in raw displays of force. Yet those who claim to have survived their aggressions would swear the world itself conspires to support the Sidereals—it is as though the subtle threads of fate dance to a Sidereal's will, amplifying her modest power to accomplish whatever necessity demands.

## Masters of the Martial Arts

Those who remember the Sidereals of old agree on one thing: they were martial artists whose genius was without compare. Only the Solar Exalted could boast equal prowess, and then only under the tutelage of a Sidereal

mentor. Their mystical fighting systems, the Sidereal Martial Arts, are the whispered legends and ultimate secret styles of the martial arts world.

## Masters of Astrology

Mortals may learn to read dim glimpses of their fortune or doom in the dance of the stars. The Sidereals, it is said, could both read the stars and dictate their course, penning a new destiny for men or nations and watching the heavens shift to answer their prayers, or even wearing a crafted destiny like a cloak and mask.

## Agents of Yu-Shan

Though the Sidereals have vanished from history, they still act in the world. When destiny trembles in its course, the Sidereals appear to right it. They move through the world along hidden paths and through secret gates, and vanish when their work is done. On those occasions when they explain themselves, they claim to act as Heaven's agents. The resources they command support this claim.

## Bronze and Gold: The Truth of the Sidereals

The Sidereal Exalted came together in the final days of the Old Realm and cast a great prophecy. Among all the possible futures they glimpsed, only those where they murdered and exiled the Solar Exalted assured Creation's survival, though its splendor would be forever diminished. And so they rallied the Dragon-Blooded to arms, and bound the Essence of the Solars into a prison of jade.

The return of the Solars has riven the ranks of the Sidereals. While the majority believes they must stay the course of their ancient prophecy, suppressing the returning Solars and holding together the crumbling Realm, many younger Sidereals have grown sickened by an Age of compromise and the steady lessening of Creation. This "Gold Faction" has broken with their comrades and mentors, and seeks out Solars in the vastness of Creation, hoping to guide them back to power. Under Sidereal guidance, they hope to avert the calamities that marked the end of the First Age.

Taking a page from the Bronze Faction's control of the Immaculate Order, the Gold Faction has built up a suppressed, heretical cult into a tool to serve their purposes. This Cult of the Illuminated preaches a doctrine



that “The Shining Ones” will appear in a time of turmoil and lead the world to salvation; it acts as an ad-hoc support network for those Solars who encounter it, and alerts the Gold Faction to the movements of the Sun’s Chosen.

PLAY ONE OF THE SIDEREAL EXALTED IF YOU WANT

- to exercise uncanny control over destiny.
- to be a wise, inscrutable stranger to all that you meet.
- to master ancient, secret martial arts of incredible power.
- to live in Heaven, and command the awe of gods.

**S**even Devil Clever had come across a whole world to see this vista, and it pleased her greatly to have made the trip. She had twined herself around the upper branches of a vast and mighty oak, growing on a hillside far above Faxai.

The city was clearly defined below her, a brightly lit figure inside its formal walls. Outside the walls were the occasional light crystals and flaring torches of outriders, but otherwise, darkness. She exulted at the sight, knowing the vast expenditures of resources that must be required for the Realm to keep that little chunk of light burning so terribly far from home, with no ability to raise its own food or supply its own merchandise. When Faxai fell, the Caul would belong utterly to the Lunar Exalted.

She dropped down into the darkness where the others waited. There was another Lunar, an older Full Moon who had brought her here, no doubt at great risk. She had wanted to urge him to stay behind—it was not as if two of them could overmatch a Wyld Hunt together, any more than she could alone.

But if there were words that could demonstrate to a Lunar warrior without insult that he should abstain from a fight he clearly desired to court, Seven Devil Clever's tongue was not swift enough to utter them. He was here of his own accord; the law of the Lunar tribe was that he could have let her scamper to her death unaided. She was no sworn kin of his, this was not a mission requested by the Silver Pact. Yet here he was, with his personal guard as well. Seven Devil Clever thought he might want to bang her like a fine drum, but she didn't want to raise her tail to such a gruesome old buck, and had made that clear long before the journey started.

They walked for a while, Seven Devil Clever a grey ghost amidst the rangy, leaping gait of the ape-men that accompanied her. When they were well past the crest and downslope, he signaled for her to stop. Did he think the occupiers in their city could hear them whispering all the way out here, leagues away in the forest? A fact worth noting.

"Did you like what you saw?"

"Fantastic, Mangler. They're bottled up tight in there. Do they get out at all?"

"Oh yes. The night makes it look especially dramatic, that's why I chose to show you this vista during the hours of darkness, but don't be fooled. They've been fighting us for years and they're not dead yet. They have excellent light discipline and they are very aggressive about controlling the space outside their walls. They can't use it, but you had better think twice before you try to. There's a reason we're looking at it from so far away. Their operations can range out even as far as this. Wyld Hunts ride much farther, of course."

Seven Devil Clever nodded. "This is an awesome fight you're in." She meant it sincerely. She was watching the snake of the Realm held down by its head and strangled, and deftly at that.

"Thank you, I take great pride in it. I helped do that."

Ah ha. Now she knew why he was showing it to her. Bragging rights.

"How long until they're gone?"

"No more than five years, we think."

"Mouse in your pocket?"

"You could say I speak for the council of senior Full Moons, among whom I am the least. I am told our plans have the favor of His Divine Lunar Presence."

Everything gained so much clarity.

"It's true, then? The black lion is active again?" Neither of them quite dared to breathe the name Sha'a Oka into the night. A smile revealed ivory fangs. "We want you to see what we can accomplish, Seven Devil Clever. We want you to think about what you could accomplish if you ran with us. This is the time for the strong to assert themselves."



## Chapter Two

# The Age of Sorrows

Close your eyes and dream of the world as it was in its youth. Imagine a forgotten age of gleaming cities of stone and bronze; of heaving seas and demon-ridden storm-winds; of mighty heroes, blessed by the gods, and their wars which rent all Creation asunder. Dream of an age after the casting of the world from the stuff of chaos, after the fall of the first and greatest era of mankind, but before the gods and demons and their manifold champions vanished from reckoning. Imagine a flat world, floating atop the immensity of chaos. This is Creation in the Second Age of Man. This is the world of **Exalted**.

At the center of Creation lies the Blessed Isle, the gleaming heart of the greatest civilization known. The Realm's decadent lords have dominated the world for seven centuries, laying it prostrate before their ambitions and appetites. Now their ageless Empress has vanished, and all eyes turn to her empty throne. Treasures are emptied equipping armies and training assassins for the struggle to come.

Across the wide Inland Sea rests the immensity of the Threshold, those outer lands bounded by the Elemental Poles, ground for centuries beneath the heel of the Realm's legions and subjugated by its mighty sorcery. Cast your eyes to the outer Directions—

The South is bordered by the Pole of Fire and dominated by an immense, hungry desert where the ambitious seek lost cities and precious gems. Its temperate coast is crowded with wealthy trade cities, while its outer regions are a poorly-mapped welter of steaming jungles, pirate coves, smoking mountains, and ferocious savannas.

The Pole of Wood blesses the East with fecundity beyond reckoning. Here farmers bring in three harvests in a lean year, and a great confederation of river nations maintains defiance against the Realm's hegemony. Closer to the purity of the Pole, rolling hills and fertile plains give way to thousands of miles of primeval forest in which dwell lost tribes ruled by men who walk as both gods and beasts.

Freezing winds sweep in from the Pole of Air, scouring the North. This harsh land produces strong people, animals, and iron, but poor crops. The Realm has long been the undisputed master of the Northern cities, but can make scant claim to the blizzard-wracked tundra; here canny nomads eke out a living through raiding and ancient pacts with patron spirits. Their worship buys protection from both the killing cold and the unchecked appetites of the Winter Folk and the restless dead.

To the West stretches the immensity of the Great Western Ocean, and beyond that, storied islands, strange gods, and exotic riches. Few ships are up to the voyage, and so the West remains shrouded in rumor and mystery. Even the Realm has only sporadic contact with its Western holdings. Legends proclaim that the Pole of Water rests somewhere beyond the farthest isle, where the sky touches the sea and the gates of the Underworld yawn wide.

### The Spirits of the World

All about Creation are the spirits of the world. Gods watch the fall of leaves and the wars of women and men. Elementals ride storms and shake the world with earthquakes. If spirits make a place sacred, then the entire world is holy land.

Gods, elementals, and demons fill out the rolls of Creation's divinities, each from different origins and each with disparate desires, save for a universal lust for prayer and propitiation. All have found their places within and apart from the world, and each guards its portfolio and cult.

### Gods

Gods are the overseers of the order of the world. They watch places, things, and ideas. They monitor the progression of events, existing omnipresent and immaterial. In Creation, gods of field, river, town, rice paddy, hot spring, apple orchard and summer storm report to the gods of



Heaven, who manage concepts—in Heaven, gods of war, trade, craft, and passion plan the destinies of nations in a grand celestial bureaucracy.

Each god watches over a portfolio of responsibility, from the gods of the least wilderness trails to the goddess of the Imperial Mountain. They are invested with limited power over their domains, and garner more through worship or promotion. By the laws of Heaven, the gods of Creation cannot intercede in the world—the Creation-Ruling Mandate belongs to the Exalted, not the divinities of forest or city—but countless gods openly defy this ancient law in the Age of Sorrows. Men are fearful of divine wrath and eager to win godly favor, for while the gods of Creation are far from omnipotent, their power is great and their providence priceless. Gods, in turn, bestow boons to chosen peoples that they might reap worship, and levy banes to demonstrate the cost of disrespect. They grant favors to cults, sire or bear God-Blooded children to act as their agents, and seek Exigence that they might Exalt champions.

Once, the gods organized themselves into courts along lines of responsibility, and a few such courts remain—the Ocean Court in the West, or the Court of Seasons who watch the turning of the calendar. But in the Age of Sorrows, most spirit courts are ad-hoc gatherings of the weak beneath the strong—here a divine tyrant monopolizes all mortal worship while his lessers compete for favor and scraps; there the gods are leaderless and fickle, terrorizing mortals as they

will. Heaven, the greatest of spirit courts, has grown ever more remote from Creation since the fall of the Old Realm, and its ministers and mandarins now spend their time expanding their portfolios and securing their political titles, choking the celestial bureaucracy on endless procedure while ignoring reports of divine misconduct in Creation.

The returning Solars worry gods who profit in the chaotic Second Age, yet the rolls of divinity are also filled with potential allies. Gods of diminished strength who wish to reclaim august positions may see the Solars as aides or tools, while gods who break Heaven's laws for the sake of their ideals might make stancher allies.

### The Greatest of the Gods

The greatest gods of Heaven and Earth are the Incarnae, the patrons of the Celestial Exalted. These seven gods were the first to empower mortal champions to throw down the creators of the world. Now in Heaven they rest or wait, seldom emerging from the Jade Pleasure Dome or sharing counsel with their lessers. Some say they are still weary from the effort of creating their Chosen; some say they hide themselves from worldly affairs because they fear the power the Exalted wield. They deign not to address such gossip.

### The Unconquered Sun

Highest of the gods, the Unconquered Sun once walked the borders of Creation, guarding it against threats from beyond. He was unbending and invincible, but could not

raise a hand against his creators, who indulged themselves in every manner of amusement with the world they'd set him to protect. It was he who declared the gods would give men favor and make them champions against his enemies, and it was he who chose the greatest mortals as champions of his own.

It is known in Heaven that some great blasphemy by the Exalted of the First Age made him wroth, and so he turned his face from the world. Now he turns it back.

### Luna

Luna tempers the Unconquered Sun's light and gives the world succor from his unbending righteousness. She is a huntress, seductress, liar, monster, saint and devil—all these things inside one skin or a thousand skins.

Luna is the most active Incarna—she still attends the Exaltation of each of her Chosen, and far-flung tribes recount tales of her hunts and dalliances among the mortal world. But her greatest love was and remains Gaia—it was Luna who gave succor to the Emerald Mother and turned her to the side of the gods when Gaia grew tired of her siblings' misconduct.

### The Five Maidens

Mercury, the Maiden of Journeys; Venus, the Maiden of Serenity; Mars, the Maiden of Battles, Jupiter, the Maiden of Secrets; and Saturn, the Maiden of Endings: These are the Five Maidens, the Ladies of Fate, most inscrutable of the Incarnae. They say little and speak in enigmas; what they love most is inevitability. Mercury loves the explorer venturing into the unknown; she loves the refugee fleeing atrocity. Mars loves the loyal soldier and the rebel; she loves the warrior gloriously triumphant and the warrior cut down.

They seem to walk a lonely road, the Maidens, keeping the world ever balanced on the path of what must be. Even their Chosen regard them with unease—whether Sidereal ventures fail or succeed, always the Maidens say it was fated to be so. Though they head the Bureau of Destiny in Heaven, they delegate many of their duties to subordinates and the Sidereal Exalted, and appear only when

## HEAVEN

**Once the home of the world's creators, the great celestial island of Yu-Shan floats beyond the world in an endless sea of quicksilver. Heaven is a city the size of a continent, teeming with ten million gods of all rank and title. At its center, in the Jade Pleasure Dome, the Incarnae wile away the centuries playing turns at the Games of Divinity, while the highest-ranking gods observe and wager from the stands.**

**The rest of Heaven devotes itself to the great work of recording and regulating all the doings of Creation and its peoples. Here the scribes and archivists of Heaven receive and file reports of terrestrial events. Committees debate how best to schedule mortal destinies, and dragon censors stand vigilant against violations of Heaven's law—or, more often, accept bribes to ignore such crimes. Yet in the fallen Second Age of Man, millions of gods have lost their positions and dwell unemployed in divine slums, where the luxury of Yu-Shan is poor comfort in the face of a purposeless eternity. These little gods amuse themselves with criminal conspiracies or do the bidding of spirits who still enjoy official positions, and look to the return of the Solar Exalted with hope or jealous dread.**

needed. When one of the Five Maidens is absent from the Jade Pleasure Dome, Heaven holds its breath.

## ELEMENTALS

From storm fronts, forest fires, earthquakes, mudslides, from deep ocean currents, from lightning strikes and blizzards, from the heat-haze of the desert and the crushing force of the avalanche do elementals birth themselves into the world.

The elemental races are old beyond measure. Before men, before beasts, and some say before even the gods, elementals have stalked Creation. They coalesce from the interplay of the world's natural energies and begin as countless types and species; each elemental race carries a unique form. They are naturally material and live in the world—wind bears herd clouds while wood spiders lurk in ancient forests, and during the dry season of the South, vast stampedes of llama-yu fire orbs traverse the desert. They perpetuate the energies that birth them, and young elementals live as embodiments of the dynamism of nature.

If they survive the ages—unlike gods, they're ageless but not immortal—ancient elementals become almost completely unique, powers named and feared whose original forms are

lost to time. At the apex of both power and enlightenment, elementals undergo a slow metamorphosis, assuming the serpentine forms of the lesser elemental dragons; no other shape could express their might. Respected by Heaven, the dragons often serve as censors in the courts of Yu-Shan, charged with overseeing celestial law in both Heaven and Creation.

In the fallen Age of Sorrows, under a fractured celestial bureaucracy, lesser elementals follow their instincts without guidance, sometimes pushing natural processes into imbalance. Greater elementals rule courts of their lessers or pretend at godhood over men. And the lesser elemental dragons are as prone to corruption as the gods, demanding bribes and turning a blind eye to their duties. Yet elementals' terrestrial origins give them a unique perspective among



the spirits of the world—elementals are mortal in a sense, native to the material, and have more reason than gods to sympathize with the plights of women and men.

#### DEMONS AND DEMON PRINCES

Locked outside Creation in an endless city of vitriol and brass, lit by a mad green sun and bordered by an infinite silver desert, the Yozis, the overthrown creators of the world, rage in inviolate imprisonment. Demons are their souls and children—creatures of love and terror, as beautiful as they are alien, enslaved eternally to oaths the Yozis swore.

Though Heaven resents the admission, demons, too, are counted among the rolls of divinity.

Demons are not always malevolent, but they're most often indifferent to the well-being of men. Like gods, they desire worship, and like their progenitors they seek escape from Hell. Demons of the First Circle are simple and made for servitude; demons of the Second and Third Circles are mightier, and express the urges of the Yozis. These alien motives are far from human understanding—mortals treat with devils at their peril.

They most often enter the world through sorcerous machination—the oaths of the Yozis render demons vulnerable to enslavement. Demons build manses, manage estates, and serve as bodyguards, steeds, and concubines to the sorcerers among the Chosen.

Folklore repeats the motif of demonologists tricked and overcome by their slaves, releasing fell spirits into Cre-

ation or dragging foolish sorcerers into Hell, but summoning is a tool, and the Exalted have long devised procedures to keep safe from the vengeance of the bound—in truth, demons rarely get the better of their captors. Demons are capricious and alien in their motives, and often surrounded by inauspicious omens, but these inclement phenomena are more a problem for bystanders than for the sorcerer, who may not care what misfortune her slaves spread, provided they don't spread it to her.

#### OTHER DIVINITIES

The divinities of Heaven, Creation, and Hell are not alone in the world. Strange prodigies abound, which confound the reckoning of savants and sorcerers alike. Foremost among these are the Five Elemental Dragons. The Immaculate Philosophy has much to say about these beings, but is silent on Gaia, whose mysteries even the greatest theosophists barely begin to address.

#### The Five Elemental Dragons

Not gods or demons, nor mere elementals rising from Creation's Essence, the Five Elemental Dragons are Gaia's children. They created the Terrestrial Exalted at history's dawn, breathing the Essence of the elements into the blood of heroes. The Immaculate Order teaches that the Dragons' nature sets them apart from the Celestial Bureaucracy and places them atop the cycle of reincarnation, and that this transcendent nature justifies the world-spanning rule of their Chosen, the Dragon-Blooded.

#### Gaia

Gaia was one of the gods' few allies. With her siblings she

created the world; with Luna she escaped her siblings. For Luna's love she sided with the gods; for love of her family she pleaded the Incarnae show mercy—an act the Demon Princes will never forgive.

Ancient texts from the earliest First Age describe a majestic woman robed in green, always at Luna's side, but the Emerald Mother disappears from the records soon after. She does not appear in Heaven now, and Luna takes other lovers. Cults to Gaia are rare and guard carefully their mysteries, and the gods speak not of where she's gone.

### The Realm

The Realm is the single greatest empire in all of Creation, and has dominated the world for centuries. Under the guidance of the Scarlet Empress, the Realm forces its will on the Threshold, smashing all opposition and bending conquered nations to the demands of its satraps. The Realm's legions are the greatest military force on the face of the world, led by ten thousand Dragon-Blooded commanding countless mortal soldiers in both the legions themselves and the armies of subjugated client-states. Its economic might rivals the Guild (see p. 76), and tons of goods travel through Realm-controlled ports each day, taxed by bureaucrats of the Thousand Scales.

Finally, its state religion the Immaculate Order is the largest religion in Creation, commanding millions of adherents and coordinating the worship of countless gods via the Immaculate Calendar and its carefully managed holidays. The Immaculate Order preaches a social hierarchy which elevates the Dragon-Blooded, and specifically the Dragon-Blooded of the Realm, as the living, deadly saints of a glorious faith.

### THROUGH MORTAL EYES

Most people in the Age of Sorrows don't see elementals as a single category of being. Many, like the ifrit and the nymph, appear almost as exotic mortals—even when they're known as spirits, they're treated most often as strange foreigners or puissant heroes akin to God-Bloods or Exalts. Elementals with alien mentalities and inhuman forms are seen as exotic animals, fearsome monsters, or simply natural phenomena. And many pose as gods.

Most don't fall clearly into categories. A beast that stalks the local livestock unless propitiated is a monster and a god; an elemental who lives among a mortal community but seeks praise in payment for its deeds is both a god and a local champion. A savant may know that the former is a wood spider and the latter is an ifrit, and that both are elementals, but to mortals who toil and die in Creation's dirt, it's academic.

The same applies to mortal perceptions of gods and demons, and for that matter beasts, beastfolk, and the Exalted. By far the most common reaction shared by men confronted with the unknown or obviously supernatural is to assume it's a god and to seek a priest.





Pennants embroidered with the mon of the Scarlet Dynasty fly above capitals in countless lands. Soldiers in the red-trimmed armor of the Realm's legions march in lockstep across thousands of miles of foreign road, enforcing the Empress's will. In the lands that border the Inland Sea, the Realm has near-unquestioned dominance, and it is only the Lunar Anathema and the rag-tag principalities of the Scavenger Lands who oppose its relentless spread.

The Realm has accomplished all this through a policy of ruthless expansion and unhesitating force aimed at any who would gainsay it. The Wyld Hunt pursues any hint of the Anathema in the Realm's holdings. The Legions crush any organized military resistance to the Empress's will. Immaculate monks cast those who would speak against the Dragon-Blooded as heretics. Though the lands under the Realm are too vast to control absolutely, any movement from dissent to rebellion is quashed quickly, brutally, and publicly.

All of this occurs in pursuit of an economic and social policy which puts the Dragon-Blooded, and specifically those Dragon-Blooded who have pledged obeisance to the Realm, at the top of the social order in countless lands, and which feeds thousands of talents of jade into the coffers of the Empress and her Great Houses. The Realm's power stems from its tireless pursuit of economic supremacy, a great predator opening wide its jaws to devour all the wealth of the world.

## The Scarlet Dynasty

The Imperial Mountain rises miles into the sky, and its foundations form the Blessed Isle, the seat of the Realm's power. The Realm divides the Isle into prefectures and dominions, each administered by a prefect appointed by the Scarlet Empress. While much of the land has been cultivated, significant portions of the Blessed Isle are set aside for nature preserves, carefully cultivated woodland landscapes, and wildlife refuges.

While the Blessed Isle is insulated from the chaos of the Threshold by the Inland Sea, it is by no means completely safe—rogue gods, restless ghosts, monstrous beasts, and renegade Exalted are rare but not unheard of, and would-be Lunar assassins made it clear the Empress was not truly safe or free from care even in the heart of the Imperial City.

## The Scarlet Empress

The Scarlet Empress founded her Realm after braving the Imperial Manse to seize control of the First Age's Realm Defense Grid in the face of the Great Contagion. Over the ensuing centuries, it was she who built the Realm's innumerable offices, planned its strategies, orchestrated its social order, and guided it unswervingly. During the Calibration between the 763<sup>rd</sup> and 764<sup>th</sup> year after her ascension to power, she disappeared from the halls of the Imperial Manse.

### EYRE OF THE SLEEPWALKER

In the Time Before, a young man lay on his sickbed, locked in the grip of the sleeping death. One cold night, as Saturn passed through the constellation of the Sorcerer, he awakened with starlight in his eyes, and was borne away on the wings of omen-birds.

They say that this is how Rakan Thulio, the Sleepwalker, entered the service of Endings. What little they know for certain is this: Rakan Thulio Exalted in the first days, and was a hero amongst the Chosen. But when the love of his life chose another, he came to believe that Heaven had done him a great injustice.

Believing his destiny had been written by another, his resentment for the cruel hands of fate became hatred for the entire Celestial Bureaucracy. Using forbidden martial techniques, he tapped into a power feared even by the Demon Princes, and marked himself as an enemy of Heaven. When Saturn made her Sign against him, he turned it aside with blasphemous power, and tore the thread of his destiny from the Loom of Fate. For this, Thulio was cast out of Heaven. Only then did Yu-Shan learn the scope of his ambitions.

Thulio has not aged a day since then. Yu-Shan fears what he has in store for the world, even as information on his plans is frustratingly sparse. What is known for sure is that

Thulio loathes Heaven, and has sent his agents to tear it apart, piece by piece.

### A WAR IN HEAVEN

Rakan Thulio has been at war with Yu-Shan for centuries. He is far from alone. A handful of Sidereals have bolstered his ranks, each with their own reasons to betray Heaven. Collectively, the conspirators bring to bear intimate knowledge of the divine bureaucracies. They've turned the political landscape of Yu-Shan into a battleground, and the city itself into the site of a shadow war between those loyal to the Celestial Bureaucracy and those who wish to see it torn down. Dissident and outcast gods flock to his banner; in exchange for their service, Thulio and his allies promise them new roles in the order to come.

Even more terrifying are Thulio's newer allies. Known as the Getimian Exalted, these mysterious agents are walking paradoxes, men and women whom Fate says should not exist. Their magic is every bit as arcane as that of the Maidens' Chosen, and their master claims that they outstrip the Sidereals in enlightenment and skill. The Getimians undermine the Maidens' Chosen at every turn, dogging their attempts to shepherd Creation's destiny. The Sidereals are uncertain where they end and where their foes begin; when they hunt for the Getimians in the patterns of the Loom, they see nothing but the ragged remains of destinies denied and fates rendered null.



## A REPORT ON THE DISAPPEARANCE OF THE SCARLET EMPRESS

*My Lady:*

*In the wake of her disappearance, I have scrambled to prepare a dossier, at your request, on what we know of the Scarlet Empress and who could have been behind her abduction, if an abduction it was. Concerning her origins, the Scarlet Empress swept from anonymity to seize control of the Realm Defense Grid amidst the near collapse of Creation during the Great Contagion. Nearly nothing of her is known from this period, except that she was an officer in the military of the Shogunate. With several companions, she traveled into what is today the Imperial Manse, and days later used its power to rally Dragon-Blooded forces and stop the advance of the Wyld. None of her companions were ever seen alive again.*

- *She used the military forces at her command immediately afterwards to consolidate her hold of the Blessed Isle, declaring herself Empress of Creation in the process.*
- *She allied with the Bronze Faction to become a living bodhisattva of the Immaculate Philosophy, both to prop up her own rule and to assist in putting Creation's shattered divine hierarchies back into order.*
- *She rebuilt and strengthened the tradition of the Wyld Hunt, capitalizing on the Immaculate Philosophy's spread into the Threshold alongside her own armies.*
- *Each of the Great Houses of the Realm was founded either by one of her children or spouses. Literally, she is the mother of the Great Houses, a social construct she's capitalized on for centuries.*

*That list is a mere sampling of her accomplishments. No being in the last thousand years has had greater impact on Creation or played a more important role in its survival. In the year since her disappearance:*

- *Several Exalted apparently imprisoned within the Imperial Manse have escaped. While most made for the shores of the Blessed Isle and stole transportation to the Threshold, several have disappeared into the thronging populations of the Isle's cities or into its vast farmlands or wilderness.*
- *There's been a thirty percent increase in deities embezzling worship outside of the prescribed dates of the Immaculate Calendar in Southern Threshold states. This has thrown the normal worship of various gods into chaos.*
- *The city of Thorns has fallen to the Deathlord known as the Mask of Winters (see attached report), depriving the Realm of its most powerful puppet-state abutting the Scavenger Lands.*

*What happened to her? A handful of times in previous centuries, she has disappeared, sometimes for as long as two years, but in those cases we suspect she still had her hands on the reins of power from wherever she went. Currently, our strongest suspicions are:*

- *The Empress was assassinated by a family member with an eye on the Scarlet Throne; attached are a list of the most likely candidates according to known ambitions.*
- *There have been three attempts on her life by Lunar insurgents in as many centuries, one of which was very close, and our analysts predict with some assurance that there were two Lunars active near the Imperial Manse recently (see attached files). One of them could have killed or abducted her.*
- *Our spies report agitation amongst certain factions in the Demon City, coinciding with the Empress's disappearance. It's not clear whether this is an effect of the chaos her absence has caused, or a response to moves within Hell itself that resulted in her disappearance.*
- *The return of the Solar Exalted in roughly the same time frame suggests a returned Solar had a hand in it. She may be a casualty of her habit of bringing Anathema into the Imperial Manse for her own occult reasons.*
- *Most distressingly, there is a chance that with the return of the Solar Exalted, some cabal within our ranks took it upon themselves to remove the Empress and destabilize the Realm, providing the Solars an opportunity for a foothold. Alternately, and just as horrifying, one of the traitor Rakan's puppets might have the power to strike down the Empress while avoiding Heaven's gaze.*

*Your Servant,*

*Tareus Slate*

### The Regency

In the wake of the Empress's disappearance, the Great Houses agreed to place a figurehead on the Scarlet Throne to maintain the illusion of a single hand at the tiller, while they shifted real power to the Greater Chamber of the Deliberative and the Great Houses who controlled it. Thus, the current Regent is Tepet Fokuf, a tractable middle-aged imbecile who won't be missed if the Scarlet Empress returns and is wroth at his temerity. For now, Fokuf acts as a rubber-stamp for the senators of the Deliberative when not pleasuring himself in his bedchambers to the more erotic passages in the Immaculate Texts.

### The Deliberative

Underneath the Empress (and currently the Regent) are the Greater and Lesser chambers of the Deliberative. By the time of the Empress's disappearance, the Deliberative served chiefly to draft advisories she could accept or veto at her pleasure.

At the same time, a term in the Deliberative was often a means of securing a high-paying place in either House affairs or in the Thousand Scales bureaucracy, and so there were no shortage of Dynasts who would fight to sit in the chamber.

The Greater Chamber of the Deliberative is largely made up of members of the Great Houses and a few outcasts who have risen up through the Legions or the Imperial bureaucracy. Since the Empress's disappearance, the executive power formerly wielded by the Empress has accreted in the hands of the Greater Chamber's Dynasts, who now rule the Realm in the name of their respective Houses. The Lesser Chamber is predominantly made up of mortal members of the patrician class. Since the Empress's disappearance, the Lesser Chamber has found much of its power stripped away, and patricians occupying positions of real power have been removed and replaced by mortal members of the Great Houses.



### The Perfected Hierarchy

The Realm's social hierarchy is based on the ideals laid out in the Immaculate texts. According to the faith, a society which arranges itself according to the path laid out by the Five Immaculate Dragons is blessed with Heaven's mandate, while those societies which embrace the Anathema or which do not arrange themselves properly must be put right.

At the top of the pyramid are the Dynasts, those Dragon-Blooded who belong to one of the Great Houses. Exalted

of lesser or fallen Houses, as well as outcastes adopted into the Realm, are considered second-class citizens by only the greater Dynasts themselves—to mortals of any social class, they are unapproachable.

Beneath the Houses are the vast patrician estates, run by powerful families descended from mortal military heroes, members of the Lesser Chamber of the Deliberative, and wealthy, successful merchants. The patricians have reached as high as mortals alone can in the Perfected Hi-

### THE GREAT HOUSES

**The Great Houses** (officially numbering ten) are now the powers behind the Realm. For centuries, the Empress played the houses against one another and kept them in check through her own cunning and skill, but now that she's gone, they're torn between cooperating long enough to administrate the Realm and warring for control of the Imperial Manse and Scarlet Throne.

The current front-runners for the throne are Houses Mnemon, Sesus, and Ragara, with V'neef, Peleps, and Cynis as potential spoilers.

**HOUSE MNEMON:** Strict traditionalists, whose religious devotion provides them power in the Immaculate Order while skillful manipulation in the Deliberative and the Thousand Scales affords them political clout. Mnemon herself is the most prominent surviving child of the Empress and much like her mother in political savvy.

**HOUSE CATHAK:** The strongest military house remaining in the Realm, Cathak can field the largest number of legions of any house and uses its military might to keep jade funneling into their coffers from their Threshold satrapies. House Cathak is famous for its heroes.

**HOUSE RAGARA:** Ragara is the chief economic powerhouse of Great Houses and a rival to the Guild in many Realm satrapies. It controls banks, insurance brokerages, and innumerable markets within and without the Realm, giving it leverage which was checked only by the Empress herself while she ruled.

**HOUSE PELEPS:** The Realm navy belongs to the disciplined Peleps, granting it enormous power. The other houses are torn between attempting to stymie them and allying with them.

**HOUSE SESUS:** Derided by the other Great Houses as brutes and thugs, the ruthless and savage Sesus are the second-most powerful military house in the Realm and deeply allied

with House Cynis. What the Sesus lack in subtlety they make up for in brutality, and those who challenge them regret it more often than not.

**HOUSE V'NEEF:** The youngest Great House and most favored by the Empress before her disappearance, the eager and clever V'neef managed the mercantile navy for the Empress along the Inland Sea—the Empress was grooming them to keep House Peleps in check. Without the Empress's favor, they are struggling to exploit opportunities for themselves while avoiding open warfare with Peleps.

**HOUSE CYNIS:** A mighty economic force, the decadent Cynis trail Ragara in raw economic power but make up for it because of their ties to the Guild (giving them access to markets in the middle and deep Threshold) and their stranglehold on the Blessed Isle's slave trade.

**HOUSE LEDAAL:** Famous for its staunch support of the Immaculate faith, House Ledaal has eyes on the swelling unrest in the Threshold rather than the Throne, dividing the House's attention in the face of looming civil war.

**HOUSE NELLENS:** House Nellens is widely derided for its weak blood, but makes up for it with political and economic influence within the Realm's ministries. Nellens is popular house with the patrician and peasant classes, and grooms its few Dragon-Blooded scions very carefully indeed.

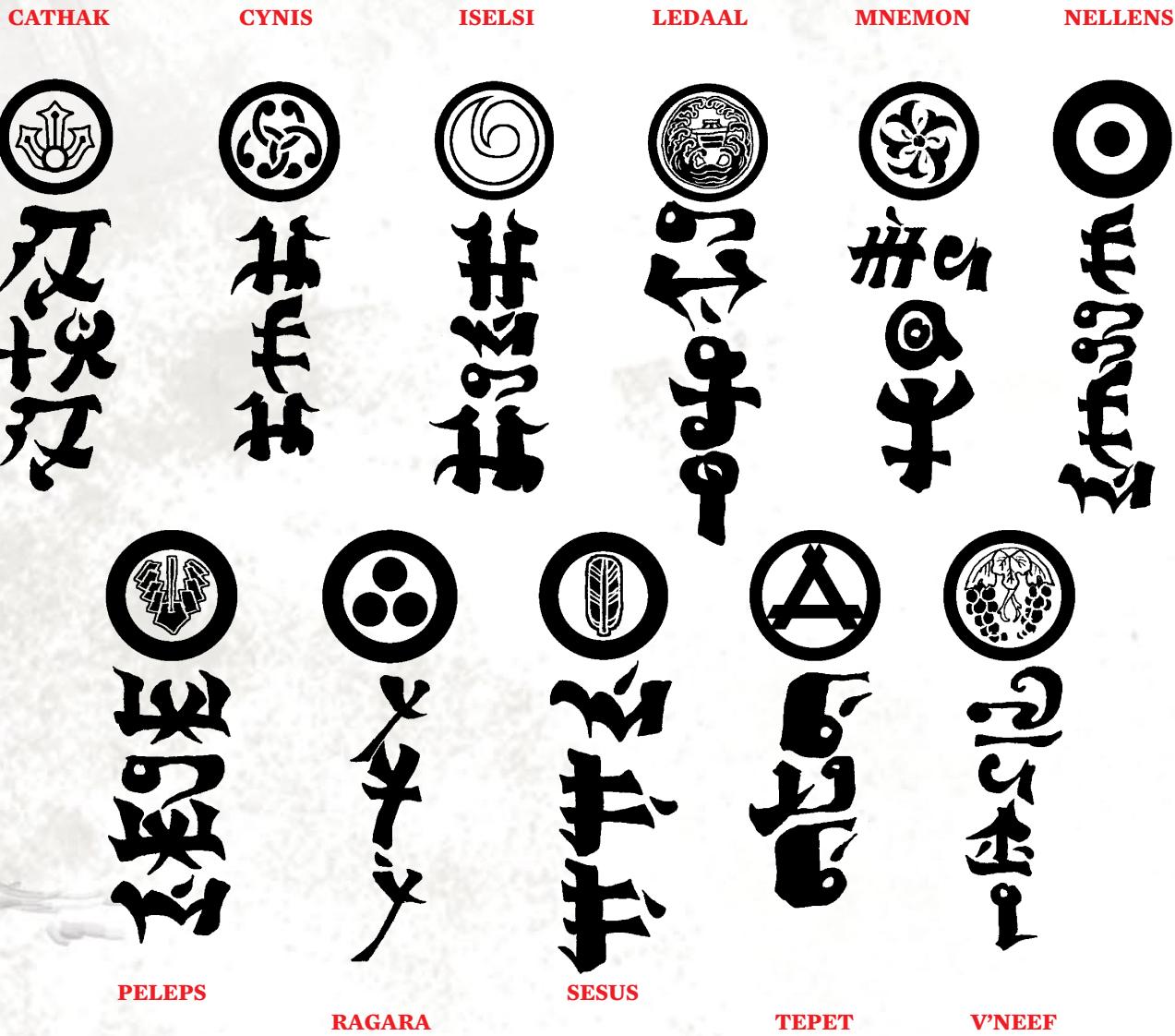
**HOUSE TEPEL:** Formerly one of the most powerful and honorable military houses in the Realm, House Tepet's legions and many of its Dragon-Blooded heirs were slaughtered on a doomed campaign in the North. Now, House Tepet is a dark horse struggling to climb back to power.

**HOUSE ISELSI:** In disgrace and officially dissolved, the Iselsi maneuvered against the Empress in a doomed power-play generations ago and now survive by her sufferance. Disregarded by the other houses, Iselsi has spent decades cultivating a massive intelligence and assassination network both in the Realm and abroad in the Threshold.

erarchy—to reach further, they must marry into a House, which the most successful of patricians achieve by offering wealth, political connections, or evidence they carry Dragon's blood.

Under the patrician class is the peasantry, bound to the land and serving a Great House. Peasantry are forbidden the use of weaponry and may not legally travel from their home communities without documentation. Underneath the peasants are slaves, usually imported as tribute from Threshold satrapies and distributed within the Realm by House Cynis. Slaves are the property of their Dragon-Blooded owners under Realm law—mortals cannot own slaves in the Realm.

Underneath slaves are the dispossessed, those who've been declared outlaw. The dispossessed's lives are even more miserable than slaves' or peasants'. They have no rights under the law, and are not protected by the Perfected Hierarchy from slight, theft, exploitation, violence, or even murder in any way—though the Immaculate Order preaches against their abuse. Individuals are seldom dispossessed; the custom is to dispossess the entire population of a peasant community if it cannot keep its criminals, dissidents, and malcontents in check. Under the current economic strife, the Great Houses experiment with mass dispossession to seize land for development in ways previously denied them—a tactic already provoking peasant unrest.



To the majority of Creation, patricians—second or third-class citizens within the Perfected Hierarchy—lead lives of incredible privilege unrivaled by anyone but the rulers of the various Threshold states. Even the Realm's peasants enjoy lives of stability that many Threshold farmers could only dream of—or they did, until the disappearance of the Empress.

### The Claws of the Dragon

The Threshold is most likely to experience the dictates of the Realm's government via satraps' announcements, conveyed through their local government. With the return of the Solar Exalted, the reborn children of the Unconquered Sun have learned at great expense that even with the Scarlet Empress missing, the Realm is the best-coordinated empire in Creation.

### The Legions

The Realm's mailed fist, the legions of the Scarlet Dynasty are the premiere fighting force of Creation. Nearly every Dynast in the Realm is trained in armed combat, and even if they plan on serving out their adult years as a tax-auditor for the Thousand Scales or a priest in some quiet Immaculate temple, they're taught the basics of wielding pike and daiklave in heavy armor, and the rudiments of military strategy.

Under the Empress, there were forty Imperial legions, at least three dozen active and in fighting shape at any one time. Each House also possessed its own (generally inferior) household military, which it used to police its territory on the Blessed Isle and enforce its power in the Threshold. The Imperial legions were meritocracies, and it was widely known that, free from House politics, only the best rose to their command. Many of the greatest generals in these legions were not of noble birth at all, but outcasts fetched from the Threshold and trained in the Realm from the time of their Exaltation, and amongst those outcasts, the legions were one of the few sure ways to advance. The House militaries had a reputation for varying levels of discipline and professionalism, with Houses Tepet, Cathak, and Sesus alone possessing a reputation comparable to the Imperial legions.

In the wake of the Empress's disappearance, one of the first things the Great Houses did via the Deliberative was to take direct control of the Imperial Legions. After the surrender of military power to the Houses, at least one entire legion went rogue to make its own way in the Threshold, and others, while ostensibly obeying the Deliberative's mandate, have been “slow” to respond to orders and return home. This doesn't count innumerable soldiers in the Threshold who have gone missing or turned sell-sword to various local powers.



## Religion and Worship

The worship of spirits and their interactions with their worshipers is a fundamental part of human existence. The supernatural is omnipresent—even in the heartland of the Realm, gods are often manifest on their holy days and seen going about their duties, symbolically or otherwise. River gods lead the ceremonies at their headwaters, and elemental drakes manifest at terrestrial demesnes.

### The Immaculate Order

The Immaculate Philosophy is the state mandated faith of the Realm's sphere of influence, a reincarnationist creed which teaches that individual souls become spiritually enlightened over multiple incarnations until they are reborn as Dragon-Blooded. Immaculates believe that after reaching perfection as Terrestrial Exalted, a soul unites with the Five Elemental Dragons. These terres-

trial deities, the Immaculates claim, spawned the world and are masters over all of its elemental Essence flows. The soul is then said to strengthen Creation and serves to bring forth new souls.

The Immaculate Philosophy purports to provide a framework to encourage individuals' spiritual advancement. It does this by developing strong, supportive, orderly communities in which individuals can prosper materially—perceived as the first step on the road to spiritual prosperity.

This philosophy holds that Dragon-Blooded are inherently suited to rule mortals, by right of their superior spiritual station. The Immaculate Order, the world's leading proponent of the philosophy, enforces practice of this religion everywhere the Realm's banner flies. The Order is a centralized, bureaucratized faith based on the Blessed Isle. Schismatic sects are tolerated only so long



as they differ not from the Order on the matter of Terrestrial spiritual and political primacy.

As well as justifying Dragon-Blooded political dominance and Dynastic imperial ambitions, the Immaculate Philosophy also serves an important role by restraining selfish or wicked deities from enslaving mortals. Left to their own devices, many gods would demand ruinous tributes from every mortal they could force themselves upon. Some gods delight in consuming humans as sacrifices or forcing victims to pray themselves to death. The Immaculates dictate to gods that they will receive their fair share of devotion and prayer, while restraining their more abhuman appetites and checking their gluttony for Essence.

### The Immaculate Dragons

In the Immaculate understanding, the Five Elemental Dragons were incarnated in five specific individuals—the Immaculate Dragons—during the destruction of the Anath-

ema and immediately afterwards. Their heroism helped banish the Anathema from Creation, and to rebuild civilization after the war.

Immaculate dogma holds that the Immaculate Dragons are not just historical figures, but the eternal ideals that persons of the faith are to strive to hold themselves up against. Veneration of the Dragons in these avatars is important to Dragon-Blooded culture, and many Exalted strive greatly to emulate their examples. Later Immaculate thinking introduced the notion of the antitheses—the spiritual opposites of the Immaculate Dragons. These are not presented as real, historical figures, but rather as abstract examples of behavior to avoid.

**Daana'd, Arbiter of the Immaculate Complaint:** A headstrong youth whose spirit gave her the determination to swim to the bottom of the sea and lock the Anathema away in the Underworld forever. Devotees of Daana'd expose





themselves to hardship, seeking to perfect their Essence through challenges. Daana'd's antithesis is the "Unmanly Babbler," who whines for others to fix their problems, when the real answer lies within—the individual is generating the situations they wish to be rescued from.

**Hesiesh, Reciter of Loud Prayers and Efficacious Hymns:** Hesiesh was a powerful Exalt who used his powers only once, burning Creation clear of corpses after the first marches of the war against the Anathema, so the slaughtered billions would not breed hungry ghosts. His careful husbanding of Essence is held up as the core lesson for Fire Aspects, who have a tendency to dissipate themselves by racing in every possible direction. His antithesis is the "Illiberal Churl" who hoards up treasures without reason, and follows traditions blindly without truly understanding their wisdom.

**Mela, Petitioner of Clouds Accordant to the Call of Battle:** Mela was the first and the eldest of the Immaculate Dragons to appear. She first introduced the rigorous training that underlies mastery of the Immaculate Forms, and her protective winds defended the Terrestrial armies against the fiery wrath of the Anathema. Her antithesis is the "Sickly Whore" who squanders natural gifts in dissipation and selfishness rather than sharing them with the community.

**Sextes Jylis, He Who Hath Strewn Much Grass:** After the war against the Anathema, Sextes Jylis wandered Creation, planting the seeds of great forests and vast meadows. Where the fires of war had scorched, he brought life back. He is seen as the exemplar of Exalted stewardship among Terrestrials, laboring endlessly—and successfully—to renew the world. The antithesis of Sextes Jylis is the "Inconsiderate Horseman" who rides directly in the ruts of the road, giving himself easy passage but making conditions worse for everyone who comes after him.

**Pasiap, He Who Illuminates Both Worlds with Majesty and Power:** Pasiap was the last of the Immaculate Dragons to emerge. He appeared just as the war against the Anath-

#### DRAGON-BLOODED MONKS

The power of Terrestrial Exalted who undergo the Order's martial art training is beyond question. Immaculates spend their lives developing their Essence, and use the natural Charms of their kind mixed freely with the proprietary Immaculate martial arts styles to perform feats of martial prowess notable even among the Exalted.

## MEASURING TIME

Time passes in Creation much as it does on Earth, with sun, moon and stars rising in the east and setting in the west. Most cultures divide the ensuing days into twenty-four hours. The idea of minutes and seconds as discrete units of time remain from First Age lore, but chronometers more sophisticated than sundials, sandglasses, and hour-candles are rare, leaving such units as vague abstractions to most. The Realm measures the passage of years from the accession of the Scarlet Empress. It is now RY 768, five years since the Empress's disappearance. The traditional calendar year is comprised of fifteen lunar months, each 28 days long and divided into four weeks. These are arranged in five cycles named for the elements—Air, Water, Wood, Fire, and Earth—each divided into Ascending, Resplendent and Descending months. The year begins with the month of Ascending Air and ends in Descending Earth.

Spring starts early in the cool, damp Water cycle and proceeds into the warm burgeoning of Wood, in which winter crops are harvested. Summer extends from the middle of Wood through most of the scorching cycle of Fire, a period long enough for Creation's more fruitful regions to manage another two or three harvests. The final harvest comes in the crisp autumnal months of Earth, followed by the icy cycle of Air.

The year ends with the five days of Calibration, when the weather is in disorder and Luna hides her face. Calibration is a time of strange portents, ill fortunes, and broken destinies, when gods, ghosts, and demons walk the earth. Some cultures mark Calibration and the end of harvest with a five-day festival of dancing, loud music, and masks to scare away ill luck. Others spend it in solemnity or fear, beseeching whatever powers they trust to protect them from misfortune, catastrophe, and the coming winter.

ema ended. He taught the Dragon-Blooded the secrets of geomancy and led them in constructing great manses and feats of civic engineering. He instructed the Dragon-Blooded in the perfection of their Charms, and is the ideal of the Dragon-Blooded who masters difficult arts and labors endlessly to transfer secrets to a new generation of heroes. The antithesis of Pasiap is the "Ostentatious Peasant," who gathers up the treasures of knowledge and skill, and spends her life extracting wealth from that knowledge without repaying society by passing it on.

### The Order and the Realm

The Realm officially recognizes the Immaculate Order as the true religion of Creation. The Immaculate Philosophy validates Dragon-Blooded rule, and the Ten Thousand Dragons in turn buttress the faith's efforts to rein in renegade deities and suppress the Lunar Exalted.

In theory, the Order is separated from the Realm's machinery of state, a church that preaches inclusion of all Dragon-Blooded, Dynast and outcaste alike. In reality, the Order's administrative locus is within the Realm and the majority of the faith's Dragon-Blooded devotees are members of the Dynasty. The order's universality is mainly manifest in its tolerant attitude toward groups of outcastes who accept the Immaculate Philosophy but reject the Realm's overlordship. The religion's amiable relations with these outcaste groups provides a conduit for intermarriage and cultural exchange.

### Immaculate Beliefs

Most denizens of the Realm, including most Dragon-Blooded, are relatively sincere adherents of the Immaculate faith.

The Immaculate Philosophy preaches a doctrine of spiritual elevation by service, humility, and abstemious behavior. It preaches that peasants should mind their business and obey the orders of their betters without question, but also stresses the responsibility of the Exalted to care for their spiritual inferiors. Thus, while the Realm's state faith provides a moral validation for the Dragon-Blooded, it also serves to restrain their behaviors. It grants them social and political legitimacy, but limits the remit of the license it grants. As a whole, it is fairly effective at keeping the Dragon-Blooded focused on their task of bringing Creation to order and defending that order against encroachment by the Anathema, although this is of little comfort to an individual mortal victimized by some Dragon-Blooded's "regrettable but understandable" moral failing.

### Monks

Foremost among the devotees of the Immaculate Philosophy are its monks, who sacrifice much in life—the pleasures of gluttony and sexual license particularly—in order to seek perfect alignment with the Immaculate Dragons. The Immaculate monks are known as master martial artists, and their presence in Threshold states forced to pay tribute to the Dynasty causes much resentment, particularly when

the Order interferes in the relationship between local populations and the deities of their locales and trades.

### Anathema and the Wyld Hunt

The Immaculates apply the technical term Anathema—in the Realm it's a formal clerical finding—to anything that the order finds abhorrent to stable and prosperous life. Solar and Lunar Exalted are always Anathema; the label can also potentially encompass Fair Folk, beastmen, elementals, and demons who threaten Realm interests, as well as gods and their Exigent champions in open rebellion against the Immaculate Philosophy.

In practice, most inhabitants of the Realm (and Immaculate-influenced cultures) associate the term “Anathema” exclusively with the Solar and especially Lunar Exalted. The Lunar Anathema in particular are great terrors used to frighten children into bed at night. Most individuals within the boundaries of the Realm are well-aware of the iconography of the Solar and Lunar Anathema—their Caste brands, and the golden and argent hues of their auras—the better to render assistance to the Wyld Hunt's investigators and trackers. The common folk are left ignorant of other beings—it's enough for them to know that when confronted with the unknown they should run and fetch a monk.

The Wyld Hunt is a social institution where Immaculate devotees from across political boundaries cooperatively destroy the enemies of Terrestrial hegemony. The efforts are usually organized and led by Immaculate monks who see the struggle as the ultimate fulfillment of their compact with the human race as its protectors and defenders.

The activities of the Wyld Hunt are considered a holy rite outside the countenance of law. It would be a crime to kill one's brother while engaging in a Wyld Hunt, and it would be a grave religious crime to declare a Hunt falsely, but the actual deed where a half-dozen Terrestrial Exalted and their personal retinues descend on a target the Immaculate Philosophy has deemed a threat to society and murder it, often in broad daylight before hundreds of witnesses, is not subject to censure.

The institution is prevalent across Creation—not only is it practiced by the Seventh Legion of Lookshy, it is the rubric under which rural outcaste Terrestrials form posses and assert protective solidarity and collective interests. The Realm's own Wyld Hunts are spread thinner than at any point in prior centuries, but no less deadly than ever before when they do appear.

### THE IMMACULATE PHILOSOPHY AND THE OTHER CHOSEN

All Solar and Lunar Exalted are Anathema by decree of the Immaculate Philosophy. Though the Abyssal Exalted are newly arrived in the world, their prominent role in the fall of Thorns and their Solar-like Caste Marks clearly announce them as Anathema and enemies of Creation as well.

According to the Immaculate texts, the Exigents were servants of the Solar Anathema in the time when those devil-gods ruled over Creation. But when the Dragon-Blooded rose up to end the age of the Anathema, some Exigents turned against their masters and joined the righteous cause of the Terrestrial Exalted. Though steeped in the dark power of their Anathema lords, the Exigents had proven they were not beyond redemption. Accordingly, the Immaculate Dragon Hesiesh demonstrated his wisdom by sealing the darkness of the Exigents when he unleashed his cleansing flames on Creation, and Sextes Jylis exercised mercy by weaving his brother's purifying power into the cycle of reincarnation. Each Exigent must labor over many lifetimes to purify the taint on his soul through correct living under the tenets of the Immaculate Philosophy, but such purification is made possible through the grace of the Dragons, ultimately leading to the potential for redemption and rebirth as one of the Dragon-Blooded—so the Immaculate Order claims. Exigent recidivists who threaten the stability of the Realm are sorrowfully dispatched by the Wyld Hunt, perhaps to find greater wisdom in their next life.

The Sidereal Exalted aren't widely known to exist. As such, a revealed Sidereal would likely be mistaken for an Exigent. Those who are aware of the Sidereals know them as rare and reclusive Chosen who labor in the shadows to uphold the proper, fated order of the world—that is, the dominion of the Realm. Liminals are blasphemous aberrations against the natural order, but so are all things of the Underworld; the Wyld Hunt rides against them if they seem an active danger to Dragon-Blooded hegemony, but pays them no special attention otherwise. A few satraps have hired Liminal mercenaries to deal with the unquiet dead.

### The Hundred Gods Heresy

The “Hundred Gods Heresy” is a blanket term applied by the Immaculate Philosophy to the worship of deities without Immaculate moderation, dating back to a terrible revolt centuries ago. In developed areas of the Blessed Isle, virtually anything that can be interpreted as worship material is banned, and possession of certain common items in combination is considered unlucky and a sign of possible heresy. In the capitals of the Realm’s tributary states and the Blessed Isle’s hinterlands, no uncontrolled worship sites are permitted and private worship is discouraged or prohibited depending on the strength of the Philosophy’s hold. In the rural hinterlands of the Threshold satrapies, worship of local deities goes unimpeded, although even the grandest rituals amount to services held in floating locations involving a few hundred

individuals at most, and not great festival events involving tens of thousands.

The gods, in turn, can rarely muster more than quiet misbehavior in hinterlands shrines in the face of the might of the Realm and its Immaculate monks. That may be changing, however. Many gods fear for locales, trades, things or concepts they represent in the face of Dragon-Blooded civil discord, and seek alternatives to increasingly erratic Terrestrial rule. Others scent opportunity, seeking to better their station by allying themselves with Exalted insurgents. All these deities, seeking to assert themselves and defend the places and nations they are inextricably linked to, form natural allies of the resurgent Celestial Exalted. This is well known to the Immaculates, who have increased their pressure on captive populations to cease all private worship.



### THE GUILD

The Guild is the most powerful trade association under mortal control, and the most influential mortal-run organization in Creation. This mercantile enterprise spans the entire Threshold and extends tendrils to the world's edges.

Its fleets and caravans tie Creation together. In cities, Guild businesses employ vendors, accountants, and artificers, while Guild wholesalers supply foodstuffs, timber, ores, and other essentials. Caravans provide markets in the hinterlands, offering otherwise unavailable goods and entertainment along their routes.

But while the Guild's efforts aid many, it is an engine for profit, and it wrings all the wealth it can from the world. Many Guildsmen deal in the "soft trade" of drugs and the "hard trade" of slaves; both draw new brokers no matter how many slavers or dealers a hero might kill or drive off. The most daring Guild slavers even barter with the Fair Folk; there's always a market for their dead-eyed, soul-eaten, quietly obedient victims. Guild leaders also use their economic influence as a weapon against rival mercantile interests—and against city-states that interfere with profits.

Caravans and ships largely travel between hub cities—sites prosperous enough to make commerce profitable. In these places, merchants, artisans, and clerks apply for Guild membership, paying dues in exchange for access to contacts, talent, and information. Those of the highest ranks—master artisans, the venture capitalists called factors, and the wholesalers called keeps—serve on the cities' nine-member Guild Councils.

The wealthiest and most powerful Guildsmen jockey for election to the role of hierarch. Meeting in the city of Nexus, the nine hierarchs of the secretive Guild Directorate set policy for the entire organization. The Exalted rarely achieve such heights, as Guild members resist placing the Chosen in position to use the organization as a tool for personal ambition rather than profit.



## Of Silver and Jade: Money in Creation

Creation practices a complex array of monetary arrangements. What follow are the prevailing methods of exchange in **Exalted**, in degree of increasing sophistication.

### Informal Economics

In populations with little wealth, provision of essential aid and supplies is usually allotted via an array of ritual exchanges; mutual gifting; patronage; and familial, clan, or tribal obligations. The typical uses for hard currency in these situations are dealing with traders, who will have wares from outside the village economy, particularly metal goods. Additionally, in areas near state influence, tax collectors often demand payment in state-backed currency, which the locals must obtain by selling their labor or its fruits at ruinous markdown.

### Threshold Economics

Most “civilized” Threshold economic systems use a standard of exchange that has little use to society as a whole, is difficult to counterfeit and is scarce enough that wealth can be transported in a small volume. Typically this means silver—though gold commands value, it’s primarily regarded as a decorative material.

The goal of the economy of the Threshold was plunder. All organized economic activity on which the Realm had any influence tended to resemble a conveyor belt feeding wealth into the Empress’s coffers. Silver was not the only tribute that the Empress demanded from the Threshold, but the means by which she extracted tribute of more practical value—troops, slaves, and rare and exotic goods. Places with scant material wealth paid her tribute in resources directly. Places that had great wealth, she forced to mine jade for her, or to otherwise obtain jade offerings to place before her throne. Jade, alongside the other Magical Materials, is the true coin of Creation—both scarce and valuable. As in the Realm, the Empress used payment in jade as a cudgel to punish those she wished to strip of their riches.

### Realm Economics

The Realm’s monetary systems feature central banking, financial instruments like bonds and equities, and the other trappings of an advanced trading and manufacturing economy. Its currency is bifurcated. Most individuals—not just peasants and slaves but even high ranking mortals—may legally have access only to a paper and copper-coin currency called “cash.” Dragon-Blooded and their assignees are permitted to transact business in jade. Many controlled objects are freely available save that the price is by law quoted in jade, rather than cash. Slaves, chests of opium, exotic sorcerous reagents, all can be bought from shop fronts or salons in the right part of town—if one has access to the currency of the Dragon-Blooded.

### THE SILVER STANDARD

The silver standard of coinage used in the Threshold has three denominations, of which 2 are struck. The silver talent is 64 pounds of silver. A talent is worth 4 dirhams, or 1,600 dinars. Talents are purely units of account; nobody goes through the trouble of making silver into 64 pound bars.

The silver dirham is a brick of silver weighing 16 pounds, worth 1/4 of a silver talent or 400 dinars. They’re rarely seen by common individuals. This was the Empress’s preferred tribute from Threshold princes, and is useful for transactions on the national or city level. Note, however, that worth is typically transferred in kegs of coins.

The silver dinar is a coin weighing 1/25th of a pound, ovoid with milled edges. Their worth is rather great for common transactions and so they are halved, quartered and cut into eighths. A dinar is the approximate monthly income of a commoner house with two skilled working adults and active cottage industry, and when food prices are stable, one dinar will pay the monthly food cost of four adults (or three adults and two growing children) with a little left over for other necessities.

### COWRIE SHELLS AND STRANGER THINGS

In the West, the red cowrie shell is used as the standard unit of value. The shells must be very fine to have much worth, and are drilled and strung together in groups of 25, 50 or 100. They’re not much valued outside of the West, but in that region, they’re worth three silver dinars to the shell, or six shells per obol.

The Empress didn’t accept the West’s tribute in cowrie shells, but allowed the West to retain a functional means of exchange even as she stripped them of silver coinage. It is for this reason that silver is given a favorable exchange rate, and jade penalized.

### THE CASH SYSTEM

The cash system contains two coins and two paper notes. The paper koku is worth 1/8th of a jade obol. It's worth 8 qian, 16 siu or 128 yen. It is shot through with purple and gold threads that form the image of a crane, and it bears the black and green imprint of eagles nesting on the Imperial mountain. A koku is worth only slightly less than a silver dinar, and the two are roughly interchangeable at the scale of household finance.

The paper qian is worth 2 siu or 16 yen. The threads in this note form the image of a lion. The qian is printed with a black and red design depicting the skyline of the Imperial City. It's a week's wages for a skilled commoner.

The siu is worth 8 yen. It is halved and quartered. A siu is adequate return for several days of labor by a skilled craftsman. It's struck from copper and treated to take on a dark brown color.

The yen is the smallest coin struck by the Realm. Yen are halved, quartered and divided into eighths. A yen is larger than a siu and struck from the same copper, but treated to be bright green. Yen are pierced so they are easily carried—you can keep your wallet on a long string. A yen represents the day wages of an unskilled laborer and will buy about a day's worth of food. An eighth of a yen will purchase several beers or a jar of wine.



## THE JADE SYSTEM

The Empress adopted jade as a currency with the open intention of making herself master of the Realm's stocks of the material. In this she was largely successful. Several of the houses have accumulated significant stocks of jade—particularly Ragara, which uses it as the capital for their banking operations. However, even Ragara's bankroll paled compared to the Treasury's hoard, which totaled more than 50,000 talents.

A jade talent is a thin slab of jade weighing 68 pounds. Those cut by the Imperial Treasury are engraved with a number and a seal, and etched on all corners to defy shavers. It's worth 8 bars, 64 minae, 128 shekels, 1,024 obols, or 5 talents of silver. These values are for a jade ledger talent—a notional value of 1,024 obols easier to keep track of than writing "1,024" repeatedly. While a ledger talent is worth 8 jade bars, a true talent is worth 12 bars by weight—the difference is lost as a talent is cut down into smaller denominations.

Physical talents do not circulate commonly, both due to the difficulty of transporting them and their enormous value. When manses need their interior geomantic structures fabricated, talents are the raw materials, so the Empress only allowed physical talents struck from the finest and purest jade.

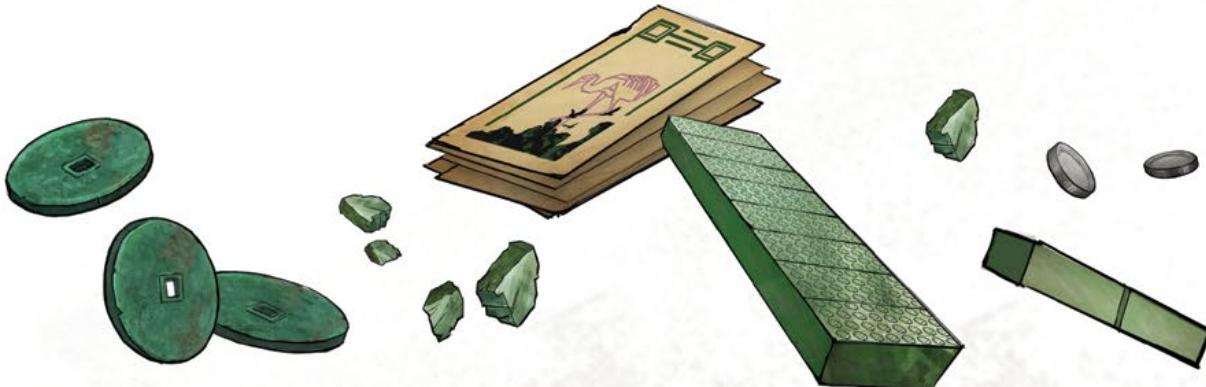
The bar is one-eighth of a talent of jade. It is traditionally scored to show how to divide it into 8 minae, and those cut down from the Imperial Treasury are marked with its crest and an identifying number.

The mina is one eighth of a bar. It is marked with a central scoring and sixteen circles, describing how to split it into two shekels or how to carve sixteen obols from it.

A shekel is simply half a mina. It is almost always marked with an eight-circle template that describes how to cut it down into obols. As implied by the marks, a ledger mina is worth 8 obols. The cutting-down process between shekel and obol is where the majority of the loss of the powdered jade known as "Imperial bootblack" happens. This is a critical material in the manufacture of magical weapons and armor, and comprises 1/3rd the mass of the shekel—many artifacts created during the Second Age are forged from "Jade-steel alloy" created by adding jade dust to molten steel and cementing the alloying process with occult treatments.

An obol is the most commonly circulated coinage among the Dragon-Blooded. Obols struck by the Treasury are graven with one of several emblems.

The bit is an informal splitting of the obol into quarters to make it more spendable. They are formally illegal for commoners to possess in the Realm, and ownership of them is nominally discouraged among the Terrestrial Exalted, as they have links to an ancient rebellion. Despite this, they represent a meaningful fraction of the circulating jade coinage of the Realm—perhaps 40%. That 40% does a lot of work; even the Dragon-Blooded of the Dynasty are not rich enough to throw full obols at their expenses casually.



## The Threshold

The Threshold lies between the world's edges and the Inland Sea which surrounds the Blessed Isle. In the North, in emerald valleys between icy mounts, men and women build nations from the scraps of empires past. In the East, they make their homes in great forests and fertile plains, fighting the feuds of a hundred petty warlords. In the South, jeweled cities built on the backs of impoverished millions spring from mediterranean hills and blistering deserts, and in the West, trade routes stretch between great archipelagos and smaller island chains, guarding against predacious pirates and aquatic mutants.

Across all four Directions mortals have built civilizations in the ruins of the First Age—at turns fragile and hardy, savage and decadent—as they struggle to raise the tribute the Realm demands and defend against the ever-hungry, world-unraveling Wyld.

## The North

This is the cold, savage frontier. This is the harshest, most alien clime in all of Creation. Here the alluring Winter Folk ride to the hunt on steeds whose hooves never break the snow-crust, driving mortal prey to fearful death on bog and heath. Renegade gods stalk among coastal ports and tundra-dwelling tribes, extorting worship with threats of violence or misfortune.

From the temperate southern coast's pine scrub and prairie, the land grows ever more bitter as one travels northward. Outside of city walls and village palisades, untamed wilderness stretches beyond the horizon. Ghosts lure the living into trackless mires to steal their warmth and claim their company in death. Wolves and tigers haunt vast boreal forests beneath curtains of rain, fog, and snow. Whalers raise cairns to the spirits amid the scarlet sedges that drape the ocean's edge.



Still farther north, beyond the deadly reefs of the White Sea, it's said that neither people nor cities can find purchase, and yet there are both. Ships skate across lakes and rivers of ice amid an ocean of snow. Miners labor at the feet of miles-high impassable mountains, praying for riches. And in the uttermost North, beyond those peaks, earth and sky meet in the infinite frozen depths of the Pole of Air.

### The Near North

Between the Inland and White Seas, the chill and isolation of the North meets the culture and population of the world's center. Even the satrapies along the Inland Sea, with their mellow summers and fine harvests, suffer from long, cruel winters. The peoples of these shores trade autonomy for security, bowing beneath ruinous taxes in exchange for protection from the ever-present Northern raiders.

Farther inland, villages of wood and peat crowd close against gloomy cities whose rooftops are thick with chim-

neys to keep out the chill. Folk huddle within damp, crumbling walls for warmth and for protection from mortal raiders, hungry ghosts, and Fair Folk. Out on the moors, the clangor of sword and shield echoes amid cold rain and fog, raitions circling by the hundreds overhead.

Across the long winter months, aristocrats intrigue while serfs drink, brawl, and pray for spring. But spring is also for war. Nomadic tribes and dispossessed raiders seize supplies from settled peoples to endure the next winter. Those same settled peoples war against each other; one hailstorm or harsh frost can bring famine, and any goods they seize from foreigners grants an iota of security.

Other than force of arms—such as the might of the Realm's legions or the power of the Lunar Exalted—most Northern warriors and reavers respect only holy ground, for even they fear the power of gods and ancestors. Northern divinities maintain a deadly grip on their worshipers, for





a settlement can be snuffed out by one failed harvest or dire wolf pack—or a winter without fire, withheld by a vindictive god. Those who live beyond the bounds of civilization eke out a hungry, terrified existence, lacking even the spirits' dubious protection.

The greatest Northern cities shine like hothouse flowers amid these dreary climes. They draw upon strange sorceries to ward off winter's bite. Some warm and feed themselves through service to the Scarlet Empire; others ally with warlords of the Silver Pact, or with spirits or stranger entities. From these disparate seeds grow cultures mixing Realm thought and fashion, barbaric culture and religion, and art and philosophy inspired by older, stranger epochs.

#### Near Northern Locales

The city of **Fortitude** is a scar on the face of the land. Once it was the mighty prison-fortress of an ancient empire. Its rulers believed that criminality was inherited, and so it filled the prisons with entire families of recidivists. That empire has long since fallen to dust, but the prison remains, and has taken on a life of its own. Over centuries, the prison and the walls meant to contain it expanded outward, while the tunneled wards beneath the surface spread like roots.

Fortitude is a place where the strongest and most ruthless rise to the top; where there is no law but what the strong decree, where entire tribes of prisoners toil in darkness, harvesting valuable plants and gems for the gangs that run the prison. The gangs in turn trade with the Realm and the Guild for necessary imports.

Fortitude is a place where the darkness is worshiped, the winter is hated, and every man believes he is cursed. It is a place where people are born believing that only their deaths can atone for their lives, and that the only way to erase the stain of darkness on one's soul is to lead a heroic life and to die an immortal death.

Deep in the underground, deep down in the farthest-reaching mineshafts, there are tunnels carved by no mortal man. Down in the black dust dwells the primal god of Fortitude. It is from this being that they derive their fatalist religion. Once every few generations, the prison produces an alliance of gangs that turn their gaze from controlling the prison to conquering neighboring provinces, and they rampage across the region until the Realm or another power puts a stop to them.

The allure of the miraculous White Elixir has infused new life and wealth into formerly stagnant **Grieve**. Thirty thousand souls, mostly artisans, merchants and laborers, dwell within the Northern port's walls. The city's famous tame lynxes strut proudly in yards and gardens, warding off

vermin and trespassers alike; their feral cousins prowl the city's back alleys. Legend says that if the cats ever leave, Grieve will fall.

Grievian savants first revealed the White Elixir just a few years ago. It is purported to grant a macabre sort of immortality, preserving body and soul in the instant of death. Grieve's richest citizens who have procured the Elixir are recognizable by their unusual pallor and the parasols they employ to ward off the sun. Foreigners arrive in increasing numbers to purchase immortality, trade in the Elixir's reagents, or seek wealth in the city's booming economy.

As a gift, the savants presented the Elixir to Grieve's queen, Shield Glory. Gossips whisper that the palace lynxes now hiss when she passes, and that she's responsible for the recent deaths and disappearances among her kin.

One thousand Immaculate temples gleam in the port city of **Pneuma**, their façades layered with arabesques. Bells ring; prayer wheels spin; the drone of sutras fills the air. Crowds part to make way for lines of monks as they pace from station to monastery to shrine, in an endless cycle of devotions to the little gods of the North.

Pneuma's greatest temple, the Nail of Truth, is a looming tower of blue-white marble that overshadows the rest of the city. Carved from a single monolithic mass of stone, legend says that Mela hurled it from the sky like a spear to crush an Anathema beneath it. The Nail is off-limits to mortal petitioners, for it's there that Northern gods negotiate with Immaculate lamas over their place in the Order's calendar.

It is known that the Wyld Hunt maintains a prison beneath the Nail where captured Anathema are held for transport to the Blessed Isle. It is said to be a place of inquisition and torture, where the sutras of the Immaculate Dragons burn in the cursed flesh of the reviled, marking them as unclean. What is not known is that the Sidereals have long used the Nail of Truth for the processing and forceful recalibration of illegal Exigents.

Throughout Medo's long wet winters, rain lashes the brooding towers of the fortress-city of **Karasch** at the eastern terminus of the Hasancea Wall. In the overcast gloom of the day, sentinels clad in oiled hats and fur cloaks look out over tree-speckled hills, meadows, and valleys to row after row of distant mountains. But in the blackness of the Medoan night, Karasch's ancestor-ghosts hold the wall in their phantom lamellar, the cold troubling them not at all, the rain passing through them like fog.

Medoan swift-riders scoured the North for generations, seizing the wealth of burgeoning cities and impressing

their people as slave labor to build three cyclopean defensive walls between the Almaj Mountains. But when they met the legions of the Realm, Medo's burgeoning empire shattered before the might of the Dragon-Blooded. Today, the finest young Medoan warriors submit to conscription as janissaries in the Realm's legions. Upon their return, they are honored for their service and respected for their experience, but distrusted for their absorption of foreign notions and cosmopolitan attitudes. Only upon death are they Medoan once more; the blaze from a warrior's funeral lights up the hills as her clan feeds sacrifices to the pyre and sings her praises.

Karasch is far from the center of Medo and the eye of the satrap. Even so, a small Realm contingent remains garrisoned in a barbican at the city's edge. Tomaj, Voivode of the Karaschin Clan, fears that he will be shamed into calling upon the Realm for aid. The Karaschin ancestors, who have always guarded the city from the horrors of Medo's shadowlands, now prove unequal to the task, with monsters creeping out of the Underworld to bedevil Tomaj's people.

Horrors stalk the taiga beyond the marble battlements of **Whitewall**. To the north, where wooded hills rise to the mountains, antlered Fair Folk princes ride down from their palaces to reap mortals as slaves. To the south and east, where shadowlands pock the chill forests and icy plains, hungry ghosts creep forth to devour the living.

The Syndics, triplet gods made of silver and ice, rule the city. Their magic infuses the walls, holding supernatural enemies at bay. In accordance with an ancient pact the Syndics forged with the Fair Folk and the undead, no being may harm another on the Travelers' Road that connects the city to the Northern coast, safeguarding trade. The Syndics, for their part, are sworn to set two dozen living people outside the walls each year for the Fair Folk and the dead. Whenever possible, these are murderers and other criminals, but when none such are available, they're foreigners or dissenters against the Syndics' rule.

Scholars pilgrimage to the Groaning Mountains to study the underground city **Gethamane**. When the ancestors of its current inhabitants fled into the frozen wastes to escape the ravages of plague and banditry that followed the Great Contagion, they found the city whole and uninhabited. None know who built it; the glyphs that coil their way across the inner walls are in no known tongue, and the only gods in the city are those the refugees brought.

Gethamane's people speak little in public. They remain insular and wary of outsiders, and retain their ancestors' deep-seated horror toward disease and walking dead.



Instead of burial or cremation, they give their corpses to the sunken gardens in the deepest parts of the city, where beds of mushrooms lit by panes of glowing blue glass offer up a bounty year round. They supplement this diet with meat and berries gathered on the alpine heights outside, or with preserved food imported from afar.

Beneath the sunken gardens run the Underways. This web of slick black tunnels winds deeper than any of the Gethamanese have ever charted, and their depths are home to all manner of unknown creatures. The lords of Gethamane have walled up most of these entrances; the rest they leave open so that scavengers may seek ancient magic and wealth, a few finds of which have enriched the city considerably. Both open and sealed corridors are well guarded, for monsters occasionally force their way through even the most secure barricades to drag victims back down into the dark.

### The Far North

On each dawn, shamans renegotiate tribal covenants with gods of animal herds. At twilight, fisherfolk make offerings to watery spirits of the shore or the mad dream-folk who ride the cold North wind. And expeditions from southerly civilizations labor through the night by the light of whale-tallow lamps, mining for eldritch metals, gems, and relics of ancient cities frozen beneath the ice.

Beyond the White Sea, the North's cold and isolation meets the tribalism and exotic resources of the world's outer rim. Coastal tribes and trading towns cluster along the White Sea's shores. Inland, tundra gives way to the Great

Ice. Here people are found only in pockets—oases of warmth around volcanoes and hot springs, communities of igloos, or the huddled tents of scavenger camps. Outside these enclaves dwell Wyld mutants and inhuman beasts—skinchangers, monstrous insects made of ice, blue-skinned giants with brine for blood, and the handmaidens of the Lover Clad in the Raiment of Tears.

So perilous are these barren lands that people brave the mad sorceries of First Age ruins for the least scrap of security. They huddle amid the curse-haunted debris of Bagrash Köl's fallen sky-city, the glassy walls of the House Invisible, and the eternally smoldering embers of the Steeple of White Fire, braving the twisting currents running through those places to escape the cold and the dark. Desperate folk know they risk their immortal souls either way, for the Winter Folk lairing in great mountain palaces and the ghosts forever wandering the great snow sea ride the blizzards down to hunt men. Against these dangers, the shadows of such once-great places often form the only shelter.

### Far Northern Locales

Across the North, herds of elk, bison, reindeer, and mammoth migrate from green-dappled taiga to icy steppes, and the **Icewalker tribes** follow them. Each tribe pursues a specific beast, which they train for riding and harvest for meat, leather, sinew, and bone, and whose great avatar they take as their totem. While they treat other tribes with the same totem as siblings, they attack rival totems' tribes in lean times, slaughtering enemy warriors and animals



alike. They have even less regard for settled peoples, and while they willingly trade their valuables—ivory, furs, and the like—for civilized goods, they raid unprotected settlements, massacring those who resist and making pyramids of their severed heads.

A change has come across the Icewalkers in recent years. Formerly adversarial tribes have banded together under a Solar warlord known only as the Bull of the North. The Bull's forces have captured several cities on the White Sea coast with military precision.

**Tusk** belongs to the Haslanti League, a loose coalition of city-states united in profiting from the ruins of the empire of Bagrash Köl—a mortal sorcerer who centuries ago dominated the Northeast. From those ruins, Haslanti scholars have unlocked magics and technologies far beyond their neighbors.

Tusk joined the alliance for political and economic reasons. Their iceships raid villages at the edges of the Haslanti sphere; their hunting parties attack Icewalker herds for meat, fur, and horn. Only the mammoth tribes are free from interference, as the ancient Tuskers forged a pact with the god of those tribes that forbids ever hunting mammoth again. The oath was sworn on a massive gold-chased ivory tusk which stands at the center of the city's temple to its old gods.

High up in the uttermost Northern mountains stands the city **Ascension**. From the city's heights, one can look upon the cloud-tangled, snow-blasted peaks of lesser mountains sweeping off to the south. But Ascension doesn't stand at the summit. Farther up still reach the groaning glaciers, glittering moraines, hovering mountains, and endless lightning-shot blizzards at the edge of the Pole of Air.

The city stands protected from the endless winter by still-functional Solar artifice. Forgotten magic keeps the air warm and dense at a height where, outside the city walls, travelers without proper gear can die of hypoxia or edema within days or hours. Huge chain and pulley systems run up the nigh-unclimbable mountainside in stages. They haul people and equipment to Ascension, beyond to the many mine-shafts that pockmark the heights above the city, and they send ores and precious minerals down to the mining-camp city Footstep at the mountain's base.

Footstep is a haven for miners, explorers, gamblers, and thieves. It is the last stop for any expedition's needs—guides, supplies, drugs, prostitutes—before heading up the mountain. Many perish while seeking their fortunes. Cold things live in the tunnels beneath the mountains, hoarding weird ores in their underground cities, while jealous elementals

haunt open-air mines on the heights, snatching prospectors and carrying them off into the endless polar storm.

### The Northeast

In the Northeast, the wintry isolation of the North meets the fecundity of the East. The Northern tundra gives way to great boreal forests of pine, spruce, and larch, broken by bogs, rich river valleys, and swaths of prairie. Hunter-gatherer tribes make camp in the sheltering shadows of the ancestor-trees beneath whose roots they bury their dead, while tree-city dwellers throw prisoners of war to hungry Fair Folk who haunt the forest floor.

Only in the last century have the urban cultures of the Threshold taken significant action to harvest the Northeast's resources. Loggers, miners, and farmers have established colonies throughout the area. Some native peoples trade peacefully with the newcomers, while others regularly raid settlements and caravans. All contest the region with wolves and feathered lizards, soul-thieves and savage gods, and all manner of monsters born of the Wyld.

#### Northeastern Locales

Merchants on the Silver River do not stint on hiring mercenaries, for fear of the **Linowan tribes**. These war bands

supplement their hunter-gatherer lifestyle in the region's rich forests and prairies by raiding passing merchants, neighboring peoples, and other Linowan for plunder and slaves. But the Linowan are not savages. Some emerge from their fortified islet-villages to trade native wares—exotic hardwoods, woolen cloth, horn carvings—for metal tools and other goods. Others hire themselves out as mercenaries or set themselves as rulers of conquered foreign settlements.

The Linowan see excellence as the highest virtue. Noble rank goes to those who distinguish themselves, whether as a hunter, weaver, dancer, or lorekeeper. Nobles gain such benefits as ownership of slaves or, for the most accomplished, a magical mask. Shamans bind small gods into these brightly painted masks to grant their wearers power, such as the bestial masks which give their war leaders the speed of leopards and the strength of demons. The Linowan reserve their harshest punishments for those who would steal such a mask—and for captives from the tree-cities of Halta, whose long-ago despoiling of Linowan holy sites with redwood seedlings has made the two peoples ancestral enemies.

Taller by far than the surrounding redwoods, the Oracle Tree looms at the heart of **Chanta**, capital of the Kingdom of Halta, like a living mountain. Its upper branches blot out the sun, massed evergreen foliage the size of a sloop's



sail swaying in the wind. Paved avenues run along the backs of lower boughs, broad as a city block and lined with long, low buildings. Other structures cluster upon the great wooden platforms that ring the Oracle Tree's trunk. Green-haired Haltans throng along precarious rope bridges, uncaring of the distance to the forest canopy below.

The tree is wise, and shares its wisdom with the city's priests in entheogenic visions. All the Northeastern peoples revere the tree—even the Linowan, who view it with awe and not a little fear. The Linowan would seize Chanta if they could. But Halta long ago formed a pact with the Fair Folk, granting the latter the forest floor while reserving the canopy to the Haltans, and the Fair Folk prey upon intruders with relish. Distasteful as soul-eating may be, the Haltans deem this just punishment for those who would invade their homes and kill their kin.

### The East

The verdancy of spring pervades the East. All the vitality of the natural world finds fruition here, from the crops and herds of the Scavenger Lands to wildernesses thick with untamed beasts and spirits—and beyond, to the primeval forest of the Pole of Wood. In the wake of the Contagion, the region's political landscape has grown as tangled and thorny as its wilds. Like new forest growth choking

out the old, the East's fractured states struggle with one another to thrive.

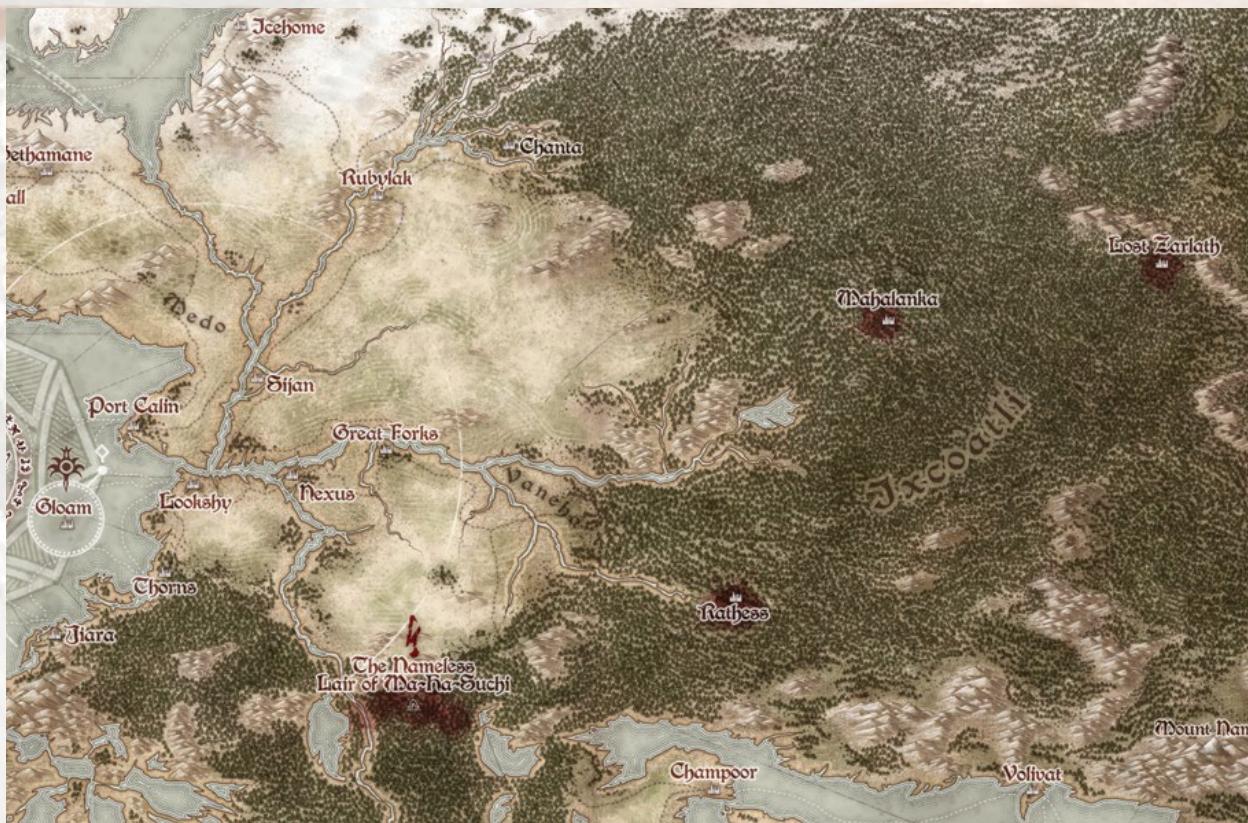
### The Scavenger Lands

Carts laden with lumber, crops, and ore—escorted by soldiers to ward off bandits, wild beasts, elementals, and foraging enemy troops—trundle past vine-draped ruins and haunted woodlands to converge on the gaily-painted gates of market towns. Brown-water ships haul cargoes down labyrinthine tributaries of the Yanaze River to the crowded cities of the Scavenger Lands. The bustling alchemy of urban life turns grain to bread, lumber to houses, and ore to cups, statues, horseshoes, and plowshares—and spears to fuel the endless wars of the East's numberless principalities.

This rich, populous realm has been a cradle of civilization since humanity's dawn, and First Age ruins still yield wealth to scavengers canny enough to master their perils. Folk of the Scavenger Lands twice joined forces under the Dragon-Blooded soldiers of Lookshy to repel the Realm's legions, and by dint of magic, numbers, and tenacity, they prevailed—albeit at bloody cost. Today they remain a thorn in the Dynasty's side.

But without immediate external threat, the military powers of the Scavenger Lands turn against one another. Queens and merchant princes drag their people into war over land,





wealth, slaves, glory, or spite. With each war's end, refugees and unemployed soldiers become bandits and mercenaries. Any thicket-flanked road or narrow defile may host ambush. This chaos offers fertile soil for the strong, charismatic or clever—bounty hunters, scavengers, assassins and thieves, thugs, pretenders, charlatans and swindlers—to rise above their station, winning coin or crown sufficient to place heroes and petty gods at their call.

#### Scavenger Lands Locales

Under the eaves of a shadowland of leafless black trees stands the tomb-city **Sijan**. Here, morticians in concealing gray and silver practice the funereal arts, taking the affluent dead of the East and preparing them for burial. They know a thousand customs for embalming and cremation, enshrouding and visitation, eulogy and procession, mourning and inhumation. But their ultimate service lies on the other side of death, where their rites ensure the ghosts of the deceased retain wealth and status. Because the treasures entombed in the necropoli of Sijan attract grave robbers, they are protected by terrible traps and guardians—including the enslaved spirits of those who thought to despoil them.

The Liminal Exalted have established an alliance with the city's necrosurgeons, whose laboratories they visit to acquire and exchange new limbs and organs. These surgeons see the Liminals as a marvel and a wonder, beyond the reach of the city's sciences and sorceries. Sijan's savants

offer access to their supplies and services to any Liminal willing to permit inspection.

After the Great Contagion, the forefathers of Sijan used their princely wealth to found crusades across Creation. They sent armies of exorcists and priests all across the world on a mission to gather and burn the corpses of Contagion dead. Their actions have been widely recognized as being a major factor in having saved Creation as a whole from sinking into the Underworld, and ever since, Sijan has been defined by its stoic service to the living and the dead.

Sometimes called Decadence or the City of Temples, **Great Forks** is one of the three greatest cities of the River Province. Great Forks is a city of gods, and they have done their best to build in it the aspect of Heaven. The fantastic wealth and power of Great Forks makes it second only to Lookshy in raw military might, and though Nexus is an unparalleled economic juggernaut, Great Forks is known as one of the richest cities in the world. Centuries ago, three tribal deities founded the city at the juncture of the Yellow and Rolling Rivers, where fertile soils support slave-worked plantations of marijuana and qat. The three still rule today, at the head of a bureaucracy of a thousand temples.

The entire city is shot through with temples and shrines, monasteries, stupas, pagodas, and sacred groves. The palaces of renowned gods dominate the high hills of the city, while countless little gods and nameless spirits vie

for favor and worship in the city's warrens and recesses. Pilgrims and orgiasts throng at all hours amid the chanting, dancing, and feasting of each day's many festivals.

With the return of the Exigence, heroes come to Great Forks from every corner of Creation to vie for the Second Breath, while Exigents empowered elsewhere have followed to meet with their own kind. The city's triumvirate has offered patronage to these heroes, and the services they perform in exchange gives the city new military and economic might—strength it will need to confront the threat of the Deathlord, Mask of Winters.

The Realm city of **Gloam** is in the twilight of its illustrious history, and no one knows it. The city stands on an island midway between Lookshy and the Blessed Isle, and has been a Realm port almost as long as there has been a Realm. But now an invisible horror stalks the streets, and the Dragon-Blooded of Gloam have become its victims.

The surrounding waters are alive with sails—fishing junks comb the waves while trading vessels from a hundred cities converge on their way to distant ports. Few of the many crews that moor their ships here realize the danger, but there is one clue that something is not right in this place—a veritable graveyard of ships in the west harbor. Lashed down and permanently anchored, hundreds of old trade vessels have become the dwellings of citizens who once lived in the city. Close examination of these ships reveals their places of origin: Port Calin, Sijan, Chiaroscuro, places farther and in-between. Ships for which there are no longer crews.

Though it does not realize it, the Scarlet Dynasty no longer controls Gloam. The seal of the Anathema beneath the city was broken. An old crypt was opened, and inside there lay something older than time. The worms in its breath have gnawed into the souls of the Dragon-Blooded of Gloam, and they belong to it now.

Luckily, only a small contingent of Dynasts were here when the vault was opened. The rest were drawn away by the impending war for the Scarlet Throne. The ones who remained now stalk the city streets by night. Their hunger for breath sates the unnatural appetites of the Thing Below. They are its puppets, and their slavery has transformed their Exaltations. By day, however, they enact whatever pretense is necessary to keep the Realm from ever suspecting the darkness that has come to roost on its very doorstep.

**Lookshy** traces its history back before the birth of the Realm, to the Dragon-Blooded Shogunate—that roaring cavalcade of feuding, backbiting elemental dynasties that

ruled the world after the First Age's fall. Its ruling gentes proclaim themselves descendants of daimyos and lesser officials from that bygone era. In the wake of the Great Contagion, the Shogunate's Seventh Legion established a military camp in the plague-shattered city of Deheleshen. That was the seed of Lookshy, and the city-state has since grown into the pre-eminent military power of the Scavenger Lands.

The Seventh Legion remains a working army today, and the city reflects its nature. Lookshy's architecture focuses sharply on defense. Structures are fortified and crenelated. Each of the city's districts stands higher on the promontory than the one before, with its own walls and towers garrisoned with troops and laden with military machinery. Visitors have little status in Lookshy and cannot enter the Upper City without authorization, although military service with the Legion provides a universal path to legitimacy.

Lookshy husbands its First Age legacy carefully. Artisans pass on methods for crafting exceptional swords and wood-block prints, warships and netsuke; armymasters practice techniques developed by long-dead Exalted heroes; savants maintain a library of battle magics at the Valkhawsen Academy of Sorcery. Vaults beneath the Lookshy Manse contain the city's dwindling store of First Age weapons—artifacts of dreadful power preserved against a time of desperate need. And the Dragon-Blooded gentes arrange marriages carefully to ensure their bloodlines do not thin.

A thousand miles south of Lookshy, past a score of nations, city-states, and tribes, stands the fallen city **Thorns**. Thorns was one of Creation's greatest cities a mere decade ago. Its bazaars bustled with merchants and glittered with goods from across Creation; poets in basement teashops and aristocratic boudoirs sang of love, both shared and unrequited; philosophers addressed their disciples beneath vine-drenched pergolas.

Now a black miasma boils up around the city, obscuring the gray fields, the leafless trees, and the grotesque foothills that rise, bloated and repellent, outside her walls. But they are not hills. These ragged slopes are mounds of rotten flesh; that promontory an elbow, those gorges the gaps between fingers like fallen spires. Thorns is now a shadowland, its panorama dominated by the vast and terrible undead giant called Juggernaut which slumps supine outside the city gates, from between whose shoulders rises the osseous castle of the Mask of Winters.

Many of Thorns's people died or fled when the Deathlord conquered the city four years ago. But over ten thousand remain. Some are trapped by poverty, sickness, or fear of



the perils of fleeing the city. Others find profit in the new order as servants, soldiers, informants, or thugs. These hardy people share their city with the dead. Some are ancestral ghosts, while others are monstrous thralls of the Mask of Winters. All claim that life in the penumbra of the dead is right and normal. To say otherwise has been forbidden by the Deathlord's regent, the blind deathknight Red Iron Rebuke, who has announced himself as the long-lost elder brother of the last Autocrat and the rightful heir to the throne.

The city-state of **Jiara** is the capital of the Jiaran satrapy. Situated upon a high plateau, it stands at a conflux of roads, rivers, and bridges that gives access to the River Province and the rest of the Scavenger Lands, as well as the jungles between the Gray River and the Summer Mountains. The valleys of the Justice and Ondessics Rivers offer rich farmland and pasturage, while the surrounding mountains supply copper, iron, precious metals, and gemstones.

House Mnemon holds Jiara. The palace-strewn acropolis called the Artahunara, once home to House Khidara—Jiara's royal family—now hosts a puppet prince and his Dragon-Blooded masters. In and around the city below, military encampments stand packed with Mnemon's forces. Her House soldiers are backed with mercenary units, masses of conscripts from other satrapies, and the

forces of Jiaran princelings who have rebelled against House Khidara. Many soldiers have been billeted in the houses of suspected Khidara loyalists to watch for resistance activities.

Jiaran soldiers are feared and respected for their skill at arms, much of it drawn from their training in the ritual sword dance. For centuries, these soldiers formed an auxiliary to the Realm's legions. Now their skills trouble the Mnemon garrison as rebellion foments amid the Jiaran countryside.

A year ago, the heir to House Khidara abandoned the capital to raise revolt. Her forces—a mix of mercenaries, Jiaran loyalists, and the royal guard—now occupy the lesser Jiaran cities of Daric, Naathul, and Parapet. Other settlements and states in the region set old resentment

#### THE RIVER PROVINCE

Some speak of the River Province as coterminous with the Scavenger Lands. In fact, it describes that particularly rich and populous expanse surrounding the Yanaze, stretching from Sijan to Lookshy to Great Forks.

aside, seeing the uprising as a symbol of rebellion against the Realm. Mnemon's interest is more personal. The other Houses will take failure here as a sign of weakness, at a time when they could tear her House apart if they smell blood in the water.

The foremost trade city in Creation, **Nexus** sprawls at the juncture of the Yellow and Gray Rivers where they feed the swollen Yanaze. Built on, around and under the ruins of a First Age metropolis, the modern and ancient cities intertwine. Irimoya-roofed shrines and teahouses with elegant rice paper doors stand cheek-by-jowl with brick warehouses and shantytown shacks. Leonine gargoyles leer from the cornices of stone façades scarred by scavengers' chisels and sorcerous fires, while strings of paper lanterns blaze over the brightly colored awnings of the city's bazaars. Beneath it all, underground districts have been tunneled from the bedrock, full of "sunless folk" who rarely see the sky.

Blast furnaces light up the night like roaring, bloody suns; trip hammers crash on hot metal with the clangor of sword on shield; windmills and waterwheels groan like dying men; ventilation fans howl like banshees as they send wind through the undercity. The ground vibrates with the rumble of elevators and pulley-cars. Tons of finished goods pour out of Nexus's workshops every day, to be purchased in bulk lots at the city's markets and carried off by caravans and ships to every corner of Creation.

Nexus is central to the Guild and Eastern commerce. No princes rule here. Official power rests in the hands of the understated bureaucracy of the so-called Council of Entities and the deadly wonderworking of the mysterious, masked Emissary. Famed as a lawless city, Nexus enforces only those edicts propounded by Councilors and administered by Council-paid mercenaries and the Emissary's inscrutable whim—most notably, that none shall obstruct trade, nor raise or bring an army into the city. Most power in Nexus lies in the greedy hands of wealthy merchants, captains of industry, priesthoods, guilds, and street gangs. Their rules are enforced not by uniformed soldiers, but by legbreaking thugs and knives in the night. In Nexus, safety and authority are purchased commodities.

As one heads farther east, the polities of the western Scavenger Lands give way to the morass of principalities called the **Hundred Kingdoms**. A hundred foreign powers have conquered the region over the centuries; a hundred minor empires have risen and fallen. From the rich soil of this history has grown a riotous garden of cultures, aesthetics and governments. Here power lies fragmented across city-states, petty tyrannies, theocracies, communes, and other political structures all couched amid mountains, forests, steep river valleys, marshes, and heaths—terrain too wild

to easily tame but too rich to ignore.

Of all the cities of Vaneha—that rich mountainous country in the triangle between the Yellow and Maruto rivers—the capital city of **Jibei** is the most beautiful and most storied. It is the City of the Sword, home to the Imperial Daiklave that legitimizes the rule of Sword Prince Gensuji. Vaneha's finest warriors and weaponsmiths—ranked among the best in the world—live and labor here at the Sword Prince's command. This is a land arrayed by clans, and so long as Gensuji holds members of each clan's ruling family hostage, he is its master.

The city of Jibei spreads downhill from the Sword Prince's dragon-backed manse, its winding avenues lined with dogwood and weeping cherry. Hedgerows and elegant gardens encircle the manors of the clan lords; these mute the rasp of carpenters' saws, grunts and *kais* of sparring warriors, and bustle of merchants trading at the markets for swords, fish, rice, and jade. From balconies one may watch clouds of birds rise above the marshes encircling Agate Lake—beneath whose waters divers extract from drowned mines the sacred metal used in Vanehan bladecraft—or see waterfalls cascading down from the sacred mountain Ama-ni-Traya, the enormous forested peak that Vaneha's people call the center of the world.

To hold off the jungle tribes that raid from the Far East, Vanehan laborers expand and extend the Great Palisade, a wall of sharpened boles running for hundreds of miles along the realm's eastern edge. Keeping the tribes at bay allows Vaneha's warriors to focus their efforts on a more profitable opponent: the Hundred Kingdoms. Vaneha's people have invaded that region many times before, even ruled it in the past as a conquering power. Now the Sword Prince raises the Imperial Daiklave to direct the clans northward once more.

#### **The Far East**

At the world's Eastern edge, the varied terrain of the Scavenger Lands gives way to denser woods thronging with animals, feral spirits, and the endless riches of the Pole of Wood. Humans form just one thread in the forest's tapestry of life. Hunter-gatherer tribes migrate betwixt rivers and lakes, warring with neighbors or trading poisons and medicines, pelts and amber. Their shamans bargain with the spirits, offering prayers and sacrifices for blessings upon trail, canoe, net, spear, hand, and womb.

The wealth of these lands has not gone unnoticed by the mercantile concerns of the Scavenger Lands—or those sophisticated Lunar domains lodged amid the uttermost East. At Guild trading posts, tribesmen with wolf's eyes and leaf-green hair exchange rare herbs and weird goods



for metal tools and ornaments. Loggers and poachers battle walking trees, ink monkeys, and beastmen to harvest precious hardwoods and furs; beastmasters seek eggs and cubs from bizarre forest creatures; scavenger bands burn miles of jungle to loot overgrown First Age ruins.

#### Far Eastern Locales

Wealthy **Nechara** stands astride the Great Southeastern Way—a braid of trade routes linking the Scavenger Lands to forest-strangled Ixcoatl and the wealthy states of the Dreaming Sea. Its noble families have traditionally sought supernatural surrogates—gods, elementals, ghosts, Fair Folk, and stranger entities—to infuse their bloodlines with Essence. Some employ their inherited magics to heal and inspire, to enhance crops, to slay monsters and break invading armies. Others use them to manipulate or oppress their people, or barter with foreign states for glory or gain.

But supernatural surrogates often demand high prices for heredity, from prayer or jade to specific services or rarities. To meet these bargains, nobles indebted themselves to outside agencies, from mercantile factions such as the Guild to occult organizations like the House of Thirty Seals—an academy of demonology in distant Nathir. These foreign groups have leveraged such debts and their own influence over local spirits to gain influence within Nechara's governments.

The most immediate threat to Nechara is military rather than political. The Broken Horn tribe, a people infused with Lunar blood, have harassed Nechara for generations, attacking settlements and mercantile traffic along the Great Southeastern Way. The Lunars behind the Broken Horns are eager to seize Nechara's genealogical records, and have redoubled their attacks since the Empress vanished.

In the uttermost East, beyond the city-state of Nechara and fungus-ravaged Elytrum, stand the mounds and ziggurats of **Izahuaca**—the capital of Ixcoatl, the Empire of the Winged Serpent.

Ages ago, the serpentfolk—a people of great builders, administrators and soldiers—battled the raitonfolk's scholarly warrior-priests across a thousand miles of forest. Then the Contagion all but exterminated the feathered peoples, and the flood of Fair Folk that followed razed the cities of the serpents to the ground and slaughtered their gods.

Years later, the serpentfolk encountered the surviving raiton clans. Rather than resuming their wars, the two groups merged. While the libraries of the serpents had burned during the advance of the Fair Folk, the raitonfolk preserved scrolls, books, and songs dealing with the shared history of the two peoples, making their lore indispensable.

The serpentfolk still overwhelmingly dominate modern Ixcoatl in terms of population, forming its ruling class of bureaucrats and merchants. Meanwhile, the raitonfolk occupy an enshrined position in the nation's caste system—priests, scholars, military officers and occasionally assassins, their collective cultural wing is the theomilitary. Those lacking the blood of serpent or raiton are consigned to the lower castes. Their empire encompasses hundreds of villages, towns, and lesser cities, keeping a steady flow of tribute and slaves flowing back to Izahuaca.

### The Southeast

The lands beyond the Summer Mountains mingle the fertility of the East with the riches of the South. This is a realm of tangled trees and wild beasts, girded by ape-ruled jungles and savannas lorded over by lions. Civilization seethes furiously around the cauldron of the Dreaming Sea—an ocean extending from the edge of the world, its depths teeming with fish, elementals, and things of the Wyld. The land is equally abundant, yielding a great wealth of crops, spices, precious metals, ivory and gems to bedeck the temples of Southeastern gods and the palaces of rajahs and ranis.

Empires burgeon across the Southeast, absorbing dozens of formerly independent city-states. Meanwhile, puissant gods spread their cults and influence, while Fair Folk reavers in ships of glass and iridescent chitin carry mortals by the hundreds to their courts on island citadels or beneath the waters of the Dreaming Sea.

Eastward, the sea grows wilder and weirder. Colored fires play upon the surface, while all manner of beasts monstrous and grotesque cavort beneath the waves. Where brightly burning empires give way to the embers of ancient civilizations are found such places as the sea-canyon city of Haven, whose tangle of crisscrossing bridges leads to halls and chambers carved into the walls over the course of ten thousand years; the calcareous island fortress of Shinjok, where the prehuman Backbenders warp human thralls into their own image through gruesome spinal surgery; and the ominous basalt towers of Dis, home to a primordial race of flesh-eating gigantes who enslave men and beasts alike with sorcery and soulgems. But age is no defense against ambition, and soon the young empires of the Southeast will cross blades with these elder powers.

### Southeastern Locales

The city **Kamthahar**, capital of the empire of Prasad, is starkly divided by caste and clan. Each clan maintains its own walled compound within the city. Untouchables and other low-caste clans dwell in squalor at city's edge. Closer

to the center, the manors of high-caste clans tower amid encircling gardens, their façades engraved with elaborate imagery. At Kamthahar's heart rise the palatial compounds of the Dragon Caste, dominated by the twin fortresses of Clans Burano and Ophris. There the city's Dragon-Blooded princes dwell in splendor, lounging in silken finery or accoutering themselves for war with dragon helms and daiklaves of jade. This is the farthest-flung of the Realm's satrapies, and in many ways the most glorious. And yet most of these Dynasts have never set foot upon the Blessed Isle.

The Immaculate Philosophy has grown askew in this foreign soil. By the precepts of the so-called Pure Way, the Dragon-Blooded here are gods. Mortals may worship spirits as well, so long as such spirits acknowledge the preeminence of the Dragon-Blooded and the Immaculate Dragons. Immaculate monks consider the Pure Way deeply heretical. Some travel the length of Creation to challenge Prasad's Pure monks, proving their convictions through battle.

Merchants across the Dreaming Sea seek profit in **Champoor**, the Nighted City. But their eagerness to visit the ancient port is mixed with trepidation, for a thousand dangers haunt Champoor's shadowy teashops, hushed bazaars and maze-like streets—dangers to profit, life, and soul.

The Nighted City is aptly named. Shade covers the streets even on cloudless days, for the water dragon Tenepeshu, queen of the corrupt Court of Secrets, has cast her cloak over the bay. Its umbral gods and undersea elementals offer their aid in exchange for commensurate sacrifice, and the city's criminal classes form their priesthoods and congregations. Captains, innkeepers, merchants, madams, dockmasters and gang leaders deploy divine magic to transport contraband, to sink rival ships, to bedazzle and brawl, to seduce and slay. In exchange they entertain and enrich their patrons, offering sacrifices of wine and scrolls, silver and jade, deflowering and death.

High in the Chalcedon Mountains, **Ysyr** was built upon the ruins of the First Age city of Pinnacle, sculpted by Solar artifice from the living rock. Years after the Contagion slew all within, the seafaring Ys people found the city and made it their own. But without the science of the Solars to regulate sorcerous engines beneath the city, Essence emanations warped the Ys, twisting their bodies and minds—and, through chance, attuning them to the power of sorcery.

But only a handful of Ysyr's people can master the sorcerous arts. These few form the ruling class, identified not merely by their elaborate finery, but also by their sorcerously endowed physical perfection. The rest of the city's



people forever bear the marks of lesser mutation—marks of servitude, for in Ysyr, all who are not sorcerers are slaves.

A web of roads and sea-lanes spills outward to city-states who pay fealty to their sorcerous Ys overlords. The sorcerers continue to extend their influence, pitting their forces against the preternatural champions of Volivat, the Dragon-Blooded princes of Prasad, and the other imperial powers of the Dreaming Sea.

Amid the isles linking Ysyr to the mainland stands the city of **Palanquin**. Four colossal inhuman statues, their features long since weathered away, hold a stony, edifice-encrusted landmass far above the sea—giants lifting an island from the waves. Webs of pier and quay stretch out from their feet through mats of merchant ships, fishing junks, and houseboats inhabited by the poor and by excommunicates seeking re-entry into the city above. Switchback stairs climb past entire neighborhoods carved into the bodies of the statues or clinging to cantilevered platforms.

Palanquin is a city of towering pagodas and vibrant shrines; the air is filled with chanting, singing, and the ringing of temple bells. Palanquin's folk are deeply religious, seeing themselves closer to Heaven than lesser peoples trapped below. This attitude is reinforced by the elemental cloud-folk of the windborne City of Blue Gauze, who visit Palanquin to trade with mortals. The city's noble families

carry cloudfolk blood, giving them an otherworldly beauty and a capricious nature. But their power is not what it once was—Ysyr conquered Palanquin a century ago.

At Palanquin's heart stands the source of the people's piety, a defunct magical gateway said to lead to Heaven itself. But sealed beyond the portal is no place ever visited by the Sidereals. Instead, it leads to the ruins of a Heaven older by far than Yu-Shan—the celestial capital of fallen Zen-Mu, where the ancients dwelt in majesty before they ever dreamed of Creation. Woe betide those who behold the gods that dwell there now.

The Solars of the First Age carved the city **Volivat** out of the sea. Standing off the shore of the Doorstone Peninsula, the floor of the city rests a hundred fathoms below sea level, kept dry by an encircling dam and system of still-functioning pumps. Enormous spires rise above the dam, visible from the shoreline miles away, where Volivat's alchemists stimulate farms and orchards to unnatural verdancy.

Volivat's leaders flooded the city during the Great Contagion in an effort at quarantine, so that only the dam and the tops of the highest towers rose from the water. Nomads found the place years later and reactivated the pumps, reclaiming the city from the sea. Discovering relics and texts of the Exalted, they set out to recreate themselves in the image of the city's founders.

The people of Volivat are called the Yennin, which means “Children of Ten Fathers” in their language. The secrets their ancestors found in the city’s central citadel included a formula for creating offspring with up to ten fathers, each contributing to the birth of a single child. They create supermen in this fashion, with only the strongest, wisest, and most gifted men contributing their seed to the next generation. The resulting cat’s-cradle of clan bonds is largely incomprehensible to outsiders. Enhanced by the combined strength, wit, and Essence of eleven parents, the greatest Yennin champions are a match for the sorcerer-princes of Ysyr and the Dragon-Blooded warriors of Prasad.

### The South

As the summer sun dominates all beneath it, so too does the South lie prostrate beneath the rule of mighty powers. Along the fertile coast, tyrants and priest-kings look down from glittering citadels upon city-states built on the backs of slaves. Farther south, where green valleys give way to dry plateaus encircling a vast sea of sand—and beyond, to the ultimate blaze of the Pole of Fire—nomads and oasis-dwellers bend knee to greedy gods. Everywhere, fresh water is scarce and passions fiery; slaves smolder with resentment, youths with wanderlust, and warriors with a fervor for glory.

### The Near South

In the cool Southern night, lighthouses shine like suns from city harbors to guide ships home. With the dawn, hillsides smolder like jewels—amethyst vineyards; ruby fields of opium poppies; emerald orchards aflame with orange and

lemon, pomegranate and persimmon. Workers labor in the noonday heat, the fruits of their toil brought to gilded treasury-temples for their gods to select the choicest portions. Caravans carry the surplus past brooding necropoleis and looming ziggurats to cities grown like termites’ nests, their mud-brick abodes climbing toward the sun. In their shadow, forges blaze with new-minted metal and glass while bazaars glow with the rich hues of spices and fire opals.

Across the superstitious, tradition-bound Southern coast, queens and princes rule their city-states without question, owing fealty only to gods, ancestors and the Realm. They gather to their courts viziers, savants, generals, seneschals, poisoners and spies; they raise armies to ward off raiding nomads, crush slave rebellions and pillage neighboring city-states. Plunder stocks their harems with beautiful youths and fills their treasures with silver and jade. Each trove’s guardians are more impressive than the last—eunuch janissaries, trained tigers and basilisks, clockwork traps and baleful sorceries.

### Near Southern Locales

Herds of cattle roam the veld around **Kirighast**, capital of the satrapy of Harborhead, led by bulls that carry their horned heads high as princes. Warriors in patterned scarlet dashikis accompany them, tasseled spears doubling as ox-goads. Every adult in the realm is a warrior, and all nearby lands are their battlegrounds. All citizens train at arms from childhood, from the Brides of Ahlat—the land’s most elite soldiers, whose chaste warriors are ritually wedded to their god—to nomads, artisans, clerks, and priests. No citizen goes unarmed, for to be unarmed is to be taken for a slave.





While the Realm's primary concern in Harborhead is to extract jade from the Bent Creek mine in the hinterlands, merchants from Realm, Guild, and other entities gather in Kirighast to deal in bronze, cattle, drugs, ivory, and slaves. But the people of Harborhead have seethed against their suzerain for all the centuries of Dynastic rule, and their uprisings have bloodied even the renowned Imperial legions. Now tribal chieftains offer their hecatombs to Ahlat, Southern god of war and cattle, while Dynasts dare not leave Kirighast's Imperial Garrison without scores of armed guards.

While the cosmopolitan denizens of Kirighast mingle freely, in the countryside the Five Peoples remain in their own villages. There they are too distant from other Peoples' settlements for assimilation, yet too close to ignore. Efforts to bring opposing tribes together through intermarriage and trade are overshadowed by blood feuds, execrations, and raids for cattle, water, and slaves. These rivalries are only set aside when marching to war against foreigners.

Ringed by irrigated fields webbed with canals, **Urim** gleams like a mirage, its outer walls glazed blue-green like the sea. At night, lamps hung upon the walls mimic the constellation of the Peacock, the city's emblem.

To a foreigner's eye, the so-called "Peacock City" greatly resembles its peers among the Varang Confederacy. The

Varang people are obsessed with the celestial order around which they have built their civilization. Radial streets, arranged with geometrical precision, throng with people whose colored garments bear signs and symbols denoting their caste, as determined by the hour and minute of their birth, and their rank within it, as determined by their parents' caste and their place in the birth order of their siblings. The casteless—those whose exact time of birth cannot be established—perform menial tasks and are despised for lacking a place in the celestial order.

Though distrusted, foreigners hold a different place in Varang culture. The inscrutability of their true social role is said to bring luck to gamblers and lovers alike. They are often approached to perform tasks that natives deem beyond the pale, such as spying, kidnapping, and murder.

**Chiaroscuro** is a vast shattered metropolis, rising from the ruins of First Age glory. Once, its shining towers of imperishable glass stood dozens of stories high, catching the light and glowing with all the hues of an eternal sunset. But now those towers have fallen and their ragged stumps rise from a confluence of shadows and rubble. Districts of softly-glowing magic glass are separated from one another by tracts and channels of ghost haunted shadow. Streets of blood-red vermillion course through the city, alive with the magic of old, the arteries of a heart that still slowly beats.



Chiaroscuro is the largest and wealthiest metropolis of the Southern coast. The city was founded in the First Age, where it was one of the greatest ports in the world, home to twenty million souls. Shattered and depopulated by the twin hammer-blows of the Usurpation and Great Contagion, Chiaroscuro was a haunted, war-torn ruin until the coming of the Tri-Khan and his Delzahn followers. The Tri-Khan slew the city's petty warlords, sealed Chiaroscuro's shadowlands with wards of precious salt, bought the goodwill of the Realm with lavish tribute, and reopened the city, declaring ten years free of taxation to entice settlers. The descendants of those pioneers still dwell in the city today.

Chiaroscuro is one of the most famous ports in the world, sitting at a confluence of land and sea routes. Its port and trade makes it one of the richest cities in Creation, with wealth that rivals even Nexus.

The current Tri-Khan is a clever and canny ruler, and his policies have prevented Chiaroscuro from becoming a mere puppet of the Realm. In the wake of the Empress's disappearance, he has further diminished the Realm's control by setting his minders against one another and covertly supporting rebellions in other parts of the Threshold. He has also allied himself with the Guild, using its support to weaken the Realm's control in exchange for opening his markets to any and all goods.

To avoid open conflict with the Realm, the Tri-Khan has outlawed all Anathema, but in practice, Celestial Exalted who hide their nature or open themselves to the service of the Tri-Khan are welcomed and even harbored in the city. As long as they are discreet, all manner of beings may trade or even settle in Chiaroscuro, though any disruption to the city will quickly be met with an attack by the city guard, or a visit by the Wyld Hunt.

Chiaroscuro itself is a treasure for the bold. Many of its ruined and haunted districts are still only lightly explored. Scavengers comb the ruins seeking out treasures that contain the barest hints of the city's former magic. Uncanny individuals from across Creation compete for the right to live in one of the coveted apartments of the Plaza, a neighborhood with functional First Age amenities; admission is permitted only at the whim of Grandmother Bright, a powerful and canny spirit who is always in need of services from the mighty.

Sorcerers, Fair Folk, outcastes, and even deathknights make their way to Chiaroscuro, drawn by the light of life, the opportunity for trade, and the shadow of anonymity.

The **Delzahn nomads** remain tied to their urban brethren, as their tribes maintain cohorts in Chiaroscuro and on the Southern steppes. The nomads maintain their ancient way of life, herding livestock across a thousand

miles of open range and raiding the farms and villages of foreigners who don't allow them to graze and water their herds. They often visit Chiaroscuro itself, both to sell their animals in the city markets and to visit their kin, and it's not unknown for nomads to settle there or urban Delzahn to abandon city life for horse and horizon.

The Delzahn maintain strict gender roles. Men rule everything outside the household, such as hunting, mercantile activity and war. They wear peacock-bright veils whose colors and patterns proclaim their bloodlines and achievements—the source of their honor. Delzahn women rule the household itself, from finances to marriage. Their honor derives from their beauty rather than deeds or lineage; they never conceal their faces, and many wear gauzy clothing to flaunt their bodies.

For those who feel mismatched to their gender and its roles, a Delzahn wearing clothing of the opposite biological sex, including at least one gray garment—often a scarf or a veil—is treated as a member of that sex. Those who “take the gray” are known as Dereth. They are viewed as unusual, but no more so than one who is left-handed or has mismatched eyes. Some say they’re lucky at love. Others claim them beloved by the gods; many Delzahn priests and shamans are Dereth.

### The Far South

The land grows hotter and water scarcer inland. Hill

tribes engage in brutal wars amid the maquis. Horse-archers ride across the sweltering steppes, alert for game beasts or the dreaded Lion Folk. Nomads and merchants meet under oaths of hospitality in towns along the green banks of rivers and the shores of inland seas. Farther south, the last vegetation gives way to the many faces of the desert: barren ridges, stony plains and salt flats encircling a vast central sea of sand speckled with emerald and sapphire oases.

The farther south one goes, the richer the cities and tribes are in precious metals, gemstones, incense, ivory, spices, firedust, and silk, while fresh water becomes rare and valuable as jade. Merchants and scavengers alike hire guides and guards mounted on Southern steeds and beasts of burden, from camels and quaggas to giant aardvarks and flightless birds. They risk death from lions and scorpions, heatstroke and sandstorms, the trickery of desert gods and the hungers of the Fair Folk, all to win a share the deep desert’s rewards—wealth, relics from lost cities, the wisdom of eremites and the blessings of the spirit courts.

### Far Southern Locales

The boomtown **Zoatham** crouches amid the pitted Galta Hills where they jut up from the sands. A decade ago, slaver-priests from the Temple of the Gauntlet discovered rich outcrops of ore. Prospectors flocked to the Galtas to claim veins of silver, gems, and gold; firedust deposits; and



nodules of crystallized smoke. Others followed: provisioners, cooks, liquor- and drug-dealers, prostitutes, as well as miners and guards earning a living alongside all manner of gamblers, forgers, thieves, and thugs.

Bandits lurk in the caves that pockmark the Galtas. Some are dispossessed natives; others are former prospectors, miners or guards. There are also inhuman dangers, from heat waves, sandstorms, typhoid fever and cholera to carnivorous giant bats, millipedes as large as river dragons, cacti that fling drugged seed-spines that sprout inside their victims, vicious hyena-like fire elementals and soul-thirsty leonine Fair Folk.

Though silver and gemstones remain plentiful around Zoatham, mining operations may soon cease. Excavations have broken into the deep places where earth elementals dwell, disturbing sonorous stony songs that have gone on unbroken since before the sun and moon were made. Now the hills rumble and shake with the slow words of the gelnlords as they debate how best to crush those responsible for this indignity.

The towers and terraces of **Gem** jut forth from the face of the dead volcano Cinere, windows shining in the night like constellations, but most of the city lies underground. Merchants haggle in the city's echoing gemstone bazaars; mercenaries and miners gather in cramped, musty drinking-halls. Eons of habitation have filled the place with curiosities, from sorcerous cisterns inhabited by half-slumbering water spirits to undisturbed chambers where explorers and vagrants sometimes unearth First Age treasures—obedient living statues carved from pink granite, a rod that projects a pulverizing ray, jewelry of demon-gold bearing the sigils of the Anathema.

The markets at Gem form a trade nexus for surrounding regions, from the Tsavo Cities to the Glister Sands, from the Saltblaze Plateau to the Dying Sea. Tradition makes Gem the center of the gemstone trade—a custom ruthlessly enforced by the local tribes, who violently thwart efforts to sell gemstones elsewhere. Successful smugglers are rare, but those who survive become wealthy.

All this wealth and wonder is at the command of one mortal: Rankar VII, hereditary Despot of Gem, War-Chief of the Sabaki Tribes, Suzerain of the Tsavo Cities. Through charm, cunning and martial prowess, this laughing bear of a man subdued the region's warring cities—Kandara of the Great Library; Origin, city of talking lions; demon-haunted Skarth—and drew their commerce to Gem not merely through force, but through the promise of profit. Secure in his strength and allies, he bargains fearlessly with outcastes, Lunars, and Fair Folk, and rejects both



blandishments and threats from the Guild. He may fall someday—perhaps tomorrow—but not today.

Beyond even Gem, so far south that the horizon shines ruddily at midnight with the distant glow of the Pole of Fire, ill-reputed **Dajaz** basks at the feet of the Firepeaks. It is a city of limestone and white granite, of pleasure palaces and oases, of endless music and fires burning into the night.

There is always celebration in Dajaz, though of who or what, no visitor can quite ascertain. Whether in the heat of noon or the icy hours before dawn, every bazaar, temple and caravanserai in the city throngs with revelers. Festivities are supplied with every conceivable need—food and drink, drugs and dancers, castrati and catamites—through the generosity of the elusive white-veiled Benefactors.

Perhaps through lost Solar artifice or some older, more insidious magic, the manic bacchanalia that grips the city touches the most temperate souls. Even in Creation, where self-indulgence is a matter of course for those with the means, Dajaz is seen as a place of iniquity, unclean excess, waste, and villainy. Talebearers say that even Lintha pirates and Great Forks sybarites are disgusted by the unholy impurity of the place.

Despite the city's purported curse—and its incredible crime rate—foreigners continue to make the long, dangerous journey to Dajaz. They come to revel and feast, to duel

and tryst, to hire assassins or fence goods, or simply to disappear. Many disappear in truth. On nights when the stars turn strange, their last screams echo from beneath the pavements, to be drowned out by the sounds of revelry and merriment.

### The Southwest

Realms west of the Firepeaks are as rich as the South and prostrate as the West. Foreign powers, whether Dynasts or Lunars, mortal princes or corrupt gods, subjugate the peoples of these humid lands—jungles and forests, marshes and savannahs—to claim their wealth and resources. Buccaneer fleets ravage shipping lanes while slavers and Fair Folk prey upon impoverished villages.

Near the center of things, the folk of wealthy satrapies hide their hatred behind adoring smiles, then kneel in secret before forbidden gods to call curses on their suzerains. Closer to the world's edge, towns and tribes lie scattered across coastal islands or encircled by monster-haunted marshlands and smoldering volcanoes. Here, where peoples are strange and their customs baffling to outsiders, any selfish godling, budding necromancer or ruthless sellsword can carve out a dominion.

### Southwestern Locales

No place in the Glorious Principality of An-Teng is as wealthy as the **City of the Steel Lotus**. Visiting Dragon-



Blooded come to indulge their basest desires in this prostrate satrapy. The docks bustle with merchants bringing delicacies from across Creation. Emporia proffer *objets d'art* of ivory, teak, and precious stones. In brothels and teahouses, lovely youths wait on Dynasts hand and foot, concealing their resentment behind servile smiles.

In another age, An-Teng waxed powerful under Solar rule. When the loyal Tengese fought to protect their masters in the Usurpation, the Dragon-Blooded tore a savage trail of destruction through their land, exterminating the royal line and choking the soil with salt and blood. So when the Empress sent her legions after the Contagion, the Tengese bowed their heads to her rule rather than face further devastation.

Today, the princes of An-Teng ready their private troops in the jungled hinterlands—the Shadow Puppeteers, the Elephant-Riding Ghost Generals, and the Masked Commanders of the Animals—lest the Realm’s garrison prove unreliable in this time of tumult. Meanwhile, other forces move furtively within An-Teng, from the ghosts of the City of Dead Flowers, where the last High Queen lies uneasy in her grave, to her hidden descendants in the demon cult called the Seven-Stranded Vine.

The vast expanses of Southwestern sargasso conceal the pirate city **Bluehaven**. The imperishable wrecks of a handful of First Age vessels float at the center of the

morass, sparkling in the Western sun like cracked opals on green velvet. They are enmeshed with innumerable more recent hulks by webs of planking and rigging to form an artificial island-maze, whose location constantly shifts in accord with the sea’s hidden currents.

Bluehaven is home to the dreaded Lintha Family, a ruthless piratical organization feared throughout the West. Ambitious buccaneers perform dangerous services or proffer exorbitant sums to win adoption into the labyrinthine Family, whose operations are directed by ancient “Grandmothers” and “Grandfathers”—once master marines, navigators, fences, smugglers, sea-priests and sorcerers, now architects of the Lintha Family’s fortunes.

Beyond their savage ways, the Lintha are known to command unnatural powers. These range from water shoes that allow them to run across the waves, to gills cultivated through debased breeding with demons, sorcerous mastery of weather, command of sea monsters, and binding of elementals.

A grotesque and petrified husk towers, mountainous, over the hills of a small isle north of the Bay of Kings. It is all that remains of an ancient primal spirit, slain by the battle-arts of the Solar Exalted in forgotten antiquity. The people of **Lathe** have hollowed out the cavernous recesses of the stony cadaver and built their city within and upon its obdurate flesh and granite bones.





Sorcerer-architects hollowed the chambers, careful to preserve the Essence humors of its mystery organs. Its heart has become a temple, its stomach a consortium for alchemists, its lungs an amphitheater. An orrery has been carved into its mind, and here the Sidereals reference the night sky and the heavens of old.

Lathe is a vital Realm port. The city is a major gateway to the Cinder Coast, and the last port on the southern route to Faxai. It has also been plagued by Yozi cults and demon worship since time out of mind. The Immaculate Order has a major temple in the city, and the monks who dwell there are specialists in demonology, the occult, and exorcisms.

Though the Realm has done its best to suppress demon congress in the city, the Order knows that they would have to burn the city to ever fully erase it. Instead, the Order ignores the least dangerous heresies, and uses connections within the cults of Lathe to keep abreast of diabolic activity and news from Malfeas. They have even at times aided and been aided by the demon slayers of the Meherest cult.

### The West

Islands lie strewn like fallen leaves across the autumnal oceans of the West. Here, amid the remnants of ancient glory, a hundred maritime societies have developed largely untouched since the Contagion. From the civilized city-states of the great island-chain to weird isles overlooking the infinite mystery of the Pole of Water, these scattered realms are ripe fruits on the vine. As the strongest among them marshal fleets to harvest the resources of their weaker peers, they themselves remain prizes to be plucked

by the rest of the world's powers in a new age of exploration and exploitation.

No other Direction is so isolated. Cut off by thousands of miles of open ocean, the West is a world unto itself. Until recently, even the Realm and the Guild have had only the most tenuous contact with its wealth and mysteries. But despite the distances involved, its allure resonates throughout the known world, for the West is renowned as a source for glamorous and exquisite treasures.

Most civilization in the West is to be found dispersed across the great chain that dominates maps of the Direction. The isles lie so near to one another that even primitive vessels can sail between them, and ships of a hundred styles cling close to fishing villages or glide from port to distant port. On the larger islands, among wooded hills and alpine meadows, farmers, miners, and loggers work the land without ever seeing the ocean that circumscribes their homes, knowing it only through dealings with coastal folk and from the depredations of seaborne raiders and maddened pelagic spirits.

Each island is unique, with its own peoples and princes, gods and monsters, traditions and treasures. Taken as a whole, they form a great cultural tapestry woven together by merchant ships and divided by hostile navies, pirates and privateers, typhoons, jealous storm spirits and marauding Fair Folk. As the West is the least populous and accessible part of the Threshold, Realm fleets and garrisons are few and independent island-states numerous. But the islands' riches—silver, coral, sea silk, pearls, exotic hardwoods, dyes, spices, slaves—attract more Realm mer-

chants, Guild factors, and other mercantile and piratical enterprises every year.

### Western Locales

The island city of **Wu-Jian** rises from the sea between the Blessed Isle and the West. As a nexus for traffic from across the West, this teeming metropolis is one of the busiest blue water ports in Creation—and among the most lawless.

What little of Wu-Jian that's not rocky and steep consists of walled Dynastic enclaves, while the majority of the city remains a morass of massively overcrowded slums. Houses and shops pile one atop the other, doors accessible only through exterior stairways and catwalks, in towers that lean together drunkenly to cast the streets beneath in shadow. Alleyways wholly enclosed by centuries of construction are pitch-dark but for lamps and torches. Ancient suspension bridges extend the city to subsidiary islets off the coast, themselves hives of urban overgrowth.

There is little the Realm can do to police the slums. Officials only dare visit the most open areas such as the waterfront, and even then they travel in groups. In the rest of the city, the law is what the strong and the clever will. Here everything is for sale and anything can be taken. Pickpockets and cutpurses roam the seething marketplaces where almost any goods imaginable can be found; gangsters draw knives on sharpers in gambling halls; the owners of brothels and drug dens roll drunken sailors for pocket change. Abandoned structures host all manner of squatters, from beggars and pilgrims to outcaste sorcerers, demon worshippers, spies from the Undersea, cannibal mutants, soul-hungry Fair Folk, or even the Anathema.

Hamoji, greatest of the Wavecrest Archipelago's volcanoes, looms above the wealthy island of **Abalone**. The Realm maintains one of its premiere Western footholds in the shadow of Hamoji's smoking splendor; Abalone's ports surge with imperial triremes, and tribute ships groan with extracted silver, foodstuffs, liquor, and jade.

The caldera often sheds a bloody glow over roof slates and palm fronds, sea-foam and the unfurled sails of merchant ships; but sometimes the light is green or gold, or a shifting cauldron of colors like spilled paint. When Hamoji is particularly active, it shakes the earth like a giant tossing and turning deep underground. Sometimes it coughs forth smoke and ash; at other times snow, downy feathers, or yellow leaves. The Wyld has tainted the slopes of the great volcano, and his priestesses alone can interpret the mighty volcano god's will. The rest of the people know only that when Hamoji is angered, his rage can be soothed by nothing but human sacrifice.



### THE TYA

Many Western cultures forbid women from working aboard ship for fear of the Storm Mothers' jealousy. Some, such as Azure, have established more directly sexist customs, restricting female power to the household. Women evade these strictures by joining the Tya, a society of women who live and dress as men. To evade the Storm Mothers' ire, Tya receive elaborate facial tattoos and take drugs rendering them infertile. This makes them male in Western eyes.

Tya guildhouses can be found throughout the West. Some Tya live in these guildhouses, taking work as guards and artisans, merchants and mercenaries. Others only visit for seasonal ceremonies. Gossips spread unfounded rumors that the Tya perform other rites in secret at the dark of the moon, performing grotesque deeds on behalf of supernatural patrons.

The Feathered One, a sacral chief elected from Abalone's royal families, maintains strict and ruthless justice. All crimes are punished by a greater or lesser term of imprisonment, so when the volcano trembles, the priestesses have many sacrificial victims to choose from. If there are insufficient sacrifices available in the prisons—or if those sacrifices do not suffice to calm Hamoji—then the Feathered One must be ready to cast himself into the caldera to appease the god.

Like many of the northern isles, the city-state **Brightwork** is subjugated by the sea lords of Azure, capital of the Coral Archipelago. The ancient city-states of the Auspice Isles—Brightwork, Windspar, Pulse—weathered the Great Contagion better than most, preserving much ancient knowledge of architecture, alchemy, mathematics, and astrology. Elegant buildings of wood, brick and plaster bustled with priests, philosophers, craftsmen and scribes. Bird-prowed ships carried porcelain, lacquerwork and other treasures across the length and breadth of the West. But their brilliant arts were no match for Azure's mastery of canvas, iron, bronze and sinew. Today, outsiders see the Auspicenes not as warriors, sailors, traders or poets, but as educated slaves in Azurite households.

The obsidian towers of **Onyx**, on the isle of Darkmist in the Skullstone Archipelago, gleam dully in the weak shadowland sun. Here the dead walk side by side with the living. Liveried corpses in polished metal masks, their garments anointed with scented oils, fetch and carry for the wealthy, while even a poor shopkeeper or family matriarch commands a skeleton or two. Out in the countryside, fisherfolk walk with their ancestors across black beaches, the latter leaving no footprints in the sand.

Onyx's people see death not as an end, but as a gateway to new life, for the aristocracy of Skullstone is an aristocracy of ghosts. Deceased who the Black Judges deem worthy return as spectral nobles and courtiers. Those who lack the proper spirit rise only as mindless walking dead. Such soulless creatures provide the labor that has made the lords of Onyx impossibly wealthy, combing the sea

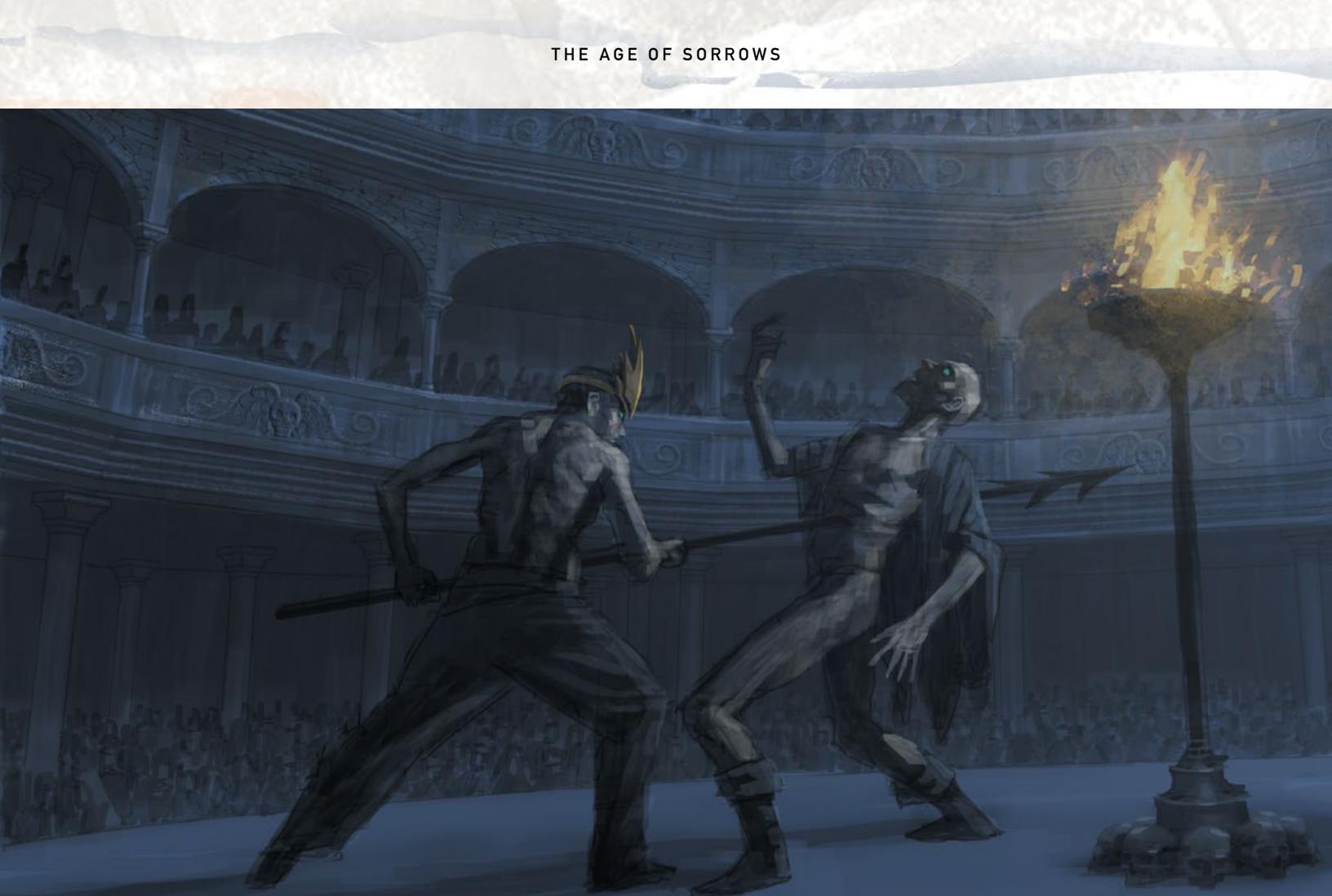
floor for days at a time to harvest pearls, coral, black jade and other undersea riches—including the cargoes of centuries of shipwrecks.

Above the city's crowded wharves, neighborhoods grow wealthier as one climbs the slopes of Mount Vashti, with low gray buildings giving way to the walled estates of wealthy nobles. At the city's highest point, the Bodhisattva Anointed by Dark Water resides in a palace of silver and basalt. The Deathlord is no recluse; in addition to attending sessions of the undead Elder Council and the mortal Younger Council, he rarely misses a performance at the city's grand necrodramas, where mindless but carefully trained zombies emulate the living and the dead.

When the **Denzik city-ship** approaches a port, what seems at first a vague smudge on the horizon soon swells into a panorama as large as an island. It's a flotilla of hundreds of enormous custom-built sailing junks lashed together for stability, each broad enough to encompass a marketplace on its upper deck, and deep-drafted enough to hold many lower decks packed with living quarters, storerooms, teahouses, whorehouses, gambling dens, and shrines. Together they form a floating city, a harbor equal to any coastal port, to which lesser vessels can moor.

Ten thousand sailors, merchants, artisans and their families live and work aboard the fleet as it traces its route along the Western isles to Faxai and the Cinder Coast, then around the Inland Sea, and back along the Blessed Isle's coast into the West. At each stop, scores of longboats and pinnaces head to shore carrying trade goods, crew on leave, and disembarking passengers, then return with new passengers, fresh cargo and vast quantities of supplies. The agricultural and pastoral outputs of entire city-states disappear into its holds to provision its endless journey.

The Realm has but one remaining foothold on the Western continent called the Caul. **Faxai** is also known as "The Walled City" after its encircling fortifications—a rampart said to predate the First Age, its hieroglyphs tangled with ivy, crusted with moss, and blurred by rain, wind and time.



Faxai is the first city along an ancient pilgrimage road, but that path is currently closed. Now battlements resound to the tread of Realm legionnaires, their eyes on the jungle, their ears pricked for the war-drums of the Moon-Touched and the siren songs of the fae.

Countless peoples mingle on Faxai's broad plazas and within its low stone buildings. The city is a gateway to the fabulous wealth of the West and Southwest. Merchants come from as far as Port Calin or the White Sea to procure spices and incense, gemstones and jade, ivory tusks as large as a man, tamed claw striders, petrified demon eyes, sapient crystals and other treasures. Moreover, the streets swell with displaced outcastes from the Blessed Isle, who have come to seek their fortunes. They prepare to make war upon the Lunar Exalted who hold the Caul's other holy cities, and re-open the pilgrim's road for their own use.

Many of Luna's most puissant and legendary Chosen dwell here, and foreign Lunars and Moon-Touched alike journey to the Caul to seek word of His Divine Lunar Presence.

On the green-cloaked crags outside the city **Makelo**, near the center of the island Sinti, slaves from coastal tribes labor under the watchful eyes of spearwomen clad in

gleaming habergeons. Some gather breadfruit, bananas and taro; others herd domesticated moa, pigs and food dogs. Still others quarry blocks of stone to enlarge the city. Swaths of forest have been cleared away to accommodate new rows of low wood and stone structures roofed in palm fronds. Largest of all are the temples to the forge-goddess Ninegala who lives inside the mountain above Makelo's wooded valley. On a calm day, one can hear the clang of the goddess's hammer—except when she's set off for the coast in her flying chariot to drive away marauding Fair Folk with javelins of red-hot iron.

Service to the forge-goddess Ninegala is a rite of passage for Makelo's youth. Each year, her priests drape young men and women in robes of gray and red, anoint them with sacred ashes, and lead them up the precarious path to the Cave of Judgment. Those few whom the goddess rejects are banished. The rest attend her for a year in her forge. There she teaches them the secret names of metals and the languages of flame. With the forgecraft learned in the mountain and the goddess's fire in their hearts, Makelo's people make weapons and armor of extraordinary hardness, resilience and beauty. These masterworks have given their warriors victory after victory against neighbors, such that the entire island is finally theirs.

**APPEARANCE BY REGION**

Ethnotypes vary widely from place to place in Creation. A tall, heavyset people with pale skin and blond hair may live just across the river from a city of short, slim, black-skinned folk. Major trade cities see a mixture of peoples, with individuals and families transplanted from faraway lands. Nonetheless, there are general tendencies for certain ethnotypes to be found in each Direction.

Most Northern peoples have pale skin and light eyes. Hair is typically white, blond or light blue, though red or black are not uncommon. Builds vary widely: hunting peoples are often tall and well-built, wealthy settled folk run to fat to fend off famine, and impoverished villagers are as stunted as those in any other corner of Creation.

A melting pot even in the First Age, the Scavenger Lands have since accumulated invaders, refugees and slaves from across Creation. Many are of mixed stock, with brown or ashen skin of varying shades, and brown or black hair. But one finds people of all shapes, sizes and colors here.

Though the Makeloans craft marvelous things from copper, iron, bronze and brass, they are merely human, and their works mortal. Ninegala's work is divine: swords that sever fire from fuel or shadow from substance; armor impervious to water, lightning and blades; statues that take up arms. When princes, gods and Exalts petition Ninegala to forge unique artifacts, she demands payment not in silver or jade, but in service. So peculiar and exacting are her demands that few will meet her price.

**Lunar Dominions**

The Realm's hegemony is founded atop mountains of stolen money and magic, soaked through with blood. It has ripped all its possessions from others, including its very name. The elders of the Silver Pact have marked each crime down through the ages, each affront, each act of theft and murder in the name of the Realm the Lunar Exalted once swore to protect.

It will not stand.

The Silver Pact is an alliance of Lunar Exalted united in purpose: to tear down the Realm and free themselves from the ancient bonds they once failed to uphold. The Pact is founded on mutual aid, defense of Luna's chosen, and opposition to the Realm and its Sidereal masters. The most

As one travels further East, bark-brown skin becomes more prevalent, paired with green or hazel eyes. Hair tends to be long and straight, its color varying from brown to blond, red or green. Folk are typically tall or well built, sharing the vitality infusing other Eastern creatures.

Those born beneath the Southern sun tend to be dark-skinned, ranging in color from olive to brown to black. Their hair—whether red, blond or black—tends to be wavy, curly or even kinky. Beards are common among men; most keep them well trimmed, as wild and unkempt hair is associated with the holy madness of hermits and those ridden by gods.

Westerners typically have bronze or golden skin. Their hair shares the many hues of sunset and sea—blues and greens, maroons and purples, grays and midnight blacks. Short and compact builds are common, as are epicantic folds around blue, green or gray eyes.

The native folk of the Blessed Isle at the world's heart tend to be light-skinned with dark hair and eyes, strong features, and slim builds. Epicantic folds are common enough in many prefectures to be considered unremarkable.

fundamental duty of any member is to find and rescue newly-Exalted Lunars—a daunting task, given the scope of Creation, but one the Lunar lifestyle is well-suited to. In addition to keeping an ear to the ground as a matter of survival, Silver Pact members have a long-standing practice of rewarding any spirit that brings them news of newly-Exalted brothers and sisters.

Once a young Lunar has been taken beyond the immediate reach of the Wyld Hunt, they're brought before a No Moon affiliated with the Pact, and given the true story of Luna's Chosen—what they were, what befell them, and why each Lunar Exaltation brings with it a hungry turmoil of the soul.

After the young Lunar's caste has been fixed by his No Moon mentor, the Pact's obligation to him ends unless he decides to participate in its loose, extended network of favor-trading, support, and anti-Realm operations. A young Lunar stands to reap benefits far in excess of what older Pact members ask in return—the Silver Pact's war against the Realm is a long-term stratagem, one that depends on today's boon-asking youth to grow into the next century's indoctrinator, strategist, and war-counselor.

**The Dominions**

The Pact's primary strategy is the creation of war dominions in places beyond the Realm's control but adjacent to its

holdings. This works roughly in line with what most young Lunars wish to do anyway—empowered by the blessings of Luna, they find themselves accumulating might and status, which the relentless aggression of the Wyld Hunt eventually seeks to strip away. The Silver Pact *doesn't* try to make its members operate according to some greater battle plan—Luna's gifts lend themselves to adaptability and unpredictability, not the grind of empire against empire, and the Realm's stolen magic and superior numbers make that a losing strategy in any case. Instead, Lunars operate according to their own plans and desires, calling upon other Pact members for assistance where necessary; success and generosity bring greater standing and influence within the Pact.

War dominions are ultimately about achieving what can be achieved today, then living to strike again tomorrow. The Lunars make themselves god-beast patrons of those the Realm has pushed to the margins and deemed barbarians; those it has crushed and disenfranchised for daring to defy it; those who live at the rim of the Threshold, nervously listening to the marching of the scarlet legions and wondering if this is the generation in which the Empress will muster her forces to push beyond the mountain, jungle, swamp, or sea that has thus far sheltered them from the imperial yoke.

The Lunars use their mystic gifts on behalf of these people. They teach strength and instill pride. They spread truths the Immaculates would suppress. And they speak of the crimes of the Realm against the people of the margins—of the glittering riches taken at sword-point, of the youths enslaved, of the brave warriors slain. Lies are rarely needed; if a tribe starves in the high mountains, it is likely because a satrapial garrison forced them there.

Other Lunars create new dominions from scratch, breeding among refugees and exiles, filling the ranks of their leaders with strong sons and daughters; or planting the seeds of a new tribe of beastfolk to be tapped for war five generations hence. The Silver Pact has learned patience.

In the end, a Lunar dominion is made into a weapon. Leather-armored screamers raid tribute caravans. Moon-blessed armies march on border cities. Realm garrisons chase skirmishers into malarial swamps, filled with ambush-points and boltholes. The legions are called in, and fight grueling campaigns in hostile terrain. Sometimes the dominions triumph. More often they fall, broken by the might of the legions or the spent power of precious, irreplaceable First Age weapons. Either way, the Realm bleeds its money, military, and magic beating back Lunar aggression.

While the Realm counts the cost, a Lunar is standing in a wooded fane hundreds of miles away, speaking in her god-

voice to another tribe, another cult, another fleet, another fledgling nation, stirring them to war.

"Ten thousand dragons rule the world," goes the chant of the Realm's military cadets. Ten thousand claws and fangs encircle that world at the behest of the Silver Pact.

### **The Mountain of the Spider King**

Multi-armed dervishes and pale-skinned bandits haunt the Black Shale Road that runs through the coastal foothills connecting Gethamane to Grieve and the sea routes to Fajad. The wealth of the West flows east along this vital road, toward Cherak and Whitewall, along with tribute-caravans belonging to houses Sesus, Ledaal, Nellens, and Ragara. Fewer make it through each year, their wealth carried away into the darkness beneath the earth.

The mountains above the Black Shale Road are honey-combed with abandoned mines. Aum-Ashatra, the Spider King, has made them his own. Aum-Ashatra dwells in the utmost depths of the tunnel system, an ebon-skinned youth reclining on silk cushions amidst gleaming treasures seized from the Great Houses, his six arms raised in meditation. Spider-blooded grandchildren attend him, and speak with his voice. The Spider King takes in refugees, exiles, and disenfranchised families that he finds on the Black Shale Road, granting them the shelter of his geothermally-heated tunnels and sharing the bounty of hidden alpine valleys and peat fens cradled deep in the mountains, accessible only by paths winding deep through ancient granite.

In addition to farming the land beyond the mountains, Aum-Ashatra's people have greatly extended the old tunnels. Now they run to countless lonely hillsides up and down either side of the Black Shale Road. The folk of the tunnels launch lightning raids from these warrens before vanishing into the hills. The tunnels are a maze of dead-ends, traps, and cave-ins waiting to be triggered, and are strung from end to end in Aum-Ashatra's webs—as soon as a punitive force enters the tunnels, the Spider King feels the vibrations and mobilizes a response. Poisoned spears and a great many-limbed terror push intruders into dead-end tunnels, where they're entombed behind tons of cold stone.

### **The Black Wave Reavers**

The Black Wave Reavers are a small Western pirate fleet. The Reavers focus their aggressions on Realm treasure ships, attempting to stave off the Great Houses' expansion into the Western isles by depriving them of profits and naval power, but this is a dangerous game—the Realm's ships are well-built and well-defended. How fortunate, then, that the fleet is coordinated and led by a pack of young Lunar heroes.



Axura, a Chiaroscuran woman taken by Realm debt-slavers for use in the Western colonies, leads the trio. She cast herself overboard one night, preferring death in the shark-filled waters to the life of a concubine, only for Luna to draw her from the waters and gift her with the shape of a deadly hammerhead shark. Her companions are Kumo, a clever and erudite islander who survived becoming the prey and plaything of the Fair Folk but still bears lingering marks of his time in the Wyld; and Enemy Ghost, a quiet and deadly man raised by a savage panther god. The three are united in their hatred of any who oppress the weak, and see no greater oppressor than the Realm. Axura holds a special hatred for slavers, and enjoys casting them overboard and then taking on her shark-shape to follow.

The Black Wave ships are heavily crewed by former slaves liberated from Realm vessels. The fleet's flagship is the *Black Water Mako*, a swift harrier captured from House Peleps.

#### **Yena's Daughters**

Three war-bands, calling themselves Yena's Daughters, have made the Diamond Road that runs between Gem and the Lap their hunting ground. The Realm publicly dismisses them as mere bandits, but if even half of the stories told in caravanserais and wine sinks are true, then these mere bandits have inflicted untold damage in lost revenue and lives. Tribute caravans simply vanish into the desert, one after another. Realm-friendly trading posts are burned.

Yena's daughters are a trio of hyena-women, inheritors of their mother's ferocity and survival instincts. Red-haired Yataqa has assumed control of a mixed band of exiles from Harborhead and the Delzahn tribes, and mounts lightning cavalry raids from the deep desert. Janati, youngest of the sisters, leads a group of Wyld mutants, many of whom blend into the hills and dune-slopes when still. They specialize in ambushes, and have a hundred bolt-holes in the red cliffs and arroyos that line certain stretches of the road. Yataqa and Janati keep what plunder they fancy, distribute generously to their followers, and then either strew the rest of their stolen goods across the trackless waste, or amuse themselves by returning precious baubles to those who gave them up to the Realm, creating suspicions of collaboration. Ratana, by contrast, always keeps her prizes. She lacks the muzzle her sisters sport, and so fancies herself the loveliest of the three—she's fond of smiling after making this boast, showing the bone-cracking teeth she inherited from her mother. Her band is made up of crack mercenaries armed with firewands and Chiaroscuran glass armor. She keeps their loyalty with princely shares of all she steals.

Yena Bone-Breaker coordinates her daughters' efforts and leads their fiercest raids. Her laughter echoes among the red canyons and rolls across the burning dunes. Yena's Daughters frustrate every attempt to find their lairs and rally a Wyld Hunt. They stalk the walled villages and

oasis-towns of the Diamond Road, leaving precious trinkets, stolen food, and heaps of silver on the doorsteps of the common folk to buy their goodwill. Yena herself descends in the night to devour the bones of any who inform the Realm of their movements. The losses continue to mount.

#### The Nameless Lair of Ma-Ha-Suchi

A ruined temple-city thrusts up from the depths of the Southeastern jungles, its buildings choked with vines, its grand fane the lair of a violent god rising from a long somnolence. Once the place had a name, but Ma-Ha-Suchi allows no name to be marked on maps save his own.

The ancient Lunar survived the destruction of the First Age, exile in the Wyld, the scourge of the Contagion and the armies of chaos, and he carries his scars with sullen pride. He greets visitors in his war form, a towering amalgam of man, wolf, and goat, and speaks in a voice like silver bells. Those who rouse his attention without good cause die on the end of his moonsilver lance, and their skulls mark the boundary of his domain.

And what a domain he has claimed! Ma-Ha-Suchi's territory abuts the southern terminus of the Scavenger Lands, and shields the wealthy empires of the deep Southeast from the Realm-controlled coastal states—not that the ancient Lunar harbors love for any of his neighbors. His beast-blooded children raid the surrounding lands ceaselessly. They suffer no permanent roads to be laid through their father's dominion, and harry what river traffic is bold enough to dare their wrath. Only those who purchase Ma-Ha-Suchi's temporary goodwill through lavish tribute may pass safely through his domain, and then only if the great beast is in the mood to be honored or flattered.

Made both wrathful and weary by the turning of the ages, Ma-Ha-Suchi shuns the politics of the Exalted. He will occasionally trade rumors or choice bits of magical plunder with respectful envoys from the Silver Pact, and has at times consented to take younger Lunars under his guidance for a year or two—but for the most part, he maintains his solitude. He does not speak of the personal significance of his jungle ruins, nor is he interested in the greater schemes of luminaries such as Sha'a Oka or the Queen of Fangs. Luna has granted him strength of arm, quicksilver wits, keen eyes to witness the decay of the world, and endless enemies who wish to spend their lives failing to take his territory for their own. For seven centuries, that has been enough. But now the dead march upon the living, the Realm turns its blades upon itself, and the gates of eternity have swung wide to admit the Solar Exalted back into the world—indeed, one bold young Solar general has already dared to challenge the ancient Lunar in his lair. The heroes, horrors,

and betrayals of the past, long buried and forgotten, have risen to stride across Creation once again. None can yet guess what flame these visitations have kindled in the ancient Lunar's heart, or who will die to feed it.

#### The Caul

For centuries the Realm and the Silver Pact have warred mercilessly over the Caul, an island sacred to both sides. The Caul is a place where the march of time has, in some ways, been suspended; where the ravages wrought by the fall of the First Age and the march of the Fair Folk were not complete. It is a land of secret power, of wild demesnes, and of five ancient shrines where the Five Elemental Dragons were said to have once cloistered, and where the Silver Lady walked Creation hand in hand with Gaia in a paradise made to contain them.

Most of the fighting has been to control the shrines. As their bloodlines decline in purity, the Dragon-Blooded seek to use the shrines to open the path to Feng-Yi, where they might stave off the waning that has threatened them since time out of mind.

Sha'a Oka, the legendary leonine warrior-king, deviated from the Silver Pact's war of attrition to claim the Caul as his battlefield. His resolve, fueled by age-old regret, is second to none. His followers are among the most zealous of the Lunar host, and they would fight for him—and for this land favored by Luna—to the end of the world. Over the years, Sha'a Oka's death has been confirmed many times only to be eventually proven false. No one has seen His Divine Lunar Presence in over one hundred years, but wise Exalted know not to bank their plans on the truth of his demise—for Sha'a Oka is said to roam the Caul, directing its defense from the shadows.

For the Dragon-Blooded, to be chosen by the Empress as a pilgrim on the Caul was a great honor and a sacred responsibility. The Realm always strove to control the five shrine cities, to ensure that the route to Feng-Yi remained open, for at certain incalculable times, if she could complete the pilgrimage, the Dragon-Blooded pilgrim could be guaranteed that her next child would feel the Kiss of the Dragons.

But when the Empress vanished, her legions on the Caul were reduced, and each of the shrine cities was left with fewer defenders than ever before. When Sha'a Oka's lieutenants learned of this weakness, they erupted from their dominions with their beastmen armies and overwhelmed one city after another.

The Dynasts were finally able to dig their heels in at Faxai, the Walled City, whose port is the gateway to the West.



Faxai's defenders know if the city were lost, the Anathema would have a way to launch an invasion of the Blessed Isle.

The Dragon-Blooded fight to prevent this from happening at all costs. But as the siege of Faxai drags on, the Realm's response to this threat has been divided. Some believe the Caul to be a waste of resources—what is the wisdom, they ask, in the deaths of many Dragon-Blooded heroes in exchange for the certain birth of a mere handful? Some even scoff at the might of the beastmen hordes. House Peleps has long signaled its certainty that the Realm Navy could shatter any invasion force before it ever reached the Blessed Isle. Others travel to the Caul even now, drawn by the tarnal silence out of the shrine cities, and their concern for the fates of those trapped by Lunar forces. Still a few of the most devout Immaculates and shikari believe that the way of the Dragons and the path to the Last City must be kept open—that this is not a matter of just the birth of a few Dragon-Blooded, but of the spiritual purity of the entire Dragon-Blooded race. To resist the Anathema at all costs is their purpose and their remit in the Immaculate Texts, and to fail in this is to fall from the grace of the Dragons and hasten the world's descent into darkness.

### The Wyld

The world is a thin shell over an underlying sea of chaos. Beneath the veil of reality is the roiling primal energy of creation, the endless potential of the unformed. In the time before history, Creation was raised from this ocean of madness, trapping its energies into the fixity of shape and time, cause and effect. This infinitude is the Wyld.

Just as the Wyld is beneath the world, it is also within it. Wherever the minds and dreams of living things have been stripped away, the Wyld seeps in, burgeoning with twisting miracles. The ravages of Fair Folk armies impregnate it with seeds of impossibility. Where sentient life flourishes, reality is strong, but in places where dreamers are hollowed and their souls eaten away, Creation falls into chaos.

Within and beneath, the Wyld is also outside, surrounding the world. In the First Age, Creation was much larger, its borders well-guarded; but in the wake of the Great Contagion, the children of the Wyld launched a great crusade against the world, and much of Creation's hinterlands fell back into the chaos from which they were

drawn. Today the borders of the world are a tattered and hazy interstitial realm of miracles and nightmares, where the tides of the Wyld grind away at the shores of the real.

Worse, the denizens of the Wyld have long regarded Creation with hungry eyes, gleaming with equally deadly love and hate. The Wyld is home to innumerable prodigies, many of which could only generously be called life—vast and magnificent beasts which could only be of singular nature; swarming horde- and hive-things; mad creators who bring forth land and song and sorrow with the beating of drums or the working of hands; countless hungry fangs, thirsting for passion and meaning; things which all of the above would name as monsters. The foremost among these beings, most commonly known as the Fair Folk, have mounted many invasions of Creation throughout the ages, and marked the bordermarches of the world with the shifting, dreamlike energies of the Wyld.

To live in these tainted lands is to risk becoming something other than human. Savage tribes carve bone and iron talismans in the hopes that they will offer some protection against the touch of chaos, and beseech whatever divinities will listen to keep them safe from the hungers of the Fair Folk. At the rim of the world, where reality is at its weakest, these measures often prove inadequate, and many tribes have been transformed into Wyld-twisted mutants.

### The Face of the Wyld

Creation is most stable at its center, buttressed by the geomantic axis of the Pole of Earth and the millions of souls who live, work, pray, travel, and trade across the Blessed Isle. The farther one travels from the center, the more the fabric of reality thins. At the outermost edge of the world, reality grows thin as a sigh and the Wyld beats on Creation's shores, ebbing and surging with the cycles of the moon. Beyond that there is only raw madness, endlessly transforming and reconfiguring itself, free of the afflictions of reason and memory.

Those places where the world and the Wyld intersect are landscapes of wonder and terror, of fantasy given expression in scenery and flesh: beautiful, unpredictable, exhilarating, deadly. Here the sky burns with impossible colors. Rivers flow with wine, or blood, or simply backwards. Here animals grow from seed-pods on trees, or mate without regard for species and produce impossible offspring. The Wyld is a landscape of crystal flowers, of birds who sing daunting and transgressive philosophies, of trees whose sap brings sweet hallucinations and transformations of mind and body, of snakes with scales of gleaming diamond, of songs which can reweave a man's memories.

To live in the Wyld invites a form of ecstasy, a loss of the self into the tides of myth and archetype, a replacement of desires with a sense of belonging. This euphoria is addictive to many, even as the ongoing ebb and flow of the Wyld work steady and subtle transformations upon flesh and psyche. It is for this reason above all others that civilized men and free barbarians fear the touch of the Wyld, and shun those lands marked by chaos.

And yet, some live within the boundaries of the Wyld. Those who dwell in tainted lands are feared and hated as no others in Creation. Most are immediately distinguishable by the marks chaos has left upon their flesh; the ignorant fear their mutations and insanities are contagious, while the learned suspect them of being stalking-horses and agents of the Fair Folk.

Where the Wyld intersects with Creation, it draws from the nearest Elemental Pole; while hardly predictable or reliable, particular stretches of chaos tend to display repeating motifs and themes of miracle and transfiguration. The most successful such mutants breed true, giving rise to Wyld barbarian tribes such as the terrible Varajtul cannibals of the North.

Beyond Creation, certainties of distance and identity become distant rumors, and time's march is rendered slippery and unreliable. A man can be reduced to a flailing pile of limbs, or a living flame, or a song, all within a matter of hours; or might find his sense of self dissolving; or might be found and claimed by one of the Fair Folk, transformed into a hunting hound and brought back to a court of madness; or might wander, unharmed, through miraculous landscapes for a day and a night, only to find his way back to Creation with the dawn to discover that twenty years passed during his sojourn. Even among the ranks of the Chosen, only the Lunar Exalted venture beyond Creation's borders without careful preparation.

### The Fair Folk

The Fair Folk are born of the chaos beyond the world—ravenous, beautiful, and immortal. They stride boldly into Creation, taking whatever they please by force or seduction. Also known as the raksha, they seem similar to men and women, but aren't human and could never be mistaken as such. Mortals don't wrap themselves in proud robes of woven poetry, nor move with the grace of a waking dream, nor wear all the blowing colors of autumn and fire in their hair and eyes.

The Fair Folk hate Creation, for it offends the children of the Wyld. When the world was raised up from chaos, it shattered the purity of the Wyld, inflicting upon it an im-

mutable center; the certainties of time; and other, subtler transformations. What had been free was now fixed. The oppressive weight of Creation's certainties presses hard against those Fair Folk who enter the world; in its every aspect, reality announces itself as their enemy. The raksha have warred against Creation since its first dawn. Once, they came within a hair's breadth of victory; perhaps in the Time of Tumult they will succeed.

The Fair Folk love Creation, for it beguiles them and fills their essential emptiness—an emptiness of which they were never aware, until Creation existed to contrast them. The raksha are soulless, donning ethics and passions like masks and fashion; they're not real the way a mortal is real, and must endlessly invent themselves. To immerse in the life of Creation—and dine upon Creation-born souls—provides another, intoxicating existence, which many fae throw themselves into wholeheartedly. The souls and sagas of heroes satisfy them best of all, drawing Fair Folk to the Exalted in endless cycles of savage war and equally savage love.

So it is that Creation has learned that the love and hate of the Fair Folk are to be feared in equal measure.

### **The Hosts of Faerie**

The raksha have long dominated the Wyld, but they are not its only children. The hosts of faerie are vast and diverse, describing horrors and beauties in countless variety. The raksha commonly enslave such lesser fae, or create them wholesale as servants, putting each to the use its nature or maker's whim dictates. Lesser fae generally excel at singular tasks—they are swift couriers, doughty wonder-smiths, lascivious paramours, savage warriors, feral hunting-beasts. The lesser faeries most familiar to the people of Creation are those the Fair Folk put to work as warriors and hunters, such as squat hobgoblins with flesh like twisted roots, shark-toothed oceanic reavers, and the wolf-faced howlers of the Winter Folk.

The churning vicissitudes of the Wyld and the dream-forges of the Fair Folk also sometimes birth colossal, monstrous terrors. These behemoths are distinguished by their uniqueness and overwhelming power. Most have no more intelligence than an animal, and often not even that much self-awareness—the Fair Folk tame them with little difficulty, despite their enormous strength. To bring one of the more intelligent or willful behemoths to heel is a great accomplishment among the courts of madness, bringing forth accolades, envy, and rivals.

The raksha hold themselves above all other children of the Wyld. They see lesser fae as potential slaves and amusements—not kin or peers. But the raksha are no longer the

undisputed lords of the Wyld. In the centuries since the failure of their last great crusade to end Creation, a new and terrible sort of faerie has emerged from the depths of the Wyld. These twisted and hungry beings—the hannya—count raksha as their preferred prey.

### **Fair Folk in Creation**

The Fair Folk take on a host of forms as they enter Creation and rob substance from its Elemental Poles to sustain themselves. What follows are the most widely-known (and feared) generalities of the Fair Folk; individual raksha may bend or break the trends of their court. The Wyld is ever-inventive, and ever-treacherous.

**The East:** The raksha of the East and Northeast are much consumed with pageantry, garbing themselves in emblems of the forest and the seasons: cloaks of leaves and torcs of laurel, juniper-berry tassels, crowns of woven dead branches. They favor armor of magically hardened wood.

Fae of the Southeastern jungles become indolent in the heat, wearing rainbow feathers and red, black, and yellow skin colors. They prefer to lay ambushes, using blowguns and spears steeped in hallucinogens to capture mortal playthings. They regard the fevered visions provoked by their darts as a refined delicacy. Deeper Southeast, scattered tribes of bronze-skinned and devil-fanged nomads range up and down the shores of the Dreaming Sea, and roam across the great interior plains, kidnapping travelers and drawing out their souls in forced contests of chance and daring. They spare only the domains of Ysyr, where it is rumored the reigning thaumatocrats have learned to enslave their kind.

**The South:** Raksha of the Southern coast creep into towns and cities by night wearing the form of black lions. They infiltrate the houses of sleeping mortals to steal their breath, or whisper from the darkness to draw watchmen away from the fires, never to be seen again.

In the far South, the raksha are desert raiders on horses of flame and shadow, dressed in flowing robes of stitched dream and burnoses of woven poetry, wielding sabers edged with deadly omens. Only their love of riddles, bets, and challenges can offer hope of delivery from their hunger—alas, precious few count themselves sharper than the Fair Folk.

**The West:** The raksha of the West are divided between the aquatic fae of the ocean depths and wild cannibal raksha who dwell upon miraculous isles. The latter paint their bodies, carve terrifying and impressive masks to frighten away the hannya, and prefer to extract dreams and souls from boiled flesh. Their whale-bone

outriggers cut the waves like swift arrows when they go a-raiding.

The fae of the open oceans wear whatever sea-life features take their fancy. Some are swift and terrible hunters, driving schools of sharks and barracuda before them as hunting-hounds; others use their beauty as a lure, drawing sailors and dock-girls into the sea with cruel, sweet songs, crimson-rouged lips and nipples, and the artful concealment and exposure of surging waves.

Most prideful and lovely of all the Western fae are those raksha who have named themselves the Pearl Court and made their home upon the coasts of the Caul. They adorn their flesh in shifting nacreous hues, seduce the winds and waves into compliant alliance, and draw ships onto the jagged shores of the Caul with storm-song and false omens.

**The North:** In much of the North, the Winter Folk are feared even above the hungry dead. Villages shudder and reach for weapons or tribute at the tinkling of their sleigh bells and the creak of their ice chains in the night. The Winter Folk adorn themselves in ermine or mammoth fur, bedecking their bodies with great antlers, horns, wolf fangs, or bear claws; many sport cow or wolf tails, which they take some pains to hide. The loveliest of the Winter Folk often walk nude through the midst of howling blizzards, offering the warmth of their bodies to lost travelers in exchange for sips and bites of the unfortunate's soul. Such liaisons are addictive, drawing doomed "snow dolls" out into the killing cold again and again in desperate search for their lovers.

## The Grave and Beyond

All mortal men know death, but few truly understand it.

It is almost universally understood that souls reincarnate. The Immaculate Philosophy teaches that souls are weighed by Heaven according to their deeds in life and rewarded or punished—sometimes both—by the cycle of reincarnation. The goal of all souls, the Philosophy maintains, should be to escape the cycle of reincarnation through achieving spiritual perfection and becoming one with the Elemental Dragons.

In lands beyond the shores of the Blessed Isle, other beliefs abound. The Dune People of the great Southern desert hold that the memories of reincarnated souls are forged into glorious arms and armor by the gods, with which to fight a great battle at the end of time. The theomilitary of Ixcoatl-teaches that Heaven weighs the virtue and excellence of each soul during the cycle of reincarnation, and that the souls of the greatest of heroes are removed from

the cycle to become new divinities. The ancestor cult of Medo believes that reincarnation represents a second chance for the weak of spirit to live, learn, and become strong; dutiful and stalwart souls, by contrast, resist the pull of reincarnation, lingering in the world to advise and protect their living relatives. The people of the Skullstone Archipelago have made an aristocracy of the dead, to whose ranks the most accomplished among the living ascend through ritual suicide.

## The Restless Dead

The cycle of reincarnation is imperfect. Some souls linger, refusing to pass on, chained to the living world by unresolved passions. Sometimes they're held back by bonds of dark magic. Sometimes they're simply caught on the fractured boundary of the land of the living and the land of the dead. Some are drawn to places whose existence has no place in the doctrine of the Immaculate Philosophy. These tarrying shades are known as ghosts, and the dark lands where they linger, the Underworld.

Ghosts come in a great diversity of forms, depending on the circumstances of their death, their fortunes in the Underworld, their lingering ties to the living world, and the strength of their will and spirit. The simplest restless shades are little more than repetitive echoes, anchored to Creation by a single inescapable memory or moment. They can rarely perceive the living, or even other ghosts, as they go again and again through the motions of their obsession. Stronger ghosts may be nearly as complex as a living person, with plans and passions to carry them through their lingering afterlife.

Others shades are little more than beasts; the most common of these are known as hungry ghosts. They are the lower, animal elements of the soul, turned vicious and feral by improper treatment of their mortal remains. Funerary practices are of vital importance to all cultures because of the threat posed by such restless spirits; it's traditional for funerists to accompany armies on the march, lest the hungry ghosts of enemy soldiers left to rot on the field rise up and feast on their conquerors in the night.

Different sorts of lingering shades are subject to different rules governing their behavior, though none know what hand scribed these laws or why. Hungry ghosts, for example, must sleep away the day within their corpses or be destroyed by the touch of the sun, while all ghosts find the touch of salt repellent and the scent of living blood intoxicating.

Most ghosts ultimately have little more than their passions to sustain them. The dead yearn for the experience

of being alive, but don't feel things in the same way they did when they lived. Still, they try; they throw themselves into passion plays in infinite variations, and if they cannot recapture the rich emotional palette of being alive, they can at least sip individually at its flavors: love, rage, and the bitter sting of betrayal may all be equally nourishing to different ghosts; each has its needs and desires. For all but the most self-aware and strong-willed of ghosts, satiating these hungers comes above all else, though the means used to do so may be very sophisticated indeed.

Sometimes truly bizarre ghosts wander up from the depths of the Underworld, creatures that have been dead so long they have forgotten even the shape of their lost humanity; savants speculate that some may never have been human at all. When cannibal fogs roll across the hills, when raven-winged shadows gather on roofs and windowsills to steal dreams and sight from those sleeping within, when angry shades haul their corpses up on puppeteer-strings of necrotic Essence and force them to walk and kill—this is when exorcists are called to their work.

### The Underworld

The Underworld is a great confluence of dead waterways. It teems with oceans of void and rivers of darkness, flowing ever away from Creation, carrying souls and memories into its depths... perhaps to reincarnation, but all too often, simply *away*. These tempest-wracked seas and black torrents divide the strange islets of the Underworld—a multitude of paradises, purgatories, and stranger afterlives where the restless dead tarry, pinned by passion, trauma, slavery, or happenstance.

The abode of ghosts is an inauspicious place, by turns bleak as a skull or flush with heart-wounding beauty. Strange stars wind through a sunless sky (where there is a sky at all), turned by the massed force of the prayers of the dead. Mortals fear to venture here; to travel abroad between the isles of the Underworld is perilous even for the shades that dwell there, and vastly more so for the living. The ancient dead are envious of their blood and breath, and rest in the Underworld offers little renewal of mind or spirit.

Many ghosts seek passage back into the world of sun and flesh, either to fulfill their frustrated passions or to carry out the business of the lords of the dead; the Underworld is a land of many kings and riches beyond counting, and so the dead are never without ambitions or temptations.

### The Ancestor Cult

The Immaculate Philosophy forbids contact between mortals and the dead; to linger as a shade is inauspicious

and improper, and contact with such beings, the Immaculate Order maintains, can do nothing but pollute a mortal's spiritual health.

Still, the ancestor cult flourishes in the lands beyond the borders of the Realm, where the Immaculate Philosophy's hold is uncertain or absent. Mortals there need supernatural patronage to protect them from predators, disease, disaster, greedy neighbors, and the Fair Folk; in the end, they often turn to their dead to provide this support. It's unusual for a ghost to be as individually potent as a god, or as easily able to reach his living descendants, but what the dead lack in raw strength they make up for in numbers and familiarity. Where the Hundred Gods Heresy flourishes, an entire village is likely to worship the same upstart god; but in ancestor cults, most families maintain their own shrine and propitiate their own familial spirits.

The dead may be able to offer up small blessings, knowledge from beyond the grave, or strange treasures smuggled from the depths of the Underworld. In return they demand veneration—care and maintenance of their graves and shrines and frequent prayer to fortify them in the Underworld are the foundation of any ancestor cult, with more particular favors for the living being solicited with the spilling of blood, or the burning or burying of tokens pleasing to the dead. Lavish funerals are the norm in areas dominated by ancestor cults, the better to arm the dead to later aid the living.

Fear of the ancestor cult isn't merely a matter of Immaculate propaganda. Ghosts are creatures driven by desire and passion, and lack for restraint. For every spirit motivated by love for those left behind, there is an ancient family matriarch willing to drive her descendants into poverty or worse to advance her status among the dead. Ghosts are often unreasonable, demanding, and vicious when they feel slighted—and the greater the congress between living and dead, the more easily a shadowland can flower should the proper circumstances present themselves. Shadowlands are almost always dominated by the ancestor cult, and the dead are usually the controlling members of that relationship.

### Shadowlands

Perhaps there was once a time when death was the only means of passage between the lands of the living and the dead. If so, that time was long ago; the Underworld resides close by Creation in the Second Age, and where too many souls have passed into the lands below too quickly, or where the living world has been scarred by sufficient atrocity, the Underworld may bleed up into the sunlit world. These places where death and life commingle are known as shadowlands.



The Underworld leaves its mark upon shadowlands. Many wild animals will leave if they can; game animals are difficult to come by, while spiders, rats, and raitions thrive. Domestic animals eventually become listless and wan, or sleek and hungry. The people of shadowlands are often pale, and may take ill easily; in a shadowland it seems easier to let go of life.

Colors leech out over a span of decades, or become flush and violent in their intensity. Storms are unusually savage; those blown in from the Underworld may carry with them drops of blood, mercury, or salty tears. Strange and winding designs impress themselves upon stones as generations go by, while boards and buildings stretch high and narrow and queer.

The flavors of food grown in shadowland soil are often strange and bitter, or oddly intoxicating. The crops and goods of shadowlands are disturbing and distasteful to many, but some collectors, artisans, and exotic gourmands will pay high prices for the exports of lands touched by the Underworld, particularly if the mixing of boundaries produces some prodigy that may be obtained nowhere else.

The borders of shadowlands are frayed and unstable places. Crossing the boundary by day takes the traveler away from the shadow of the grave and into the lands of the living. By night, the borders of a shadowland lead out into the dark vistas of the Underworld.

Most importantly, shadowlands permit the dead to walk among the living—to speak, and touch, and do more than touch. By night, ghosts are as solid as mortals, though few could be mistaken for such. In most shadowlands, ghosts fade away with the rising of the sun, unable to be seen, heard, or touched by the living; in truly powerful shadowlands, the dead only fade away when sunlight falls directly upon them, and retire to windowless ancestor houses during the day. In either case, they return to full solidity with the coming of night.

### **The Deathlords**

The Underworld is split up into countless dead dominions, many ruled over by ghostly princes, emperors, and generals from nations and armies long gone to dust. But the greatest number, by far, are controlled by a group of ancient and mysterious sorcerer-kings known as the Deathlords.

Ghosts know better than to speak openly of the lords of shadow—the Deathlords know their business and see no need for others to do so—but when they believe themselves secluded in the echoing darkness of the Underworld, the dead whisper. They whisper that no two Deathlords are alike, that some are gleaming alabaster angels with wings or cloaks of knife-edged steel and inscrutable tragedy-masks, while others shroud themselves completely in invincible soulsteel armor, or bare lovely ivory flesh that is the stuff of desire itself. They whisper

## THE FALL OF THORNS

Situated at the edge of the Scavenger Lands, the wealthy and ancient city of Thorns has been a lynchpin of trade and travel for centuries. Its beautiful architecture is widely held as a marvel of Second Age achievement.

Thorns paid tribute to the Realm for better than twenty generations, and served as the Scarlet Empress's largest military outpost abutting the Scavenger Lands.

In RY 764, the year after the Empress vanished, Thorns fell to the dead.

The Mask of Winters advanced on the city at the head of an army of zombies and mercenaries, riding atop the back of the terrible and forgotten abomination known as Juggernaut. Juggernaut was a fearsome behemoth slain in the forgotten epochs of the First Age—a terror with fists the size of hills, the bulk of its flesh like a city wrought in muscle and sinew. The Deathlord found the behemoth's ancient corpse and enslaved it through unimaginably potent sorceries, raised his citadel upon its rotting back, then set it crawling toward the city.

The Dragon-Blooded of the Thorns garrison rode forth to confront the Deathlord's forces, only to be cut down in the space of an hour by the Abyssal Exalted who emerged from the corpse-fortress's shadow. This was Creation's first introduction to Death's Lawgivers.

The Mask of Winters could have conquered the city that same day: Juggernaut could have easily pulled down the walls, and the Abyssal Exalted gone reaving through the streets. Instead he settled in to siege. He sent rats to eat the city's food, and sickness to taint its air. As the people starved, he released pigs into the streets; the skeletons of those who ate of their cursed flesh tore their way out from the screaming bodies encasing them. In the end, he made the people of Thorns open their own gates and invite him inside. He made them beg him to deliver them from the horrors he had brought.

The Mask of Winters was glad to oblige. Thorns is now the center of a new, swiftly-growing shadowland, and the capital of the Deathlord's nascent empire. His cold, hungry eyes now settle upon the River Province to the north.

that the Deathlords have sworn themselves to dead gods rotting forever at the heart of a vast Labyrinth which winds beneath the Underworld, at the point where all rivers of oblivion converge. They whisper that the Deathlords feed the souls of those that anger them to these nightmare beings, and that their glittering chalcedony citadels are pushed up from the earth when the dead gods reach through the substrata of the Underworld to grasp at these offerings. Of the identities of the Deathlords before their demise, the dead are utterly silent—or are made silent.

The Deathlords perpetually fight among themselves, winding out long games of conquest, assassination, aggression, alliance, and betrayal. So it is that the dead are split into many shifting empires of bone and steel, rather than a singular engine that might be turned against the living.

Until recently, few living individuals had even heard of the Deathlords. Those that had regular contact with the dead knew the Deathlords as dark legends and dire rumors—ancient witch-kings of enormous power, ruling over the black and silent kingdoms of the dead. That changed four years ago, when the Mask of Winters led his bleak army to conquer the living city of Thorns.

It's unclear how many ancient spirits number among the ranks of the Deathlords. The wildest rumors say that their numbers are legion; or that there are truly only two, playing out an eternal war from behind many masks, catpaws, and false identities. Most who concern themselves with the matter of the Deathlords suspect there are more than five but fewer than a score of these most ancient and potent beings. Ultimately, only the Deathlords themselves can say for certain. The following are a few of the more openly active and widely-known Deathlords:

• **The Mask of Winters** was a name unknown to the living and obscure among the dead until recently. For uncounted centuries, he commanded the fearful loyalty of a handful of remote dominions in the sunless lands, while he personally explored the most dangerous and obscure reaches of the Underworld—what he sought, no one knew. When he marched on Thorns wielding fearsome sorcery and the resurrected corpse-fortress Juggernaut, the scope of his ambitions became clear. Because of the Mask of Winters, the threat of the Deathlords is now on the minds of princes and generals throughout much of Creation. His fellow Deathlords resent his boldness, and move to frustrate his ambitions out of spite. His arrival has cast a pall of fear across the Scavenger Lands; while many nations and city-states brace for war, others seek alliance with the Mask of Winters, hoping to avoid his charnel march.

• **The Lover Clad in the Raiment of Tears** claims many of the North's enormous shadowlands for herself. The Lover is a being of impossible alabaster beauty, of frustrated passions quenched at last, and lifelong loneliness answered—for a time. Under her influence, those who die in the North with great and unfulfilled passions find their souls bound to the living world, denied both reincarnation and the darkness of the Underworld. These tangible shades, known as the Loveless, wander the North in search of the warm comfort of life. By preference they seek out living paramours, exhausting their vitality one night at a time; denied such willing relief, they become feral cannibals, finding solace in living blood. The Lover opens her domains to those with nowhere else to go—the heartsick, lonely, and lost—and so the hollow husks of those who willingly go into the Lover's arms are a common sight in the North. Their eyes are dull and empty, their faces slack; they have seen and experienced such things that life and living have nothing more to offer them.

• **The Bodhisattva Anointed by Dark Water** rules as the eternal monarch of the Skullstone Archipelago, a series of Western isles covered by an ancient shadowland. He teaches that life is merely a preparatory period before the exaltation of death, and this belief is the foundation of his nation's religion and culture. The Bodhisattva is a canny trader, salvager, diplomat, admiral, and administrator; his wealth shames that of any other Western nation. He has expanded his territory for centuries, slowly but steadily, preferring to enmesh his neighbors in complex webs of debt, favors, and mutual oaths before moving to annex them once they inevitably break faith in some way.

## Behemoths

A creature the size of a fortress and made up of equal parts batrachian nightmare and simian brute batters down the wall of an ancient city, its defenders powerless to even slow the beast's advance. It crushes the buildings and besieged populace in a rage; when its fury is spent, it digs a hollow in the city center and lays its enormous bulk down to sleep for months, before awakening to rampage again. A hideous mockery of a man stalks his prey across Creation, devouring their strength and growing stronger, the prototype for every predator to ever walk the face of the earth. A beshelled, piscine titan floats about the Western seas, until it grows hungry, at which time it devours whole ships and island populations in a feeding frenzy, turning the sea red with the blood of its prey. These are behemoths, discarded by the ancient world-makers who created them, immortal half-formed prototypes of the later life that would walk the face of Creation, often cast into the Wyld by the First Age Solar Exalted, and now massive threats to anything that crosses their paths.

Properly, behemoths are the byblows of a Creation that never happened, and include living mountains which prowl continents, an adamic man of clay meant to be the progenitor of the human race, and strange blind worms the length of a Guild caravan with a thousand heads. Each of these creatures is nearly indestructible, and its motives and drives are nonsensical or incomprehensible to mortal or Exalted. As it is difficult for the average person to inquire into the origins of the walking nightmare devouring their family or destroying their city, the word "behemoth" is often also misapplied to living nightmares from the Wyld, or monstrous entities which fit no other description, such as the ghosts of behemoths slain by Solar Exalted in the First Age; strange, city-sized automata buried deep under the earth and prowling ancient caverns where the sun has never shone; First Age war-machines built by the Solar Exalted and which no modern mind can comprehend or stop; and ancient cannibal gods cast out of Heaven with the overthrow of the enemies of the gods.

The sheer killing power and near-invulnerability of a behemoth gives even the most potent Exalt pause, and head-to-head clashes often end in the destruction of whatever chose to stand in the face of these ancient terrors. The clever often try to redirect the behemoth, rather than actually confront it, but even this is difficult, because many behemoths operate on a scale in which humanity is a mere trifle. Would an Exalt notice if a bee tried to turn him away from a hive, after all? Even the behemoths which are man-sized or smaller, of which there are a handful, are incredibly dangerous, with potent defenses and the same near unbreakable will and flesh.

# E

choing Breath flinched at the cold splash of plasmic Essence across her cheek. It felt like icy mist, penetrating the leather of her cowl. Spectral armor splintering, the hungry ghost dissolved. Winter fog rushed to take its place.

"Five down," she whispered. She shook the ice from her thin, bone-white blades. "Is that all?"

Heavy boots crunched through stale snow as she trudged across the frozen pond. The black bones of bare elms crowded close. Here and there, pale arms jutted from the ice, a few still grasping jade weapons. *They need to be burned. Or the ghosts will rise.* The blood was sluggish in her veins, breath hard won for ragged lungs. Her throat rattled in the silence. Her scarred neck ached. The Liminal pulled the cowl over her face, drawing deeper from the air around her. Half-formed visions sparked in her mind like a guttering flame—the elms lush, the pond sweet, the fields ripe, the dragons on the hunt, riding for glory. Yes, there had been five Dragon-Blooded, all armed to the teeth. Now here they lay. The villagers had abandoned the fields and spread tales of their ghosts. The tales had drawn a hunter equally terrible.

"It's just you and me now," Echo whispered into the fog, raising her blades.

The trees were moaning, branches cracking against each other. Her pace was silent and inexorable. Her final target would be lurking at the twisted feet of a naked elder tree, she knew—not only because she could smell it in the fetid air, but because she remembered. The heavy mist parted like a shroud, and Echo could see beyond to the sudden thread of gold in the mist—a magnificent weapon of solid sunlight. A building growl snatched her attention, and a hunched figure came prowling from the gnarled roots of the elder tree.

Echoing Breath flexed her sword hands. Her fingers were stiff and black with cold, but there was no time to scavenge new ones. The ghost started, its movements disjointed, a blur of gray light where its head should be. Degrade power prickled the breath in Echo's throat. Her scars began aching again.

A guttural sound, a flash—Echo's daiklaves scraped against the shaft of a ghostly dire lance, her shoulder grazed and stinging. The po howled, its strangled voice uncoiling from a missing neck, the formless mist of its face rearranging itself in more and more nightmarish configurations. The Liminal attacked, but her foe was unnaturally fast, even wielding a pale fraction of the power it held in life. The dreadful lance struck again and again, driving her back. Echo's body was threadbare from pursuing the dead hunters, her bone-white daiklaves only just parrying the ghost's onslaught. But her breath was even and the gloom flexed in time with her lungs, which now began to pump.

The po screamed and raised the shadow lance for the final blow. Echoing Breath reached deep between the folds of Creation and the Underworld, her exhalations mingling with the numbing promise of lethe, and thrust her blades. The lance tore into her shoulder, splitting flesh from bone, tearing away the cowl. Echo felt a killing cold ripping at her bare face. A scream rang through the winter night.

The trembling po sank to the hilts of her daiklaves. Its head solidified, briefly, nose to nose with her. Their faces were perfect mirrors. The ghost raked feeble claws against the Liminal's neck, mouth gaping soundlessly.

"You must move on." She breathed deep and twisted the blades, drawing the ghost toward lethe. "You must go."

It melted into the mist, a look of repose on its remembered face. Echo shuddered, wrapped her wounded shoulder, and replaced the cowl. The foreign memories of green elms and golden fields lifted with the fog, drifting away on her breath.



## Chapter Three

# Character Creation

Whether you're beginning your first **Exalted** game or your hundredth, your first step is to create a protagonist for your chronicle. As the game progresses, you'll guide your character through the adventures that await her, deciding how she shapes and is shaped by the world. This chapter will help you create a lifelike, intriguing persona worthy of the title "Exalted."

### Preparation

Before you begin, ask your Storyteller about her plans—will her crew of heroes brave the pirate-infested waters of Coral? Will they hunt death-sworn traitors in Whitewall? It's also a good idea to talk with your fellow players, and ask them about their character ideas. Getting a feel for the group's intended tone, setting, and goals for the game will help you make a hero everyone will enjoy playing alongside.

If you're new to **Exalted**—or to tabletop roleplaying in general—it might be a little intimidating to create your first character. Here are some tips to help get into the right mindset.

#### *Think Larger Than Life*

The Solar Exalted take cues from mythic heroes, but that doesn't mean you have to limit yourself to mythological sources. Exalted draws on many forms of media, ranging from pulp fantasy novels to modern anime—anything that tells an epic, sweeping story can serve as inspiration. Think of the larger-than-life heroes you enjoy. What passions drive them? How do they impact the world around them? What are their goals, and what sacrifices do they make to reach them? Thinking about questions like these can help you figure out what aspects of these characters you'd like to explore at your gaming table.

Additionally, you might want to consider the sorts of epic feats you want your character to perform. Do you want to deduce the methods and motives of a murderer after a brief glance at a blood-soaked alleyway? Would you like to infiltrate a satrap's palace, quiet as a shadow and twice as

elusive? Do you want to give a sermon that moves the most hardened hearts to tears? If you're stuck for ideas, or if you just want a better grasp on the sorts of things the Exalted can do, you might want to look through the Charms chapter for ideas.

#### *Put it in Words*

Even if you have a solid idea, it might be daunting to translate into numbers on a character sheet. Try describing your concept verbally before you begin, to give you a better idea of your character's strengths and weaknesses.

*Example:* "Veiled Sunrise is lightning-quick, witty, charming, and devilishly handsome. He has few equals in the field of swordplay, and he excels at the sort of acrobatic stunts you'd expect from such a swashbuckler. However, his naiveté makes him trusting, and he's easy to manipulate."

A brief description like this will help you nail down the key parts of your character concept—things that should inform your decisions when assigning dots and selecting Merits and Charms.

#### *Points and Dots*

**Exalted**'s mechanical backbone is the Storyteller system, which uses dot ratings and points to describe a character's skill and aptitude.

**Dot ratings** work something like the 1-5 star rating system used in book and movie reviews. In general, a rating of one dot is poor, a rating of two dots is average, a rating of three dots is above-average, a rating of four dots is exceptional, and a rating of five is masterful. Dot ratings above two are important, and dot ratings above three are key elements of a character's concept. Dot ratings are permanent, and typically only change with the expenditure of bonus points (p. 124) or experience points (p. 177)—though certain supernatural effects may provide a temporary penalty or bonus.

**Points**, on the other hand, measure your character's available resources, such as his reserves of mental fortitude or the numinous energies that power his Charms. Your char-

acter spends points when the circumstances dictate—such as when he employs a Charm to guide his aim in combat, or when he shrugs off the magical wiles of one of the Fair Folk. Once spent, points may be regained through specific means. All of these traits are explained in greater detail in Chapter Four.

#### WHAT ABOUT OTHER EXALTS?

The rules in this chapter will show you how to create one of the Solar Exalted, a long-lost champion returned to reclaim his ancient birthrights. Future supplements will give you all the rules you need to play the other types of Exalted described in Chapter One.

### Step 1: Concept and Caste

Take some time to think of heroic archetypes you enjoy, and thumb through the setting information in Chapter Two to see what jumps out at you. Would you like to play a prideful swordsman, a silver-tongued spy, a scholar of forbidden lore? What corner of Creation does your character call home? The world is vast, but sometimes the Exalted have reason to venture to its farthest reaches; if your character is from another part of the world, why is she here? You should also sketch out your character's personality. What would she be like if you sat down to talk to her? Whom does she call family, friend, or enemy? Once you've thought all this out, try to boil it down to a few informative sentences—a sort of capsule description of your character.

Once you've got a solid concept, pick the Caste that suits it best. Some concepts can easily fall under more than one Caste, but keep in mind that your character's Caste is as much a measure of her methods as it is her strengths. Each Solar is chosen for her Caste because it fits her, one way or another. Chapter Four explains the five Solar Castes in full detail.

### Step 2: Attributes

Once you have your concept, it's time to flesh it out with numbers. Attributes represent raw potential before skill and training come into play—grace, force of personality, and intellect, among other things. **Exalted** divides Attributes into three categories—Physical, Social, and Mental—and few heroes develop all of them in equal measure. Pick the category that's most important to your concept, and mark it down as primary. Next, pick the category that's

slightly less integral, but still important, and mark it down as secondary. The remaining category becomes tertiary. Each Attribute begins with one free dot. From there, distribute eight dots among your character's primary Attributes, six dots among your character's secondary Attributes, and four dots among your character's tertiary Attributes.

**While distributing Attribute dots, keep in mind that a rating of two dots is average, and a rating of five dots is the pinnacle of human development. Solars may not start with more than five dots in any Attribute, nor can they raise an Attribute above five dots during play.** Don't be afraid to play against type if it fits your concept—many Dawns have primary Physical Attributes, but your Dawn could just as easily be a genius scholar-tactician with primary Mental Attributes. Your ratings should make sense for your character concept, as well. Keep in mind that a rating of one dot is as significant as a rating of five dots, and that poor ratings can provide as many opportunities for character development as excellent ones.

### Step 3: Abilities

Abilities measure a character's knowledge, training, and skill. As paragons of human endeavor, the Solars possess remarkable depth and breadth of competence, represented by Caste and Favored Abilities. Your character's Caste Abilities are the skills and talents that led to her Exaltation as a member of her Caste. Traditionally, each Caste has a wide range of duties, and few Lawgivers—especially freshly-Chosen ones—show talent in all of them. Find your character's Caste on the list below, and pick five associated Abilities. These are her Caste Abilities.

- **Dawn:** Archery, Awareness, Brawl (and Martial Arts), Dodge, Melee, Resistance, Thrown, War
- **Zenith:** Athletics, Integrity, Performance, Lore, Presence, Resistance, Survival, War
- **Twilight:** Bureaucracy, Craft, Integrity, Investigation, Linguistics, Lore, Medicine, Occult
- **Night:** Athletics, Awareness, Dodge, Investigation, Larceny, Ride, Stealth, Socialize
- **Eclipse:** Bureaucracy, Larceny, Linguistics, Occult, Presence, Ride, Sail, Socialize

Now, pick five Favored Abilities. These Abilities represent skills and talents that don't necessarily fall within the duties of her Caste. A demon-hunting Night Caste might favor

Occult thanks to his knowledge of the signs and portents that herald the arrival of demons in Creation. If you want, you can select some Favored Abilities from your Caste's Ability list, but you can't take the same Ability as both Caste and Favored. Your choice of Caste and Favored Abilities is important to your character's development — it's less expensive to improve selected Abilities, and to learn Charms associated with them.

Select one of your Caste Abilities and one of your Favored Abilities to be Supernal abilities. Your Supernal Abilities are the emblem of your character's legend, the thing she is the very best at. You have an easier time learning powerful Charms with your Supernal Abilities than any other Ability - Charms in your Supernal Abilities treat your Essence rating 2 higher than your current rating (to a maximum of 5) for all purposes. You can learn Essence 3 charms in these abilities right off the bat during character creation, and use upgrades to them sooner than otherwise. When your character's essence is 4, then a charm in one of your Supernal Abilities that lets you make (Essence + 2) attacks allows you to make 5 (your real Essence 4 + 2, to a maximum of 5).

Once you've selected Caste, Favored and Supernals, divide 28 dots among your Abilities. Abilities start at 0, and you cannot raise them higher than 3 without spending Experience Points. You must assign at least one dot to each Favored ability. As with her Attributes, you should explain any of her Abilities rated at three or more dots. Did your character train under a great master to achieve her five-dot rating in Melee, or is she a self-taught martial genius?

Lastly, choose four Specialties for your character. Specialties describe specific focus within an Ability.

#### Step 4: Merits

Merits represent a character's assets and quirks, everything from a family business to a stomach that can handle all but the most rancid food and drink. As with Attributes and Abilities, Merits are rated from one to five dots. Remember that although temporary merits come and go during play, those you've purchased (during character creation or with Experience Points) gain a limited amount of plot armor - they're much less likely to fail when you need them most, or wander off of their own accord. For more information on Merits in play, see the Traits chapter.

Assign up to ten dots to your character's Merits. As with other traits, Merits can shape your character's background and circumstances, and they can also be consequences of your character's past. Be sure to tie them into your overall concept. Did your character earn his Ally through a previous act of selflessness? Has being Hideous shaped the way she sees others?

#### Step 5: Charms

A Solar's Charms are natural expressions of her heroic legend, powered by the very Essence of Creation. Can she run for miles without tiring? Can she shoot a diving swallow at a hundred yards? Once you've got a mental picture of your character's legend, pick out ten suitable Charms, keeping in mind that each has prerequisites of enlightenment and skill. Don't forget to purchase the Solar Excellency in abilites you want your character to excel at - it's an incredibly powerful charm.

If you took the Martial Arts ability or learn Sorcery (see the Martial Arts and Sorcery chapter for more details), you can also take Martial Arts charms or learn spells, trading in your starting charms on a one-for-one basis.

#### Step 6: Intimacies and Limit Trigger

Intimacies describe the important parts of your character's life, from long-held beliefs to feelings toward loved ones or mortal enemies. For more information on Intimacies, see the Traits chapter. Unlike other traits, there's no limit to how many Intimacies your character can start with, but you must have a minimum of four Intimacies, of which at least one must be Defining, one must be Major, one must be in some way negative (a thing the character opposes or dislikes), and one must be positive (a thing the character supports or likes).

Additionally, all Solar Exalted labor under a Great Curse spoken by the enemies of the gods as the Exalted slew them. As a result, your character has a Limit Trigger, a circumstance in which the lingering curse of the dead ancients may rise to trouble him. Select a Limit Trigger from the choices in the traits chapter, or work with your Storyteller to design your own.

## Specialties

Abilities represent broad knowledge of a given field, but few people go through life without acquiring unique talents and special interests. In Exalted, these areas of expertise are referred to as Specialties. When you make a roll with an Ability that matches an associated Specialty, you can add one die to that roll. Specialties can be somewhat broad, but there must be notable situations where they can't apply. Melee (Swords) is perfectly acceptable, but Melee (While Armed) or (While Breathing) are not. Only one Specialty can apply to a single roll, even if your character has more than one that could be useful.

## Step 7: Experience Points

You have 50 Experience Points to spend on anything that makes sense for your concept. Spells are considered Caste or Favored if Occult is. You're allowed to spend these Experience Points at any time during character creation - to help meet the prerequisites of a Charm in step 5, for example.

Trait	Experience
Attribute	8xp per dot
Caste or Favored ability	3xp per dot
Non-caste and non-favored ability	4xp per dot
Specialty	3xp
Merit	3xp per dot
Willpower	8xp per dot
Charm or Spell (Caste/Favored)	8xp
Charm or Spell (Not Caste/Favored)	10xp

## Step 8: Finishing Touches

Solars start play with Essence one, Willpower five, and seven Health Levels (-0, -1, -1, -2, -2, -4, and

Incapacitated). A Solar's pool of Personal Essence is ([Essence x 5] + 5), while their Peripheral Essence pool is ([Essence x 10] + 20). These traits are explained in further detail in Chapter Four.

Each Exalt was a human being before he was Chosen, and he remains so after Exaltation. Being Chosen doesn't make anyone perfect - as powerful as they are, Solars have nothing to guide them beyond what they bring from their mortal lives. Think about your character's past and what he was like before his Exaltation. How did he see the world? How did he treat other people? How did other people treat him? Who were his allies, enemies, friends, and loved ones? What faiths and philosophies did his people follow? What other influences played a role in his life? No one is an island, least of all one of the Exalted.

As with any life-changing event, Exaltation can have dramatic effects on a person's worldview. How does your character feel about his Exaltation and the fact that many see him as a dangerous Anathema? In what ways has his Second Breath changed him? What sort of future does he see for himself?

# P

Prince Diamond glided across the churning surface of the river, his footfalls meeting the water as though it were smooth, solid stone. The chieftain of the Cloud Wolf Tribe lagged behind him on the winding course of the river's banks, creeping warily for fear of the cursed ground he walked upon. "Move a little faster, Six-Fangs. Otherwise, you'll more likely die of old age than anything else." The wolfman responded with a grudging snarl of assent and hastened his pace, though he still couldn't keep up with the straight path the Eclipse Caste walked down the face of the river. Diamond sighed. He would have found better conversation with his horse Ember, but the steed was no more able to walk on water than Six-Fangs. Still, if long silences were the worst they faced on this journey, he would count it as lucky.

By the time the sun had moved halfway towards setting on the western horizon, Prince Diamond and Six-Fangs had reached the river's once-hallowed origin, a waterfall cascading down from a small mountain peak. The wolfman eyed the falls warily, but there would be no need to make that climb. The gods did not live in the sky, as the superstitious chieftain presumed, nor would Prince Diamond be so rude as to intrude upon the river spirit's sanctum. Instead, he would call the god to him. He drew a sheet of colorful paper out of his robes and folded it into the shape of a crude boat, then began to speak into it—strange words, in a tongue the wolfman knew not. Then, the Eclipse Caste laid the boat upon the water, where the raging turmoil dragged it under in mere seconds. A faint glimmer of blue, like sapphires on the riverbed, told him that his call had been heard.

The river spirit emerged from the water with slow grandeur, towering over them both in a form of bracken and black water that wore a porcelain mask for its face. "Who would have words with Yanamo? Who intrudes upon my peace?"

Six-Fangs raised his hackles at this manifestation, stumbling backwards in fear, but the Eclipse Caste remained composed. "I am Prince Diamond, an envoy on behalf of the Cloud Wolf Tribe. It seems that the bridges across your river have somehow been swept away in the past few months, and its waters become entirely impassable. They would ask, humbly, that you calm the river, and let them cross over to the hunting grounds on the other side of the

shore, as they have for years before now. Certainly, that can be arranged."

The god spat in contempt, hacking up a glob of sludge onto the riverbanks. "What does Yanamo care for such trifles? Let them starve, let them eat—they will all die in the end. All of them, just like White Eyes. My river rages with my grief, envoy, and you have not the words to quell either. Begone." Prince Diamond had no idea who White Eyes was, but the way the wolfman's ears had perked up when he heard the name told him all he needed to know. The god had taken a priestess-wife from the Cloud Wolf Tribe—hardly an unusual arrangement—and forgotten his bride's mortality, until she died.

"My condolences. I suppose there is nothing to be done, then. I will leave you—the Immaculate Order is nigh, and I must keep far afield of their hunt." He turned to leave, waiting for the river-spirit to break the silence.

"Wait," said the god, his voice quavering just enough to betray his fears. "The Immaculates—are they truly coming?"

The Eclipse Caste grinned, but composed his face into a mask of calm before turning back to face the god. "As we speak, I assure you. Their reach has spread even to these hinterlands, it seems. But you are mighty enough to contend with the Dragon-Blooded, no?"

The river-god hung his head in silent resignation.

"Well then, perhaps we could strike a bargain. The Cloud Wolf Tribe has worshipped you for years. With your blessings, and your river at their back, perhaps they could stand against the Immaculate Order. But of course, it is hard to fight on an empty stomach—"

"Very well," said the god. At Prince Diamond's beckoning, Six-Fangs came forth, placing his clawed hand within the immensity of the god's own outstretched hand. "So long as the Cloud Wolf Tribe stands in my defense, they will have safe passage across my river, and my blessings in war." As the god spoke, the words of his pledge scribed themselves into the air, burning with the white-gold fire of Prince Diamond's anima as the Solar willed it to sanctify the oath, shining like reflected stars on the water's face.



## Chapter Four

# Traits

**Exalted** uses a number of traits to describe characters, presented in this chapter. These include your character's Limit track (which measures the buildup and terrible expression of an ancient curse placed upon the Solars by the enemies of the gods), the five Castes into which the Solar Exalted are divided, your character's Attributes (natural talents such as strength and intellect) and Abilities (cultivated skills such as horse-riding, wilderness survival, and archery), Merits and Flaws (advantages and disadvantages that help or hinder your character), as well as Essence, Willpower, Health, and powers granted by the Solar anima. Finally, the end of this chapter contains rules for gaining and spending experience points to strengthen your character over the course of the game.

### The Great Curse and Limit Break

When the Exalted slew the enemies of the gods, those ancient monsters pronounced a terrible death-curse against the traitorous Incarnae. The Unconquered Sun and his compatriots had anticipated this, however, and crafted mighty magic to protect themselves. What they failed to notice was that the death-curse of the fallen ancients, thwarted by the gods, took root in the hearts of their Chosen. That Great Curse still haunts the Solar Exalted to this day, leaving a seed of darkness in each hero Chosen by the Unconquered Sun. The Curse expresses itself in moments of great stress and hardship, inflating the Solar's passions into gross displays of unrestrained and destructive excess. The growing strength of the Great Curse is measured by a trait called Limit.

#### Limit

Limit is a measure of stress, self-doubt, and mental instability. As a Solar accrues Limit, the power of the Great Curse gains a stronger purchase on his soul. While this growing corruption may be invisible to others, the cursed Exalt finds his thoughts wandering in darker directions.

When he reaches 10 Limit, the Curse spills over and can no longer be contained, erupting into Limit Break.

The Solar Exalted gain Limit in the following ways:

- Once per scene, when a character acts in a way that opposes one of his Major Intimacies, his player rolls a single die, gaining one point of Limit for each success (unless he's already rolled for acting against a Defining Intimacy; see below). Note that weakening an Intimacy always counts as opposing it, as does spending Willpower to resist an influence roll supported by that Intimacy.
- Once per scene, when a character acts against one of his Defining Intimacies, his player rolls two dice for Limit (or one die if he's already rolled for acting against a Major Intimacy). This otherwise functions as acting against a Major Intimacy, above.
- All Solars have a Limit Trigger selected at character creation, a special condition under which a character can gain Limit. When a character's Limit Trigger is met, his player rolls three dice for Limit, gaining one point per success.

#### Legendary Social Goals

When a Solar character successfully completes a major, landmark goal or accomplishment such as reclaiming their homeland from the Realm or winning the love of their ancient Lunar mate, they may lose a point of Limit at the Storyteller's discretion.

#### Limit Triggers

Below are a number of potential Limit Triggers. This list is meant to be illustrative rather than exhaustive—players should feel free to design their own Limit Trigger (with the Storyteller's approval). A Limit Trigger should be a situation that the character finds stressful, traumatic, or frustrating.



- The Solar is insulted, belittled, or deliberately frustrated by another character.
- The Solar tells a lie, deliberately deceives someone, or breaks a sworn oath.
- The Solar sees innocents suffering, and is either unable or unwilling to help them.
- The Solar is hindered or defeated by the self-indulgent and intemperate behavior of those around him.
- The Solar's allies suffer a setback or defeat because of a mistake he made.
- The Solar is faced with the opportunity to advance his own cause by harming an innocent or ignoring one's suffering.
- The Solar's emotions lead him into a course of action that he regrets.
- The Solar is denied a favorite pleasure or vice, either by circumstance, another character, or his own decisions.

#### Limit Break and Virtue Flaws

Once a character has accumulated 10 Limit points,

he will enter a state called Limit Break—the manifest expression of the Great Curse. Limit Break may or may not manifest immediately; the Great Curse is insidious, and tends to erupt into full bloom only when the Exalt's actions have the potential to create significant turmoil or suffering. An Exalt in the midst of an argument with his Circle is likely to experience the full effects of the Great Curse immediately, while one trekking through the vast desert of the South might continue to travel for several days before the effects of his Limit Break manifest. The timing of such manifestations are ultimately up to the Storyteller.

The precise manifestation the Great Curse takes is known as a Virtue Flaw. Several potential Virtue Flaws are described below, and the Storyteller may create new ones as suits the needs of his story. A Solar's Virtue Flaw isn't fixed—the Storyteller should choose whichever one is most suited to the character's current situation or seems like the most dramatic choice. All Virtue Flaws share the following features:

- Each Virtue Flaw forces the character to act out some kind of behavior that is harmful to those around him or to himself. The behavior enforced by Limit Break is treated as a Defining Principle, applying a +4 or -3 to the character's Resolve against relevant influence rolls and

allowing the character to treat certain types of influence as unacceptable.

- In addition, if a character *could* treat an influence roll as unacceptable due to Limit Break, he must—he does not have the option of letting it be resolved as normal.
- Being in Limit Break is an intensely emotional experience, a powerful cathartic reaction to whatever stress has driven a character to it—it *feels good*, or at least necessary, even as it is traumatic. As a result, when a character ends his Limit Break he resets his Willpower points to equal his permanent Willpower, regardless of whether this causes him to gain or lose Willpower.
- Each Virtue Flaw specifies a duration of either session or scene. Those that have a session-long duration last for the remainder of the session of play. If the Limit Break occurs towards the end of the session, or there isn't an opportunity for it to have any impact on the game, the Storyteller may choose to have it spill over into the next session as well. Those that have a scene-long duration last for a single scene of play. In addition, each Limit Break has a condition which can end it prematurely if met.
- Once a Limit Break ends, the character loses all points of accumulated Limit.

### All-Consuming Grief

The Solar is overwhelmed by regret or sorrow, and can do nothing but stop to mourn what he has lost or to brood upon the injustices that have befallen him. He'll try to go off to be alone to grieve, if possible; if not, then the Solar ignores his surroundings and focuses inward on his pain. He stirs from his grief for nothing, not even to help his allies.

**Duration:** Scene. All-Consuming Grief can be ended prematurely if the Solar is attacked or if someone to whom he has a Major or Defining Tie is incapacitated.

### Berserk Anger

The Solar rampages out of control, attacking and killing anything he sees. His killing spree begins with his enemies, but then turns to any innocent or uninvolved bystanders of the fight. He may spare characters he has a positive Tie towards from his rampage, but this protection vanishes if they try to impede him in any way.

**Duration:** Scene. Berserk Anger can be ended prematurely if the Solar runs out of valid victims to kill, or if he incapacitates someone he has a positive Tie toward.

### Chains of Honor

The Solar is overwhelmed with regret for his past mis-

deeds, and cleaves to an unbreakable code of honor. He will not tell any lies, including lies of omission or half-truths, nor will he break a promise or sworn oath he has made. If he has deceived anyone in the past, he will strive to find them, tell them the truth, and do whatever he can to atone. Likewise, he will seek out those whom he has broken oaths to, and take on whatever labors or tasks they assign to correct his failure.

**Duration:** Session. Chains of Honor can be ended prematurely if the Solar is forgiven by someone to whom he has broken an oath or harmed by means of deception.

### Compassionate Martyrdom

Consumed by overwhelming compassion, the Solar cannot see the suffering of others without intervening. Whenever he sees a suffering innocent, he must intervene to help them in the most dramatic way possible. If she is being harmed, the Solar must either intercede to take the blows meant for her, or else kill her aggressor. If her suffering is caused by poverty, sickness, or other prevailing conditions of her life, the Solar must find some similarly dramatic method in which to help her, working without cease to do so.

**Duration:** Session. Compassionate Martyrdom can be ended prematurely if the Solar sees that the actions he has taken have caused the people she is trying to protect to fear or reject her, or if she loses a combat that she started because of the Limit Break.

### Contempt of the Virtuous

The Solar becomes unfalteringly sure in his own moral righteousness, and strives to correct the failings of those around him. If he sees another person engaging in immorality, indulgence, or dishonesty, he will strive to correct them, lecturing them on their failings. If his instruction is mocked or rejected, he may even turn to force in preventing them from sin.

**Duration:** Session. Contempt of the Virtuous can be ended prematurely if the Solar is forced to question the righteousness of his own actions, either because he is confronted with the unintended consequences of something he does, or because he is persuaded by another character.

### Crushing Doubt

The Solar is crippled by self-doubt. He will seek the assistance of his allies in every task, no matter how simple, and will pass his duties and responsibilities on to others whom he believes are more capable than him. If he is separated from allies, he must try to return to them or else find some other companions, and will flee from any potential danger or obligation he encounters along the way.

## STORYTELLING THE GREAT CURSE

The purpose of the Great Curse is to add drama and conflict to the player characters' lives in a way that emulates the genres of epic poetry and sword and sorcery which Exalted draws inspiration from. Limit Break is the Solar Exalted's equivalent to Achilles sulking in his tent when he is needed on the battlefield, Hercules slaying his family in a rage, or Elric of Melniboné being forced to kill by his cursed sword Stormbringer. As the Storyteller, you control much of this added conflict by choosing the manifestation of Limit Break, as well as determining when they begin and end. Keep in mind the point of Limit Break is never to punish players for taking Limit-gaining actions, nor to sour players' desire to play the characters they've made. Ultimately, the Great Curse should help serve to make your chronicle a story of flawed heroes and savage adventure. If the rules ever seem to be at odds with that, err on the side of making a more enjoyable story.

When one of the player characters reaches 10 Limit, try to either choose a Limit Break that will immediately produce dramatic results, or delay the onset of Limit Break until it will. Going into Berserk Anger in the middle of a crowded metropolis will obviously carry drastic consequences, but if the characters are wandering through desolate wasteland, it won't be so interesting. It's also important to consider what impact a Limit Break will have on a player's investment in his character—forcing Chains of Honor on a silver-tongued scoundrel or Rampaging Avarice on a Solar who's made a point of self-denial for the good of his circle has the potential for interesting character development, but also risks negating the player's whole reason for creating that character in the first place. While the Great Curse *can* force a character into completely uncharacteristic acts, more often it tends to exaggerate personal quirks, flaws, or even virtues into dangerous exaggeration; a violent scoundrel is more likely to experience Berserk Anger than an even-tempered monk, while the monk is more likely to experience Chains of Honor than the scoundrel. When choosing a Virtue Flaw, don't try to invalidate what's cool about a character, but try instead to set them up for dramatic moments and character development. If you're uncertain of which Virtue Flaw to declare, ask the player.

**Duration:** Session. Crushing Doubt can be ended prematurely if the Solar is forced to face a significant danger alone and succeeds, or if he single-handedly saves an ally from a significant danger.

### Deliberate Cruelty

The Solar is consumed by cold cruelty, no longer recognizing others as worthy of respect or life. He will harm others without a second thought if he benefits from doing so, and has no aversion whatsoever to the use of torture, terror, and mutilation. His manner is cruel and scathing, even to friends and allies, mocking and verbally tormenting them as a matter of course.

**Duration:** Session. Deliberate Cruelty can be ended prematurely if the Solar's actions cause harm to someone he has a Major or Defining positive Tie towards.

### Heart of Flint

The Solar's heart is hardened against all emotion, becoming distant and utterly lacking in empathy or feeling. While in Limit Break, he is treated as having no Intimacies whatsoever, making his decisions based purely on what is most

efficient. His lack of empathy imposes a -2 penalty on all social rolls.

**Duration:** Session. Heart of Flint can be ended prematurely if the Solar's apathy allows a character that he holds a Major or Defining positive Tie towards to come into life-threatening danger.

### Rampaging Avarice

The Solar is filled with rampant greed, no longer willing to let anything come between him and what he wants. Whenever he is faced with the opportunity to indulge in a favorite pleasure or vice, he will do so. If someone would deny him a pleasure, he will take it by force, even if it would be trivial to obtain it otherwise. While he can restrain himself from committing acts of murder or rape, he will not hesitate to destroy property or physically harm others to get what he wants – but only after he's done enjoying it.

**Duration:** Session. Rampaging Avarice can be ended prematurely if the Solar harms an innocent in order to get what he wants—but only after he's done enjoying it.

# Dawn Caste

The darkness quails and cowers as the sun's first rays illuminate the world. The scuttling horrors of the night flee in the face of the dawn, retreating to those few places its light doesn't touch. This will not save them from the Dawn Caste, whose arrows, blades, and fists are as relentless as the rising sun. Peerless warriors one and all, these Solars exemplify martial might, taking battle with them wherever they go. They leave behind fields soaked with the blood of their enemies, red as sunrise.

In the First Age, the Dawn Caste served as the Old Realm's warriors, champions, and generals. They led its armies against all enemies—horrors of the Wyld, monsters from the Underworld, behemoths left behind by the enemies of the gods, and even the might of the Undersea. Their martial prowess kept the Realm and its peoples safe for countless centuries. During the Usurpation, the Bronze Tigers unleashed their terrifying might on the Dragon-Blooded, turning well-planned ambushes into slaughter. None of them went to their graves peacefully, and some of their restless shades haunt the Underworld to this day.

Creation's greatest warriors have returned to a world of strife, ready and eager to test their mettle. Whatever their choice of arms, the Solars of the Dawn Caste are triumphant masters—many of them are military polymaths, achieving brilliance in multiple styles of combat. On the battlefield, the Spears of Morning are engines of destruction, beautiful and terrible to behold. Not all lead troops into battle, but those who do turn their men into soldiers worthy of the Sun.

Most Dawns were warriors long before their Exaltation, but some have been drawn to war in other ways. For every career soldier or seasoned mercenary, there's a young farm girl who took up a blade to defend her home. A Dawn is generally the most skilled combatant in a Solar Circle, protecting his Circlemates and leading them in battle. If a situation requires force, the Dawn Caste can deliver.

**Anima Banner:** The Caste Mark of the Dawn is an eight-pointed sunburst of purest gold, gleaming on the brow. Dawn Caste anima banners are often pale gold or white,

tinged with rose red and subtle violet hues—the colors of the sunrise.

**Anima Effects:** The Unconquered Sun stood as the war-leader of the gods in antiquity, and his ferocity lives in the Essence of every Dawn Caste, sharpening their already-formidable battle prowess to an unmatched edge. See page 175 for details.

**Caste Abilities:** As befits such peerless masters of combat, the Swords of Heaven show talent for Archery, Awareness, Brawl/Martial Arts, Dodge, Melee, Resistance, Thrown, and War.

**Associations:** The season of spring, the full moon, the Maiden of Battles, the colors of lavender and saffron, the East, the element of Fire.

**Sobriquets:** Ascending Suns, Children of the Dawn, Light-bringers, Spears of Morning, Swords of Heaven, Bronze Tigers, the Forsaken (derogatory).

**Concepts:** Bodyguard, genius tactician, city guardsman, wandering swordsman, barbarian warlord, repentant brigand, martial monk, former slave gladiator, veteran soldier, daring young farm girl, swordsmith, arena brawler.

## THE FORSAKEN

In Immaculate fables, the Dawn Caste were the most cruel and brutal of the Anathema. These monsters served as the gauntleted fist of their fellows' blasphemous hegemony. When the righteous Dragon-Blooded rose up against this tyranny, the other Anathema abandoned their warrior dupes, leaving them to die. As a reminder of this betrayal, these Anathema are forever known as the Forsaken.

# Zenith Caste

The noonday sun hangs high over Creation, its glory visible to all who walk in the light. In its sight, there can be no shadow—only endless radiance. So it is with the Solars of the Zenith Caste, heroes chosen to exemplify the Sun's divine authority. These priest-kings are masters of oratory, but their actions speak even louder than their words—lesser priests might be satisfied with delivering sermons, but the Resplendent Suns let their faith shine through in their deeds as well. Virtue is the Zeniths' duty, and they do not shirk it.

Long ago, the Zenith Caste presided over the people of the Realm, handing down edicts inspired by their patron's boundless virtue. They led their subjects in prayer and celebration, stoking their faith and inspiring them to strive for new heights of righteousness. Before great decisions, the Zeniths sought guidance from their divine patron, praying to the Unconquered Sun for wisdom and insight. The night the Usurpation came, the Zeniths were the last to fall—their faith sustained them until the bitter end. Worn down by the ceaseless attacks of the Dragon-Blooded, they were as mountains eroded by the sea.

The Unyielding have returned to a world in dire need of their example. The Zeniths walk among all peoples, equally at home in princes' courts and beggars' shantytowns. They bring hope to the hopeless, faith to the faithless, and justice to the unrighteous. They endure whatever Creation throws at them, trusting in the might bestowed upon them by the Unconquered Sun to carry them through these dark times.

The Unconquered Sun speaks to each Zenith at the moment of Exaltation, urging them to make the world a righteous place as best they know how. Some Zeniths lived inspirational lives before Exaltation, acting as living examples for their fellow men. Others dwelt in iniquity before they came to the light—knowing the despair and pain that lies down that road, they do their best to keep others from choosing it. The Golden Bulls often act as a Circle's backbone, supporting their fellows and calling them back when they stray too far from the Sun's path. Some are their Circles' official leaders, and they trust in their patron to help them guide their fellows wisely.

**Anima Banner:** A Zenith Caste Mark is a brilliant golden circle, shining like the noonday sun on the brow. Zenith

anima banners are bonfires of bright white and majestic gold.

**Anima Effects:** The just and cleansing nature of the Unconquered Sun burns powerfully in the Essence of his priests, abhorrent to those things that lurk in darkness or rise from the dead. He also empowers the Pillars of Heaven to see righteousness done in the world, as best they know how. See page 176 for details.

**Caste Abilities:** Zeniths are beacons of leadership, inspiring their people with words and deeds. They excel in Athletics, Integrity, Performance, Lore, Presence, Resistance, Survival and War.

**Associations:** The season of summer, the half moon, the Maiden of Serenity, the colors of cobalt blue and gold, the South, the element of Earth.

**Sobriquets:** Resplendent Suns, the Unyielding, Pillars of the Sun, Hammers of Heaven, Golden Bulls, the Blasphemous (derogatory).

**Concepts:** Firebrand revolutionary, master orator, two-fisted laborer, village chief, wandering mendicant, peasant rebel, itinerant physician, former priest or shaman of another god, inspirational artist, runaway slave, hermit, musician.

## THE BLASPHEMOUS

In Immaculate fables, these monsters enslaved the innocent with unholy power, binding mortals in servitude to their dark gods. They presided over the foul rituals of the Anathema, indulging in slaughter, human sacrifice, and hedonistic debauchery. When the Dragon-Blooded rose up, they shattered this vile cult, and slaughtered its masters to the last man. In its place, they taught mortals of the Immaculate Philosophy, sharing with them righteousness and hope. The dead cult's masters became known as Blasphemous for their crimes.

# Twilight Caste

The proud institutions of the First Age lie in ruins, and knowledge is the province of an exclusive few. In this fallen world, a man can live and die knowing of nothing beyond his meager village. To the Solars of the Twilight Caste, this state of affairs is unacceptable—as scholars, craftsmen and sorcerers, it is their duty to carry the light of learning into the darkness of ignorance. They are among mankind’s most brilliant minds, and they are not content to spend their lives in a library, sanctum, or workshop—they need to be out in the world, putting their learning to use.

During the height of the First Age, the Arrows of Heaven created wonders of infrastructure, granting Creation’s people good health and lush farmlands. They built cities that reached to the heavens, and pooled their knowledge in schools and libraries so that all who wished to could learn. Many Twilights were mighty sorcerers as well, plumbing the depths of reality with great workings. As the Usurpation unfolded, many of the Copper Spiders hid their greatest works, leaving caches of lore and treasure for their eventual successors. Most remaining First Age artifacts survived as a result of a Twilight’s foresight and determination—though the Dragon-Blooded cut them down, fragments of their legacy survived.

Now the Twilights have returned, ready to reclaim their birthrights and build a glorious future. Whether they’re constructing a manse or solving a murder, they approach their work with keen insight and dogged persistence. They remember the glories of the lost age and know those glories can be rebuilt. The process will take the work of many mortal lifetimes, but none are better-suited to it than the Twilights.

Many Descending Suns were well-educated before their Exaltation, but far more important is a desire to learn. Whether they’re physicians, occultists, or savants, Heaven’s Lamps are marked by endless curiosity and undeniable brilliance. Twilights often do most of a Circle’s intellectual heavy lifting, recounting old lore to find a troublesome demon’s weakness or deduce a captured spy’s cipher. Twilights with a talent for artifice or sorcery supply their Circlemates with bound servitors and potent spells, or craft wondrous tools custom-made for their allies.

**Anima Banner:** The Twilight Caste Mark is a golden circle on the brow, filled in on top with the bottom half empty. Twilight animas are a splendid riot of evening colors, en-

compassing bright golds and reds, as well as subdued blues and violet hues.

**Anima Effects:** Recognizing the mark of the Unconquered Sun’s divine authority over the cosmos that burns within the Essence of every Twilight, the universe bends to protect Heaven’s Lamps from destruction. She may also bind lesser spirits to her service. See page 176 for details.

**Caste Abilities:** A Twilight is sagacious, agile-minded and curious, always working to push back the darkness of ignorance. Bureaucracy, Craft, Integrity, Investigation, Linguistics, Lore, Medicine, and Occult come naturally to them.

**Associations:** The season of autumn, the crescent moon, the Maiden of Secrets, the colors of orange and black, the West, the element of Wood.

**Sobriquets:** Descending Suns, Children of Twilight, Copper Spiders, Arrows of Heaven, Solar Lightning, Heaven’s Lamps, the Unclean (derogatory).

**Concepts:** Radical scholar, destitute student, master geomancer, child prodigy, architect, cunning tailor, blacksmith, demonologist, relentless detective, court astrologer, young scavenger lord, master chef, village wise woman.

## THE UNCLEAN

In Immaculate fables, these Anathema were by far the most avaricious and power-hungry of their kind. In their wickedness, they struck bargains with demons and other vile spirits, gaining forbidden knowledge and the secrets of darkest sorcery. No sacrifice was too extreme for these Anathema—they fed entire cities to their patrons, and allowed horrors from beyond to sate carnal hungers on their own flesh. In the end, their ill-gotten power could not save them from the Ten Thousand Dragons, who stood fast against their wicked magic and slew them. To this day, they are remembered as the Unclean—forever stained by their perversions and by the vile forces they bargained with.

# Night Caste

Darkness seems welcoming to those who cannot abide the Sun's light. The night is home to many threats, from thieves and murderers to outcast gods and the walking dead. Some think themselves safe, for the eyes of the Sun are not upon them. They are wrong. The Solars of the Night Caste are the hidden hands of the Unconquered Sun—they fight the enemies of righteousness on their foes' terms, using the arts of spycraft and assassination to bring their quarry low. While some might think their methods unsavory, the Iron Wolves know they're simply doing what must be done.

At the height of the Solars' reign, the Night Caste kept the Old Realm safe from threats within and without. They spied on the princes of Hell, kept a watchful eye on rogue Exalted, and assassinated faerie lords in their courts. The Daggers of Heaven kept a hand on the pulse of the world's criminals, breaking up crime syndicates and watching their fellows for signs of subversion. When the Dragon-Blooded struck, many Nights vanished into the shadows. They waged a bloody guerrilla war against the usurpers, striking whenever the Terrestrials grew complacent. But even they couldn't hide forever, and one by one the Hidden Suns fell to Dragon-Blooded hunters.

The Solars of the Night Caste have returned to a world where the shadows have grown longer, and the things hiding in them have grown more vicious. They meet the challenge with sharpened blades, stalking through dark alleys and abandoned mausoleums in search of their quarry. But assassination is not their only means of dealing with such foes. It's no coincidence that the Nights are also famed for their skills at spycraft—they know that the right piece of information slipped to the right person at the right time can lay any foe low.

Nights are used to unconventional methods. Some were outlaws prior to their Exaltation, and some made a living hunting outlaws down. Others were information-brokers, members of secret societies, or spies. All Nights share an appreciation for subtle methods, regardless of who they were in their mortal lives. The Iron Wolves are often a Circle's eyes and ears, watching enemy movements and reporting back with their findings. They excel at finding effective and unorthodox solutions—though the legality of those solutions is often sketchy at best.

**Anima Banner:** A Night's Caste Mark is an empty golden circle on the brow. Night Caste animas are pale gold with hues of ghostly white, soft violet, and luminous grey.

**Anima Effects:** It is as difficult to find a Night Caste in a den of villains as it is to find the Unconquered Sun at midnight; shadows bend to conceal them, and their very anima colludes to keep their location and identity a secret. See page 176 for details

**Caste Abilities:** Those of the Night Caste show great talent for Athletics, Awareness, Dodge, Investigation, Larceny, Ride, Stealth, and Socialize—Abilities which allow them to work in secret against the enemies of the Sun.

**Associations:** The season of winter, the new moon, the Maiden of Endings, the colors of violet and grey, the North, the element of Water.

**Sobriquets:** Hidden Suns, Concealing Shadows, Night-bringers, Iron Wolves, the Daggers of Heaven, the Wretched (derogatory).

**Concepts:** Cat burglar, escaped fugitive, bounty hunter, nobleman's mistress, confidence man, vigilante hero, neglected youngest sister, smuggler, former prostitute, spy extraordinaire, underworld kingpin, assassin, highwayman, acrobat.

## THE WRETCHED

In Immaculate fables, some among the Anathema were so corrupt that they could not stand the touch of sunlight. These piteous beings served as enforcers, skulking unseen through cities and slave-pens to stifle dissent. As dawn broke, they left behind the mutilated bodies of their victims as a warning to all who would challenge the Anathema. Their cowardly tactics were no match for the Dragon-Blooded, who drove them from their lightless lairs and brought them swift death. In memory of their craven cowardice, these monsters are forever known as the Wretched.

# Eclipse Caste

Few events in Creation are rarer or more portentous than a solar eclipse. The sun, the moon, and the stars share the sky, united in a grand display of celestial harmony. It is the duty of the Eclipse Caste to bring such harmony to the rest of Creation. As diplomats, they travel to the far reaches of the world—and beyond—braving the wilds and treating with strange peoples. The treaties they forge help bind the world together, encouraging the exchange of both riches and ideas. As ministers, they run cartels and nations with skill and aplomb, expanding their interests far and wide. As explorers, they seek out new opportunities for themselves, their Circlemates, and Creation. Regardless of his surroundings, an Eclipse is confident, versatile, and eager to rise to any challenge.

The Eclipses of the First Age kept the enormous Old Realm running at peak efficiency, ensuring that its bureaucracies were swift and fair. They traveled the length and breadth of Creation as goodwill ambassadors, fostering understanding between disparate peoples. Their journeys took them into the dream-courts of the Fair Folk, the silent halls of the dead, and even the maddened streets of Hell. They forged alliances between spirits and men, bonds of trust and mutual profit. In the face of Dragon-Blooded treachery, the Eclipses turned to their allies for shelter and protection, but the usurpers' influence reached far and wide; faced with betrayal at every turn, the Eclipses fought for their lives, and lost.

Harmony and understanding are rarities in the Age of Sorrows. The Crowned Suns have returned to a world wracked by centuries of strife, where treachery and duplicity are commonplace. Undaunted, they have begun to rebuild what was lost, ending wars and forging alliances. They broker agreements between gods and men, pacify faeries with ancient stories, and even act as ambassadors for the living in the land of the dead. All the while, the Eclipses seek out remnants of the First Age—living or otherwise—to integrate into the framework of society. Lost peoples and ancient wonders hide in the wilds of Creation, and the Eclipses are eager to find them.

Eclipses are people-savvy—they might be the sort who make friends everywhere they go, or they might simply be keen students of the human condition. A wizened society matron is as likely to become an Eclipse as a well-traveled merchant or a cunning diplomat. Eclipses are often the public face of their Circle, negotiating on its behalf and representing its interests. Their adaptability and knowledge of the world makes them an invaluable

asset, whether the Circle is acclimating to the mannerisms of a foreign court or trekking through the jungle in search of a First Age ruin.

**Anima Banner:** The Eclipse Caste Mark is a disk within a circle, both of brilliant gold. Their animas resemble the corona of the sun during an eclipse—brilliant whites and golds, sparkling at the core and growing filmy and diaphanous at the edges.

**Anima Effects:** During an eclipse, the Unconquered Sun stands surrounded by all the splendor of Heaven—he and the world join together to create the mightiest of omens. The Eclipse Caste is likewise given sanction to command the glory of the world, and to bind it together in the cause of righteousness. See page 176 for details.

**Caste Abilities:** An Eclipse is as at home in the court as he is in the wilds, prepared to speak with men and spirits alike as he blazes new trails. Members of this Caste show talent for Bureaucracy, Larceny, Linguistics, Occult, Presence, Ride, Sail, and Socialize.

**Associations:** The period of Calibration, the gibbous moon, the Maiden of Journeys, the color of silver, the Center, the element of Air.

**Sobriquets:** Crowned Suns, Harmonious Voices, Wheels of Peace, Solar Winds, Quicksilver Falcons, Quills of Heaven, Heaven's Voices, the Deceivers (derogatory).

**Concepts:** Translator, ambitious young noble, village shaman, diplomat, merchant prince, adventurous sailor, royal advisor, gentleman explorer, speaker-to-gods, professional courier, government minister.

## THE DECEIVERS

In Immaculate fables, the empire of the Anathema was built on lies, and these monsters were its architects. Their honeyed tongues could convince men to abandon virtue and give themselves willingly to depravity. For centuries, they kept their slaves in a fog of lies, calling blasphemy art and murder justice. When the Dragon-Blooded rose up, they drove these Anathema into the wilderness and hunted them down like the animals they were. The fruits of their wickedness have forever branded them the Deceivers.

## Attributes

Attributes represent a character's innate aptitudes and talents—the raw capacity of his mind or body rather than any learned skill or cultivated technique. Attributes are divided into three classes: Physical, Mental, and Social. The Physical Attributes of Strength, Dexterity, and Stamina reflect the raw potential of the character's body. The Social Attributes of Charisma, Manipulation, and Appearance define his innate ability to sway and influence others. The Mental Attributes of Perception, Intelligence, and Wits embody the intellectual and intuitive faculties of the character's mind.

For mortal and Exalted characters, Attributes are rated on a scale of one to five dots.

### Attribute Rating

- The character's Attribute is on the low end of the human average, or worse.
- .. The character's Attribute is on the upper end of the human average—not remarkable, but what an ordinary person might be expected to have
- ... The character's Attribute is a talent, visibly outstanding to others—he is “strong” or “smart” or “charismatic.”
- .... The character's Attribute is truly extraordinary, putting even other notable individuals to shame. He casually out-wrestles strong men, outwits smart ones, or outshines the merely charismatic.
- ..... The character's Attribute is at the apex of human potential—it's the stuff of legend! The character is a serious contender for world's strongest man, a once-in-a-generation genius, or a born leader whose charisma will change the course of history.

### Strength

Strength represents a character's raw physical power, the sheer might of what he can achieve by muscle alone. In combat, Strength helps determine the damage a character can deal with his **withering** attacks, as well as how well he grapples foes. It's also used when a character wishes to lift, break, or heave any objects or obstacles that might stand in his way.

### Dexterity

Dexterity is grace, agility, and coordination. In combat, Dexterity determines both the accuracy of a character's attacks and his faculty to defend against enemy attacks, as well as being used for movement that relies on swift or nimble maneuvering across terrain. It's also used for actions that require precise control of physical motions, such as hiding from a patrolling sentry or picking a merchant prince's pocket.

### Stamina

Stamina is a measure of vitality. In combat, having a high Stamina rating reduces the damage of **withering** attacks. It's also used to fight off poison or disease, and more generally to endure the effects of anything that might weaken or assail the body, be it lengthy physical exertion, sleep deprivation, suffocation, exposure to the elements, or starvation.

### Charisma

Charisma represents a character's ability to express and articulate his beliefs or commands, convincing others to see things his way or follow his orders. It's used primarily in social influence when a character wishes to make a sincere argument that he genuinely believes in, but can also be used in combat to lead armies from the front with rallying, inspiring speeches.

### Manipulation

Manipulation is a character's innate talent for deception, passing off lies as the truth, or simply telling people what he knows they want to hear. It's used primarily in social influence when a character wishes to make a false argument, whether through outright lying or more complicated verbal misdirection, as well as any argument where the character is purely trying to evoke a desired response rather than to express his own feelings or outlook. It also represents a character's ability to remain composed and not reveal his true feelings, contributing to his Guile rating.

### Appearance

Appearance is a measure of a character's striking looks and his ability to use them. Generally, this means a measure of how attractive the character is, but for certain characters (see the Hideous merit, p. 162), Appearance measures how intimidatingly unpleasant the character's looks are. Appearance is used when a character wishes to influence others through looks, beauty, overwhelming presence, or first impressions rather than reasoned debate or emotional manipulation.

### Perception

Perception rates both the raw quality of a character's senses and his faculty for comprehending what he perceives. Perception is used for noticing details, whether it is a strange plume of smoke over a far-off village, a black-clad assassin

lying in wait, a subtle tell in a courtier's manner of speech, or a fragmentary clue at the scene of a crime.

### Intelligence

Intelligence measures a character's ability to think logically and rationally. It covers analytical thinking, drawing connections between disparate pieces of information, recalling pieces of knowledge or useful memories at opportune moments, and making judgments based on rigid logic. It is the province of strategoi, sorcerers, and savants.

### Wits

Wits rates a character's intuition, common sense, and ability to react quickly to new circumstances or while under fire. In combat, Wits is used for the Join Battle roll that determines a character's starting Initiative, and it also factors into a character's capacity to remain unmoved by persuasion that goes against his intuitive understanding of the world, contributing to his Resolve rating.

## Abilities

Abilities represent skills that have been developed and honed through training, education, and experience. While an Attribute embodies a character's raw aptitude for succeeding at a given task, an Ability represents the skill and

### YES, YOU CAN TAKE A 5

It's incredibly rare for someone in the world of Exalted to have an Attribute or Ability rated at five dots. A professional soldier enlisted in a standing army most likely has Melee ••, while a cunning courtier whose web of lies and blackmail have snared an entire court in his influence might only have Manipulation •••. A character who has five dots of raw talent in an Attribute or five dots of skill in an Ability is a prodigy even among other prodigies of his field, a living legend whose feats might defy belief.

Sounds like the Exalted, doesn't it?

If you want your character to be one of the strongest men in the world, the greatest savant in generations of scholarship, or an unsurpassed master of the martial arts, you can take five dots. While we encourage you to let your character concept define the ratings of their Attributes and Abilities, rather than the other way around, it is totally valid to buy a trait all the way up to five at character creation if that's what makes sense for your character.



technique she uses in applying that aptitude—thus, both are used in calculating the dice pool for any given action.

For mortal and Exalted characters, Abilities are rated on a scale of zero to five dots.

#### **Ability Rating      Meaning**

0	The character has no training or significant experience in this Ability.
•	The character has been trained in the fundamentals of the Ability, or is experienced enough to be familiar with using it. This is the level of apprentices, interested amateurs, and dabblers.
..	The character has trained in the Ability to a professional level, or has experience equivalent to a professional. This is the level of most soldiers, healers, savants, and merchants in the world of <b>Exalted</b> .
...	The character's training in the Ability surpasses the competence expected even of professionals, marking her as an elite or veteran in her field.
....	The character's mastery of the Ability sets her above even experts in her field. Seasoned veteran soldiers pale before her prowess; the top physicians of noble families consult her for guidance; clever and wealthy merchants envy her business acumen.
.....	The character is a legendary master of the Ability—or else, she will be once word of her skill spreads. She has a comprehensive understanding and utter command of every aspect of her skill.

While all characters benefit from their Abilities, the Solar Exalted are capable of drawing even greater power out of their skills. Practiced mastery and the empowering Essence of their Exaltation allow them to achieve feats of supernatural prowess, called Charms. Each Solar Charm is governed by an Ability, requiring a certain minimum rating in that Ability before it can be learned. See Chapter Six for more information on Solar Charms.

#### **Archery**

*Konoko heard the demon's wings before she saw it, the unearthly sound of molten obsidian beating against the air. It slashed through the sky like a bolt of black lightning, bringing the shadow-feathered ravens that were its progeny in its wake. The archer reached for the first of many arrows from her quiver and sent it into flight, her hands blurring into a*

*steady rhythm of nock, aim, release. With her first volley, she had put out one eye of the demon named Karsa, and pierced the hearts of his entire flock of heartgorgers. As it howled its pain across the horizon, Konoko nocked another arrow.*

#### **This Ability is important in combat.**

Archery is the discipline of using ranged weapons. The bow is the dominant form of ranged weapon in Creation in all its different varieties, from the simple wooden self bows used by subsistence hunters to the composite bows carried by the Realm's archers. However, Archery also applies to the use of more exotic weapons. In the South, weapons fueled by a reagent called firedust shoot streamers of flame rather than arrows, and in the North, the nation-states of the Haslanti League favor the crossbow.

#### **Athletics**

*"Anath—"*

*Before the word had left the Immaculate's tongue, Novia Claro was in motion, vaulting through the teahouse window in a burst of shattered glass. There were reinforcements stationed outside, ringing the teahouse to cut off any route of escape—so she went up, scaling the wall as if she had made the climb a hundred times. With a single bound, Novia made her way to the treetops above, springing from branch to branch as she made good her escape. As she vanished into the foliage and the night mist, she cursed herself for not thinking to bring the cup of black tea with her.*

#### **This Ability is important in combat.**

Athletics is the discipline of physical fitness and acrobatic maneuverability. It is used in performing feats of strength, such as lifting up a fallen cart or bending the metal bars of a prison cage. It is also used for movement both in and out of combat—racing towards a distant enemy, jumping over a gaping chasm, climbing a brick wall, and swimming against a powerful tide are all uses of Athletics.

#### **Awareness**

*Silver Dusk Returning felt something was wrong the instant she stepped out of the restaurant, but didn't let it change the pace of her stride. It wasn't until she had taken a feigned wrong turn into a dead-end alley before she addressed the figure tailing her in the darkness. "I know you've been following me. I heard the knives when you drew them five minutes ago, and you reek of black adder venom." She turned around, smiling broadly, making sure to lock eyes with the point in the darkness where she knew her would-be assassin hid. "And, from how hard you're breathing, I know you're slower than me. Whereas you," she said, unsheathing a*

*length of golden metal from its leather scabbard, “know nothing about me. Who do you think wins this fight?”*

### This Ability is important in combat.

Awareness is the practiced discipline of alertness and wariness of one’s surroundings. It is used for rolls to notice or pick up on sensory information, but is also important in combat, adding to the Join Battle roll that determines a character’s starting Initiative and allowing her to notice hidden enemies.

### Brawl

*The tyrant lizard bit down hard on Noxx’s right shoulder, huge fangs striking sparks off steel-alloyed jade. “All right, I gave you that one,” the Dawn Caste said, gritting his teeth against the pain, “but I’m getting bored.” Drawing his front leg back, he pivoted around the weight of the tyrant lizard’s jaw, dragging it down with his dropping arm. In the same instant, he threw a crushing jab with his left hand, puncturing the giant lizard’s eye and smashing through its skull to bury his fist in its brains.*

### This Ability is important in combat.

Brawl is used by unarmed combatants who fight based on instinct and a natural talent for violence, rather than any particular discipline or style. It’s used for punches, kicks, head-butts, shoulder thrusts, grappling, and all similar methods of using one’s own body as a weapon. Brawl also conveys an aptitude for brawling aids such as brass knuckles and improvised weaponry such as chairs and broken bottles. In addition to covering attacks, Brawl can also be used to calculate a character’s Parry rating in combat, although parrying a weapon capable of inflicting lethal damage with one’s bare hands requires a stunt.

### Bureaucracy

*Few understood the importance the numbers in Rising Echo’s ledgers held for the Lianhua Principality. A decimal slashed from a tax rate, and prosperity followed. So many talents of jade held in reserve from the coffers today, and Lianhua’s people would have food in a year of blighted fields. A slight increase to the tariff rate, and the flow of heroin from Guild caravans dwindled down to nothing. Few understood the importance of Rising Echo’s ledgers, and that was just the way he wanted it.*

Bureaucracy represents a character’s acumen in organizational, mercantile, and legal endeavors. Bureaucracy is used to assess and evaluate the resources—both wealth and manpower—available to one’s self or one’s rivals, as well as to understand the legal codes of a society or the bureaucratic structure of an organization.

### Craft

*The ethereal sound of barking boomed over the clangor of Yosef’s workshop—the Wyld Hunt had found him at last. He silenced the alarm with a pat on the head of the lion-dog statuette, and took stock of his resources. A daiklave of black jade and behemoth-bone—no good, its blade still in need of tempering in glacial meltwater. A pouch of ornate eggs carved from yasal crystal, a starving, half-mad demon caged within each brittle shell... that might be useful. An orichalcum gauntlet, inlaid with the fangs of a storm serpent... that would do nicely.*

*By the time the Dragon-Blooded reached the Twilight’s lair, they had no idea the trouble they were in for.*

### This Ability is necessary to create artifacts.

Craft is used to create or repair objects through skilled labor, whether forging a sword, cutting the gem for a merchant prince’s brooch, or planning and overseeing the construction of a temple. The Exalted and other supernatural beings are capable of using this Ability to create artifacts, treasures of legendary quality that possess powerful magic of their own.

When a character first buys Craft, she gains an automatic specialty in her area of expertise. Potential areas of expertise include weapon forging, armoring, architecture, tailoring, woodwork, carpentry, cooking, and anything else a player might come up with, covering similarly broad (but not all-encompassing) concepts. Characters cannot craft things for which they don’t have a relevant specialty. Additional Craft specialties can be purchased as normal.

For mundane crafts projects, Storytellers are encouraged to be generous in interpreting logical edge cases for uses of Craft. If a character needs to repair a horseshoe, but only has Craft (Armoring), it’s reasonable to declare that the character’s Craft rating encompasses basic metal fabrication and to allow her to use her Craft rating anyway, perhaps at +1 difficulty.

### Dodge

*It happened in a second—the click of a pressure plate, the oncoming rush of air, the countless guillotine blades descending from their niches in the ceiling of the subterranean passage. A second was all Fen needed. As the first blade descended, he flipped backwards, finding the few inches of safety between it and the next. The Shattered Mendicant of Dreaming Masks’ manse was well-defended, but it would take more than traps to deny Handsome Fen his revenge.*

**This Ability is important in combat.**

Dodge is the skill of evading one's enemies, deftly maneuvering out of the way of attacks or managing to avoid the dangers of fighting on hazardous terrain. In combat, a character's Dodge rating contributes to her Evasion, but is also used to escape from close-quarter conflicts with enemies or to take cover from the attacks of far-off foes.

**Integrity**

*The faerie queen's eyes were pinpoints of light, colorful stars scattered carelessly across the swirling darkness of her countenance. These eyes surveyed Lance of Starfallen Justice as he entered her boudoir, with a polite nod to his salamander-headed guide. The warrior's polished orichalcum hauberk was as splendid as his bearing, and the constellation of the queen's eyes could see the tongues of fire that burnt in his soul—surely a man to be tempted by power and glory. With a wave she called up gossamer marvels from her treasure vaults: a mirror that whispered profound and terrible wisdoms; an ewer styled as a dragon's head that held liquid immortality; a black diamond that could beckon forth countless hobgoblin servants.*

*Lance of Starfallen Justice regarded her display politely, as he took a seat to negotiate for the souls of the villagers imprisoned in her palace. "No thank you, fair lady."*

**This Ability is important in social influence.**

Integrity is the Ability to remain resolute in one's beliefs, principles, and decisions when they are challenged, an active discipline of self-assurance and refuting opposing arguments. It contributes to a character's Resolve, which is used to resist the persuasion of socially skilled characters.

**Investigation**

*Tenth Reed took a long drag on his hand-rolled cigarette. It had been weeks since the Council of Entities had contacted him, and the facts of the case seemed plain enough—the ashes of a burnt letter, a midnight getaway, a murdered husband. But still, he thought, there was something missing. If Izaya Nora had run off with some paramour, it would explain him killing his merchant prince lover, but not the apothecary robbery that had his lackeys' hands all over it, or the faint scent of rotten honeysuckle that clung to the stables like cheap gin on a drunkard's breath.*

*Realization hit hard, as if the cigarette's embers had suddenly cast a new light on the case. The stab wounds on Izaya's husband were too clean—they had been made after the fact, to cover up the real cause of death, a dose of hemlock stolen from a disreputable medicine shop. The secrecy, the betrayal by poison, the otherworldly smell—this was no affair, and the*

*author of the burnt letter had not been human. It was a ritual, a demon-summoning, and it clearly went further than the Council had imagined when they contracted him.*

Investigation is used to uncover hidden or obscured details through close surveillance or examination, whether it is searching a magistrate's chamber for a hidden letter, unearthing clues at the scene of a murder, or reconstructing the details of a crime from the evidence presented before a magistrate at court.

**Larceny**

*Three Shores was a quiet village between Ragara Akina's estate and the Imperial City. A few rice paddies and the hovels of the peasants who tended them; nothing that would delay her journey to deliver the execution orders for magistrate Koizu to the capital.*

*Mongoose had other plans. The lanky thief had no great love for the law, but she knew Koizu for a fair judge. She would not let House Ragara dispose of him simply to further their designs on the throne. Disguised beneath a mud-stained shawl, a false hunchback, and enough make-up to add decades to her face, she approached the Dynastic procession, grabbing for the hem of the Dragon-Blood's robes in seeming supplication.*

*By the time Ragara Akina realized she was short one execution decree and several obols of jade, such was her rage that she scarcely noticed the urchin girl sleeping in the alleyways, resting on a bunched-up shawl.*

Larceny covers a range of talents that fall under the general penumbra of criminal activity. Pickpocketing, lock picking, and sleight of hand are all uses of Larceny that rely on physical deftness, but it also applies to more intellectual tasks such as creating an effective disguise, hiding evidence at the scene of a crime, or navigating a society's criminal underworld.

**Linguistics**

*"Trees that flowered in Spring,  
as your children marched away,  
now paint their graves red.  
Mothers, if you cry,  
salt will fill their coffers full.  
Burn with rage instead.  
Stain the earth with red.  
Call your children back to sleep  
with their killer's death."*

—Excerpt from the poem believed to have incited the overthrow of Nyala's satrap, authored by the so-called Mirror Flag.



### This Ability is important in social influence.

Linguistics is the Ability used to compose works of writing—literary epics, poetic verse, propaganda pamphlets, or even a simple conversational letter. It can be used to influence the thoughts and feelings of characters who read the work using social actions. **A character must have at least one dot of Linguistics to be able to read.**

#### Lore

*“Once, mankind understood the workings of the world, and lived in an age of wonders beyond our comprehension.” Ineffable Blossom said to her Circlemates, her eyes dark from sleepless nights of study. “The greatest libraries of the Realm are but droplets from that ocean of lost wisdom. The wonders of the Lookshy foundries are paltry toys compared to the treasures of our forebears.” She brandished a map annotated with countless markings from weeks of study. Scribbled in the margins were broken ciphers, solved equations, and entire fields of mathematics she had reinvented, centered around a bold, red X. “Which is why, once we have delved into the ruins of Is-Tagath, we will wield power beyond the dreams of any who’d oppose us. And I’ve found just where those ruins lay.”*

### This Ability is necessary to create artifacts.

Lore represents a character’s understanding of the world, covering academic disciplines of history, mathematics, geography, literature, science, philosophy, and similar scholarly pursuits. It can be used both to recall useful pieces of academic knowledge, as well as to perform scholarly research in a library or archive. It is also important in the forging of artifacts and the raising of manses. Players must note the subject of their character’s education when selecting Lore, as this impacts the scope of what the Ability may cover for them (see p. 237 for more details on using Lore)—Lore 5 alone makes the character a world-class savant, but doesn’t mean she knows *everything*. Lore areas of expertise can be expanded with specialties and roleplaying.

#### Martial Arts

*Sagacious Palm had wandered the Burning Rivers since his brother had killed their sifu. Black Peach Heart had always been the better fighter of the two—stronger, faster, more ruthless. When he decided to claim Lady Tiger’s position as leader of their dojo by treachery, Sagacious Palm was powerless to stop him. Now, Sagacious Palm’s journey found him back where he began, at the foot of the cracked stone*

steps leading up to a red-tiled pagoda. “I would have words with the master of this dojo,” he announced to the wind, throwing off the traveler’s cloak that concealed a lean, muscled body. “Tell him his brother is returned.”

*At once, the dojo’s doors opened, and his brother’s gang of thugs came rushing down the stairs. Sagacious Palm caught the curved blade of his first assailant between his hands, twisting it in a Crane style kata to send both the weapon and its wielder flying. A spinning kick swept the legs from under a pair of chain-swinging brutes and sent them tumbling. Then the mob of attackers held back, unsure of what to do. Sagacious Palm dispatched them with a powerful kiai that turned the dojo’s steps to dust.*

“Well, well, little brother,” sneered Black Peach Heart, finally stepping out to face him. “You’re sure to make Lady Tiger proud beating drunken bandits and peasant’s sons. Now,” he said, hefting up a tetsubo studded with steel spikes, “you can join her in death!”

#### This Ability is important in combat.

Martial Arts covers formal study of martial systems, such as the styles detailed in Chapter Seven. In addition to providing mastery of unarmed techniques, Martial Arts also facilitates the use of certain exotic weapons, such as the staff, the rope dart, sais, and hook swords. Like Brawl, it can be used to calculate a character’s Parry Defense.

Martial Arts cannot be taken as a Caste ability, though it may be Favored (and from there chosen as Supernal) as normal. Like Craft, when a character first buys this Ability, she gains an automatic specialty in the style her dots represent mastery of. Chapter Seven contains a number of example martial arts styles characters might choose.

Additional styles may be purchased as specialties as normal, if the character trains with an appropriate teacher for the style.

#### Medicine

“Wake up, old friend,” Khabran said. “You don’t get to die just yet.” The freckled woman’s eyes slowly blinked open, as Khabran let cool water trickle into her mouth.

“Khab... you idiot, get away...” The physician gave her some more water, but showed no sign of leaving the patient’s side.

*After a few more swallows, Yarnsaxa could finally speak. “Khabran, I have the plague... just leave me behind.” Her friend’s smile caught her entirely off guard, even more than the golden mark that now shone on his brow.*

“Not any more, you don’t.”

Medicine is used to diagnose and treat wounds, sickness, poisoning, and other ailments. In the Age of Sorrows, the state of Creation’s medical practice is primitive, with bone saws, sutures, and scalpels representing the most advanced medical technology a physician might have access to. In some of Creation’s cultures, methods of folk medicine such as herbal treatments, acupuncture, or therapeutic yoga take the place of traditional surgical implements, and can be just as effective, if not more so, in treating certain ailments.

#### Melee

*“It can’t be helped, then,” said Ragara Anja. With a single fluid motion, she drew her daiklave into the path of the axe-blow, splitting the blood-stained steel in half against the imperishable orichalcum edge. Her stroke continued in an effortless follow-through, cleaving the madman’s head from his body in a flash of crimson. With a disdainful flick of her wrist, Anja shook the drops of blood from her blade before returning it to its sheath. “How unpleasant.”*

#### This Ability is important in combat.

Melee is the Ability of hand-to-hand weaponry, covering swords, knives, hammers, axes, lances, and any other weapon used in close quarters. It is used both to attack with these weapons and to calculate a character’s Parry rating when she blocks enemy attacks.

#### Occult

*When the rest of his circle had left the chamber, Shen lingered a moment. “I can see you, you know,” he said into the empty corners of the room, speaking to the revolving congeries of eyes and pedipalps that hung invisible in the air. “Who are you spying for? Mnemon? The Silent Ministry? If you tell me, I may be merciful.” The demon ceased its revolutions, and let out a horrible ululation before it fell on him.*

*The Twilight Caste’s Circlemates rushed back when they heard the monstrous screech, and were met with a blinding flash of sapphire that bled through the edges of the closed door. Volfer smashed it off its hinges, revealing only Shen contemplating a small pile of smoking, silver sand.*

“What happened?” asked Perfect Soul.

“Nothing to be concerned with,” the sorcerer replied.

### This Ability is necessary to create artifacts or to use sorcery.

Occult represents an instinctive facility for dealing with Creation's mystical and otherworldly elements. It describes a rapport with the uncanny and things normally held beyond mortal ken. This includes understanding of the nature, powers, and ways of gods, ghosts, and demons, but also a sense of those things beyond the ken of Heaven and the gods. Occult is vital to the exorcist and the shaman, whose arts cannot be taught to those lacking proper sensitivity, and also to the sorcerer, whose senses pierce the veils of the universe.

#### Performance

*"My word is final," snarled the mountain god. "All who climb my heights or cross my paths will die, and their screams will be all the prayer I need. Why should I let you pass, when my shrine has gone untended so many long centuries?"*

*With that ultimatum, there was no more place for words. Yomiko reached for her sanxian, and began to pluck a sorrowful melody from its strings, a song of regret and loves long lost. Something new began to show in the countenance of the crag-faced god, a glimmer of surprise beneath the anger. Yomiko did not know what words she sang—only that they came to her lips, ancient syllables of the Old Realm called up from the memories of a past life. She knew not what they meant, but when she saw the first droplet of molten stone well up in the god's eye, she knew he had heard the song before.*

*"Very well," he conceded, his voice choked with sobs. "They may pass. I missed you, Shining Bodhisattva. It has been far, far too long."*

### This Ability is important in social influence.

Performance is the Ability of influencing others through creative or artistic displays, covering both traditional forms of artistic expression such as music, dance, and poetry, as well as rhetorical speaking through prepared speeches or oratory. It can be used to influence the thoughts and feelings of other characters through social actions.

#### Presence

*"Let me make myself understood," Perfect Soul said to the mixed throng of princelings, captains, and merchants that gathered in the smoky opium den that was House Khidara-in-exile. The mark of her Exaltation still shone fresh on her brow, golden light limning her features with furious dignity. "Jiara has been betrayed. The Realm lines their vaults with our gemstones, swells their ranks with our sons and daughters, and spits upon a throne that is rightfully mine. I intend*

*to take it back, with the iron of our swords and the might of the gods. Are there any of you with enough of Jiara in your veins to join me?"*

*Every voice in the room—from the scions of House Khidara's former protectorates, to the soldiers of the royal guard, and even to the grey-bearded elder lost to opium dreams over in the corner—shouted its allegiance to Perfect Soul, the true sovereign of Jiara.*

### This Ability is important in social influence.

Presence is the Ability to effectively lead, intimidate, or persuade through force of personality. It can be used to influence the thoughts and feelings of other characters through social actions. When a hot-blooded general rallies her troops with an inspiring battle cry, a witty conversationalist charms those around her over the course of a party, or a thief blurts a convincing explanation for how she came into possession of a carved jade idol, all of these characters are using Presence.

#### Resistance

*Stone Grey slumped in his cage, managing to find a comfortable position to rest his hands behind his head despite the manacles—being imprisoned was restful, after all. His captors had first tried crude intimidation, bludgeoning his face with truncheons and breaking bones. As if he hadn't faced worse pain than that living on the open tundra. Next had come the slower, subtler torments—days without food, nights without sleep. He certainly would have enjoyed the steaks his interrogators dangled before him in exchange for answers, but it would take more than a little pain in the belly for him to betray his Circle. Finally, his interrogators forced a blue liquid down his throat, a concoction of herbs and powdered tortoise shell said to extract the truth from even the tightest lips. "This isn't going to work, you know," the Icewalker said, after gulping it down.*

### This Ability is important in combat.

Resistance is the learned Ability of coping with pain, disease, fatigue, and other forms of physical weakness. In combat, it is useful for fighting through the deleterious effects of poisons used by dishonorable foes, or weathering the perils of fighting over hazardous terrain.

#### Ride

*Prince Diamond kicked down on the flanks of his steed, hastening down the winding path of obsidian that cut through the desert. He regretted such ill treatment of his mount, but the spirit who kept the ancient road was capricious, and had promised sole right of passage to whomever could complete its span first—and the Guild's caravan, drawn by a dozen*

*thoroughbreds, had far too great a lead on him. It had already reached Night's Bluff, where the path descended the side of a mountain over a dozen zig-zagging switchbacks. Drawing in the reins, Prince Diamond paused at the top of the bluff, contemplating an impossible scheme. "What do you think, Ember?"*

*With his mount's whinnied approval, Prince Diamond made a flying leap off the face of the mountain, man and horse plunging down hundreds of feet together. With every flick of his reins, Ember dropped in a bounding arc, hooves skidding up sparks against the stone before beginning another jump. Finally, all four legs made solid contact with the obsidian pavement at the mountain's base, and Prince Diamond let his steed break out into full gallop. The Eclipse Caste looked back, and permitted himself a slight grin. The rival merchant prince still had many, many switchbacks to go.*

#### **This Ability is important in combat.**

Ride is used to ride on a horse, ox, or more exotic mount, as well as to maneuver in vehicles such as chariots or carts that are led by horses or beasts of burden. In combat, the Ride skill is used for moving across the battlefield while mounted.

#### **Sail**

*Darktide cursed the horizon folk loudly as he spun the wheel, banking his warship out of the path of a living hurricane. He knew his ship was fast enough to make it to safe harbor before the horizon folk could take notice of it—but it was not his life he was concerned for. Beneath the lashes of its fae masters, the hurricane was advancing on the small island of Diquis, whose natives tended coffee plants on the slopes of a sunken volcano. They would have no hope against the oncoming storm—no hope except him. Moray Darktide barked new orders to his crew—orders to intercept. He would sail straight into the heart of the living storm, and teach its riders to fear the taste of orichalcum.*

Sail is used to captain a seafaring vessel through the great oceans and rivers that make up much of Creation. It is used both for maneuvering a vessel and for plotting a course using sea charts and navigational instruments. While the vast majority of vehicles in the Second Age are ocean-faring ships, the Sail Ability can also be used to pilot more exotic vessels, such as the hot-air balloon skyships used by the Haslanti League or many of the ancient, wondrous vehicles lost with the First Age.

#### **Socialize**

*"My humblest greetings, o conquering one. This worthless thing would present itself before your presence." Admiral Sand had no fondness for groveling, but there were more*

*important things than his dignity at stake. "As your majestic fury most certainly already knows, the Mask of Winters has sent envoys riding to meet you, asking you to join him in war against the Pagathi. I am slow of wits, and clumsy of mind, but it occurs to me that it would be an insult to the invincibility of your own armies to suggest they need any alliance to wipe out those milk-drinking herders—and what's more, it would empty your own pockets of the wealth the Pagathi might offer up in exchange for your most glorious protection. I dare not to make presumptions, but I believe..."*

*"Enough," said the warrior-queen, seated on a silk cushion and surrounded by countless captured blades. "Your words are understood, Admiral. Let us dispense with the formalities—there are many head of oxen on the fires, and I grow hungry." And with that, peace had been won.*

#### **This Ability is important in social influence.**

Socialize is a character's understanding of the social context in which she acts, encompassing both knowledge of decorum and etiquette as well as how to use them to one's advantage in persuasion or manipulation. In formal social situations such as an aristocratic court or a ritualized ceremony, a character can use Socialize to influence the thoughts and feelings of other characters with social actions. Socialize is also used both to read the emotional tells or body language of other characters to discern their inner thoughts, and to conceal such tells on one's self, contributing to a character's Guile rating.

#### **Stealth**

*No one noticed one more shadow amidst the darkness of Thorns. No one heard the soft padding of feet across the city's rooftops, or the sound of a diamond blade cutting through glass. Even the guard dogs were impassive to the intruder's scent, thanks to a tincture of valerian and poppy slipped into their supper. For all the guards stationed at their posts, not a one saw the flicker of motion that flitted just beyond the torchlight's reach. By the time the death-knight's servants found him slain in his bed, his throat slashed with a single stripe of scarlet, Harmonious Jade was already countless miles from the gates of the cursed city.*

#### **This Ability is important in combat.**

Stealth is used to avoid being noticed, evading the sight of one's pursuers through physical deftness and cunning. In combat, it can be used to catch foes unawares with sneak attacks or to hide from threatening enemies. Outside of combat, it can be used for covert surveillance, silently infiltrating a guarded building, or blending into a crowd after committing a crime.

**Survival**

*The pale wolf was huge, bigger than any beast should have grown in the wild. Graceful Path did not know what had created such a monster, but she knew she did not have the strength left to fight it—her muscles groaned with exhaustion, her Essence had dwindled like the flames of a dying candle, and her spear lay abandoned beneath the waters of the river where she fled from the Wyld Hunt. As the great hound advanced on her, she reached into her pouch of rations, and offered the giant a hunk of salted meat. “Come here, pup,” she said, forcing the words through a dry throat. “You look hungry.”*

*By the end of the night, Graceful Path slept huddled against the white fur of her new companion, safe and warm for the first time she could remember.*

Survival is the Ability used to traverse and survive in wilderness environments. It covers the basic rudiments of outdoor survival, such as finding shelter, finding fresh water, and gathering food, as well as tracking, navigation, and handling animals.

**Thrown**

*The satrap’s thugs spread out around Snow Blossom and the boy, brandishing their clubs and swords as the only authority they needed to “keep peace” in the high-walled capital. “You think you can steal from Satrap V’neef and escape his justice?” the shaggy-haired leader of the gang said—as if freeing a slave was an act of theft. “We’ll have you—”*

*Snow Blossom’s patience had finally run out. Her hands blurred through the air like a flight of doves, scattering numberless knives. Gently, she placed a hand over the child’s eyes, so that he would not have to see the scarlet carnage left in the wake of her attack. “I think it is time for us to depart.”*

**This Ability is important in combat.**

Thrown is the Ability used for weapons designed to be thrown at an enemy, rather than those which fire projectiles. Throwing knives, shuriken, javelins, chakrams, and nets are all used with this Ability.

**War**

*Magnificent Rose Ligara surveyed the map of the battlefield by torchlight, long after she had bid her soldiers sleep. After a string of defeats, they needed the rest—morale was low, and supplies lower still. If she did not win tomorrow, the Walker’s army of marauding dead would break through the last line of defense that kept them from the River Province. Outnumbered by a dozen walking dead to every soldier she commanded, the Dawn Caste had no chance of victory in a fair fight. But Ligara had no intention of fighting fair. It had cost hundreds of lives to secure the position she now held,*

*and even her most loyal lieutenants questioned her wisdom. Such a tactic flew in the face of every page of The Thousand Correct Actions of the Upright Soldier. But Ligara was resolute. On the next dawn, when the Walker’s shambling legion reached her, they would have the high ground, true—but their high ground had been the southern shore of a saltwater sea in the First Age, and even today was rimed with crystalline salt. And everyone knew what salt did to undead flesh...*

**This Ability is important in combat.**

War is the Ability of understanding strategy and tactics. It is used both to direct the long-term progress of a war, planning battles to gain the upper hand over enemy forces, as well as to command the soldiers or warriors that serve a character directly in battle.

**Merits**

Merits are special features that add distinction to characters. Some Merits are physical advantages (such as Strong Lungs), while others represent specific learned aptitudes—additional languages the character knows how to read and speak are a common example. Still other Merits may represent social advantages, such as great wealth.

In addition to personal quirks and aptitudes, Merits also represent unusual supernatural features and capabilities. The most common source of such “Supernatural Merits” is the transformative power of the Wyld—a gift few seek. Other individuals might gain such features through divine parentage, sorcerous experimentation, or the blessings (or curses) of the many spirits of Creation. Supernatural Merits may offer great power, but those which obviously twist the mind or body also bring suspicion and hatred from the majority of Creation’s residents, who fear the mad touch of the Wyld.

Each Merit has a number of dots (•) associated with it. These dots represent the number of points that must be spent to purchase the Merit. Some Merits allow for a range of dots (• to •••, for example). These allow players to purchase a low or high rating as appropriate—and often to raise low ratings over time during play.

**Innate** merits represent unusual facets of a character, physical or mental traits that set them apart from a crowd. They cannot usually be gained or lost during a story without magical intervention.



**Purchased** merits are similar, except that they can be purchased at any time during play for XP.

**Story** merits represent the way a character relates to the world - possessions or relationships. They are often easy to gain or lose during play.

### Standard Merits

These Merits are generally available to any character.

### Allies (•, ••, or ••••) — Story

*This Merit may be re-purchased as many times as desired.*

Each purchase grants the character a single noteworthy Storyteller-controlled ally—a close friend or trusted companion with some useful capabilities. The nature of this ally must be defined at the time the Merit is purchased. One dot grants a mortal or very minor supernatural ally, who may possess useful contacts, political clout, refined expertise, or other resources he is willing to put at the character's disposal, within reason. Three dots grants a supernatural ally at least as powerful as a young Terrestrial Exalt. Five dots grants a supernatural ally as powerful as one of the Celestial Exalted. The Storyteller has final say over what constitutes a valid ally.

*Drawback:* Allies aren't automatons or flunkies. They have their own lives and concerns, and expect the character to provide the same assistance to them that they provide to her. A mistreated ally is likely to abandon the character or even become her enemy.

### Ambidextrous (• or ••) — Innate

The character doesn't suffer a -1 penalty to actions using his off-hand. The two-dot version of this Merit provides

fully prehensile feet as well as hands. This Merit is common to native Haltans, as well as the ape-men that inhabit the jungle-choked First Age ruins now known as Mahalanka—Lair of Raksi, Queen of Fangs.

#### **Artifact (•• to ••••)—Story**

*This Merit may be re-purchased as many times as desired.*

The character owns a magical item—see Chapter Nine for more details.

A two-dot Artifact is a minor wonder with limited but still supernatural usefulness, such as a goblet that nullifies any poison within it, or a jeweled torc that keeps the wearer fresh and clean in any circumstances. Many such items were created in the First Age, and have become rare and highly-valued commodities in the Age of Sorrows, lusted after the wealthy and the mighty when they appear.

Three-dot Artifacts are what most individuals think of when the word “artifact” is spoken—they are broadly powerful wonders, such as most daiklaves, magical armor, hypnotic cloaks, and the like.

Four-dot Artifacts are legends unto themselves, with powers of significant complexity or depth. The most famous Artifacts of this rating are “hundred-year daiklaves:” weapons manufactured over a century of passion and toil, and possessing truly formidable Evocations. Other such Artifacts might include cloaks that allow their wearer to ride the wind, or veils that scatter light and deflect the eye.

Five-dot Artifacts are legendary treasures in the Age of Sorrows—magical vessels, lesser First Age siege weapons, and legendary “thousand-year daiklaves.” Any character coming into possession of such an item will be defined as much by ownership of it as by any other element of his personality or legend, and as such, five-dot Artifacts may only be purchased with explicit Storyteller approval.

Artifacts of yet greater power may still be found in Creation on the rarest of occasions: mighty remnants of the long-fallen First Age such as invincible warstriders, “ten thousand-year daiklaves,” or magical warships. These are considered to be rated Artifact N/A, and cannot be taken during character creation by spending points—as these items are of chronicle-defining power, they may only make their way into a player’s possession if the player and Storyteller both want to spin a game around that story, or if a player somehow forges or unearths such a world-shaking miracle during play.

#### **Backing (•• to •••)—Story**

*This Merit may be re-purchased as many times as desired.*

The character enjoys official standing in an organization, which is defined when this Merit is obtained. For example, she might be a government minister, a military officer, a Guild merchant, or a member of a spy network. Backing represents the support the character can call upon from the organization.

Two-dot Backing represents either a low-level position within an organization of significant power (such as a dues-paying Guildsman of no particular standing), or a solid post in a less powerful organization, with most disagreeable duties pawned off on subordinates (an officer within the market guard of Gem).

Three-dot Backing represents middling rank in a powerful organization (a merchant prince of the Guild), or standing as one of the elite in a smaller organization (a captain of the market guard).

Four-dot backing represents elite rank in a mighty organization (a Guild factor) with significant support.

*Drawback:* Backing represents membership rather than leadership. Characters will have to answer to superiors and uphold the duties of their station to retain it.

#### **Boundless Endurance (••)—Purchased**

**Prerequisite:** Stamina or Resistance ••

Steady as an ox, the character keeps on going long after all others have dropped from exhaustion. The character reduces the difficulty of all rolls to resist fatigue or remain awake by 2.

#### **Command (•• to ••••)—Story**

*This Merit may be re-purchased as many times as desired to represent multiple distinct military detachments or truly enormous military forces.*

The character is the recognized commander of an organized military force of some sort—generally one composed of ordinary mortal soldiers (traits for an average soldier can be found on p. 496). This Merit’s rating determines how great a force the character commands. For more information on battle groups, see pages 205-211. At two dots, this Merit provides a military force of Size 3, Might 0, and Average Drill.

At three dots, this Merit provides either a Size 3, Might 0 group with Elite Drill, or a Size 4-5, Might 0 group with Average Drill.

At four dots, this Merit provides either a Size 4-5, Might 0 Group with Elite Drill, or two Size 5, Might 0 groups

with Average Drill. Alternately, it may provide a Size 3, Might 0 battle group with Elite Drill and the traits of elite rather than average troops.

At five dots, this Merit provides either a Size 5, Might 0 group with Elite Drill and the traits of elite rather than average troops, or five Size 5, might 0 groups with Average Drill, or two Size 5, Might 0 groups with Elite Drill.

**Note:** Taking the Command Merit indicates that the soldiers are personally loyal to the Exalt—that they are “her” men, rather than forces belonging to an organization; military forces of that sort are acquired through the Backing Merit.

#### **Contacts (•, ••, or ••••)—Story**

*This Merit may be re-purchased as many times as desired.*

Each purchase grants the character a network of contacts willing to feed him information. The player must specify what sort of contacts he’s purchasing at the time the Merit is gained. Examples might include contacts within the Immaculate Order, the Delzahn nomads, the court of the Tri-Khan of Chiaroscuro, the Guild, the craftsmen of Nexus, House Mnemon, Western ship captains, the Lintha family, a specific noble family of Port Calin, all noble families of Port Calin, or the smugglers of the Haslanti League.

One-dot contacts are generally confined to a single city-state or similar region. Three-dot contacts may span a broad area or indicate an organization with vast but specific reach and influence, while five-dot Contacts mean that almost anywhere the character goes within a Direction, he’ll be able to find applicable contacts within the purchased field.

#### **Cult (• to ••••)—Story**

The character is the object of organized veneration by a group of mortals. Without additional magic, humans (including the Exalted) cannot actually hear prayers directed at them, although when deep in meditation they can feel the mute moth-wing fluttering of appeals, sacrifices, and words of adoration whirling about them.

The rating of this Merit dictates the size of the character’s cult and the power she can draw from its prayers. A one-dot cult comprises only a few full-time priests and a handful of devout worshipers. A two-dot cult spans several hundred individuals, perhaps an entire large village. A three-dot cult means the character is venerated throughout a significant region, or perhaps openly rules a mighty city-state as its god-king (although this would require additional Merits to represent such influence). A four-dot cult means that an entire nation honors the character; tens of thousands offer

up prayers to her, and the Wyld Hunt has surely heard her name. A five-dot cult spans much of a Direction; few Exalts indeed may claim such a vast bounty of worship, and at present, no Solar Exalt has yet done so in the Age of Sorrows.

The character may spend a Willpower point without actually losing the point a number of times per story equal to her Cult rating. Higher Cult ratings exist, allowing the character to spend one free Willpower point per scene, but such veneration is reserved for the mightiest of spirits—at present, no Exalt in the Second Age is so widely worshiped, and very few even among the mightiest of gods can boast such reverence.

#### **Danger Sense (••)—Innate**

**Prerequisite:** Perception or Awareness ••

An indefinable “sixth sense” warns the character when she is in danger—a definite asset in the Time of Tumult! She enjoys a bonus die on rolls to detect danger.

#### **Demesne (•• or •••)—Story**

*This Merit may be re-purchased as many times as desired.*

The character controls a place of power in Creation. A demesne is a wellspring of incredible geomantic power, usually a site of incredible natural splendor. A demesne might be the heart of a primeval forest, a crystal cavern behind a mighty waterfall, a field of black glass where desert abuts an ancient volcano, or any other place of clear majesty and power. Most demesnes are strongly aspected toward one of the five elements, but certain rare demesnes resonate with the Essence of the sun or moon, of destiny, or even of death.

A character attuned to a demesne who stands within its boundaries enjoys certain benefits. Outside of combat, he respites an additional two motes of Essence per hour, and may reflexively roll (Perception + Occult, difficulty 3) to sense any active expenditure of Essence within the demesne’s boundaries. The demesne can also be used as a Means for sorcerous workings which resonate with its nature (pgs. 487-488), granting one extra interval.

As a four-dot Merit, the character gains control of an exceptionally powerful demesne. She respites four extra motes per hour outside of combat, the difficulty to detect Essence-use becomes 1, and using the demesne as a Means grants two extra intervals.

#### **Direction Sense (•)—Innate**

The character is never completely lost, and is able to naturally determine her orientation relative to the five Poles. In addition to always knowing her facing and acting as a living

compass, she lowers the difficulty on attempts to navigate toward a fixed, known location or to retrace her steps by 2.

#### Eidetic Memory (••)—Innate

The character enjoys near-perfect recall, adding one automatic success to all attempts to remember details from previous scenes and events.

#### Familiar (• to ••)—Story

*This Merit may be re-purchased as many times as desired.*

Creation is filled with beasts both prosaic and exotic, and the character has formed a deep and profound bond with one of them. Although the familiar is (probably) no more able to speak the languages of men than any other beast, the character can roughly understand the chirps, pawings, barks, and gesticulations of his animal companion, and the familiar understands the character's commands in turn. He can even share his familiar's senses by concentrating and taking no other actions, so long as the familiar is somewhere within long range (see p. 197) of him.

One dot in this Merit provides a relatively weak familiar, such as a squirrel, owl, cat or dog. Two dots provides a formidable or useful beast, such as a riding animal or vicious predator—horses, simhata, tigers, and omen dogs are all appropriate two-dot familiars. Three dots provides a familiar that is in some way overtly exceptional or magical, such as one of the talking monkeys of Halta, an

#### ATTUNING TO A DEMESNE OR MANSE

It takes six hours of meditation and careful co-mingling of Essence to attune to and claim ownership of an unclaimed demesne. The owner of a demesne can reflexively sense all attempts to attune to the demesne while present, and may automatically block them, permit them as sub-attunements which grant attunement benefits without bestowing ownership, or may even allow ownership to be taken. She can also sever any existing attunements with a moment's concentration and a difficulty 3 (Wits + Occult) roll. While the owner remains attuned but not present, she may remotely sense attempts to attune to the demesne, but may not block them; they automatically succeed as sub-attunements.

Attunement to (and ownership of) a demesne fades (character's Essence) weeks after leaving its boundaries. Attunement to a manse functions in the same fashion, save that it takes (character's Essence) months for attunement to lapse, and attunement will never lapse if the character is carrying the manse's Hearthstone.

armored and fire-breathing ox mutated by the Wyld, a super-predator like a tyrant lizard, or a God-Blooded stallion fathered by the horse god Hiparkes.

#### Fast Reflexes (•••)—Purchased

**Prerequisite:** Wits •••

Tempered by war or perhaps by growing up living on the edge, the character's steady nerves give him an advantage in battle. He adds one additional die to Join Battle rolls.

#### Fleet of Foot (••••)—Purchased

**Prerequisite:** Dexterity •••

The character is particularly swift and nimble, moving through the world like a shadow racing the light. She adds one additional die to all rolls depending on sheer foot speed, most notably rush, disengage, and withdraw actions (see p. 197-199).

#### Followers (• to ••)—Story

*This Merit may be re-purchased as many times as desired.*

Each purchase represents a number of mortal followers with some particular form of expertise that have flocked to the character's banner. The nature of these followers must be decided upon each time this Merit is purchased. Examples might include bureaucrats, bodyguards, assassins, merchants, spies, entertainers, smiths, or astrologers. Such followers are of average to above-average skill in their professions (two or three dot Ability ratings), but are personally loyal to the character (rather than to an organization the character might have Backing from, or might lead through Influence), and might be trained to greater expertise over time.

One dot grants up to a dozen followers, two grants up to 50, while three grants a group of up to a hundred.

#### Giant (•••)—Innate

**Prerequisite:** Stamina •••

The character is enormous, standing somewhere between seven and a half to ten feet in height. Her great size grants an extra -0 health level. This Merit may also be gained as a result of Wyld mutation.

*Drawback:* The character's great size is very distinct, imposing a -3 penalty on all disguise rolls to pass as anyone of lesser stature, and making the character memorable wherever she goes.

#### Hearthstone (•• or •••)—Story

*This Merit may be re-purchased as many times as desired.*

This Merit bestows ownership of a hearthstone - a gem formed of concentrated geomantic Essence. Most hearthstones are deliberately formed through Essence concentration in manses, but a few naturally form in demesnes or at sites where Essence has worked prodigious miracles upon the land. If the manse's owner places the hearthstone in a specially-designed socket in an attuned artifact, then the character enjoys the benefits of standing within the manse wherever she goes.

Hearthstones do not provide any magical powers of their own - they are useful purely as a power source for artifice or as a link to the manse they belong to. The two-dot version of this merit links to a 2-dot manse, and similarly with the 4-dot version.

#### **Hideous (0 dots)—Innate**

*This Merit has no cost, and may be taken for free.*

The character is memorably ugly, possibly as a result of overt deformity, disfiguring scars, inhuman mutations, or just being born that way. His Appearance does not measure how attractive he is; instead, the more dots of Appearance he has, the more intimidatingly horrid he looks. The character adds his Appearance bonus (p. 218) to attempts to threaten or intimidate, rather than to instill and persuade actions.

**Drawback:** The character subtracts his Appearance rating from most seduction attempts.

#### **Influence (• to ••••)—Story**

*This Merit may be re-purchased as many times as desired.*

This Merit reflects a character's standing and pull in society. It might derive from political office, notoriety, leadership of an organization, military conquest, or from awe or fear of the character's displayed power. Whatever the reason, people take heed of the character's wants and will. Most Exalted eventually gain some degree of Influence, if they don't start with it.

One dot describes a figure of local note—a tribal family head, a respected physician, a known sorcerer, or the owner of a very popular teahouse.

Two dots describes a figure of some pull in the city-state or satrapy where he resides—a politically connected magistrate, a shipping magnate, a mercenary company leader with an important contract.

Three dots describes an influential character, very important to the region in which he resides: a royal advisor, a general, a tribal chief, a merchant prince with investments everywhere in the region.

Four dots describes a major regional power, whose words carry great weight, and who may possibly rule a small city directly. This also represents leaders of tribal alliances, the right hands of princes, and Lunar Exalted who openly live as gods.

Five dots describes a character of vast influence, likely the ruler of a city-state with influence on neighboring principalities. Alternately, the character might be a widely-feared warlord, or the Lunar god-king of an all-consuming horde.

It is *possible*, though difficult, to cultivate Influence of different sorts in multiple regions simultaneously.

#### **Iron Stomach (•)—Purchased**

**Prerequisite:** Stamina or Resistance ...

The character can digest almost anything edible, from live insects and brackish water to raw meat or spoiled rations. She enjoys a -2 difficulty on Survival rolls to forage for herself, as well as Resistance rolls to recover from food poisoning.

#### **Language (•)—Purchased**

*This Merit may be re-purchased as many times as desired.*

Each purchase grants the character fluency in one language in addition to his native tongue. If the character possesses Linguistics 1+, then they are also literate in any written forms of the language.

The 'civilized' inhabitants of each of the outer Directions speak a different language (actually a number of closely-related regional dialects), while the Scavenger Lands has its own particular language and the mighty Realm has two official languages. There are also countless local languages that are only spoken by tribal or ethnic groups spread around Creation's rim.

The major languages of Creation are:

- **High Realm:** The formal language of Dynasts and patricians of the Blessed Isle, as well as their servants. All official business of the Realm is conducted in High Realm. Its written form is a phonetic alphabet of complex brush work characters.
- **Low Realm:** The tongue of the Realm's commoners, generally constituting local bastardizations of High

Realm drifted into near-incomprehensibility to outsiders. It shares the written stylings of High Realm, but often uses simplified character depictions which can be rendered without brushes or careful calligraphy.

- **Old Realm:** The native language of the spirits and those that created them, as well as of the Fair Folk. It was widely spoken in the First Age, especially by savants and sorcerer-engineers, and used for many official documents. Characters must have Lore 1+ or Occult 1+ to learn this language. There exist several styles for writing Old Realm, the most extravagant of which is a complex glyptic system where symbol arrangement is as important as symbol choice, and the same phrase might be read in several ways, often as a deliberate choice by the writer intended to impart subtle and layered meaning.
- **Dragontongue:** Derived from recovered elements of a priestly language that was lost during the shogunate, luminaries of House Mnemon birthed and spread this language over the course of two centuries. It is a mix of Old Realm and High Realm, with elements of a lost shogunate tongue, and excludes the mind from the wider, more dangerous concepts inherent to Old Realm, keeping a person in mind of the Dragons, the Poles, the natural world and the Perfected Hierarchy. It is a beautiful language more than a scholarly one, and even in satrapies which have been thoroughly suppressed by the Realm, there is a rush by savants and poets to learn this language of poets and princes. Its written form utilizes very challenging yet beautiful brushstrokes.
- **Riverspeak:** The language of the Scavenger Lands. The Guild has promoted this loanword-filled tongue as the unofficial “trade language” of the Threshold; it is probably the most widely-understood language in Creation. Its written form employs a simple glyptic alphabet whose characters can easily be shaped with a quill, stylus, or even a stick of charcoal.
- **Skytongue:** A language family spoken in the North. Its written form employs a simple runic alphabet.
- **Flametongue:** A language family spoken in the South. Its written form employs a sophisticated alphabet of flowing lines and curves; meaning can be greatly influenced by the manner in which characters connect to one another.
- **Forest-tongue:** A language family spoken in the East, beyond the bounds of the Scavenger Lands. Its written form consists of a wide array of branching ideograms, connected vertically and diagonally.

• **Seatongue:** A language family spoken in the West. Its written form consists of a simple alphabet of lines and dots whose connection to one another can be exceedingly complex.

• **Guild Cant:** A secret language spoken only by members of the Guild. Its written form is composed of simple horizontal and vertical lines, designed to be able to be written quickly and unobtrusively when necessary.

• **Local Tongues:** Creation contains countless languages spoken by specific “barbarian” tribes, insular ethnic enclaves, isolated island-dwellers, and various other small groups. Four such languages may be learned with a single Merit purchase.

#### **Manse (\*\*\* or \*\*\*\*)–Story**

*This Merit may be re-purchased as many times as desired.*

The character owns a manse—a magnificent magical tower, fortress, palace, or estate raised atop a demesne and designed to capture and channel its power. Many manses are designed to express minor magical powers to enhance the beauty or comfort of the building, such as columns of free-standing water filled with colorful fish, or floors which stay warmed with channeled fire Essence even in the depths of winter.

In addition to ownership of the manse itself, possessing this Merit at three dots provides the benefits of both the Demesne Merit (p. 160) and the Hearthstone Merit (p. 161), at two dots each, for no additional cost. With five dots, the character is the owner of a manse raised atop an exceptionally powerful demesne, with a concomitantly powerful hearthstone (replicating the benefits of the four-dot Demesne and Hearthstone Merits).

#### **Mentor (• to \*\*\* )–Story**

Another individual of greater experience regularly teaches and advises the character. Mentors may provide advice, assistance, and even training in mundane or magical fields.

A one-dot mentor is an expert within a particular noteworthy field, such as languages, swordplay, sorcery, or martial arts. A two-dot mentor is an expert in several notable fields, and may be an individual of notable power or influence. A three-dot mentor is a master of many things, as well as a significant regional power or universally respected authority in his areas of expertise.

The Martial Artist merit from the original core book does not exist. Martial Arts may be purchased like any other ability.

**Mighty Thew (• to ••)—Purchased****Prerequisite:** Strength •••

The character can lift and carry incredible weight. When attempting a feat of strength (see pgs. 228-229) the character adds his rating in this Merit to the attempt's dice pool.

**Natural Immunity (••)—Innate****Prerequisite:** Stamina •••

Whether naturally hardy or blessed by a spirit, the character never seems to contract minor ailments such as the common cold, and easily bounces back from nastier afflictions. The character reduces the difficulty of all rolls to resist infection, sickness and disease by 2.

**Pain Tolerance (••••)—Purchased****Prerequisite:** Resistance ••••

While the character still feels pain, he's better at coping with it than most. -2 wound penalties are reduced to -1, while -4 wound penalties are reduced to -3.

**Quick Draw (• or ••••)—Purchased****Prerequisite:** Archery, Brawl, Melee, Martial Arts, or Thrown •••

The character possesses the lightning draw of a deadly duelist. At one dot, she suffers no Defense penalty for taking a draw/readiness weapon action. At four dots, if she flurries a draw/readiness weapon action and an attack action, the flurry penalty is reduced to -1 rather than -3. This Merit must be purchased separately for each of the attack Abilities.

**Retainers (•• or ••••)—Story**

*This Merit may be re-purchased as many times as desired.*

Each purchase grants the character a single Storyteller-controlled servant, an expert in their field with noteworthy and useful abilities. The nature of this servant must be defined at the time the Merit is purchased. They might be a courtesan, bodyguard, assassin, advisor, or even high priest of the character. Retainers are outstanding experts in their profession (four or five dot Ability ratings plus at least one applicable specialty), and are personally loyal to the character (or at least strongly motivated not to betray or abandon him).

Two dots grants a mortal or minor supernatural ally (such as a God-Blooded assassin or demonic advisor of the First

Circle), who may possess useful contacts or experience, political clout, martial prowess, or other resources he is willing to lay on the line at the character's bidding.

Four dots grants a supernatural ally at least as powerful as a young Terrestrial Exalt, though always weaker than the character himself—peers are best represented as Allies rather than Retainers.

**Resources (• to ••••)—Story**

This Merit describes a character's finances. Each dot represents an economic bracket and grants a standard income. The source of this wealth must be detailed (rents on property, sharecropping, government stipend, banditry), since it may vary as the game plays out. Most Exalted have little difficulty accumulating some Resources if they wish, but it often makes the most sense when taken in concert with another Merit like Backing or Cult.

One dot indicates less than 1 shekel a year in jade, less than 64 koku a year in cash, or less than 60 dinars a year in silver—up to four times the expected income of a household with two skilled working adults (see “The Silver Standard,” p. 77). It’s appropriate to agrarian landlords, respected mortal craftsmen or artisans, renowned performers, successful small merchants, mid-ranking criminals in urban cartels, or local government officials.

Two dots indicates roughly a mina per year in jade, 128 koku in cash, or 100 dinars in silver—around twice the income provided by the previous level. It’s appropriate for urban slumlords, gang bosses, high-ranking local government officials, famous mortal artisans and performers, successful regional trade investors, or the stipend of a Realm patrician.

Three dots indicates a talent or less per year in jade; 8,000 koku in cash; or under 5 talents per year in silver—more than fifty times the income of the previous level. This level of Resources represents a take in the spoils of empire. It’s the income of the heads of established patrician houses, large cartels, or Guild merchant princes, and is also the usual discretionary stipend or income for Dynasts. These characters are usually economies unto themselves, with entourages who help manage their assets and depend on them for a living. Beyond three dots, it’s unusual for a fortune to be measured in cash—most of the independently wealthy bond their riches in silver or real or ledger jade.

Four dots indicates an income of 4-6 talents per year in jade; 16,000-50,000 koku per year in cash; or 20-30 talents per year in silver. Successful Dynasts and well-off patricians sometimes possess this level of Resources, as do successful Guild merchant princes, the most fortunate

scavenger lords, rulers of small Threshold states, and mortal craftsmen with skills of singular value to the Chosen—for example, renowned mortal manse architects.

Five dots indicates an income of 12-20 talents per year in jade; 96,000-160,000 koku per year in cash; or 60-100 talents per year in silver. The heads of the richest patrician families, renowned and successful Dynasts (often serving vital positions within their Houses), established Guild factors, and the rulers of powerful Threshold kingdoms possess this level of personal wealth.

#### **Selective Conception (•)—Innate**

The character enjoys full conscious control over his or her fertility, never running the risk of unwanted pregnancy. Perhaps this is the result of years of cultivated control of body and Essence, a divine blessing, or simply the benefit of lucky birth. Both sexes may withhold fertility when they wish. Female characters may pay one Willpower to ensure conception, and will automatically know when they're pregnant; male characters do not gain this benefit.

#### **Strong Lungs (•)—Purchased**

**Prerequisite:** Athletics •••

The character is practiced at holding her breath for long periods of time, like the famed pearl divers of the West. She may hold her breath for (Stamina + Athletics) minutes before she begins to suffocate or drown; under duress, this becomes ([Stamina + Athletics] x 2) rounds.

#### **Tempered by the Elements (••)—Purchased**

Due to her upbringing, the character is at home navigating a certain harsh environment, selected when this Merit is taken. The character is able to cross one type of difficult terrain (such as deep snow, thick jungle, or broken ruins) at normal speed. While this Merit *can* be taken more than once, very few characters ever do so, as it takes years of intimate familiarity to cultivate—a mere few months spent in a swamp or on the tundra is inadequate to foster such skill.

#### **Toxin Resistance (•••)—Purchased**

**Prerequisite:** Stamina or Resistance •••

Perhaps the character is a poison taster, or perhaps she is simply hardier than most. Regardless, she adds two dice to rolls to resist poisons (see p. 232-233).

*Drawback:* The character's body can't tell the difference between recreational toxins and intentional ones. It's very difficult for her to become intoxicated.

### **Supernatural Merits**

These Merits bestow supernatural capabilities, and may

generally only be obtained by magical means. The most common source of supernatural Merits in **Exalted** is exposure to the Wyld. Few seek out such power, both due to the unpredictability of the Wyld's blessings, and because of the extreme stigma attached to obvious Wyld mutation throughout Creation.

These Merits are primarily presented to represent the warping power of the Wyld, and to aid Storytellers in putting together beastfolk, Wyld mutants, or similar characters. It's *very* uncommon for individuals with such Merits to experience Solar Exaltation, but not unheard of. **Characters can only begin play with supernatural Merits with explicit permission from the Storyteller.**

#### **Chameleon (•••)—Innate**

The character can change the color and pattern of her skin to match her surroundings. She adds a die to Stealth rolls, and to Survival rolls to hunt for game. If she's not wearing any clothes, add two dice.

*Drawback:* When the character is nervous or stressed, she must make a Willpower roll (difficulty 1) to keep her skin from reflexively shifting a few shades toward the dominant color of the surroundings, giving her away as a likely Wyld mutant.

#### **Claws/Fangs/Hooves/Horns (• or •••)—Innate**

The character gains some form of natural weaponry, generally in the form of horns, or short but sharp claws and fangs. The one dot version of this Merit allows the character to inflict lethal rather than bashing damage with either unarmed **decisive** strikes or **decisive** savaging attacks during a grapple (the latter represents fangs). The four-dot version of this Merit grants larger, more dangerous natural weapons, allowing the character's strikes or bites to both inflict lethal damage when savaging, and to be treated as a medium weapon for **withering** attacks.

*Drawback:* Natural weaponry granted by the four-dot version of this Merit imposes a -1 penalty on disguise attempts.

#### **Enhanced Sense (••)—Innate**

One of the character's senses becomes preternaturally acute, like that of a wild animal. The character adds two dice to all Perception rolls related to that sense.

*Drawback:* This Merit is physically obvious in unusual eye color or shape, large ears, an elongated nose, or some other similar mutation.

#### **Exalted Healing (•••••)—Innate**

The character heals quickly and perfectly, with no risk of

lingering complications. Only the most grievous of injuries leave any hint of scarring, and the character's healing is like a slow form of regeneration, flawlessly mending severed muscles and nerves, torn ligaments, and shattered bones. Unless a body part is completely severed or destroyed, it is restored to perfect working condition once healed. Finally, the character's wounds never become infected. For more detail on healing from injuries, see page 173. **All Exalted possess this Merit at no cost.** Spirits also universally possess this Merit, as do the Fair Folk.

#### **Extra Limbs (•••)—Innate**

The character possesses more than the normal allotment of limbs—generally in the form of extra arms or legs, but stranger manifestations are possible, such as prehensile tentacles or even an extra head. In all cases, the result is the same—when the character performs a flurry, one of her actions (of the player's choice) suffers only a -1 rather than a -3 penalty.

#### **Gills (0 or ••)—Innate**

The character possesses visible gills somewhere on his body, and may breathe comfortably underwater. The free version of this Merit causes the character's lungs to atrophy, preventing him from breathing air; out of water, he begins suffocating after (Stamina x 5) minutes. The three dot version makes the character amphibious, able to breathe equally well above or below the water's surface.

#### **Poisoned Body (•, ••, or ••••)—Innate**

The character's body is toxic in some way. This poison is equivalent to snake venom (p. 234), and the character is naturally immune to his own toxin.

For one dot, the character's blood is poisonous, and must be ingested to inflict damage.

For two dots, all of the character's bodily fluids are poisonous, and can be applied through ingestion or intimate contact.

For five dots, the character's blood becomes a contact poison. Anyone inflicting two or more levels of lethal damage on the character with a single attack, or grappling him when he has suffered lethal damage during the scene, must make a difficulty 3 (Wits + Dodge) roll to avoid being poisoned.

*Drawback:* This Merit tends to be its own drawback, since it can't be turned off.

#### **Quills (••••)—Innate**

The character's body bristles with sharp quills in the manner of a porcupine. Her unarmed **decisive** attacks inflict lethal damage, her **withering** savage becomes a medium weapon and likewise inflict lethal damage when

used **decisively**, and anyone attempting to initiate a clinch against the character automatically loses one point of Initiative per round of grappling.

*Drawback:* Disguise attempts suffer a -5 penalty, and close physical contact with others—of any sort—becomes difficult at best.

#### **Subtlety (••)—Innate**

**Prerequisite:** Another physically obvious Supernatural Merit, such as claws, quills, or extra limbs.

*This Merit may be purchased as many times as desired.*

Subtlety must be attached to another already-purchased Supernatural Merit; it makes that Merit non-obvious to observers when not in use. Examples might include fully retractable claws, extra limbs which fold up into easily-concealed pouches or cavities on the character's body, or gills that close up tight enough to be invisible when not in use. The Wyld is rarely kind enough to bestow this Merit on those who feel its touch; it is most commonly granted as a blessing of the Fair Folk to their human servants, though some sorcerers have also studied the art of infusing subtlety into the works of the Wyld.

#### **Tail (• to ••)—Innate**

The character has a tail, which might be scaly, furred, tufted, or fleshy like a rat. For one dot, the tail adds two dice to attempts to maintain balance. For two dots, the tail is also prehensile, and may act as a fully functional limb, although it suffers a -1 off-hand penalty. The tail may be hidden under clothes, although this negates its benefits.

#### **Thaumaturgist (••••)—Innate**

The character is able to wield a certain small magic, possibly as part of an ancient tradition, possibly as a unique prodigy of the world. No one can quite say why one individual is gifted with thaumaturgy while tens of thousands aren't; perhaps the character is the seventh son of a seventh son, was blessed in the womb by a powerful god, or was simply born under a confluence of auspicious (or inauspicious...) signs. For more information on thaumaturgy, see pgs 490-491. Exalted characters who take the Charm Terrestrial Circle Sorcery (see pgs. 360-361) gain this Merit at no cost.

#### **Unusual Hide (• to ••••)—Innate**

One of the most common mutations bestowed by the Wyld, this Merit grants an unusually resilient hide of some sort. The character gains additional points of natural soak equal to the Merit's value. One or two dots generally represents fur, feathers, leaves, or light scales. Three dots indicate flesh far beyond the human norm—the leathery hide of a rhino or crocodile, or the exoskeletal carapace of an insect,

perhaps. Four or five dots grant an armored hide which may be made of bony armor, an obsidian carapace, or perhaps even a body of living stone.

**Drawback:** The character obviously looks like a Wyld mutant, with all the stigma that accompanies such status, and suffers a penalty equal to her rating in this Merit on all disguise rolls to pass for normal.

#### Venomous (••• or ••••)—Innate

The character's body possesses a reservoir of deadly venom, which can be applied through natural attacks. The standard version of this Merit requires that the character also have some other Merit or power granting him natural weaponry capable of inflicting lethal damage, such as claws, fangs, quills, a tail-barb, or the like. This allows the character to poison his enemies on a successful **decisive** attack up to (Stamina / 2, round up) times per day.

Alternately, if the character lacks such natural weaponry, this Merit allows him to spit a contact poison as a difficulty 3 gemit (see p. 199), aiming it as though it were a Thrown weapon. Success envenoms the target. This attack can be made up to (Stamina / 2, round up) times per day.

For four dots, a character with appropriate natural lethal weaponry may envenom his attacks *and* spit poison. Both attacks draw out of the same limited poison supply. Regardless, all poison supplied by this Merit has the same traits as snake venom.

#### Wall Walking (••••)—Innate

The character gains the ability to cling to, as well as walk or crawl across, walls and even ceilings. Ceilings and inherently slick surfaces with little purchase (such as Chiaroscuro glass) count as difficult terrain.

**Drawback:** The character's hands and feet become visibly nonhuman, possibly sporting sticky suction pads, tiny climbing claws, or spurs like a lizard.

#### Wings (••• or •••••)—Innate

At three dots, this Merit grants the character patagia or other weak, gliding wings. The character has little ability to maneuver in the air, and cannot effectively gain height, but may cover enormous distances with a leap, especially from high elevation—effectively, she may travel two range bands forward when gliding before she must descend one range band down, and as long as she has room to glide to the ground, need not fear falling damage.

The five dot version of this Merit grants powerful wings (or equivalent means of flight, such as gas-filled bags) and

true, functional flight. A flying character in combat moves no faster than other characters; her advantages are in her ability to pass over most forms of difficult terrain with ease, and in the severe trouble many close-ranged fighters experience in reaching her to attack her.

**Drawback:** In addition to the stigma of mutation, the character suffers a -4 penalty to attempts to disguise herself as a non-winged individual. Actions taken in the air which require any degree of finesse or precision (including attacks in combat) suffer a -3 penalty; drawing a bow or swinging a spear without getting in the way of one's own wings is more difficult than it looks!

#### Flaws

Flaws are particular debilities and drawbacks. Players *may* select one or more flaws for their character, if they desire, but don't have to. Flaws are completely optional and carry no cost in points of any kind.

Flaws can add interesting quirks or qualities to a character that make them more fun to play or which help characterize them. For example, a player might select the Blind Flaw if she wants to play a legendary blind swordsman whose preternaturally keen hearing compensates for his lack of sight.

If a Flaw comes up during play and significantly inconveniences or harms the character, this presents an opportunity to gain Solar experience (p. 177). This *only* happens if the Flaw significantly harms or impedes the character—if the blind swordsman compensates for his blindness with Awareness Charms and triumphs over his enemies, then the Flaw has simply been a cool character detail in that scene—not a significant impediment or source of harm. If the same character had to follow a crimson-glass path through the Wyld to the freehold of a faerie noble, his blindness would become a significant problem once the road began to branch off into differently-colored paths leading to various dire fates, since, no matter how sharp his other senses, he has no way to “hear” or “feel” the color of the road.

A few example Flaws are listed below. Storytellers and players should feel free to design their own additional Flaws.

#### Addiction

The character is addicted to some substance. This is most often a drug such as alcohol or opium, but might be something more exotic or dangerous, such as Wyld addiction. Withdrawal symptoms impose a -1 penalty to all actions



while the character is deprived of his fix, and the character may need to put himself in significant financial or physical jeopardy to satisfy his cravings.

#### Amputee

The character is missing a limb; whether this is a birth defect or a battle scar is up to the player. If missing an arm, the character suffers a -3 penalty to actions which demand two hands to perform properly. If missing a leg, the character treats all ground as difficult terrain (p. 199).

#### Blind

The character cannot see. Perhaps she was born this way, or lost her eyes in battle, to misfortune, or as part of a draconian punishment. All actions which primarily depend on sight suffer a -3 penalty.

#### Deaf

The character can't hear, and suffers a -3 penalty on all Awareness rolls which are partially dependent on a sense of hearing. She's also likely to have communication difficulties in hectic situations where she can't read lips, such as combat.

#### Derangement

The character is afflicted, suffering some malady of the mind. All Derangements are of either Minor, Major, or Defining severity, and may be exploited by social influence as though they were an Intimacy. Resisting a Derangement is possible, but costs one Willpower point per session or day (whichever is longer) for a Minor Derangement, one point per session or day (whichever is *shorter*) for a Major Derangement, or one point per scene for a Defining Derangement. A few examples are provided below:

**Hysteria:** The character's emotions swing out of control when he botches a roll or is subjected to extreme stress or anxiety, causing him to lash out at others or attempt to flee into isolation if he fails a Willpower roll against difficulty 1 (for Minor), 3 (for Major) or 5 (for Defining).

**Madness:** Intense trauma has caused the character to withdraw from reality, experiencing hallucinations and violent emotional swings. These symptoms manifest when the character botches a roll, experiences intense anxiety, or runs out of temporary Willpower, unless she makes a

Willpower roll against difficulty 1 (for Minor), 3 (for Major) or 5 (for Defining).

**Megrims:** The character is prone to black moods and depressive periods of despair and lassitude. Whenever the character botches a roll or drops to zero temporary Willpower, she must make a Willpower roll against difficulty 1 (for Minor), 3 (for Major) or 5 (for Defining). Failure prevents her from spending any Willpower for the next several days, except to temporarily suppress the Derangement.

**Obsession:** The character is fixated on a certain idea, person, action, or object. When it's present, the character will focus on it to the exclusion of more pressing concerns. When the character is out of temporary Willpower, he will drop what he's doing to seek out or indulge in the object of obsession unless he makes a Willpower roll against difficulty 1 (for Minor), 3 (for Major) or 5 (for Defining).

**Paranoia:** The character harbors delusions of persecution, and often mistrusts all those around her. Whenever the character is subjected to intense stress, this Derangement compels her to distrust all strangers, and negates the benefits of all her positive Ties unless she succeeds at a Willpower roll against difficulty 1 (for Minor), 3 (for Major) or 5 (for Defining).

#### Mute

The character cannot speak or make vocal utterances. All attempts at communication must be through writing or other non-verbal means (p. 221).

#### Sterile

The character is infertile, and incapable of reproduction. They may or may not be capable of sexual congress, at the player's discretion, but they can never sire or bear children. This Flaw is most directly relevant to Dragon-Blooded characters, but might prove to be a problem for other characters as well.

#### Wyld Mutant

The character is visibly marked by the strangeness of abhuman lineage or the touch of chaos, condemning her to the distrust, fear, and hatred of most people she meets. This Flaw is most often possessed by Wyld mutants and beastfolk, and imposes a -3 penalty to social interactions with strangers (or outsiders, in the case of beastfolk enclaves or Wyld tribes).

#### Willpower

Allies, magic, and even personal might will only take a hero so far—the rest comes from within. Your character's

Willpower represents her drive and determination, quantifying her dedication on a scale of one through ten. Characters on the lower end of the scale tend to be meek and hesitant, while characters on the higher end are confident and certain. Like Attributes and Abilities, Willpower is a rating, and it may be increased by spending bonus points or experience. By default, Solar characters begin play with a Willpower rating of five dots—Exaltation does not favor the weak of heart.

Willpower also has an associated point pool, which represents how determined your character is at the moment—even the Exalted can be worn down if they constantly push their limits. All characters begin play with Willpower points equal to their permanent Willpower rating, but this is not a hard cap. As your character bolsters himself and achieves his goals, he gains Willpower points. **Willpower points gained in certain ways can raise the total number of points in your character's Willpower pool above his rating, to a maximum of 10.**

If a roll calls for Willpower as part of its pool, you generally roll your character's permanent rating, not the number of points in his pool, unless specified otherwise.

#### Spending Willpower

You can spend Willpower points to do the following things:

- Add one automatic success to a single roll. You can only spend one Willpower point per roll this way, and you must spend it *before* you make the roll.
- Increase a single static value (such as Defense or Resolve) by 1. You can only spend one Willpower point per opposing roll, and you must do so before your opponent's player rolls.
- Reject certain kinds of social influence (see Chapter Five).
- Use a Charm that costs Willpower.

#### Gaining Willpower

Your character gains Willpower when the following conditions are met:

- A good night's sleep restores one Willpower point, but cannot raise a character's Willpower points above his permanent Willpower rating. Certain characters might not require sleep—in their case, six to eight hours of rest or meditation will suffice, although this bonus can only be gained once per day.
- Your character gains one Willpower point if he undergoes significant hardship or sacrifice to uphold a Major

or Defining Intimacy. He may only gain one Willpower point per scene this way. Willpower gained in this fashion may exceed his permanent Willpower rating.

- Achieving a major character or story goal is grounds for gaining Willpower. The Storyteller may award one to three points of Willpower, depending on the scale and significance of the goal, and these may exceed the character's permanent Willpower rating.
- Performing a two-point stunt grants one point of Willpower, while performing a three-point awards may stunt grants two. Three-point awards may exceed the character's permanent Willpower rating.

Additionally, there are several conditions which will refresh a character's Willpower points. At the beginning of a new story, if your character's Willpower points are lower than his permanent rating, they're refilled to equal it. The catharsis of Limit Break also resets the character's Willpower to its permanent rating—even if this means losing excess Willpower.

## Intimacies

Intimacies represent loves, hatreds, ideals, and goals—the things in this world people feel strongly about. **Intimacies are important to social influence actions (pgs. 215-218), as they help determine what kinds of influence will affect your character.** They come in two basic types:

- **Ties** describe your character's attachments to people, objects, organizations, and other concrete entities. They have an emotional context which describes your character's feelings towards that entity. Ties are generally written as the subject of the Tie, followed by a parenthetical clarifier to establish context. Examples include Great Forks (Hometown affection), My mysterious benefactor (Wary respect), My wife (Love), Peleps Deled (Hatred), and The Immaculate Order (Admiration).
- **Principles** describe your character's beliefs and ideals. Principles are generally written as a statement of the Principle. Examples include ideals such as “Honesty is my watchword” and “Pragmatism rules my actions,” and beliefs such as “The Immaculate Philosophy is the true guide to righteous living” or “I believe everyone looks out for number one.”

The basic mechanical function of Ties and Principles is identical, but some Charms and other special rules may differentiate between them.

Intimacies come in three levels of intensity: Minor, Major, and Defining. Minor Intimacies are notable parts of your character's worldview, but only come into play when the subject of the Intimacy is directly relevant to her current situation. Major Intimacies hold more influence over your character, coming into play even if the subject is only indirectly or tangentially related to the situation at hand. Finally, Defining Intimacies hold sway over every aspect of your character's life—they're the pillars of her worldview, and often things she would lay down her life to protect.

Intimacies help characters to regain Willpower, and govern what actions they can be persuaded to take via social influence. For more information on Intimacies and their role in social influence, see pages 214-215.

Charms will sometimes become empowered by Intimacies, such as by granting a character extra strength to fight to protect his loved ones. In these circumstances, **Minor, Major, and Defining Intimacies are “valued” at two, three, and four points, respectively**—thus, a Charm granting dice equal to an Intimacy's rating would grant three dice if keying off of a Major Intimacy.

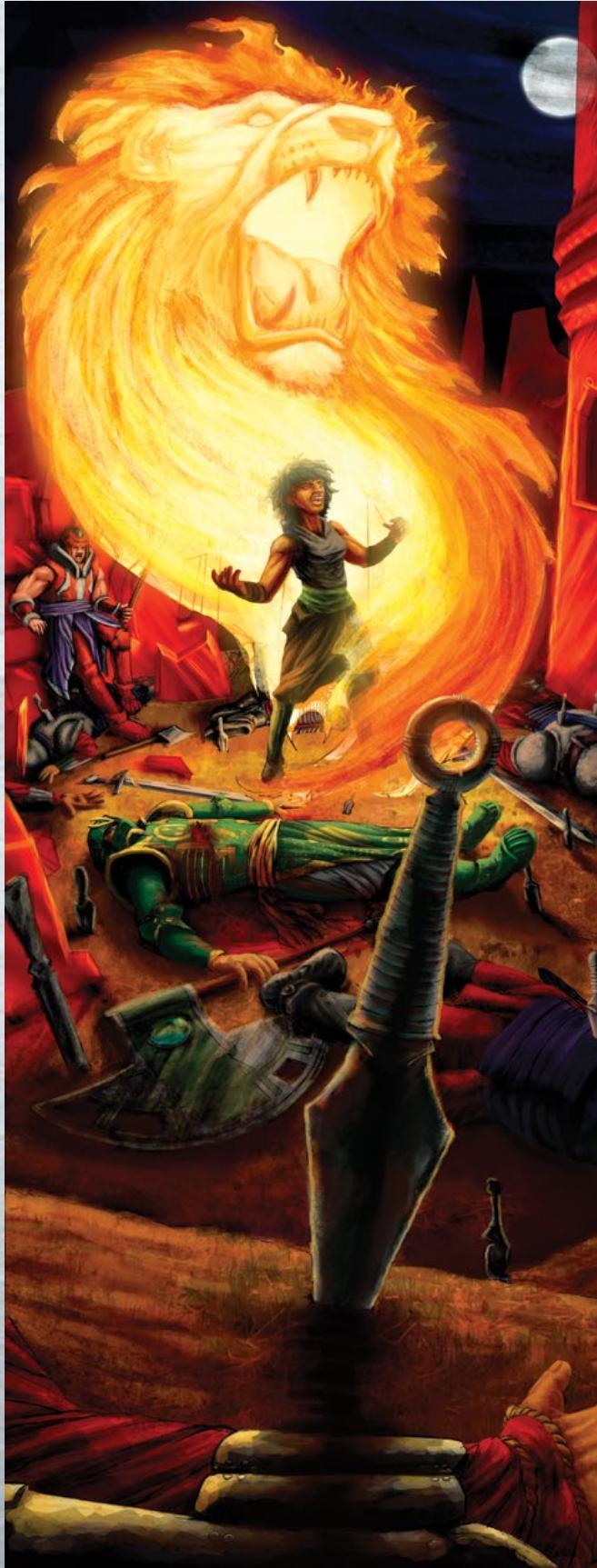
### Gaining Intimacies

Characters start with whatever Intimacies their players feel are appropriate, with a minimum of four Intimacies, of which at least one must be Defining, one must be Major, one must be in some way negative (a thing the character opposes or dislikes), and one must be positive (a thing the character supports or likes). Characters may gain new Intimacies in several ways, all subject to Storyteller approval. The key to changing Intimacies is that the change must make sense given the roleplaying going on during the scene and in the broader context of the story. Characters can't gain beneficial new Intimacies if it doesn't match how they've been played.

- Intimacies can be created at Minor intensity or strengthened by one level by the social influence of other characters (p. 215).

### WILLPOWER ACROSS CREATION

Like all Traits, Willpower varies considerably across the populace of Creation. Most individuals have a Willpower rating of 2-3, with ratings of both 1 and of 4-6 being uncommon. Willpower ratings of 7-8 are rare, while less than one person in a hundred will have a rating of 9 or 10.



- Whenever the player feels it is appropriate and the Storyteller agrees, the character may add a new Minor Intimacy or intensify an existing Intimacy at the end of a scene by one degree.

- In extraordinary situations, the character may gain a new Intimacy at Major or Defining Intensity based on the events of the story—when an Abyssal murders your brother, it's probably acceptable to go straight to a Major or Defining Tie of hatred toward him.

### Losing Intimacies

Losing Intimacies is similarly simple, and likewise subject to Storyteller discretion.

- Intimacies can be degraded by one level or removed entirely (if Minor) by the social influence of other characters (p. 215).

- Whenever the player feels it is appropriate *and the Storyteller agrees*, the character may remove a Minor Intimacy or degrade an existing Major or Defining Intimacy at the end of a scene—the character just doesn't care about that thing as much anymore. Generally, this should follow several sessions in which the subject of the Intimacy hasn't come up—characters should rarely drop or degrade an Intimacy right after it has been created, even if the Intimacy is undesirable. Alternately, this might follow several sessions showing the character resolving or working to conquer unwanted Intimacies, such as Intimacies of fear or hatred.

- Whenever the Storyteller judges that a player hasn't reflected an Intimacy in her roleplaying for a while, she may declare that it has degraded or even disappeared completely. This is mostly to keep characters from accumulating a lot of Defining Intimacies, which should be reflected in the character's actions at least once per story. Few characters can sustain the kind of intensity needed for more than a small handful of Defining Intimacies, and the Storyteller's pruning helps keep down the clutter.

### Health

Your character's health track represents his current physical condition: how hurt he is right now, and how much punishment he can take before being rendered unconscious or dead. Characters can't keep functioning at peak efficiency when wounded. The pain and mounting systemic damage of severe injuries can cripple even the hardiest warrior; this is represented in the form of *wound penalties*. **As your character accumulates damage in his health track, he receives a dice penalty to all rolled actions,**

## INTIMACIES AND ROLEPLAYING

Characters in Exalted are complex and multi-dimensional. The Intimacy system should be seen as an attempt to capture this depth and nuance, rather than as a mechanic for programming characters with a set social script. The more that players engage with the system from this perspective, the more it will help them in roleplaying interesting characters. As a way to facilitate this, starting characters begin with a minimum of four Intimacies including at least one Defining Intimacy, but players shouldn't be discouraged from taking more. While no hard mechanical rules require characters have a certain number of Ties or Principles, nor mandate minimum intensities, the Storyteller should keep in mind what these labels mean in terms of character definition. A complete absence of any Ties suggests a current state of total emotional detachment, while the absence of Principles suggests an apathy that precludes any goals, beliefs, or distinctive character traits. Some characters may occasionally experience these states, but they aren't conducive to player characters. Also keep in mind that not everything needs to be an Intimacy—"I need to eat to avoid starvation" is a truism of most living things, not a character trait worthy of being enshrined in an Intimacy, while sexual preference doesn't necessarily need to be represented with an Intimacy to be meaningful. (See also the Red Rule, p. 222)

The Storyteller should be mindful of extremely broad Intimacies such as a Principle of "I bow to no one" or "No compromise with those who oppose me." While these may be legitimate for a few characters, their broad applicability makes them very powerful traits, and thus increases the incentive for players to take them at a higher intensity than is actually applicable to the way they play the character. Also, some Intimacies simply break the system, and should be disallowed entirely, such as Intimacies that are excessively vague or generic in a way that lets the player define their applicability ("Some people just rub me the wrong way," as opposed to "Nothing's weaker than a bully"), use exploitative wording to manipulate the system rather than trying to represent character traits (A Tie of hatred against "People trying to manipulate me in ways I don't like"), or explicitly engage with system terminology (the Principle "I balk at social influence enhanced by Charms"). Similarly, a player might try to avoid letting other characters engage with him socially by not taking any Intimacies at all, treating them as mechanical weaknesses rather than character traits. To curtail such disruptive issues, the Storyteller may reassign the intensity of a valid-but-overplayed Intimacy if she notices that a player is not roleplaying his character in a way that makes sense given the current intensity of the Intimacy, reword or clarify an abusively phrased Intimacy, or assign an Intimacy to a character if it fits the way he's being roleplayed—especially, but not only, if that character has no other Intimacies.

**indicated by the highest number associated with a health level which has received damage. This wound penalty also applies to all of your character's static values, such as Defense and Resolve. Damage rolls (p. 191) are exempt.**

Characters have seven levels in their health track: one -0 health level, two -1 health levels, two -2 health levels, one -4 health level, and one Incapacitated health level. Exalted characters can gain more health levels by purchasing the Charm Ox-Body Technique.

### Losing Health

Characters lose health levels when they take damage from **decisive** attacks (see Chapter Five), environmental hazards, poison, or when they otherwise suffer bodily trauma. There are three sorts of damage to which characters' Health Tracks might be subjected: *bashing*, *lethal*, and *aggravated*.

*Bashing damage* is inflicted by blunt trauma, contusions, and extreme stress placed on the body which doesn't inflict gross physical injury. Examples of sources of bashing damage include fists, short falls, and heat exhaustion or

severe cold. Bashing damage is recorded in the health track by marking through the box with a slash (/). If a character's Incapacitated health box is marked through with a slash, the character is rendered unconscious.

*Lethal damage* represents lacerations, punctures, burns, and massive tissue trauma. Potential sources of lethal damage include blades, arrows, falls from extreme heights, fire, and the claws and fangs of wild beasts. Lethal damage is recorded in the health track by marking through a box with an X. If a character's Incapacitated health box is marked through with an X, the character is either dead or dying (which one is up to the Storyteller).

Bashing damage is always marked in the next unmarked box on the health track, while lethal damage always "enters" at the left end of the track. Thus, a character who has taken three bashing damage already, and who then takes two levels of lethal damage, would mark through his left-most health boxes, "pushing" the bashing damage two boxes to the right, as shown in the illustration on page 173.

A character whose health track is full of bashing damage, and who continues to take bashing damage, upgrades his existing damaged health levels to lethal damage on a one-for-one basis, moving from left to right across the health track.

Finally, some injuries are considered *aggravated damage*. Aggravated damage is usually a result of powerful magic modifying damage that would otherwise be lethal. Any aggravated injury cannot be healed by magic, nor can its healing be sped up by magic—only natural rest and healing will mend it. Aggravated damage heals at the same speed as lethal damage, but is always the last damage to heal—mark it on the health track with an asterisk, “pushing” bashing and lethal damage to the right.

## Regaining Health

Quickly regaining lost health is difficult, requiring rare and powerful magic. The more severely injured a character is, the longer healing takes. Characters heal bashing damage before lethal, and their most severe injuries before their less serious ones—thus, healing “proceeds” across the health track from right to left. The Exalted, gods, and other magical beings with the Exalted Healing Merit (p. 165) replenish their lost health levels at the following rate:

- Recovering a -0 health level takes one hour if bashing, or one day if lethal.
  - Recovering a -1 health level takes 12 hours if bashing, or two days if lethal.
  - Recovering a -2 health level takes one day if bashing, or three days if lethal.
  - Recovering a -4 health level takes two days if bashing, or five days if lethal.
  - Recovery from Incapacitation is up to the Storyteller—in the case of being knocked out by bashing damage, it usually happens at the end of the scene, but might happen in the same scene shortly after the end of combat (if the Storyteller wants to get the player back into the action), or could potentially occur hours later. Incapacitation by lethal damage is usually fatal, though the Storyteller can allow the character to linger at death's doorstep for a few rounds, giving other characters a chance to stabilize him with emergency medical treatment. In this case, it might take hours, days, or even weeks before the character regains consciousness and heals his Incapacitated health level.

## HEALTH TRACKS

Below are two examples of damage applied to a health track, belonging to a Solar with Stamina 5 who has purchased Ox-Body Technique (p. 375) twice.

<b>HEALTH &amp; DEFENSE</b>							
NATURAL SOAK:	ARMORED SOAK:	TOTAL SOAK:	HARDNESS:				
PARRY:	EVASION:	RESOLVE:	GUILE:				
HEALTH LEVELS							
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
-0	-0	-0	-1	-1	-1	-2	-2
-0	-1	-1	-2	-2	-2	-2	-4
<b>INC</b>							

The one on top has taken three bashing damage, while the one below it has taken three bashing damage followed by two lethal and one aggravated, “pushing” the bashing damage to the right.

## MORTAL HEALING

The bodies of the Exalted are far more resilient than mortal flesh. Mortals cannot heal lethal damage to their -2 and -4 health levels at all unless resting, and will bleed to death at a rate of one point of lethal damage per minute if they suffer any single injury which inflicts lethal damage equal to or greater than their Stamina rating (stanching such bleeding is an Intelligence + Medicine roll with a difficulty equal to the mortal's wound penalty, minimum 1 and maximum 5; the difficulty increases by 1 if the mortal is treating himself). Additionally, mortals heal at a slower rate than the Chosen, as detailed below:

- Recovering a -0 health level takes 12 hours if bashing, or two days if lethal.
- Recovering a -1 health level takes one day if bashing, or four days if lethal.
- Recovering a -2 health level takes four days if bashing, or one week if lethal.
- Recovering a -4 health level takes one week if bashing, or one month if lethal.
- Recovery from Incapacitation is up to the Storyteller, as with the Exalted. Recovering from lethal Incapacitation almost always leaves some sort of permanent debility, though skilled medical treatment may minimize this.

These times assume characters are primarily resting and avoiding strenuous exertion. If the character remains fully active while injured, double any healing times.

## Essence

Exaltation instills a mortal soul with the power of the gods, opening the recipient's eyes to the energies within. This Essence grants an Exalt power, and as the Chosen grow in power and enlightenment, so too does the Essence within them. As they perfect and purify their inner might, they can accomplish ever greater feats. Your character's Essence rating represents both the cultivation of her Essence, and her overall level of Exalted prowess. All Exalted begin with an Essence rating of one dot. **Essence rating is one of two main prerequisites for your character's Charms—as her Essence rating increases, she can purchase more powerful Charms.** Additionally, Essence rating helps determine the capacity of her Essence pools.

### Mote Pools

Essence is the fuel of the Exalted, transforming heroic feats into divine miracles—but even the Chosen are limited by the amount of power that a human frame can contain. Savants recognize that an Exalt can channel only a limited amount of Essence without causing friction between himself and the world around him. When an Exalt calls upon his Essence, it escapes from him—and if it is drawn too rapidly, it passes through his anima, causing a brilliant display.

Your character's surface Essence is known as his peripheral mote pool, while the Essence residing in the depths of his spirit is called the personal mote pool. Both pools contain a reserve of *motes*, which power Charms. It's helpful to have a piece of paper or two handfuls of differ-

ently-colored beads or poker chips to help you keep track of how many motes you have remaining. **When your character activates a Charm or other power, you may spend from either pool, but you can only split the cost between them if you don't have enough motes in your chosen pool to pay the full cost.** Spending peripheral motes might cause your anima banner to flare (see below).

Mote pools replenish themselves over time. **Characters with mote pools regain five motes of Essence at the end of each round while in combat**, as the dynamism of battle stirs the world around them. **Outside of battle, characters regain five motes per hour.** In the most relaxed of times—such as when a character is asleep, meditating, or quietly reading—they respire Essence at a rate of 10 motes per hour. Motes in the peripheral pool are replenished before motes in the personal pool.

A Solar's personal mote pool is ( $[Essence \times 3] + 10$ ) motes, while her peripheral mote pool holds ( $[Essence \times 7] + 26$ ) motes.

### The Anima Banner

As an Exalt taps into the Essence at her command, her soul ignites, revealing her nature to the world. All of the Chosen possess an anima banner: an invisible, intangible aura that flares to vibrant life when exposed to their unleashed glory. Gods and other natural Essence-users lack anima displays, but the Exalted are neither wholly mortal nor entirely divine; extreme expenditures of Essence eventually stoke their souls into brilliant visibility. As the display builds in power, it might reveal an Exalt to everyone in the room, then everyone in the building, and finally everyone in the city! At its most intense, an Exalt's anima

banner becomes a blazing icon, an immense, coruscating image visible for miles.

Your character's anima is a reflection of who she is, incorporating colors, sounds, and imagery suited to her temperament, ideals, and Caste. The anima of a Zenith priest-king might blaze like the noonday sun, a molten-gold light that burns away all shadows. As he spends Essence, the light takes shape, surrounding him with the image of a sacred mandala inscribed with the vows he's sworn to the Unconquered Sun and his people. As he makes pronouncements, phantasmal offering-smoke rises to Heaven, and soft voices sing hymns of praise. The anima of a Night Caste assassin might shroud her in a flickering glow like torchlight, casting dancing shadows every which way. As the display intensifies, the shadows grow longer, turning into cloaked, blade-wielding silhouettes that mirror her every move like puppets in a shadow-play.

When your character has spent 10m of peripheral Essence in a scene, her anima is Glowing. Having spent 20m (total) from your peripheral pool raises it to Burning, and 30m to Bonfire/Iconic. Regaining motes has no effect on this - it's a measure of how much you've spent.

#### Anima Level Effects

Dim	The Solar's anima is invisible to all senses, masking her Exalted nature. This is the default level at which a Solar's anima resides when not spending Essence.
Glowing	The character's anima glows and pulses, outlining him with the colors of the sun. His Caste mark appears on his brow, shining through anything placed over it. Any attempts at stealth or disguise suffer a -3 penalty.
Burning	The character's anima blazes brightly, subsuming his Caste mark into its radiance, though the mark may reappear when he uses powerful Charms. Wisps of bright power coil off his body and rise into the air. Anything subjected to his anima may become warm to the touch afterwards, or take on the faint scent of a summer afternoon. Stealth becomes impossible.
Bonfire/ Iconic	The Solar's anima ignites in a grand display of iconic splendor, depicting personal iconography chosen by the player—one Solar warrior's anima may depict a tiger

whose roar shakes the heavens, while a savant may be surrounded by a storm of whirling parchment covered in the lore of bygone ages. This phantasmal display then collapses into a raging bonfire of spiritual power stretching high into the air, visible for miles. This level of display illuminates the area around the Solar out to short range, banishing shadows. His Caste Mark behaves as in the previous progression, and the iconic display may also reappear at dramatic moments.

It takes about an hour for the anima to vanish from its full brilliance—fifteen minutes to recede from bonfire to burning, the same length to go from burning to glowing, and then about half an hour until the glowing anima dims and vanishes.

#### Anima Effects

A character's anima is her most instinctive expression of Essence, granting access to a number of small miracles. A few of these are available to all Solars, while most are unique to a Caste. Where anima effects enhance a dice pool, they do *not* count as dice added by a Charm (p. 251-252).

By feeding a mote of Essence into their anima, all Solars can evoke the following effects:

- The Solar may feel the brilliant presence of the sun relative to herself and know the exact time of day thereby. This works even if she's underground or in the Wyld beyond Creation.
- The Solar may cause her Caste Mark to appear and display itself for as long as she desires.

In addition to these universal effects, Solars of each Caste enjoy a number of innate benefits:

#### Dawn Anima Effects

- At bonfire/iconic anima display, the Dawn adds half her Essence score (round up) to her base Initiative upon resetting to base after a successful **decisive** attack.
- For 10 motes, all of the Dawn's combat and movement Charms with outstanding reset conditions are automatically reset. This effect can only be used once per day, becoming available again at sunrise.
- The Dawn Caste inspires terror in her foes. She adds half her Essence score (round up) in dice to all intimidating social influence. She may also intimidate targets which do not feel fear, such as automatons, golems, and certain undead.

### Zenith Anima Effects

- For one mote, the Zenith's anima leaps from her hand to a corpse she's touching, igniting it in Solar flame. This power incinerates the corpse and ensures the soul of the deceased will not return as a hungry ghost. In addition, the Zenith may perceive the strongest Intimacies of the deceased and may choose to accept them. When she is ready, she may pay one mote, touching a target of those Intimacies to pass on feelings of peace, love, and assurance, shedding them in the process. She may also transfer them to an object, allowing it to convey comfort or a sense of duty to the subject. Conversely, she may touch someone who caused the deceased to suffer, paying one mote and rolling ([A social Attribute] + Presence) with three automatic non-Charm successes against their Resolve to transfer pain suffered by the deceased back on the one who caused it. The Storyteller is free to dictate the length and weight of such attrition.

- For 10 motes, one Willpower, the Zenith channels her Essence into an aura of divine retribution, surging around an attack. This power supplements a successful **decisive** attack against a creature of darkness, preventing the Solar's Initiative from returning to its base value after the attack. When the Zenith's anima is at bonfire, reduce the cost of this power by five motes and ignore the Willpower. This power may only be used once per day, resetting when the sun is at its zenith.
- For seven motes, the Zenith may order a dematerialized spirit to manifest using a (Charisma + Presence) persuade action with (Essence) automatic successes. All spirits inherently recognize the Unconquered Sun's authority in the priest-kings and are compelled as if by a Defining Intimacy, but may still have Defining Ties or Principles which counter this advantage. If successful, the Zenith's very command draws the spirit into the material world, so that it does not need to pay the cost to materialize.

### Twilight Anima Effects

- For five motes, the Twilight projects an aura of pure force, reflexively gaining five Hardness for one turn. At the bonfire/iconic level, this power activates itself automatically at no cost. This effect doesn't stack with other magic that raises Hardness, but it *can* be used during Initiative Crash.
- For 10 motes, one Willpower, the Twilight's anima flares blue and white and consumes her body over the course of the round. On her next turn, she vanishes into her anima and ceases to exist. If the Exalt moves or suffers knockdown before the action is completed, it fails and the effect is wasted. After using this power, the Twilight will not reappear until the following sunset. When she

does, it will be at a place of power within 10 miles of her vanishing point, chosen by the Storyteller. She might appear at a temple, a demesne, a major crossroads, the door of a god's sanctum, the precise center of a city, etc.

- For 10 motes, the Twilight may touch an Essence 1-3 elemental or a demon of the first circle, conjoining its Essence to her anima. Roll Intelligence + Occult against the creature's Resolve. If successful, this creates a pact that changes the spirit into her familiar, allowing her to target it with applicable Survival Charms. In addition, the Twilight can reflexively summon the spirit instantly for three motes, drawing it through the Essence of the world to appear beside her. She may banish the creature again, reflexively, for free, returning it to the tides of Essence that suffuse Creation until needed. The Twilight may have up to (Essence) spirit familiars bound in this fashion at once.

### Night Anima Effects

- For two motes, the Night can dampen her anima, treating all Peripheral Essence expenditures as if they were Personal for one instant.
- For three motes, the Night can ignore up to (higher of 3 or Essence) penalties to a Stealth attempt for one instant. These motes are always considered Personal, regardless of the pool they're spent from.
- When the Night's anima is at the bonfire/iconic level, it wraps around and suffuses her form, hiding her figure and masking her visage in flame. She is merely a fearsome silhouette shrouded in all the hues of evening. It becomes impossible to discern her identity. This is considered a perfect effect, and cannot be pierced by Eye of the Unconquered Sun (see p. 273) or other all-seeing magic.

### Eclipse Anima Effects

- For 10 motes, one Willpower, the Eclipse sanctifies an oath she has witnessed. The Exalt touches the oath-givers (or their words, as they pass through the air), her caste mark flashing imperceptibly. If she wishes, her anima briefly flares, swirling with the words and runes by which Heaven has given her the right to arbitrate such matters.

Oath-givers who break oaths sanctified by the Eclipse (including the Exalt herself) are subject to a terrible curse. The details of the curse are devised by the Storyteller, ideally reflecting the oath broken. A woman who breaks a hospitality oath might find herself incapable of rest beneath any roof for a year and a day, while a man who murdered the one he swore to protect may find his defenses utterly failing him when he must next fight for his life.

- The Eclipse has diplomatic immunity when treating with the enemies of Creation. So long as the Eclipse approaches them on legitimate business of some kind, shades, spirits, the demon princes of Hell, and the Fair Folk may not attack the Eclipse or her companions without just cause, and such creatures must observe the local rules of hospitality. Such beings may still attempt to provoke members of the Solar's embassy into breaking the peace, thus voiding this effect's protection.
- The Eclipse represents all the subtle movements of Essence under Heaven, the strange and self-referencing powers that stir when night merges with day. Eclipses can learn the Charms of spirits, Fair Folk and similar supernatural beings which have the Eclipse keyword for eight experience points each.

## Character Advancement

Character growth is expressed with experience points, given out at the end of every session, which players spend to increase characters' traits, as well as to buy new Charms and spells. These function exactly as they do during character creation - see the Experience Points table in chapter three. Each character

gains five experience points at the end of every session. These points may be spent immediately, or saved to be spent later.

### Raising Essence

While it's possible for a character's Essence rating to increase in a dramatic moment of blazing glory, it's more common for the growth to take place over the course of days, weeks or even months. Some Solars retreat into temporary seclusion in order to commune with their inner divinity, spending time atop mountain peaks, desert plateaus or other elevated places to contemplate the face of the Unconquered Sun and their own burgeoning power.

Characters' Essence ratings increase automatically once they have earned and spent enough experience points on other traits. Essence is the core of a Solar's power, the beating heart of his enlightened will, and it becomes stronger only when the Solar has grown as an overall hero of Creation, rather than being cultivated directly. The numbers on this table include the starting experience from character creation.

Essence	Experience Points
••	100xp
•••	175xp
••••	250xp
•••••	350xp

# H

er mother always said that rain was the tears of Daana'd—one droplet for each transgression against the Immaculate Philosophy. It had been raining more, lately.

Her name was Peleps Marani. By the grace of the Scarlet Empress she served the Realm as magistrate. She had walked down every road on the Blessed Isle, and her bones were growing tired—like the Realm's own bones, she feared.

With the Empress missing, the protection of the magistracy had vanished, and her enemies were many. Her duty was all she had left, faithfully protecting her treacherous charges. And they needed her sorely. The Anathema were spreading. Stories spread, truths hidden among rumors and deceptions.

Mere weeks ago, a student at the Spiral Academy had burst into golden light. The death toll from her escape was terrible. Among sailors, she had heard rumors about a ship that sailed against the wind, faster than any other vessel, and whose rag-tag crew fought with the skill and discipline of elite Realm soldiers. And from the southeastern Threshold, she had received a missive detailing a new heresy: the Cult of Hesiesh, Dragon of Light. A sun-god.

The village huddled in fear next to the bay. Garish paint couldn't hide the state of dilapidation, nor the thin layer of grime that covered everything.

She walked into the plaza. Empty, but for one figure—a beautiful young man whose robes hung open to show his slender, muscular torso, his lack of a right hand only accentuating his perfection.

Her commanding voice rang out: "I would speak to the village elder."

The young man smirked, and nodded to someone unseen. She heard footsteps behind her. "You will speak to me, magistrate." His voice was as smooth as his skin. On his forehead appeared a glowing symbol. Solar Anathema. Forsaken Caste.

She turned to run. A spear whispered towards her neck without warning, but her hand flew up instinctively and swept the tip aside with two fingers. She struck at her attacker, a surly-looking man who was probably portly once, and embedded her bare hand in his chest up to the wrist.

Her loping run was spry for someone of her age, and doubly so for her full suit of armor. She drew her hook-nosed hammer from its hoop at her thigh, and raised it firmly.

With a crash, another assailant leapt out of a window behind the magistrate. The attacker's axe swung in a wide arc, but the magistrate spun around, presenting her sturdy breastplate to the blow. A strike from the hammer left the young warrior gurgling, coughing up water.

The old soldier rounded a corner, a clear run to the harbor—freedom. With the blessing of Daana'd, she could stay close to the bottom and swim for a few hours. She doubted even the Solar could emulate that.

Her legs carried her forward with a speed mortal athletes could envy. Only a few dozen paces...

The man seemed to come from thin air. He dropped down in front of her, drew his blade and flourished it, grinning a roguish grin. Such a pity that those looks were wasted on an Anathema.

"My dear magistrate, you are resourceful. My name is One Million Perfect Petals, and it shall be my pleasure to cross blades with one of your caliber."

He dashed, and left his image in the air. The blade lashed out, and her reflexes were only just sufficient—the sword nipped at her sleeve. She swung at his head, but his blade moved faster than she could perceive and intercepted the blow. He crouched and swept at her legs. She jumped clear, and lashed out with a spinning back-kick. He slipped under it and slashed her armored thigh, chest, and wrist, striking three points in one motion. She fell heavily on her back, her hammer flipping out of reach. The tip of his sword was at her neck.

"You have been betrayed." His expression grew grim. "So have I. They never seem to appreciate devotion, even centuries-long. This is not the Realm you swore your life to protect, magistrate. And I have need of a... well, a second-in-command."

He sheathed his blade and offered her his hand.

"Join me. Let us have our revenge together, and put things right."

The rain kept beating down.





## Chapter Five

# Systems and Conflict

Now that you're familiar with the world of **Exalted** and how to make a character, this chapter explains the rules by which the game is played. The purpose of these rules is to heighten dramatic tension by introducing an element of chance and uncertainty, particularly in the face of opposition or difficult circumstances. Taken as a whole, these rules comprise the Storyteller System on which **Exalted** operates.

Before we get started, here are the three most important rules:

**The Golden Rule:** If you don't like one of these rules, change it. If a rule is getting in the way of having fun, throw it out. If you have an idea that would work better for your group than one of the rules here, go with that. Nobody knows better than you what you'll find fun.

**The Orichalcum Rule:** This is a big game with lots of rules, set in an even bigger and more complex world, and players are endlessly inventive. If you ever find that by following the letter of the rules, you get a result that *doesn't make sense* in the course of the story, *the rules are wrong, the story is right*. If the rules suggest something dumb or nonsensical or just plain not fun, ignore them or change them. Story comes before adherence to the rules.

**The Storyteller's Rule:** A lot of the rules in **Exalted**, especially the combat engine, are heavy abstractions rather than faithful simulations. Storyteller, if it seems to you like a player is using the letter of the rules to muck up the spirit of the game and the fun of the story, then that particular rules loophole doesn't work. You are explicitly empowered to call shenanigans whenever it seems necessary—the rules can't account for everything, and any interpretation of a Charm or other mechanic away from its intended function isn't legal unless you say it is.

### Before We Begin

**Exalted** is a big game with lots of rules. The intention is to provide a built-in sense of style, some challenge, and

lots of tactical options when the game gets competitive, such as during combat. We don't recommend trying to memorize all these rules at once—start simple, and then add in more nuanced bits like taking cover, stealth, and naval combat as you go. Here's what you *really need* to get started:

- Basic action resolution, setting difficulties, and how penalties work, on pages 184-189.
- The fundamentals of combat, including attack, defense, and movement, on pages 184-199.
- The basics of social influence—how to alter Intimacies and how to persuade people to do things. This is on pages 212-225.
- **If you are the Storyteller**, you should know how battle groups work, detailed on pages 205-211. For other stuff—crafting, sailing, environmental hazards, poison, combat gambits—try adding one or two of these rules in with each game session, and you'll have a much easier time than if you try memorizing it all at once.

### Glossary

A number of specific terms appear repeatedly throughout this chapter. The most common and important are collected here for easy reference.

**Ability:** A trait representing learned skills or knowledge. Abilities are added to an *Attribute* to determine your basic *dice pool* for most tasks.

**action:** Something a character does that's resolved within the Storyteller system. There are several types of action, described in more detail on pages 188-189. Additionally, two particular types of actions are important in combat—*combat actions* and *reflexive actions*.

**aggravated (damage):** Produced by certain magical effects that modify *lethal damage*, aggravated damage cannot be healed magically.

**Attribute:** A trait representing innate capabilities, Physical, Social, or Mental. An Attribute is added to an *Ability* to determine your basic *dice pool* for most tasks.

**base Initiative:** The value that a character's Initiative resets to after landing a successful **decisive attack**. This is usually 3 Initiative.

**bashing (damage):** Produced by **decisive attacks**. The least severe variety of *Health Track* damage a character can suffer, representing blunt impacts, contusions, and bruising. A character whose *Health Track* is filled with bashing damage is rendered unconscious.

**botch:** A roll which has failed in some dramatic and notable fashion, due to gaining no successes and displaying one or more results of 1.

**combat action:** The action a character takes on her turn in combat—usually an attack. A character can take only a single combat action per round, unless she flurries.

**damage:** The result of attacks launched by one character against another. Damage may be applied either to a character's *Initiative* score or to his *Health Track*. The latter comes in three varieties: *bashing*, *lethal*, and *aggravated*.

**decisive attack:** A risky, pivotal attack within a combat scene, which may decide the outcome of a fight. Attempts to *damage* an opponent's *Health Track*.

**Defense:** A *static value* which establishes how difficult it is for others to attack the character, based on the higher of the character's *Evasion* or *Parry*. See page 194.

**dice pool:** The number of dice rolled to determine failure or success (and the degree of success) for a character's *action*. Dice pools are usually determined by adding an *Attribute* to an *Ability*, plus any relevant modifiers.

**difficulty:** The number of *successes* required on a roll for an action to succeed.

**Double 10s:** A result of 10 on any rolled die is counted as two *successes*. This rule applies to almost all rolls save for **decisive** damage rolls.

**Double 9s:** When this rule is in effect, a result of 9 or 10 on any rolled die is counted as two *successes*.

**Double 8s:** When this rule is in effect, a result of 8, 9, or 10 on any rolled die is counted as two *successes*.

**Double 7s:** When this rule is in effect, a result of 7, 8, 9, or 10 on any rolled die is counted as two *successes*.

**Evasion:** A *static value* describing how well a character can dodge attacks. Can be used to determine *Defense*.

**flurry:** A rule allowing characters to take two combat actions in a single turn in exchange for suffering certain penalties. See page 195.

**gambit:** A special maneuver whose execution is similar to a **decisive attack**, but which is intended to shift the tactical parameters of battle, such as by disarming or unhorsing an opponent.

**goal number:** The total number of cumulative successes necessary to complete an extended action.

**Guile:** A *static value* which establishes how difficult it is for others to read the character's intentions and motives. See page 214.

**Hardness:** A value establishing a character's incredible toughness, due to magic, mystical armor, or superhuman prowess. Protects against **decisive attacks**.

**Health Track:** A series of boxes measuring a character's physical well-being. When these are all filled in with *damage*, a character is unconscious, dying, or dead.

**Initiative:** A trait abstracting combat advantage, and determining the order in which characters take turns during combat. This very important trait changes rapidly during battle. See pages 192-194.

**Initiative (damage):** Produced by **withering attacks**, Initiative damage causes the character's *Initiative* rating to drop (and usually the attacker's *Initiative* rating to increase by an equal amount).

**Initiative Break:** An *Initiative* bonus granted for forcing an enemy into *Initiative Crash*.

**Initiative Crash:** A state wherein a character is on the ropes and losing a fight, signified by an *Initiative* value of 0 or below.

**Initiative Shift:** A dramatic reversal of fortune which occurs when a character in *Initiative Crash* Crashes the enemy who Crashed him.

**inspire:** A social action which inflames passions, often with unpredictable results.

**instill:** A social action which creates or modifies Intimacies.

**interval:** The amount of time between rolls in an extended action.

**Intimacy:** A trait which describes people, places, things, or ideals that are important to a character.

**lethal (damage):** Produced by *decisive attacks*. Severe damage to a character's *Health Track*, representing edged weapons, arrows, and other attacks which inflict grievous bodily harm. A character whose *Health Track* is filled with lethal damage is either dead or dying.

**minimum damage:** The lowest possible number of damage dice a *withering attack* can roll. *Soak* cannot reduce a *withering attack* below this value. Minimum damage is normally equal to the Overwhelming value of the weapon used to make the attack—see page 580.

**onslaught penalty:** A -1 penalty to a character's *Defense*, lasting until his next turn, that is incurred every time he suffers an attack.

**Parry:** A *static value* describing how well a character can block or parry attacks. Can be used to determine *Defense*.

**persuade:** A social action which convinces characters to do things.

**reflexive action:** An action that takes little to no time or concentration, or which occurs automatically.

**Resolve:** A *static value* which establishes how difficult it is for others to change the character's mind through argument or emotional appeal. See page 214.

**soak:** A value which determines how well-protected the character is from injury, due to toughness and armor. Soak only protects against *withering attacks*.

**static value:** A fixed value generated by a character's traits, used as a difficulty rating for hostile individuals attempting to act on the character in certain ways. **Exalted** has static values: *Defense*, *Evasion*, *Guile*, *Parry*, and *Resolve*.

**stunt:** An action which is described in a dramatic fashion, granting the player a bonus.

**success:** (1) A die which matches or exceeds a roll's *target number*. (2) A roll whose number of successes match or exceed the *difficulty* of the *action*.

**target number:** Abbreviated as TN. The number which a *dice pool*'s dice must match or exceed in order to produce *successes*. Virtually all dice pools are rolled against TN 7.

**terminus:** The number of rolls allowed during certain extended actions (p. 189).

**threshold successes:** Successes in excess of the minimum number required to succeed at an action. These are relevant to some types of actions, particularly attacks.

**withering attack:** An attack or series of attacks which move a combat *scene* toward its conclusion, but which will not end the fight in and of themselves. Attempts to damage an opponent's *Initiative*.

## General System Structure

Creation is an enormous, diverse place where almost anything might happen—and need to be resolved by the players and Storyteller. Although **Exalted** has many rules, they almost all refer back to a simple resolution system, explained below.

### Time

**Exalted** has five general measurements to describe the division of time within the game, progressing from the largest to the smallest unit:

- **Chronicle**—A complete game focusing on a continuous series of characters or events. Similar to the full run of a television series or cycle of books.

- **Story**—A discrete portion of narrative that often takes several sessions to play out. Stories generally have an overall goal or framework, such as “Overthrow the satrap,” “Find the ancient ruins of Lost Zarlath,” or “Escape from the Wyld Hunt after being ambushed and trapped in the city.”

- **Session**—A single evening of gaming, generally encompassing several scenes.

- **Scene**—A segment of action and roleplaying that takes place without a cut in time and location, like a scene in a film. A scene takes as few or as many *rounds* as are necessary to resolve events—in-setting, a scene might be as short as a few minutes or as long as a few hours.

- **Round**—A unit of time used to measure combat scenes, considered long enough to take one action. A round nor-

mally lasts about three seconds in combat situations, but could potentially represent more time during fights involving large battle groups. The point during a round when you declare your character's action is called your *turn*.

Existing outside of this scale of progression, there is also: **Downtime**—Time between scenes or sessions that pass without roleplaying, which is narrated in an abstract fashion—“Three weeks later, you finally arrive in Nexus,” or “My character spends the remaining days before the festival rigorously practicing martial arts on the mountaintop.”

### Dice

The **Exalted** Storyteller system uses 10-sided dice; each player should have at least 10 dice of her own, though dice can be shared in a pinch. 10-sided dice can be purchased at most hobby outlets, or from online retailers; alternately, countless free virtual dice-rolling applications are available online.

### Traits

Characters possess a variety of *traits* describing their innate capabilities, trained skills, and other measurable qualities, such as their Strength, Intelligence, and Stealth ratings. Most traits are rated in dots (•) ranging from 1 to 5, much like the “five-star” system critics use to rate movies, wherein • is a low or poor rating, •• is average, and ••••• denotes superlative excellence at the outer edge of human potential. These traits are explained in greater detail in Chapter Four of this book.

### Dice Pools

When a character takes an action in **Exalted**, her chance of success is represented by her *dice pool*, which is normally formed by combining the most logically applicable Attribute and Ability that pertain to the task. For example, a character attempting to pick a lock (a task requiring nimble hands and criminal expertise) would combine her Dexterity rating with her Larceny rating. Assuming she has Dexterity 3 and Larceny 2, she then has a dice pool of 5 dice.

Which Attribute and Ability should be combined to attempt an action is generally up to the best judgment of the Storyteller.

### Determining Difficulty

Having determined what dice pool to use, the Storyteller then considers the task the player wants his character to attempt and assigns it a *difficulty rating*.

As great heroes, **Exalted** characters are assumed to possess abundant confidence and competence. Tasks which run-

Rather than generating dice pools, characters occasionally generate static values—fixed ratings which are recorded on the character sheet. These are normally used to determine the difficulty for hostile individuals to act on the character—for example, a character's Defense rating determines the difficulty of attempts to attack her. Exalted has the following static values: Evasion, Parry, Defense (which is equal to the higher of Evasion or Parry), Resolve, and Guile, detailed on page 194 for Defense and page 214 for Resolve and Guile.

of-the-mill individuals in Creation would consider challenging (such as picking a lock or removing a patient's appendix without killing him) are ordinary fare for heroes. Such tasks are appropriate for **difficulty 1**.

Performing challenging tasks under significant duress (such as picking a lock or removing an appendix in the dead of night, without sufficient light, in the midst of a howling storm) is appropriate for **difficulty 2**.

Tasks which might daunt even heroes, by contrast, are appropriate for **difficulty 3**. Examples might include plucking a gem from a nest of writhing serpents without being bitten, or breaking a man-eating horse born in the depths of the Wyld so it accepts the hero as its rider.

Performing such tasks under significant duress (such as plucking the aforementioned gem while the temple collapses around the intrepid thief, or breaking the man-eating horse in the midst of a raging forest fire) are appropriate for **difficulty 4**.

Near-impossible feats, even by heroic standards, are appropriate for **difficulty 5**. Examples might include reading a letter in pitch blackness by feeling the texture of ink on the paper, leaping over the rail of a sorcerer's flying chariot to land safely in a hay cart hundreds of feet below, or running for three consecutive days and nights without succumbing to exhaustion.

### Rolling the Dice

Now that you know what to roll and how to determine the difficulty of an action, here's how to read the results.

Roll a number of dice equal to your dice pool. Each die that shows a 7, 8, 9 or 10 is considered a *success*. In fact, each die showing a 10 usually counts as *two successes* (this is known as the *Double 10s rule*). For an action to succeed, the player must accumulate a number of successes equal to or greater than the action's difficulty rating.



**Success:** To return to our earlier example of the lock-picking hero: Let's say she's picking the lock at twilight in the midst of a storm. The lighting is poor and the rumble of thunder masks the sounds of the tumblers turning. The Storyteller determines that the action is difficulty 2. Since the character possesses Dexterity 3 and Larceny 2, the player rolls five dice against difficulty 2, garnering results of 1, 3, 6, 7, and 10—three successes. The door opens.

Successes in excess of the number required are known as *threshold successes*. In the above example, the thief succeeded with one threshold success. Threshold successes are relevant to certain actions detailed later in this chapter, such as combat.

**Failure:** If the roll generates no successes, or generates fewer successes than the difficulty set by the Storyteller, then the action has *failed*. Depending on whether it makes sense, the character might or might not be allowed to attempt the action again. In the example of the thief, the Storyteller might rule that the character may attempt to pick the lock again, but now hears a guard approaching—if she doesn't succeed this time, she won't have time to hide before the guard comes into view.

**Botch:** If the roll generates no successes and one or more dice come up showing a result of 1, the action has *botched*. A botch means that the action has failed in such a way that it dramatically complicates the story—perhaps the thief's attempts to pick the lock have caused her picks to break off inside, jamming the lock so it cannot be opened at all! The character will have to find another way to reach her objective.

#### AUTOMATIC ACTIONS AND DIFFICULTY 0

Many actions that a character takes aren't dramatic at all, and aren't worth breaking out the dice for. A character can generally lace up her boots, navigate stairs, and cook breakfast without needing to roll to determine success—she's simply assumed to be competent at things she does on a regular basis, and the story moves on.

Sometimes, however, thanks to magic, penalties suffered by enemies, or very low static values, characters may occasionally find themselves attempting a rolled action at difficulty 0. Treat this as a difficulty 1 action which cannot be botched. The most common sources of difficulty 0 are low-Defense (p. 194) combatants suffering penalties due to armor or magic.

## stunts

**Exalted** is a game of cinematic action and mighty heroes who go crashing through the world and look cool doing it. Characters needn't choose between doing the sensible thing or the stylish thing—the coolest course of action is also the optimal one. Such actions are known as *stunts*.

For an action to qualify as a stunt, it must fulfill two criteria, as approved by the Storyteller:

- The action must be cooler than a basic declaration of intent (see below for examples).

- The action cannot be boring. This is not meant to act as a harsh quality bar players must strive to jump over—mostly it means repetitive stunts stop qualifying as stunts, as they're no longer entertaining. This also means **any stunt so long and overwrought that it bores rather than excites isn't a stunt.**

Stunts may be used as often as desired—and to be clear, the average player can *and should* use a stunt to enhance almost every action her character takes. Storytellers are encouraged to err in the player's favor when deciding what is or isn't a stunt.

- **One-Point Stunts:** The benefits of stunting are simple: any rolled action enhanced by a stunt gains two extra dice. If the stunted action is the application of a static value (such as using Defense to block an opponent's leaping sword slash), then that static value rises by 1. Players should be able to use a one-point stunt on almost every action.

- **Two-Point Stunts:** A two-point stunt stands above and beyond other stunts. These are intended to be less common than one-point stunts; to be a two-point stunt, the action needs to stand out memorably as a highlight of the scene.

Exceptional stunts on rolled actions are rewarded with two extra dice and one automatic success. Exceptional stunts on static value applications raise the static value by 2. A player might get two or three of these in an evening of play.

**Whenever a player describes a two-point stunt, her character gains a point of Willpower**, up to a maximum of her permanent Willpower rating.

- **Three-Point Stunts:** These are stunts so cool that everyone at the table is impressed. These stunts are intended to be rare and memorable; to be a three-point stunt, the action needs to stand out as probably the coolest thing that's going to happen during the entire session.

Three-point stunts on rolled actions are rewarded with two extra dice and two automatic successes. Three-point stunts on static value applications raise the static value by 3. A player probably won't manage a three-point stunt in every session—it's rare to see more than one out of the entire group in the course of a night of play.

**Whenever a player describes a three-point stunt, her character gains two points of Willpower**, which may take her above her permanent Willpower rating.

Finally, when a character performs an unnecessarily dangerous stunt (such as leaping over a roaring bonfire to strike at her opponent, or hurling herself off a tall building in an attempt to grapple a flying enemy), the Storyteller is urged not to level devastating consequences should the stunt fail. In the above examples, the character might have an opportunity to beat out the flames kindling on her clothing before suffering any damage, or should be provided a roll to grab onto a ledge or other surface to keep from plummeting to a messy death. **Exalted** players shouldn't avoid reckless heroism for fear of the obvious danger.

### STUNT EXAMPLES

**NOT A STUNT:** I attack the archer by the tree.  
**STUNT:** Ducking under another arrow, I race up to the archer and swing my daiklave across his torso, slamming him into the tree. Blood stippling the falling leaves that rain down around us.

**NOT A STUNT:** I release him from the grapple by throwing him.

**STUNT:** I hoist the Exigent into the air and slam him down through the table with a ringing crash.

**NOT A STUNT:** I parry the soldiers' attacks.

**STUNT:** I swing my daiklave left-to-right, scattering the soldiers' spears like toys.

**NOT A STUNT:** I climb up onto the roof.

**STUNT:** I run halfway up the wall, leap, grab the edge of the roof, and flip myself up to land easily on the red shingles.

**NOT A STUNT:** I try to bribe the clerk to let me in without an appointment.

**STUNT:** I walk up to the clerk's desk. "I'm here to see Magistrate Chen—promptly." I let the coins in my hand ring audibly against the surface of his desk to punctuate my words.

**NOT A STUNT:** I cast Invulnerable Skin of Bronze.

**STUNT:** A storm of whirling Essence coalesces into a scrawl of Old Realm characters printed upon my skin, which then spread and harden into an invulnerable shell of living bronze.

## Action Complications

The rules above detail a normal dice roll. They're used to resolve the vast majority of all actions and circumstances in **Exalted**—but not all. What if another character is trying to stop your action from succeeding? What if your action is merely one step in a long and complex series of action intended to produce a specific outcome? What if you have magic helping you out—or hindering you?

### Bonuses and Penalties

Your dice pools may be changed by *modifiers*—bonuses or penalties that increase or decrease a character's likelihood of success by adding or subtracting dice from her dice pool. The most common sources of modifiers in **Exalted** are *situational penalties* (penalties based on the circumstances in which the action is attempted), *equipment modifiers* (bonuses or penalties based on tools used to assist or hamper the action), and *Charm modifiers* (bonuses or penalties based on the use of magic to assist or impede the action).

Bonuses or penalties add to or subtract from the character's relevant dice pool by the number indicated. For example, a character suffering under a divine curse that levels a -2 penalty to all attempts to transgress the laws of the city Great Forks would lose two dice from her dice pool every time she attempted an action that broke the city's laws.

Bonuses and penalties also occasionally affect a character's static values. In these situations, the static value is simply raised or lowered by the amount specified.

Equipment and Charm modifiers are generally pre-set, depending on the magic or equipment being employed. Situational penalties, on the other hand, are set by the Storyteller whenever it seems appropriate to do so (see below).

Penalties cannot reduce a character's dice pools or static values below 0. Charm bonuses are subject to some special limitations—see pages 251–252 in the next chapter.

#### When and How to Use Situational Penalties

Most of the time, advantageous or disadvantageous environmental factors will simply determine the difficulty of an action, rather than producing penalties or bonuses. A character navigating his ship into a narrow cove with a favorable wind and a calm sea would be facing a difficulty 1 action—no bonus is necessary. If the waters are choppy and the wind seems to want to carry the ship into danger, this would produce a difficulty 2 action rather than a penalty.

**Penalties are applied when the difficulty of an action is already pre-set**—usually by a static value possessed by another character. For example, an attempt to shoot another character with an arrow always has a difficulty equal to the target's Defense. But what if the Night Caste hero Harmonious Jade attempts to shoot a marauding Abyssal in the middle of a cloudy night, with a high wind blowing? In this case, the difficulty of the action remains unchanged, but the archer suffers a penalty to her dice pool.

**Penalties may also be applied when there is no difficulty, as in the case of opposed rolls.** For example, if one character is rolling (Dexterity + Stealth) to hide, and another is rolling (Perception + Awareness) to find the first character, there's no difficulty.

A list of example penalties follows, demonstrating how characters might be hampered by certain factors:

#### Example Martial Penalties

- 1: Character fights in poor lighting, or attempts a ranged attack in high wind. Character attacks on poor footing, such as slick rocks.
- 3: Character attacks while standing on perilous terrain such as a narrow tree limb or balancing on a rope. Character suffers multiple minor complications, such as fog and high wind. Character is trying to fight while blind, and must rely on other senses.
- 5: Character is fighting in the sweltering haze of a burning building, choking on smoke and avoiding nearby flames. Character is fighting blind in an environment full of noise or other factors that make her other senses unreliable.

#### Example Social Penalties

- 1: Character's requests or actions represent an unknowing social *faux pas* in the culture he's dealing with.
- 3: Character's bearing is inappropriate for the circumstances (showing up to a royal court in stained traveling clothes and smelling of sweat and horses).
- 5: Character's bearing is *wildly* inappropriate for the circumstances (showing up to a royal court naked and covered in blood).

#### Example Opposed Roll Penalties

- 1: Character engages in a riddle contest, but the riddles draw on cultural idioms and symbolism alien to the character.

-3: Character runs a foot race against an opponent across harsh terrain such as deep snow or heavy underbrush.

-5: Character attempts to notice an assassin sneaking up on him, but the assassin is perfectly, supernaturally silent and concealed in shadows.

### Extended Actions

Sometimes *whether* a character can do something isn't as important as *how fast*. Extended rolls exist to measure such situations—how long does it take to scale the side of a manse while under fire from archers? In a foot race, who can reach the finish line first?

An extended roll has a dice pool and a difficulty just like a normal roll, but also has a *goal number*, an *interval*, and sometimes a *terminus*.

An extended roll's goal number is a number set by the Storyteller. When a character takes an extended action, the player rolls her dice pool not once, but repeatedly, until she accumulates a number of successes equal to the action's goal number. Difficulty determines how difficult it is to make any advancement at all in the action, while the goal number describes how much work it will take to complete the task. When determining a character's current success total, count only those successes that **meet or exceed** the action's difficulty. For example, a player attempting an extended action with difficulty 3 who rolled four successes would accumulate two cumulative successes toward her goal number.

An extended action's interval measures how much time elapses in-game between rolls. For two characters climbing up a tree to retrieve a goddess's golden arrow, an interval of one turn might be appropriate. For two ship captains racing across the Great Western Ocean to follow directions to an island lost since the First Age, their navigation rolls might be made at intervals of one week.

If a character fails a roll on an extended action, her effort isn't for naught—she simply doesn't make any appreciable progress during that interval. A botch on an extended roll ruins the entire effort, however, and forces the character to start over.

Finally, some extended rolls also have a *terminus*—a limit (usually time-based) on how much effort the character can put into the roll before overall success or failure is determined. An extended roll's terminus is the number of rolls the character can make before the extended roll is finished. An extended action with a terminus of 4, for example, would automatically fail if the character hadn't met her goal number after four rolls.

### Opposed Actions

Sometimes, two characters attempt to act and there can only be one winner. Whether it's tug-of-war or two rival singers attempting to impress a god with their skills, such contests are decided through opposed rolls. Opposed rolls are simple—they work just like normal rolls, except they don't have a difficulty. Instead, it's a straight competition to see which player's action generates more successes.

In the event of a tie, the Storyteller awards victory to the player with the best stunt.

### Reflexive Actions

Most of the time, you can only take one action in a round, on your turn. Some rolled actions, however, happen automatically or **by reflex**. These are called *reflexive actions*, and a character can take them at **any** time they'd be appropriate. Rolling (Perception + Awareness) to spot another character attempting to hide from you is one example of a reflexive action—you're constantly perceiving your environment whether you're trying to or not. Another might be rolling (Stamina + Resistance) to fight off an illness. You don't need to concentrate to do that—your body does it automatically. The most common reflexive action in the **Exalted** system is the basic movement action, which carries a character across a range band (p. 197).

### Combat

The Solar Exalted have returned to a world teeming with enemies, from the hired armies of greedy princes and the elite assassins of the Wyld Hunt to hostile Exalts determined to halt the Solars' rise to power. Battle is unavoidable.

### How Combat Works

Combat in **Exalted** is a dynamic and cinematic affair. Heroes leap into battle, daiklavens flashing. They knock opponents through teahouse railings in showers of splintered wood; they're hurled through stone walls by the blows of terrible demons, only to rise and rush back into the fray. Nimble demigods run across treetops or race over the massed arrow barrages of armies. Swordsmen drive each other through rain-slick streets in symphonies of ringing steel, until a final, fatal blow settles the fight.

In order to win a battle in the **Exalted** Storyteller System, characters must seize the upper hand during the course of battle (by raising their Initiative) and then find the proper moment to capitalize on their advantage with a decisive blow (filling an enemy's Health Track with damage). A character whose Health Track is completely filled with damage is Incapacitated—unconscious (if his last Health Level is marked off with bashing damage), or dead or dying (if filled with lethal damage). In any event, he's not a threat any more.

Combat proceeds in a series of rounds, during which each combatant acts once; the order in which characters take turns acting is determined by their Initiative ratings (in order from highest to lowest). Generally each combatant will attempt to attack another character in each round, attempting to either bolster her Initiative at the expense of an enemy's Initiative (known as a **withering** attack), or to "cash in" a high Initiative value to damage an opponent's Health Track and hopefully defeat him (known as a **decisive** attack).

When no enemies remain to offer resistance, the battle is over.

### **Withering and Decisive Attacks**

Whenever a character attacks, his player must decide whether the attack is **withering** or **decisive**. **Withering** attacks attempt to damage their target's Initiative score, raising the attacker's Initiative by the same amount of damage inflicted on the target. **Decisive** attacks inflict damage directly to an opponent's Health Track, but their potential to inflict that damage is determined by the attacker's current Initiative rating.

**Withering** attacks model the rising tension of cinematic combat, allowing drama to drive the mechanics of battle. Daiklaves and armor ring in showers of sparks. Near-misses cleave and shatter the fighters' surroundings, as the two drive one another across the battlefield. These are the exchanges that escalate a battle toward its conclusion—in cinema, it is the beginning of the fight where martial artists exchange blows that sting and stagger, or where two swordsmen clash and attempt to force an opening.

Because **withering** attacks determine the ebb and flow of battle, they factor in all the advantages that combatants brings to the battlefield—the strength of their weapons, their fighting prowess, and the protection of their armor. The more advantages a combatant has in a fight, the easier it is for him to seize the upper hand!

An opponent who is 'struck' by a **withering** attack is disadvantaged in some way. He may be left off-balance as his desperate avoidance leaves him backing toward a corner,

or landing on unstable footing. He may suffer a glancing blow from a weapon that sets him off-balance, or suffer an unarmed strike that winds him, but doesn't put him down for the count. Because **withering** attacks only damage the target's Initiative, they never inflict more than superficial damage to the opponent—a dramatic scratch or slight bruise at most.

If **withering** attacks are the cinematic build-up which makes up the majority of clashes between heroes, **decisive** attacks are the turning points or conclusions of such battles. In a **decisive** attack, the character makes a dramatic play to end the fight; the result of the dice roll tells whether he succeeds completely, partially, or not at all.

Successful **decisive** attacks inflict damage to the opponent's Health Track. A daiklave rips through the opponent's chest or beheads him entirely; a warhammer staves in ribs; a martial artist lands a brutal spinning kick to the opponent's temple, staggering him or knocking him out. One character seizes the Initiative he's accumulated and uses it to end the fight—or tries to. A character that attempts a **decisive** attack and fails cedes some of his advantage, and may soon find himself facing a comeback from his opponent.

Because **decisive** attacks are the result of seizing the Initiative provided by **withering** attacks, the quality of the combatants' arms has only a limited effect on their outcome. Even a lowly mortal hero armed with a knife may strike down one of the Solar Exalted, should the battle have brought him to the right moment.

### **Withering Attacks and Drama**

To be clear, **withering** and **decisive** attacks are a game abstraction used to model the cinematic nature of combat between heroes in Creation. Individuals within the world of **Exalted** would recognize no such distinction; setting aside feints and the like, characters absolutely intend for most **withering** attacks to injure or kill their target. The players and Storyteller declare attacks as **withering** or **decisive** to create satisfying and exciting battles; for characters, each cut and thrust is made in deadly earnest.

The default assumption is that a **withering** attack depicts a glancing blow—something that grazes the character, or strikes his armor without wounding. Players might use stunts to also depict successful **withering** attacks as near-misses that characters unbalance themselves avoiding, or put themselves into bad tactical positions parrying at the last moment, but the usual assumption is that it's a glancing blow.

**Withering** attacks must be described as serious combat maneuvers—they're usually intended as killing or dis-

abling blows by the characters who make them. You might also describe a **withering** attack as a feint to draw your opponent off-guard, or an intricate kata intended to force an opening for a finishing blow. What's *not* valid, ever, is "I wither him to steal some Initiative." Initiative is a system abstraction of momentum and tactical advantage—you have to *do things* to establish that advantage. It isn't something combatants directly interact with in the setting.

## Resolving Attacks

Explained below are the steps in resolving attacks, followed by an explanation of the elements involved.

### Resolving a Withering Attack

First, you decide what combat Ability your character is attacking with—Archery, Brawl, Martial Arts, Melee, or Thrown. Based on this decision, you make an attack roll:

**Step One:** Roll (Dexterity + [relevant combat Ability] + weapon's accuracy and any other modifiers) against a difficulty of the target's Defense (see p. 194). If the roll produces fewer successes than the target's Defense, it fails.

**Step Two:** If the attack succeeds, determine its raw damage. Raw damage is an attack's damage rating before soak (see p. 194) is subtracted. Raw damage is usually calculated as (attacker's Strength + weapon's damage value + threshold successes on attack roll in Step One.) A few weapons, such as firewands and crossbows, omit Strength from this calculation—see Chapter Nine.

**Step Three:** Subtract target's soak from the attack's raw damage. This cannot produce a result lower than the weapon's Overwhelming rating (see p. 580). Roll a dice pool equal to whatever damage remains after soak. **Unlike decisive attacks, the Double 10s rule does apply to withering damage rolls.**

**Step Four:** First, you gain one point of Initiative simply for landing a successful **withering** attack. Then count up the successes on the damage roll. Subtract that amount from the target's Initiative, and add it to your character's Initiative.

### Resolving a Decisive Attack

**Decisive** attacks carry a penalty if used unsuccessfully—choose your moment to launch **decisive** attacks carefully! As with a **withering** attack, you start by selecting which combat Ability your character is attacking with.

**Step One:** Roll (Dexterity + [relevant combat Ability] + any modifiers) against a difficulty of the target's Defense.

You do *not* add your weapon's accuracy to this roll. If the roll fails, and your current Initiative is 1-10, your character loses 2 Initiative. If it's 11+ and the attack fails, your character loses 3 Initiative.

**Step Two:** If attack is successful, roll your current Initiative value as a dice pool. **The Double 10s rule (p. 183) does not apply to this roll.** If your target has Hardness (p. 195) equal to or greater than your damage pool in this step, you inflict no damage but your attack is still considered a success; proceed to Step Four.

**Step Three:** Count up the successes on the Initiative roll. Apply that many levels of damage to the target's Health Track. This damage will be bashing or lethal, as determined by the weapon used (see p. 195).

**Step Four:** If the attack was successful, reset your character's Initiative value to 3 (also known as "Resetting to base value.")

## Elements of Combat

Combat contains a number of special rules and traits, each of which are explained in more detail below:

### Combat Timing

Timing is key to battles in **Exalted**—those who control the tempo of a fight are most likely to seize victory. It's thus important to understand how time is measured during a fight:

- **Scene**—Sometimes a battle constitutes a scene unto itself, while other times it is merely part of a larger scene. Any effect stating that it lasts for one scene will effectively persist at least for the rest of the current battle.

- **Join Battle**—Join Battle is a roll (detailed below) which precedes every fight. All participants in the fight make this roll before the first *round* begins. The results of this roll dictate characters' *Initiative* ratings in the first round.

- **Round**—A round is the basic measure of combat, during which characters take *turns* acting, from highest *Initiative* value to lowest. Characters with identical Initiative values act simultaneously. A round ends when all characters have taken their turns.

- **Tick**—The smallest measurable unit of time in the **Exalted** system, ticks are used to measure certain actions taken within a *round*—generally magical actions (see Chapter Six). Ticks are numbered, and correspond to characters' *Initiative* ratings. For example, a Dawn Caste with an Initiative value of 7 will take her turn on tick 7 of



the round. A Night Caste with Initiative 5 will take his action on tick 5 of the round—two ticks after the Dawn.

- **Turn**—The tick on which a player declares her character’s combat action for the *round*. Characters’ *Initiative* ratings determine the order in which they take their turns. A character may only take one turn per round, no matter how her Initiative may rise or fall.

#### Order of Action

Combat proceeds in rounds, with the characters acting in order of highest Initiative to lowest. Characters with equal

Initiative values act simultaneously. Although a character’s Initiative may shift during the course of a round, she may only take a single combat action during a round. Initiative values persist until something happens to change them, or until the end of the scene. Once all participants in the fight have acted (“Taken their turn”), the next round begins.

#### Join Battle

*Join Battle* is a reflexive action that automatically occurs for all characters at the beginning of combat. It measures a character’s responsiveness and readiness when violence breaks out and things turn ugly—how fast can she drop

#### ADVANCED TROUBLESHOOTING: CHANGING INITIATIVE AND SIMULTANEOUS ACTIONS

Once Charms get into play, a character’s Initiative value can bounce up and down very quickly during a round. What if a character who has not yet taken her turn suddenly gains a great deal of Initiative, and finds herself with a higher Initiative value than other characters who have already taken their turns? What if this Initiative value is higher than the current tick the round is moving through?

Characters cannot be forced to miss out on taking a turn during a round because of situations like this. If a character’s Initiative suddenly changes in such a way that it indicates she should have already taken her turn, she takes her turn on the following tick.

Finally, what if two characters act on the same tick and it becomes important to determine whose action resolves first, as in the case of two characters both attacking the same opponent, and both Crashing him simultaneously? They can’t both get an Initiative Break bonus—so who attacked first? If one player wants to allow the other to go first, then he gets to do so. If both players want to act first, flip a coin or have each simultaneously acting player roll a die to break the tie.



into the mindset of a fighter, and how ready is she to take command of the pace of battle?

**Join Battle** is a **(Wits + Awareness)** roll. Count out the successes gained on this roll, then **add three**. This is your starting Initiative rating in the first round of battle. Because Join Battle is a commonly-used value, a space is provided to record it on your character sheet. Join Battle cannot be botched.

If a character joins the scene in the middle of an already-ongoing fight, her player immediately rolls Join Battle to determine starting initiative.

## Initiative

Initiative is possibly the most important element of combat. It not only determines what order characters take their turns in, but more importantly functions as an overall measure of the tempo of battle and a character's confidence and advantage within the fight. A character with high Initiative controls the flow of combat, forcing opponents to respond to his tactics and assaults; a character with low Initiative is on the ropes, clawing for an opening to turn the tide in his favor. Sudden reversals of fortune are not only possible but frequent, so it's normal for a character's Initiative rating to change from round to round. Gaining a high Initiative and then using it well is the key to victory in **Exalted**.

There is no limit on how high a character's Initiative may rise, nor on how low it can fall—Initiative may be driven down to 0 and even below, into negative numbers. This state is known as Initiative Crash.

### Initiative Crash

A character whose Initiative value drops to 0 or below is in a state of Initiative Crash. He's on the ropes, having utterly lost control of the fight. So long as a Crashed character remains in that state, the following special rules apply:

- A Crashed character is considered to have Hardness 0 (see p. 195) regardless of any magic or equipment employed, unless it explicitly states that it provides Hardness in Crash.
- A character in Initiative Crash cannot launch **decisive** attacks.
- A character in Initiative Crash can't use Charms with the Perilous keyword (see p. 253).
- Withering attacks continue to affect a Crashed character normally, driving his Initiative deeper into negative values and granting Initiative to his attackers. However, if the Storyteller decides that a Crashed character has no hope of recovery against his opponents, and that his continued presence will only serve to give the players a “free” source of Initiative, she can declare the Crashed character defeated the next time he suffers a successful withering attack.

- If a character survives three consecutive turns spent in Initiative Crash, his Initiative resets to 3 at the beginning of his next turn. This is known as “Resetting to base Initiative.”
- If a character enters Initiative Crash as a result of his own actions (such as by using a disengage action, which costs 2 Initiative to attempt, with only 2 Initiative remaining), he immediately loses another 5 Initiative.

### Initiative Break

When a character forces an opponent into Initiative Crash with an attack, he gains what is known as an Initiative Break bonus. An Initiative Break bonus is a +5 bonus to Initiative. A character cannot gain an Initiative Break bonus from an enemy during the round that enemy recovers from Crash, or during the round that follows that.

If a character forces himself into Initiative Crash (such as by using a Charm which costs Initiative to activate), then the Initiative Break bonus is awarded to the opponent most directly responsible for provoking the action which caused the character to Crash, at the Storyteller’s discretion.

### Initiative Shift

While suffering Initiative Crash, if you are able to Crash the opponent who Crashed you, you instantly return to base Initiative (unless this would cause you to lose Initiative) and make a Join Battle roll, adding the result to your Initiative. Your turn is then refreshed: any combat or movement actions you have used that turn are reset, allowing you to act again, immediately; however, should this renewed action be used to attack, you can only attack the character you Shifted against.

A character who entered Initiative Crash as a result of his own actions (such as by using a disengage action) cannot achieve Initiative Shift.

### Defense

It’s safe to assume a character in a fight is trying to stay alive as best he can. As such, self-protection doesn’t require any action taken—it’s always happening! This is represented by a character’s Defense static values.

Characters can protect themselves by attempting to parry or dodge attacks. Their skill at doing so is measured by their Parry and Evasion ratings.

A character’s Parry rating is ( $[Dexterity + Brawl, Martial Arts or Melee, whichever is appropriate to the character’s current armament] / 2$ , round up) + weapon’s Defense bonus, if any. Characters wielding ranged weapons such as bows or chakrams cannot parry.

A character’s Evasion rating is equal to ( $[Dexterity + Dodge] / 2$ , round up) – armor’s mobility penalty, if any.

The highest applicable number among the two values is the character’s overall Defense static value. The difficulty of all attacks made against the character is equal to her Defense value.

Any applicable specialties add +1 to the calculation before dividing by two and rounding up. Thus, an unarmored character with Dexterity 3, Dodge 3, and an “Unarmored” specialty would have Evasion 4.

Some bonuses or penalties will specify that they apply to your Parry or Evasion, while others modify your Defense, meaning that it modifies both Parry *and* Evasion.

Finally, there is a special kind of penalty that Defense ratings commonly suffer, known as an *onslaught penalty*. Every time an opponent attacks a character, that character suffers a cumulative -1 Defense penalty until his next turn. As a result, even mighty heroes should be wary of facing too many opponents all at once.

### Soak

Characters possess a trait called soak. Where Defense measures a character’s ability to avoid harm altogether, soak determines how well-protected the character is from successful **withering** assaults. As such, soak is determined by a character’s Stamina rating and the quality and type of his armor.

#### FRIENDLY FIRE AND OTHER SHENANIGANS

**Question:** Can allies whomp on one another with withering attacks to manipulate Initiative values? For example, can a Circle’s Twilight drop his Defense and let the Dawn beat on him to raise the Dawn’s Initiative value quickly?

**Answer:** No. Withering attacks are an abstraction of advantage against the enemy. They don’t actually exist—and what’s being abstracted in the above example doesn’t make sense. Why would the Dawn attack his allies, if not under some form of mind control? The Twilight isn’t an enemy, and so there’s no advantage to be gained.

Use common sense when adjudicating such situations—for example, a training duel between two friendly martial artists is an obvious exception to the above. Ultimately, if it seems like shenanigans to the Storyteller, it doesn’t net anybody Initiative, as per the Storyteller’s Rule on page 182.

**Natural soak:** Characters can use their natural toughness to resist some amount of damage—a burly sailor or battle-conditioned soldier can shrug off more abuse than a small child or an overweight savant. As a result, all characters gain natural soak equal to their Stamina rating.

**Armor soak:** A character wearing armor enjoys the value provided by the armor, in addition to his natural soak—see page 591 for a list of different armor types.

**Total soak:** A character's overall soak total is (her natural soak + her armor soak).

**Using soak:** Soak is only applied against **withering** attacks, representing the difficulty of gaining a **decisive** advantage against a sturdy or well-armored target.

### Hardness

Certain Charms and magical armor grant a trait called Hardness. Hardness offers protection from **decisive** attacks; it has no use against **withering** attacks. If a **decisive** attack's damage dice pool is equal to or lower than the target's Hardness, the **decisive** attack can't inflict damage. A **decisive** attack that strikes but fails to penetrate the target's Hardness is still considered a successful attack, and causes Initiative to reset to 3 as normal. Unlike soak, Hardness does *not* subtract from an attack's damage.

Hardness doesn't stack unless it explicitly says so. If a character has Hardness from multiple sources, he simply uses the best Hardness value.

### Damage

Characters can suffer four kinds of damage from attacks in **Exalted**, detailed below.

**Initiative damage:** This is an abstracted kind of damage inflicted by **withering** attacks. It mostly represents bad positioning, tactical disadvantage, and discomfort—at most it might represent a character getting banged around or scratched. Initiative damage causes the character's Initiative value to drop.

**Bashing damage** is inflicted by blunt force trauma such as fists or clubs, as well as sources of harm which don't inflict immediate severe bodily trauma, such as severe cold. **Decisive** attacks with bare hands and certain blunt weapons inflict bashing damage, which is applied to the character's Health Track.

**Lethal damage** is inflicted by attacks which cause blood to flow and flesh to tear, or which inflict immediate severe damage—swords, arrows, and fire all inflict lethal damage. **Decisive** attacks with swords, spears, arrows, and simi-

larly lethal implements inflict lethal damage, which is applied to the character's Health Track.

**Aggravated damage** is a rare quality sometimes applied to lethal damage, usually by spells or Charms, which prevents magic from aiding in recovery from that damage.

### Combat Actions

Characters can normally take only a single combat action per turn, and receive only one turn per round.

There's an exception to this rule. Characters are allowed to declare that they're taking a **flurry**. When you flurry, you're allowed to take two combat actions on your turn. However, a character can never flurry two of the same action—you can't attack twice, for example, even if they're different kinds of attack (a thrown knife and a sword slash can't be put in a flurry). Further, when a character flurries, he suffers a -3 penalty to both actions, and his Defense is reduced by 1 until his next turn.

Below is a comprehensive list of available combat actions:

- **Attack:** The most common combat action. An attack may be **withering** or **decisive**—see page 190 for more details. Attacks may be made with one of four Abilities. For **withering** attacks: Archery attacks are rolled as (Dexterity + Archery + accuracy modifier based on range). Melee attacks are rolled as (Dexterity + Melee + weapon's accuracy modifier). Thrown attacks are rolled as (Dexterity + Thrown + accuracy modifier based on range). Finally, Brawl and Martial Arts attacks are rolled as (Dexterity + [Brawl or Martial Arts] + weapon's accuracy modifier). Unarmed attacks fall under Brawl and Martial Arts; “Unarmed” is considered a light weapon (p. 580).

**Decisive** attacks use the same pools, save that they don't add an accuracy modifier.

### UNBLOCKABLE, UNDODGEABLE

Certain attacks, particularly attacks modified by some Charms, are unblockable, undodgeable, or both. An unblockable attack bypasses Parry entirely, necessitating an application of Evasion to defend against. Likewise, an undodgeable attack bypasses Evasion. Using an attack that's rolled but both unblockable and undodgeable is a difficulty zero action (p. 186).

- Aim:** The character spends a few moments taking aim at his intended target. The player must declare which target he is taking aim at when he uses this action. Should his character attack that target on his next turn, the attack gains a +3 bonus. If the target moves out of the weapon's range or behind full cover (see p. 198) before the character's next turn, this action is wasted. An aim action is required before an attack can be made from medium or greater range (see p. 203), even one assisted by magic; attacks from medium or greater range don't gain a +3 bonus unless two consecutive turns are spent aiming. Characters cannot move and aim during the same round without some form of magic to permit it. *This action cannot be placed in a flurry.*

- Defend Other:** The character protects an ally within close range (see p. 197), interposing himself to deflect attacks. The defending character may apply his Parry against any attacks directed at his ward until his next turn. Should an attack defeat the guardian's Parry, the *attacker* may choose either to apply the attack to the guardian, or may attempt to strike his original target by using his threshold successes to attempt to overcome the original target's Defense. If he chooses to strike his original target with a **decisive** attack, he loses one Initiative die from his damage roll for each two points of the protecting character's Defense.

- Draw/Ready Weapon:** The character draws a close-range weapon, or readies a long-range weapon for use (stringing a bow, adjusting a brace of throwing knives, and so on). If a character wishes to change weapons during battle (sheathing a sword and unslinging a bow, for example), he must use a draw/readied weapon action to do so. This action reduces a character's Defense by 1 until his next turn. **Characters are assumed to begin combat with a weapon of their choice already drawn or readied**, unless they are ambushed (p. 203). Natural weapons such as fists and claws **never** need to be readied before use, making unarmed fighters very resistant to being blindsided.

- Full Defense:** The character dedicates himself completely to protecting himself. Until his next turn, his Defense rises by 2. Using Full Defense causes the character to lose one Initiative point. **This action cannot be placed in a flurry with anything save social influence actions (p. 212), nor used during Initiative Crash.**

- Miscellaneous Action:** This is a 'catch-all' category for a wide variety of possible actions. The character takes some non-combat action which can still be completed in a matter of only a few seconds. Examples might include picking a lock or searching a fallen opponent's pockets. The Storyteller is the ultimate arbiter of what is or isn't possible in the span of a single miscellaneous

action. The character's Defense is reduced by 1 until his next turn.

### Ranged Attacks

Melee, Brawl, and Martial Arts attacks can only be made from close range, barring the use of specialized magic. Thrown and Archery attacks can be made from a greater distance; the weapon used determines a ranged attack's maximum range, usually medium range for Thrown weapons and long range for Archery weapons. Ranged **withering** attacks determine their accuracy bonus (or penalty) based on the range they're made from, rather than the weapon's innate accuracy.

Archery and Thrown attacks made from medium or greater range become very inaccurate unless the character takes care to aim first. A character must take an aim action before launching an Archery or Thrown attack from medium range or greater, or the attack automatically misses. This aim action doesn't provide an accuracy bonus—it only allows the character to draw an accurate bead on her target so she has a chance of hitting at all. Taking two aim actions in a row before attacking at such range provides the normal accuracy bonus.

### Delaying Actions

A character may delay his turn, waiting until a point later than his Initiative to act, if he desires. The delayed action may be deployed on any tick later in the round that the player wishes. This is an excellent way to force Clash

#### USEFUL COMBAT CALCULATIONS

You'll use these values in combat a lot. It's a good idea to write them down so you don't have to calculate them at the table constantly.

**Join Battle:** Wits + Awareness (plus 3 successes to determine starting Initiative).

**Withering attack pool:** Dexterity + (Combat Ability) + weapon's accuracy

**Decisive attack pool:** Dexterity + (Combat Ability)

**Parry:**  $([Dexterity + (Brawl, Martial Arts, or Melee)] / 2, \text{round up}) + \text{weapon's defense.}$

**Evasion:**  $([Dexterity + Dodge] / 2, \text{round up}) - \text{armor's mobility penalty}$

**Rush pool:** Dexterity + Athletics

**Disengage pool:** Dexterity + Dodge

Attacks (see p. 202), for characters who know powerful Clash-enhancing Charms. However, delaying an action drops the character's Initiative by 2.

## Combat Movement

**Exalted** combat is a dynamic affair where heroes duel while racing across rooftops, leaping from branch to branch in primeval jungles, or rampaging up and down the stairs and throughout the opulent halls of manses. Taking cover from archers, advancing on fleeing foes, and riding down terrified enemies atop trumpeting mammoths are just a few of the options available to the canny fighter.

Most of these actions are fertile ground for stunts, and because of the great variety of movement possibilities available to characters, **Exalted** uses an abstracted system to represent movement and positioning.

### Positioning

Positioning is measured by the general distance between various combatants—keeping track of character locations down to the exact yard or meter generally isn't important, especially given how quickly Exalts can move around during battle; remembering general relative positions is good enough. There are several ranges that two characters can potentially occupy in relation to one another:

When a character is at **close range**, he is in an opponent's face, close enough to easily attack with a hand-to-hand weapon such as a sword, spear, or his fists. This doesn't mean that the characters are necessarily within arm's reach of each other at all times, but rather that they are able to close such a distance in moments. If an opponent is within close range of a character, that character is *embattled*, and must use a disengage action if he wishes to move away from the opponent.

When a character is at **short range**, he is outside of the immediate reach of an opponent wielding a hand-to-hand weapon, but close enough that the opponent could reach him with a quick sprint.

A character at **medium range** is a fair distance away from an opponent. This is the range band of the most far-reaching Thrown weapons, and less powerful Archery weapons, and at this range it's impossible for two characters to communicate with one another without shouting. Characters cannot make Thrown or Archery attacks from medium range without first taking an aim action, or the attack will automatically miss. This aim action provides no accuracy bonus; to gain an accuracy bonus, two aim actions must be taken in a row before the attack.

A character at **long range** is very far away from his opponent. Combat at this range can only occur through powerful Archery weapons such as longbows, and is the favored range of snipers. Closing with a character at long range can be quite difficult! Complex communication is generally impossible without signaling devices, energetic pantomime, or magic. Characters cannot make Thrown or Archery attacks from long range without first taking an aim action, or the attack will automatically miss. This aim action provides no accuracy bonus; to gain an accuracy bonus, two aim actions must be taken in a row before the attack.

A final range, **extreme range**, also exists. At this range, opponents are distant specks; communication is generally impossible, as is combat. All range bands beyond long range are considered extreme range, and a character might potentially be several extreme range bands away from another character in a scene ranging across a very large area. In the event that some form of magic or specialized weapon makes an attack from extreme range possible, characters must take an aim action first, or the attack will automatically miss. This aim action provides no accuracy bonus; to gain an accuracy bonus, two aim actions must be taken in a row before the attack.

### Movement Actions

A character can take only one of the following actions per round, unless otherwise noted. A character could not, for example, use a disengage action and a move action during the same turn. All movement actions may only be taken on the character's turn, regardless of whether they are reflexive or a combat action.

Characters may remain stationary *in terms of range bands* while stunting dramatic movement, if desired—circling an opponent at close range, stepping back from a powerful attack, or otherwise engaging in acrobatic stunts are all possible without changing relative positioning or using a movement action.

- **Move (Reflexive Action):** The character may move one range band toward any other character or landmark present in battle once. This action can only be taken on the character's turn. It is the most commonly-used movement action.

- **Rush (Combat Action):** This action may only be directed at an opponent within short range of the character, and it may explicitly be used even after taking a reflexive move action. A rush action is a contested (Dexterity + Athletics) roll between the character and an opponent at short range. If the rushing character is successful, then as soon as his opponent moves a range band, he will immediately and reflexively move one range band toward

that opponent, keeping pace. This reflexive movement does not count as a movement action, and so it can occur outside the character's turn, regardless of whether he has already taken a movement action that round.

Characters must have some means of reaching an opponent in order to rush him—if the opponent is a winged Lunar Exalt who travels a range band upward into the sky, most characters would not be able to follow him.

- **Disengage (Combat Action):** This action *must* be taken when a character at close range with one or more hostile opponents wishes to retreat to short range—the standard reflexive move action cannot be used to do so. Disengaging is an opposed roll of (Dexterity + Dodge) against the (Dexterity + Athletics) of all opponents who wish to contest the disengage action. If the character defeats all of his opponents, then he moves out to short range; furthermore, if one of the opponents he disengaged moves toward him on her next turn, the character immediately and reflexively retreats one further range band away from her, even if this means he would move outside of his turn. Like a rush action, this reflexive movement does not count as a movement action. It occurs only the first time after a disengage action that a disengaged opponent moves toward the character.

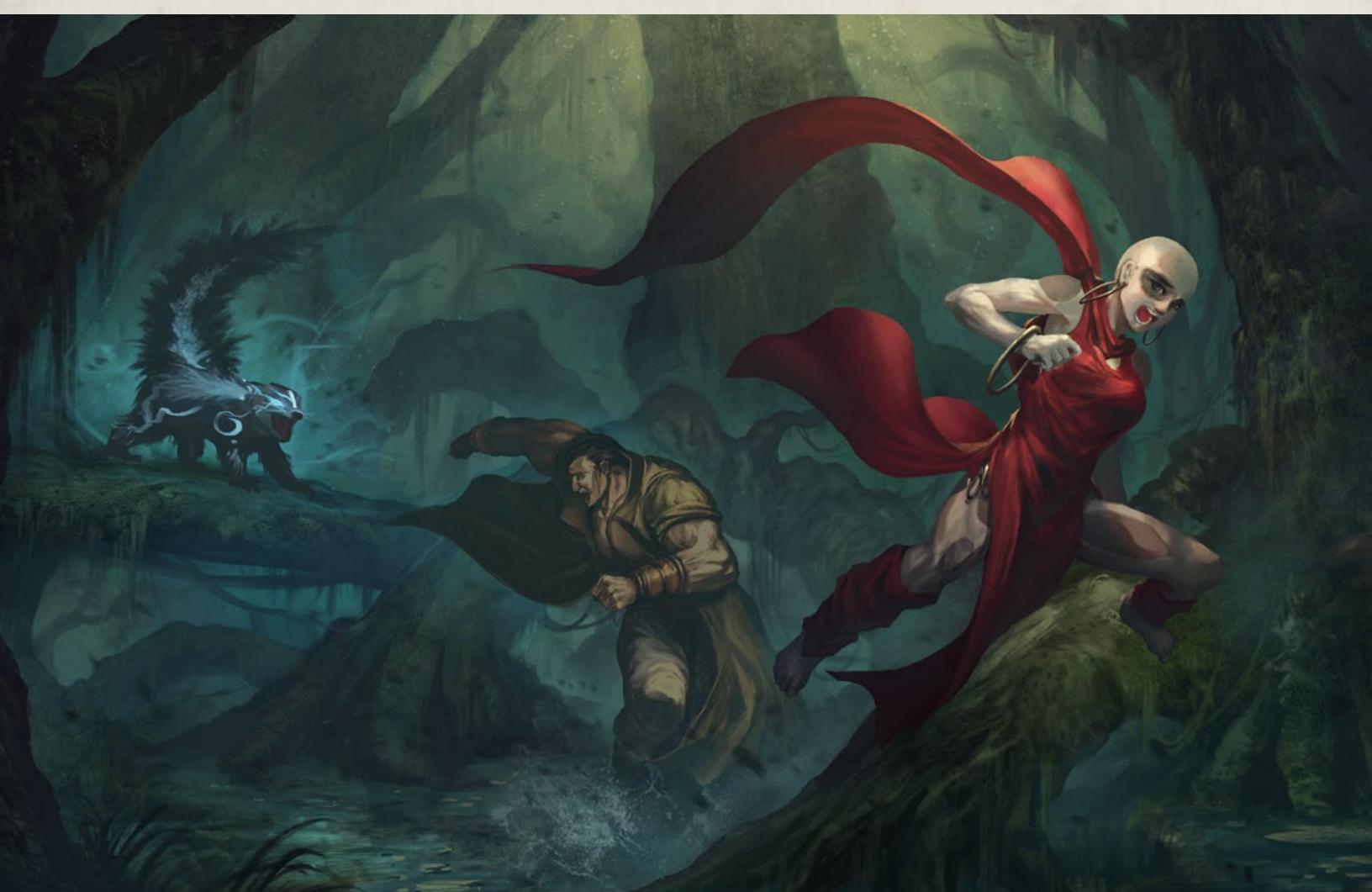
If any opponent beats the character's disengage roll, he is incapable of moving away—there's simply no opportunity for the character to safely escape his enemies.

Taking this action causes the character to lose 2 Initiative points regardless of its success.

- **Rise From Prone (Combat Action):** Certain attacks may leave a character prone on the ground, such as Smashing attacks (see p. 586). Rising from a prone position requires a combat action. This action is usually automatic, but if an opponent is at close range then the character must roll (Dexterity + Dodge) against difficulty 2 to rise from prone successfully.

- **Take Cover (Combat Action):** This action is used to seek cover from attackers, such as by crouching behind a rock, tucking into a doorway, standing behind a tree, or moving behind a wall. Taking cover requires a (Dexterity + Dodge) roll—the Storyteller sets the difficulty according to how easy it is to find and reach appropriate cover. Cover may be light, heavy, or full.

**Light cover** protects a significant portion of the character's body, such as leaning into a doorway or standing behind a waist-high wall. **Heavy cover** protects the majority of a



character's body, leaving at most part of the head and an arm and shoulder exposed—shooting through an arrow slit would provide heavy cover, as would shooting around the edge of an ancient redwood tree. **Full cover** protects the character's entire body—standing behind a six-foot-high wall or retreating inside of a building are examples of full cover.

Cover raises a character's Defense against attacks by 1 for light cover or 2 for heavy cover. Full cover makes ranged attacks impossible. Attackers at close range also enjoy equal cover against attacks from the character in cover—crossing blades across a fence or around a tree is equally impairing for both parties.

Cover is subject to common-sense limitations. If a character has full cover because he's standing behind a wall, for example, that cover only protects him from enemies on the *other* side of the wall; he gains no cover bonus against opponents at his back. It may or may not be possible for a character to move without losing the benefit of cover. A character taking cover behind a tree will have to break cover to go anywhere, since he can't take the tree with him; one taking cover behind a waist-high stone fence, on the other hand, can freely range up and down along the fence without losing his cover.

Attempting to keep an opponent who's in cover at short or longer range while circling around him to obviate his cover requires a number of movement actions determined by the Storyteller—generally, the farther away an opponent is, the longer it takes to circle around to flank him.

- Withdraw (Combat Action):** This action is used to escape from the battlefield completely, losing any pursuit that may be following. It is an extended (Dexterity + Athletics) roll, difficulty 1, goal number 10, interval one round. It may only be attempted if the character is at medium or greater range from all opponents. Using a withdraw action moves the character one range band away from his enemies, and causes the character to lose 10 Initiative per round—this can be done even if it would result in a negative Initiative value. Succeeding at the extended roll causes the character to move an additional range band away from his opponents. If the character succeeds at a withdraw action's extended roll while at extreme range from all opponents, he successfully escapes the battlefield for the rest of the scene, evading all pursuit.

### Difficult Terrain

Moving around fields, roads, and even inside buildings isn't normally that difficult—at least not compared to climbing over deadfalls, slogging through thigh-high water, trudging across muddy swamps, or advancing through prepared fortifications. Deep snow, thick foliage, and panicked crowds may also constitute difficult terrain, at Sto-

ryteller discretion. Using a move action to travel through a band of difficult terrain takes two move actions rather than one. Difficult terrain may also be used to model objects which will force a character to make a significant detour in order to advance or retreat from another character—for example, if a character's enemy is on the other side of a locked building, the Storyteller may decide to declare the building difficult terrain—the extra time needed to advance on the opponent will represent time spent going around the building, rather than through it.

Attempts to rush, disengage, or withdraw across difficult terrain suffer a -3 penalty; by contrast, difficult terrain is often very easy to take cover in.

### Complications

While the above rules detail all the nuts and bolts of combat in **Exalted**, there are a few other unusual complications that may arise from time to time, which certain sorts of characters are likely to specialize in.

#### Gambits

Gambits are a special sort of **decisive** attack. Rather than inflicting Health Track damage, gambits are used to execute special maneuvers which can significantly shift the course of battle, such as disarming or unhorsing an opponent.

Four “universal” gambits are detailed below, but gambits are customizable—if a player wants to do something crazy during combat that the rules in this chapter don't cover, and the Storyteller is left going “I have no idea how to represent that”—it's generally good to make it a gambit. Some Charms require gambits to execute. Forthcoming supplements will also contain new situational gambits—for example, there might exist gambits that represent fighting the corpse-fortress Juggernaut, allowing characters to disable parts of the behemoth's gigantic undead body, bit by bit.

To execute a gambit, the player must declare what he's attempting and then make a **decisive** attack against his opponent. If the attack fails, he loses Initiative as normal (p. 191). If it succeeds, then he rolls Initiative. Rather than inflicting Health Track damage, however, this roll is trying to match the gambit's difficulty rating. If it does, the gambit goes off! If not, then the Gambit is unsuccessful. Regardless of the gambit's success, the character loses a number of Initiative equal to the gambit's difficulty + 1. A character cannot attempt a gambit whose cost would place him in Initiative Crash.

The following maneuvers are presented as examples of how gambits work:

- **Disarm (difficulty 3):** A successful disarm gambit allows the character to knock an opponent's weapon out of his hand, flinging it away to short range. Retrieving a disarmed weapon normally requires moving to the weapon's location and using a draw/readied weapon action to reclaim it.

- **Unhorse (difficulty 4):** A successful unhorse gambit allows the character to knock an opponent off his mount. An unhorsed character suffers one level of bashing damage and is rendered prone, and the mount usually flees in the confusion. This is generally an easier and less-costly option than trying to target a mount with a **decisive** attack to kill it. (While this is perhaps unrealistic, players generally don't enjoy having their trusty horses shot out from under them, especially if the animal is a familiar. Storytellers running especially gritty games may want to allow the unhorse gambit to be used to shoot mounts out from under riders as well as forcibly dismounting opponents, at difficulty 5.)

- **Distract (difficulty 3-5):** The character leads, threatens, or feints his target into the path of an ally's **decisive** attack. The attacker declares an ally (who is not in Initiative Crash) as the beneficiary of this distraction; that ally gains the Initiative the character loses as a result of successfully executing this gambit. The transferred Initiative *must* be used to attack the gambit's target on the ally's next turn, or it is lost. A character can only benefit from one distraction bonus at a time.

- **Grapple (difficulty 2):** The character seizes her opponent in a clinch, limiting his movement and gaining the opportunity to do truly severe damage. Grapples are a bit more complicated than other gambits, and are explained in greater detail below.

If you want to design your own gambits, it helps to keep the following guidelines in mind:

Gambits are always delivered via **decisive** attack, and so they need to have a definite target. Gambits are mostly there to give a framework for advantageous maneuvers that are difficult to balance if characters can do them over and over again (such as disarming; if disarming could be attempted nonstop at no cost, it would either be incredibly powerful—which produces odd, unenjoyable battles in which everyone loses their sword constantly—or would need to be weakened to the point of uselessness for balance's sake). Finally, remember that 7 successes on a **decisive** damage roll is normally enough to incapacitate or kill—if your custom gambit is difficulty 7+, then its primary advantage over a normal **decisive** attack is going to be that it doesn't reset Initiative, unless it is custom-designed

to be used against something with more than 7 Health Levels, like a behemoth.

### Grapples

While most martial arts battles in the world of **Exalted** consist of a ballet of devastating striking techniques, some unarmed fighters learn to specialize in holds, clinches, slams, and other wrestling moves; such attacks are also a long-standing staple of self-taught brawling masters, and are dangerous to underestimate.

Grapples are initiated through a grapple gambit. Upon succeeding at the gambit, the grappler makes a **control roll**, which determines how long she can keep the grapple locked on. This is an opposed (Strength + [Brawl or Martial Arts]) roll between the grappler and her target. Should the target win or tie, then the target escapes the grapple on his *next* turn. Should the martial artist win, she gains control of the grapple during her current turn, and for a number of additional rounds equal to the number of successes by which she beat her target. After those turns elapse, the grappled target automatically escapes the grapple. A grapple will also immediately end if the grappler suffers Initiative Crash.

While grappling or being grappled, both characters suffer a -2 penalty to their Defense and cannot perform flurries. Victims caught in a grapple cannot take movement actions, and suffer a -1 penalty to all attacks, or a -3 penalty to all attacks using two-handed weapons.

### POSITIONING, MOVEMENT, AND COMMON SENSE

Movement in **Exalted** is heavily abstracted, and as such, requires a bit of common-sense adjudication. Changing position relative to one character may easily change an individual's position relative to other characters as well—if you advance from short to close range toward two swordsmen fighting each other, then you're now close to both of them, not just the one you advanced on. If you retreat away from those same figures, from short to medium range, then you're now at medium range from both—and at long range from the Bowman behind them, who is himself at short range from the swordsmen, but on the opposite side of the battlefield. Likewise, certain forms of unorthodox movement may obviate certain kinds of difficult terrain. A Lunar Exalt that transforms into a bird, for example, will be able to easily fly over most kinds of difficult terrain, while certain Charms make normally-difficult terrain easy to navigate. Ultimately, use common sense.

Each time the grappler suffers an attack and/or damage from any source, she forfeits one turn of control of the grapple. For example, a wrestler who clinches an opponent and wins the control roll by a margin of 5 successes will maintain control for 5 additional turns. In that same round, she is attacked twice; one attack misses, while the other inflicts 3 points of Initiative damage. Because she was attacked twice and damaged once, she forfeits three turns of control—the victim will now escape after only 2 turns.

During each turn in which the grappler maintains the clinch, **including the turn** on which she initiates it, she must choose to apply one of the following effects: she may **savage** the opponent, **restrain and drag** him, or **throw** him. She may also **release** him at any time. She can take no other movement or combat actions so long as the grapple persists.

**Savage:** The grappler injures her opponent, choking him, wrenching his limbs, stretching his joints, or bashing him into nearby scenery. The savage action applies **withering** or **decisive** damage to the grappled opponent without chance of failure or opportunity for defense. If the grappler chooses to inflict **withering** damage, she makes an unarmed attack roll against Defense 0 for the purpose of determining extra damage. Again, this attack hits the opponent automatically, even if the character generates 0 successes on the attack roll. With a **decisive** attack, no attack roll is necessary—just roll Initiative, apply damage, and reset to base as usual.

**Restrain/Drag:** This action uses up two rounds of control, and can't be used if the victim wins the control roll. The attacker locks the victim up in an immobilizing hold. This inflicts no damage, but prevents the victim from taking any action at all on his next turn. While restraining her opponent, the character may take a movement action, and in doing so, drag the victim with her. This might be used for abductions, to haul a target out from behind cover, or perhaps even to drag an individual into an area that is harmful to the victim but harmless to the attacker (such as a Water Aspect Dragon-Blooded pulling an opponent into a river to drown him).

**Throw/Slam:** The grappler ends the clinch prematurely, slamming the victim into the ground or a nearby surface within close range. This inflicts damage in the same fashion as savaging the opponent, with the following difference: the attack's damage dice pool is boosted by 2 dice per turn of control forfeited by ending the clinch prematurely if **withering**, or by 1 die per turn if **decisive**. The opponent is left prone (p. 202) by this maneuver. A throw/slam maneuver can only benefit from a maximum of up to (Strength) turns of control forfeited; any greater number of turns are simply lost with no benefit. **Decisive** slams normally inflict

bashing damage but can inflict lethal damage if the chosen impact point is particularly deadly (such as into a bonfire, or onto a spike).

**Release:** The attacker simply releases the clinched victim without harming her. Release is a reflexive action rather than a combat action, and may be performed at any time.

**A final note:** Characters cannot grapple any opponent where a grapple simply doesn't make sense given the relative scales involved (so grapples would be inapplicable against an army of a hundred Realm legionnaires, or against the Mask of Winters's corpse-fortress Juggernaut; likewise, a toddler can't effectively grapple a grown man, nor could a grown man grapple an eight-ton tyrant lizard).

### Crippling

The Chosen of the gods heal most injuries perfectly. It takes a truly profound wound to even leave a scar as a reminder, much less to permanently cripple an Exalted hero. Moreover, crippling injuries can change a character's image and concept, ruining a player's enjoyment—he didn't sign up to play a one-armed boxer, or a prince with no nose!

As a result, crippling injuries are *voluntary* in **Exalted**, and may be taken at the behest of the player controlling a character. Your character won't lose an eye, a hand, or a limb unless you want him to.

So why would you want that? You might decide that losing an eye would be a cool long-term reminder of an epic duel. Or you might think it's better to suffer a terrible, debilitating injury than to die. While crippling injuries are difficult to mend, they're not impossible once Exalted physicians or gods with powerful healing miracles enter the picture. Here's how it works:

**Once per story**, a player whose character has just suffered physical damage may choose to ablate it by accepting a crippling injury instead. The character *must* take a minimum of two Health Levels of lethal damage to accept a crippling injury, after the damage negated. If this would leave him Incapacitated or dead, he instead simply marks off his last health box before Incapacitated.

**1-2 Health Levels:** By negating this much damage, the character suffers maiming that impairs the function of some body part or sense. He might lose half the fingers on one hand, or an eye, or half a foot.

**3-4 Health Levels:** By negating this much damage, the character loses an entire sense or useful extremity. He might be blinded completely, have his tongue cut out, lose a hand, or suffer maiming of his generative organs.

**5 health levels:** By negating this much damage, the character loses a limb—most of an arm or a leg, gone.

A character's wound penalties are doubled for the rest of the scene in which he suffers any crippling injury by negating 3 or more health levels of damage. Accepting a crippling injury is basically accepting debility in the name of either producing an interesting plot hook, or attempting to save a character from death. Storytellers, it's *usually* poor form to have enemies immediately finish off a crippled character, though you know the needs of your own story best. See the Amputee, Blind, Deaf, Mute, and Sterile flaws (pp. 168-169) for the permanent effects of crippling injuries.

### Being Prone

Certain attacks (such as Smashing attacks made by hammers, or being thrown by a grappler) can leave a character prone—knocked forcefully to the ground. A prone character must take a rise from prone combat action (see p. 198) to regain his footing. As long as a character is prone, he suffers a -1 penalty to his Parry, a -2 penalty to his Evasion, a -3 penalty to attacks, and cannot take any movement actions other than to rise from prone. He also automatically fails all attempts to resist rush and disengage actions.

### Clash Attacks

Clash Attacks are a special roll used when two characters attack one another on the same tick. In these situations, the quality of a character's defensive prowess becomes irrelevant—victory goes to the fighter whose strike is superior.

Clash Attacks ignore both characters' Defense. Instead, the two attacks act as an opposed roll (p. 189). The character who accumulates more successes wins, striking his opponent, while the loser's attack is thwarted. If a Clash Attack is **withering**, then it adds the threshold by which the winning fighter beat his opponent's roll to its raw damage.

A successful **withering** Clash attack adds 3 additional points of Initiative damage *after* damage is rolled. A successful **decisive** Clash attack adds one additional automatic point of Health Track damage after damage is rolled. Finally, in addition to suffering damage, the loser of the Clash Attack suffers a -2 penalty to his Defense until his next turn.

### Mounted Fighting

Opponents fighting from horseback (or from atop any similarly-sized mount) enjoy a number of advantages and a few disadvantages over combatants on foot.

**Movement:** Mounts are generally faster than human warriors, particularly when moving at a charge. As a

### AMMUNITION

There are two ways to track ammunition for ranged fighters in Exalted. The first is to keep track of how many arrows, throwing knives, and so forth the character has on him, taking pains to retrieve ammunition and weapons from fallen enemies, or ensuring the character arrives with more than enough arrows to suit his needs.

A less math-intensive and more dramatic method is to periodically make a roll to see if the character is running out of ammo. This roll should occur every five rounds or so, though modify this up or down if the character hasn't been shooting much, or has been spraying volleys of missiles into enemies.

As more-skilled characters tend to waste fewer shots, roll Archery or Thrown with a mounting -1 penalty each time it repeats. Failure indicates that the character is out of ammunition, and must resort to other means of combat, or scavenge more ammunition by some means. Increase the penalty to -2 if the character is using very limited ammunition stockpiles, such as a bundle of javelins or pouches of firedust charges.

Scavenging for more ammunition is a (Wits + [Awareness, Survival, or War]) action with a difficulty dictated by the Storyteller based on availability of the needed sort of ammunition nearby. Scavenging more arrows might be difficulty 1 to 3 depending on the battlefield, scavenging rocks for a sling is almost certainly always difficulty 1, and scavenging firedust is likely impossible on most battlefields.

result, most mounts grant a movement bonus to rush, disengage, and withdraw actions. These bonuses are listed in the stat block of any creature suitable as a mount as a mount's Speed Bonus, and the most common Speed Bonuses are summarized below. The Ride Ability replaces Athletics and Dodge for any movement rolls made while mounted.

Mount	Speed Bonus
Austrech	+2
Camel	+3
Horse	+4
Mammoth	+1
Simhata	+4
Tyrant Lizard	+2
Yeddim	+1

**Combat:** Mounted fighters employing close-range weapons enjoy a +1 bonus to **withering** attacks against non-mounted opponents of human scale, or +2 against battle groups (p. 205) not armed with weapons with the reaching tag (p. 586). Mounted fighters also enjoy a +1 Defense bonus against attacks from close-range weapons wielded by non-mounted opponents, so long as those weapons lack the reaching tag.

**Unusual Mounts:** Some rare mounts render these rules unsuitable. Flying mounts, such as the giant hawks employed by the famed hawkriders of Mount Metagalapa, grant no combat bonuses, instead offering only superior mobility. Enormous mounts such as mammoths, yeddim, or tyrant lizards prevent their rider from being attacked at all by short-range weapons not possessing the reaching tag, unless opponents first use a miscellaneous (Dexterity + Athletics, difficulty 3) action to climb aboard the huge mount (this counts as the character's movement for the round). However, riders atop such mounts similarly cannot attack opponents on the ground with short-range weapons which lack the reaching tag.

**Attacking Mounts:** Mounts generally don't have their own Initiative track, though the Storyteller may waive this if it seems appropriate (such as a Fair Folk noble entering battle on the back of a behemoth more dangerous than its rider). Unless a mount has its own Initiative track, all **withering** attacks against it are considered to target its rider. **Decisive** attacks can be used to target mounts with the intent of killing them out from under their riders; in many circumstances, however, the unhorse gambit (p. 199) is a more effective option.

**Equipping and Fighting with Mounts:** Characters may obtain specialized defensive equipment designed for mounts, called barding. They may also wish to equip their mount with weaponry such as fortified crowns, horns, or fixed lances.

In general, barding for mounts works exactly the same as armor for any other character—light, medium, and heavy bardings are available, with the same traits as armor for humans. Bardings' mobility penalty is applied to the mount's Speed bonus, and in certain cases might even turn it into a speed penalty (such as with heavy bardings on a mammoth). In the likely event that a barded mount isn't tracking Initiative, it's suggested that bardings subtract raw damage from incoming **decisive** attacks against the mount (-2 for light, -4 for medium, -6 for heavy).

Weapons, by contrast, give access to special advantages. Horns or spikes grant the gore technique used by ox-dragons, aurochs, and other horned beasts (p. 568). A lance,

by contrast, is a heavy weapon detailed on page 585; mounting it to the saddle makes it impossible to disarm, and enables the impale technique. To impale an enemy, the character must make a **withering** or **decisive** attack with a fixed lance after moving two consecutive range bands toward her target; this adds +5 to the attack's raw damage if **withering**, or +3 if **decisive**.

Commanding the mount to attack or use an attack technique uses up its rider's combat action. This is considered an attack action, and can be placed in a flurry.

### Stealth

Stealth is a powerful advantage in battle, affording the opportunity to strike when an opponent least expects it, or when he doesn't realize he's in danger at all.

All stealth attempts consist of opposed rolls, generally (Dexterity + Stealth) against (Perception + Awareness). Stealth rolls can easily take penalties if the conditions aren't amenable to sneaking or hiding—dry underbrush, bright light, and scant cover can all make stealth more difficult. Likewise, Awareness rolls can take penalties due to cluttered or noisy environments (such as market crowds or stormy nights)—Stealth and Awareness are both very context-governed Abilities.

Assuming that a character has successfully concealed himself, he may then attempt to make an **unexpected attack**. Unexpected attacks are either an *ambush* or a *surprise attack*.

An ambush is defined as an attack against a target completely unaware of the attacker's presence—generally only possible during the first round of a fight, against a target with a lower Initiative value than the attacker. An ambush attack completely ignores the target's Defense; the target is considered to have Defense 0 against the attack.

A surprise attack, on the other hand, is an attack launched from hiding against an opponent who knows he's in battle and who is actively on the lookout for attacks, even if he isn't sure exactly where all of his opponents are at the moment. A target faced with a surprise attack suffers a -2 Defense penalty against that attack.

Attempting to re-establish surprise is a combat action that cannot be placed in a flurry.

A character in stealth cannot take Rush actions. If he wants to move normally in combat (see pp. 197-199 for more on movement in combat) while maintaining concealment, he must have some adequate place to hide in the spot he's moving to, and must make another reflexive (Dexterity + Stealth)

roll when he moves, to keep from being spotted while moving. If this movement crosses wide-open terrain with no appreciable cover, the Stealth roll's penalty climbs from the usual -3 (for attempting stealth while already in combat) to -5.

### **Hold at Bay**

A permutation of an ambush, to hold someone at bay is to succeed at an ambush without attacking, choosing instead to hold the target hostage for a number of rounds. The character points her weapon at her target's vital organs; the target knows he will suffer a deadly attack if he so much as moves, allowing the character to speak her mind before battle commences. The character may interrogate, threaten, cajole, or otherwise detain her opponent for a number of rounds equal to the difference in their Initiative. If the target chooses to struggle or try to escape before these rounds are finished, the character may make an immediate **decisive** ambush attack against him with onerous results: not only is the target's Defense set to 0, but his Hardness is set to 0 as well, and the attack gains +5 automatic damage. If the character chooses to attack her target before the rounds are up, he may defend normally.

If the target chooses to cooperate, the hostage-taker's Resolve and Guile are at +1, while the target's are each at -2 until the specified number of rounds have passed. When the hold at bay rounds have passed, if the target has not agreed to surrender, both roll Join Battle to determine who will act first, with the hostage suffering a -2 penalty to his results. If the hostage-taker wins, she can immediately execute a standard ambush attack.

#### *A dramatic overview of Hold at Bay:*

The character's ambush may be an elaborate trap: she arranges for her target to be in a certain room at a certain time, and sits in a darkened corner with a crossbow aimed at the door. It might also be a spur of the moment grab: a Night Caste reaches out of an alley to snare a passer-by and put a dagger to his throat. In all cases, for a character to be held at bay, he must be intelligent enough to feel fear, or otherwise competent to understand a threat. The action won't work on mindless automata, beasts, or mindless monsters. While holding a person at bay, his mental faculties are concentrating on survival, or on looking for a way out, so his Resolve and Guile is weakened, while the person holding him at bay has the social upper hand. In this type of scenario, the target will generally agree to all simple commands such as "Turn around" or "Move over there" which do not directly cause him harm, but can still resist agreeing to things which would harm him or deprive him of safety. When the character's control rounds end, if the target has not surrendered, the new Join Battle roll reflects a shift in the drama, at which one

character or the other figuratively blinks. If the target wins this roll, it means he's seized a moment to fight for his life. If the character holding him at bay wins, she can continue to talk for a number of rounds equal to the new Initiative difference, or she can choose to attack. In this case, the target is only at Defense 0.

### **Go to Ground**

Sometimes a character needs to get out of a fight, but surrender isn't an option and the hopes of escaping by way of a withdraw action seem slim. In these situations, the character may attempt to escape the fight by going to ground.

A character who goes to ground is attempting to hide somewhere on the battlefield and to avoid detection until the fight is over (and, hopefully, any hostiles have left). In order to attempt to go to ground, a character must already be in stealth. His player must then declare he is attempting to go to ground, and then make a successful (Dexterity + Stealth) attempt to maintain concealment over the next three turns. The first roll is at a -3 penalty, the second at -4, and the final roll at -5. If all of these rolls successfully defeat the (Perception + Awareness) rolls of the character's enemies, he is considered so well hidden that there is no hope of finding him until he voluntarily emerges from concealment.

This climbing difficulty can represent either the increasing difficulty of maintaining a single hiding place in the face of concerted efforts to find the character or the risk of moving about from hiding place to hiding place to evade searching opponents. Players are encouraged to think about how their characters attempt to go to ground, and to stunt appropriately—they'll need all the help they can get to deal with the penalties.

### TACKING AND BARDING MOUNTS

Mounts usually need saddles. Working at speed, it takes a master stabler five minutes to tack a horse—a process that involves affixing a blanket and saddle, bit and bridle, crown and boots. Barding, similarly, is applied after tacking, and even the fastest cataphract requires a minimum of five minutes to fully deck a destrier in armor. After that, if the animal is to carry any special weapons, they take a minute each to affix.

Mounts of a similar size to horses—agata, claw striders—take about the same amount of time to equip. Larger mounts such as mammoths or tyrant lizards take twice as long. Page 591 has the rules for characters themselves equipping armor; rushing a mount's equipment uses those rules.

A character who goes to ground successfully, but then emerges from hiding to re-join the fight in the midst of the same combat, re-enters the fight in Initiative Crash, at -10 Initiative.

### Uncountable Damage

Sometimes an avalanche sweeps an entire town off the side of a mountain. Sometimes a manse is converted into a geomantic bomb. Sometimes you're standing beneath the miraculous floating mountain Metagalapa when suddenly it falls on you. These situations produce *uncountable damage*—apocalyptic destruction totally out of scale with what combat resolution, environmental hazards, and Health Tracks are designed to deal with.

When a character is subjected to uncountable damage, the Storyteller decides what happens to him (usually death, although in some cases it might be reasonable to permit a roll to reduce a sure demise down to mere incapacitation). Luckily, the Chosen have a number of Charms which allow them to deal with uncountable damage, such as Adamant Skin Technique (p. 377).

## Battle Groups

Bands of mountain bandits. Mobs of angry rioters. Squads of hired mercenaries. Vast armies. The Wyld Hunt itself. Sometimes battles in the world of **Exalted** consist of only a tiny handful of heroes, but more often they feature a great many combatants, far too many for it to be practical to keep track of each fighter's traits individually. These mobs, gangs, and armies are represented by battle groups.

Battle groups are an abstraction used whenever there are more than two combatants on the battlefield who are reasonably similar to one another in terms of capabilities and equipment, who aren't especially noteworthy to the story as individuals, and who aren't potent supernatural beings such as Exalts. Battle groups can represent small groups, such as a squad of a dozen of the Tri-Khan of Chiaroscuro's palace guards, or vast forces such as 1,000 men-at-arms riding to war.

Simply put, a battle group is treated as a character with the traits of the average combatant making up the group, plus a few other traits which modify these capabilities.

### Quick Overview

Before we get down to details, here's a basic idea of how a battle group works: A battle group is a group of fighters who are mechanically represented as one character. A group of soldiers, for example, is basically a single soldier,

### STORYTELLER ADVICE: RESOLVING BATTLES

While the decisive/withering attack division is an abstraction and doesn't represent different sorts of attacks within the Exalted game setting, Initiative is an abstraction of something that is more measurable—who's pressing the advantage in a fight. Observant combatants can usually tell when they're in trouble, or when they've got an opponent on the ropes.

Most combatants in the world of Exalted aren't fanatics—they're soldiers doing their job to make a living or because they didn't seem to have any other course to follow in life, or they're thugs hoping for an easy mark, or they're heroes with ambitions they hope to live to fulfill. While life is cheap and death is common in the Age of Sorrows, few people want to fight to the death if it means their own death. As a result, it's worth keeping the withdraw, go to ground, and surrender (pp. 199, 204 and 223) actions in mind. Once it becomes clear that a fight can't be won, or that the cost of doing so is unacceptably high, many opponents will attempt to lay down arms and beg for mercy or to simply run.

Players have no obligation to let their characters' enemies get away or to accept a surrender, but actions build reputations. Those said to be bloodthirsty and merciless can often expect no mercy on the day they find themselves outmatched.

except this soldier gets a number of bonuses to his attack, damage, soak, and Defense based on his battle group traits. He always uses **withering** attacks against you (which start inflicting Health Track damage once you run out of Initiative). By contrast, your **withering** attacks don't take his Initiative, but instead directly damage his "Health." He's got a special Health Track (called a Magnitude Track) that can absorb a lot of punishment, and it's likely that a battle group will break and run before being totally destroyed—whenever you empty the Magnitude Track, there's a chance they'll flee or surrender. If they don't, their Magnitude refills, but their combat bonuses become weaker, and it gets harder for them not to rout next time they run out of Magnitude.

### Battle Group Traits

There are only four differences between a solo character's traits and those of a battle group: battle groups have three special values that individual heroes don't (Size, Drill,



and Might), and instead of a Health Track, they have a Magnitude Track.

#### Size

Size is simple—it measures how big a battle group is, in terms of how many fighters are in it. The greater a battle group's Size, the harder it hits and the tougher it is; Size is the single greatest source of a battle group's power. Battle groups enjoy a bonus to their **attack rolls, raw damage, Magnitude** (see below), and **soak** equal to their Size. Thus, a Size 3 battle group adds +3 to its attack pools, +3 to its raw damage, +3 to its soak, and has 3 extra points of Magnitude.

**Size 0:** One or two fighters. These should be modeled as individual combatants, not as a battle group. Any battle group reduced to Size 0 through Magnitude loss effectively ceases to exist—all of its members are either dead, fled, or surrendered.

**Size 1:** A small group: a half-dozen thugs in an alley, a fang of Realm legionnaires, a bar brawl, ten Dune People lying in wait beneath the sand. A dozen or fewer combatants.

**Size 2:** A modest group: a late-night lynch mob, a scale of Realm legionnaires, a Harborhead war-band, an aristocrat's house guard. Several dozen combatants.

**Size 3:** A moderate group: a mercenary company, a talon to a wing of Realm legionnaires, a sweeping riot, a war band of the Fair Folk. Over a hundred combatants.

**Size 4:** A large group: a mercenary army, a dragon of Realm legionnaires, an entire Delzahn clan and its bannermen rallied to war, most of a small town slain and raised as the undead soldiers of an Abyssal. Several hundred combatants.

**Size 5:** A full army: two dragons of Realm legionnaires, a barbarian horde, a city-annihilating plague of fae or undead. Over a thousand combatants.

If *appreciably* more than a Size 5 battle group worth of combatants are present, they are represented by creating an additional battle group (or groups). 20 extra combatants are a drop in the bucket, but if an extra 300 are present, that's worth starting up a second Size 3 battle group.

#### Drill

While the traits of the average character making up a battle group determines the quality of the group overall, Drill measures how well the combatants within that group work together. In mass combat, Drill is one of the most important traits a group of fighters can have. It represents hours of training and familiarity—the ability to know what

the soldier to the left or right of you will do at any given moment because you've been through these maneuvers with them countless times. Well-drilled units hold together better in the face of sudden catastrophe, respond more readily to orders, and are generally much more difficult to defeat than low-Drill units of greater Size. As a result, Drill modifies rout rolls (p. 208), provides modifiers to command actions (p. 209), and enhances a unit's Defense. In short, high-Drill battle groups are tougher to defeat, and respond better to commands.

There are three categories of Drill:

**Poor**—A unit with poor Drill has no training in fighting together, or no capability for such training. This is the Drill quality of rioting mobs, of impromptu peasant conscripts tossed directly into battle, of most village militias, of many bandits, of raiders who fight without any sort of coordination, of groups of experienced fighters brought together without any particular familiarity with fighting alongside one another, and of mindless undead.

Poor-quality battle groups inflict a -2 penalty to order and rally for numbers actions (p. 210), do not modify their Defense, and raise the difficulty of all rout and rally rolls by 1.

**Average**—A battle group with average Drill has some training fighting together, either in the field or through extensive training and practice. In a fight, they know what to do and they move with ease and precision. The majority of military forces in the world of **Exalted** have average quality Drill. This covers standing armies, common mercenary groups, well-trained guards, Guild caravan security, and the war-bred minions of the Fair Folk.

Average-quality battle groups inflict no penalty to command rolls and enjoy a +1 Defense bonus.

**Elite**—Elite battle groups have drilled extensively with one another, and have probably gone through a number of battles together. The members of the battle groups often eat, sleep, and relax together, and spend far more time honing their skills as a group than the average band of soldiers. As a result, these battle groups are often small, prestigious units or semi-religious orders. The Realm's elite Imperial Guard, Harborhead's Brides of Ahlat, the warrior-brotherhoods of Medo, and the very best mercenary companies employed by the Guild are all elite-quality battle groups.

Elite-quality battle groups add a +2 bonus to command rolls and enjoy a +2 Defense bonus.

### Might

Might is an uncommon trait in the Age of Sorrows, mea-

suring the supernatural power of a battle group. A battle group only possesses might if the average member composing it is supernaturally powerful in some martially relevant fashion. As a result, the overwhelming majority of battle groups have Might 0; very few battle groups with Might above 2 have been fielded since the founding of the Realm. Might goes from 0 to 3, and adds to the accuracy, damage, and Defense of a unit.

**Might 0:** The Might rating of battle groups primarily composed of ordinary mortals. This rating has no effect on the battle group's traits.

**Might 1:** The Might rating of battle groups lightly touched by the supernatural or whose members are slightly superhuman. This is the Might rating of groups of beastfolk and martially-enhanced Wyld mutants, or units which fight under divine blessings of a martial nature—something only very potent spirits are able to grant to battle groups above Size 2.

Might 1 bestows a +1 bonus to accuracy and damage and a +1 bonus to Defense.

**Might 2:** The Might rating of battle groups composed primarily of supernaturally potent beings, such as lesser spirits. This is the rating of groups made up of first circle demons, war ghosts, or lesser elementals, as well as the armies of the Fair Folk.

Might 2 bestows a +2 bonus to accuracy and damage and a +1 bonus to Defense.

**Might 3:** This is the Might rating of battle groups composed of Terrestrial Exalted or similarly potent beings. Such battle groups have rarely been seen since the First Age—in the Age of Sorrows, such beings simply don't gather in sufficient numbers to require abstract representation, and are almost always depicted as individual heroes, even when three or more are present.

In the event that such a battle group appears, Might 3 bestows a +3 bonus to accuracy and damage and a +2 bonus to Defense.

### Fighting Battle Groups

To keep things straightforward, fighting a battle group in most ways resembles fighting an ordinary character with its traits inflated a bit by Size, Drill, and possibly Might. There are a few key differences, detailed below:

**Making Attacks:** Battle groups can only launch **withering** attacks. While these can damage a target's Initiative

## NONCOMBATANTS AND TRIVIAL OPPONENTS

Not everyone on a battlefield is necessarily a combatant. Fights sometimes break out when individuals are present who have no meaningful combat capabilities and no real interest in fighting. Such individuals are considered **bystanders**, or noncombatants. For the most part, they're scenery—screaming crowds, panicked party-goers, confused shoppers in a Nexus market. Most notably, noncombatants have a permanent Initiative rating of 0 and cannot yield Initiative when targeted by withering attacks; if it becomes important to resolve an attack against a noncombatant for some reason, treat them as a Size 0 battle group—withering attacks simply inflict damage directly to their Health Track. Generally, though, this shouldn't be necessary—bystanders are mostly there to provide stunt opportunities for the players' characters and their opponents.

For games featuring particularly powerful and experienced characters, certain combatants might also be declared trivial opponents. A trivial opponent is a character vastly less powerful than other combatants on the battlefield—for example, a single mortal soldier of ordinary skill on a battlefield where every other fighter is a Fair Folk noble or Celestial Exalt. Any opponent the Storyteller decides is trivial is treated as a noncombatant, using the rules above; they have some slight chance to wound or impede the heroes around them, but thwarting such a minor adversary offers no meaningful opportunity to shift the initiative of the battle overall.

as usual, the lost Initiative is *not* gained by the battle group—it vanishes. Any damage the battle group inflicts against a target that has fallen into Initiative Crash, however, is instead applied directly to the target's Health Track as bashing or lethal damage, whichever is appropriate to the standard armament of the battle group.

Battle groups *never* enjoy the Double 10s rule on damage rolls.

**Area Attacks:** Like other characters, battle groups can only make a single attack on their turn, but these are often large attacks, consisting of hundreds of flashing blades or sheets of arrows darkening the sky. As a result, when a battle group makes a close-ranged attack, it makes a single attack roll and applies that roll's results to all enemies in direct contact with the group (depending on the battle group's Size, this could potentially cover a considerable area). When a battle group makes a ranged attack, it must

select a single primary target for the attack. If this target is another battle group, the attack resolves normally; if it's an individual, then the attack is also applied to all other individual characters (friendly or hostile) within close range of that target. Huge mobs of archers make poor precision snipers.

**Inert Initiative:** Because battle groups can't make **decisive** attacks and can't take Initiative from other characters, their Initiative rating is used entirely to determine when the group takes its turn during each round. On the other hand, all **withering** attacks launched against a battle group instead directly damage its Magnitude (see below). Successful **withering** attacks directed against a battle group still generate one automatic point of Initiative for the attacker.

**Magnitude and Damaging Battle Groups:** Battle groups don't have Health Tracks. Instead, they have a number of points of Magnitude equal to the number of health levels contained in the Health Track of the average fighter in the group (usually seven), plus their current Size.

**Withering** attacks directed against a battle group are resolved normally, save that their damage is applied to the group's Magnitude rather than its Initiative. **Decisive** attacks directed against a battle group also resolve normally, save that they, too, are applied to its Magnitude, and inflict one additional level of automatic damage per four damage dice rolled (round up).

When a battle group loses all of its Magnitude, it must check for rout (see below). If the battle group survives its rout check, its Magnitude rating re-fills completely, and it loses a point of Size. Any damage in excess of the unit's Magnitude Track during a rout check 'rolls over' into the new Magnitude Track—it's even potentially possible for a strong enough attack to fill up this new track immediately, forcing another rout check!

**It's important to understand what Magnitude damage represents.** Partially, it means dead or unconscious fighters, but it also represents damage to the group's morale—having the allies on either side of you cut down tests a person's resolve to stand and keep fighting, despite the dangerous likelihood that you may be next; in fact, without your fellows-at-arms, you're *more likely* to be next. Thus, Magnitude damage is a mixture of incapacitated combatants and those who have lost the will to fight, or have stopped fighting effectively.

If a character causes a battle group to lose a point of Size or to dissolve, she gains an Initiative Break bonus (p. 193), just as though she'd sent an opponent into Initiative Crash.

**Damage and Rout:** Few large-scale battles end when all the soldiers of one side kill all the soldiers of the other side. At some point in almost every battle, one side breaks, and soldiers begin to flee, or if that is impossible, to cast down their weapons and attempt to surrender. These moments when a battle group's will is tested are known as rout checks.

A rout check occurs whenever a battle group's Magnitude Track fills up with damage and it loses a point of Size. Having so many of its soldiers whittled away causes the group to hesitate, and there's always the danger that this hesitation could spread into full-blown panic and retreat—a sufficiently daunting assault by a small, elite group may even cause a vastly superior force to panic and collapse into disorder.

A rout check is normally a Willpower roll, using the Willpower rating of the average fighter in the battle group, as modified by the unit's Drill. The difficulty of a rout check begins at 1, but may be modified in a number of ways:

Difficulty	Condition Modifier
+1	Another allied battle group has already suffered dissolution during the fight.
+1	One or more of the battle group's leaders or heroes have been incapacitated or killed during the battle.
+1	per point of Size the battle group has already lost during the scene.
+1	The rout check is provoked by a devastating supernatural area-of-effect assault such as the spell Death of Obsidian Butterflies (p. 472).

If the rout check succeeds, the battle group loses a point of Size and restores all points of Magnitude. If it fails, the battle group suffers *dissolution* on its next turn and attempts to surrender or run—either way, it's no longer a meaningful participant in the battle.

**Taking Actions:** Battle Groups may take most of the same actions as normal characters. Notably, they can't take grapple actions. Rather than grappling, battle groups may take "Engage" actions, in which the battle group swarms the target, encircles him, or otherwise pins him down with force of numbers. Engage works the same way as a grapple, with the following exception: no Initiative roll is required to confirm the action (the gambit automatically succeeds, deducting an appropriate Initiative cost), saving and control rolls use the group's standard armament

and combat Ability rather than unarmed attacks, and the restrain/drag and throw options aren't available. Engage is primarily useful for pinning an enemy in place and preventing movement.

### Battle Groups and Movement

Battle groups use the same movement system as individual heroes, but they take up a *lot* more space than a single person does. Depending on their Size, they can be truly enormous, potentially covering hundreds of yards of ground.

As a general rule, a battle group can direct attacks with its full strength at any character or group within range of any edge of the group. Also as a result of this enormous size, individual characters are capable of moving *through* the space occupied by a battle group, crossing it as difficult terrain at a cost of 1 Initiative per round spent doing so (battle groups can't move through one another). Storytellers must use common sense when deciding what sort of positioning-based actions to allow individual characters to take—two characters at close range to a 500 man battle group on opposite sides of it, for example, may well be at long range with regard to one another.

Battle groups can potentially spread out to cover truly enormous amounts of ground, allowing them to direct close-range attacks at a greater variety of characters, but if the members of the group spread out so much that the average space between group members is 10 yards or more, the group loses all Size advantages to its attacks.

Battle groups *don't* need to take disengage actions to move away from opponents two or more points of Size smaller than themselves.

### Command Actions

Battle groups are mostly self-contained and self-directed entities, under the Storyteller's control—even battle groups allied with or "owned by" players' characters. Sometimes, however, individual heroes wish to exercise more direct command over a battle group. This is done with command actions.

To issue a command action, a character must be either the recognized leader of a battle group—such as the boss of a gang or the commander of an army—or must be a known hero to the members of the group, whom they would be willing to trust and rally around in the midst of battle.

A command action is a one of three different combat actions: Either an *order*, a *rally*, or a *rally for numbers*. None can be placed in a flurry. In order to direct command



actions to a battle group, a character must have some way of making himself understood—shouting to subordinate officers from the front of battle, using signal relays from a back-line command post, and battlefield magic are the most common methods.

Issuing an order is a ([Charisma, Appearance, or Intelligence] + War) roll against difficulty 1. Intelligence is used by rear line characters who are not actively participating in the battle, generally characters protected somewhere behind the battle group they're issuing orders to. Charisma and Appearance are used to lead from the front, by characters actively participating in the battle. Charisma directs troops through impromptu speeches and valorous exhortations, while Appearance leads by example, such as charging at the enemy while calling for troops to follow. An order action both determines what the targeted battle group will do on its next turn and adds its successes to the battle group's dice pools for all actions taken during that turn.

Rally actions can be taken after an allied battle group has failed a rout check, but before dissolution occurs (remember, a battle group dissolves on its next turn *after* it fails a rout check). They effectively give a unit a second chance to rally back. A rally action is a ([Charisma or Appearance] + War) roll, against the same difficulty as the failed rout check. If the rally action succeeds, then the targeted battle group recovers as though it had succeeded at its rout check.

Finally, a rally for numbers action can be taken after the Battle Group has suffered Magnitude damage, to stiffen the resolve of hesitating soldiers or to call warriors who have begun to break formation and flee back to battle. It is a ([Charisma or Appearance] + War) roll against difficulty 1. Every two successes rolled restore one point of Magnitude. Rallying for numbers can't give a battle group more Magnitude than its current maximum rating, nor can it restore a lost point of Size—that can only be done by recruitment or rounding up deserters after the battle. A battle group can only benefit from one rally for numbers action per battle, though losing a point of Size resets this limit.

### Complications

There are two additional factors to consider when using battle groups:

**Perfect morale:** Some rare battle groups possess a quality called *perfect morale*. A battle group with perfect morale is made up of fighters incapable of fear. Such a group automatically succeeds at all rout checks, and simply will not retreat unless ordered to do so. Fearless battle groups enjoy a +3 bonus to their Magnitude, but cannot benefit from rally for numbers actions (since all of their casualties represent fighters killed or injured too badly to continue fighting).

### WHY BATTLE GROUPS?

Lone heroes fighting many times their number in nameless lackeys is a staple of many of the sources Exalted draws on. Additionally, because of the scope of martial conflicts often present in Exalted, it's impractical to depict each soldier in a war scene individually. Battle groups satisfy the demands of both huge-scale mass combat scenes and more modestly scaled scenes where the heroes smash up two dozen thugs in a furious display of their martial prowess.

The astute may wonder if it wouldn't be more useful to divide, say, a Size 5 group up into ten Size 3 groups, netting ten attacks per round instead of one stronger attack. However, battle groups are a gameplay abstraction, and military minds within the world of Exalted don't plan wars around the battle groups system. Battle groups are there to reduce the Storyteller's workload, and splitting 1,000 soldiers (one thing for the Storyteller to keep track of) into ten 100-fighter groups (10 things for the Storyteller to keep track of) defeats that purpose.

The only time similar mobs of fighters should be represented as separate battle groups is if they are so widely separated geographically (two units of infantry fighting at opposite ends of a mile-long valley) that it becomes impractical and implausible to combine them. Otherwise, don't split battle groups into smaller units for greater offensive power.

The most common groups with perfect morale seen in the Age of Sorrows are mindless undead, although legends of the First Age speak of fearless groups of clockwork legionnaires and similar wonders of mystic artifice. If such a force could be excavated and restored to working order in the Second Age, it would be a treasure beyond price.

**Slaughter:** While a battle group that has suffered rout and dissolved is no longer a meaningful actor in battle, the surviving fighters that made up the group still exist—they're usually either laying down arms or running away from the fight in an uncoordinated manner. In the latter case, if allowed to escape, they may very well re-form and offer battle again at a later date. As a result, the standard military response to a rout is to run down the fleeing survivors and slaughter them.

This gruesome practice consists of simply directing attack actions at the fleeing battle group, which suffers a -3 penalty to its Defense. As the group no longer has any

Magnitude, the Storyteller simply looks at the damage inflicted and the number of fleeing soldiers, and estimates what it amounts to in terms of dead enemies—the more damage, the more carnage inflicted against the routing battle group.

Of note, if the fleeing group is of a Size greater than 2, then only other battle groups can generally attempt slaughter attacks against it—an individual hero just can't cut down enough fleeing soldiers to make much of a dent in a 600-man retreat, at least not without powerful magic such as battlefield sorcery.

### Strategic Warfare

Long before armies and heroes clash on the field of battle, the strategies of their generals shape the conflict to come.

What follows is a simple system for strategic conflict for use whenever a battle between two military forces is imminent. This is intended to shape the clash of armies—it's not intended to be used by a Circle of Solars preparing to fight a Circle of Abyssals, or for any similarly small-numbers conflicts.

#### Overview

This is how strategic conflict works:

- The strategic decision-maker (generally a general or strategos) for each side decides upon a desired stratagem.
- The players of each involved general tally up any advantages they may have that would provide modifiers to their attempt to implement their strategy.
- The players make an opposed (Intelligence + War) Strategic Maneuver roll. If one side or the other manages to triumph, then the battle that follows plays out according to the terms of the stratagem they've selected.
- The battle is then played out in the combat system as usual, subject to the selected stratagem.

#### Potential Modifiers

The following is a list of potential modifiers to the Strategic Maneuver roll. This list is not intended to be exhaustive—the Storyteller should feel free to add additional modifiers if they seem appropriate.

Modifier	Condition
-1	General knows nothing at all about opposing general
-1	General knows little to nothing about the forces he is to face.
-1	General commands troops with poor Drill.
+1	General has extensively studied his opponent's past strategies
+1	General has spies and informants within the enemy's ranks
+2	General has a high-placed traitor within enemy ranks
+1-3	The players have roleplayed one or more scenes in which they obtained some concrete advantage over the enemy or harmed the enemy army (stealing its secrets, devastating its supply lines, killing a famous hero of the opposing forces, etc).

## Potential Stratagems

What follows is a list of potential stratagems. Each has a listed *threshold*—a number of successes by which the opponent's Strategic Maneuver roll must be exceeded in order to successfully implement the stratagem. If you roll more successes than your opponent, but fail to accumulate enough to implement your stratagem, then the battle simply occurs with no stratagem in place and no particular advantage accorded to either side.

**Back to the Sea (*threshold: 1*):** The victorious general confronts his enemy on terrain that makes escape or retreat impossible. The enemy may literally have his back to the sea, or might be forced to fight at the edge of a cliff or river, or inside of a box canyon, or similar environment. The enemy force cannot take withdraw actions; Size loss indicates massive deaths or surrenders rather than soldiers fleeing the battlefield, so that later regrouping and recovery becomes vastly more difficult if not impossible. Slaughter actions are vastly more effective than normal. Rally for numbers actions require three successes per point of Magnitude restored.

**Strategic Placement (*threshold: 1*):** The victorious general forces the fight to occur somewhere advantageous by dint of its nature—generally this is used by Fair Folk strategoi to force their opponents to pursue them into the bordermarches of the Wyld, or by Abyssal Exalted to force confrontations inside shadowlands. This stratagem offers no mechanical advantage in and of itself—it's up to the general to have a battle strategy in mind to exploit the ground she's chosen.

**Demoralized (*threshold: 2*):** The victorious general demoralizes his enemy's forces before the battle begins. Perhaps their supply lines have been ravaged and they must fight hungry; perhaps vengeful ghosts have been sent to haunt their camps. In any event, the enemy takes a -1 penalty on all rout checks and all command actions.

**Fortifications (*threshold: 2*):** The victorious general leaves her enemy with no choice but to confront her on a battlefield she's prepared in advance to confound her foes. This may be an entrenched camp on a hill surrounded by palisades of stakes, or it may mean street-to-street fighting in a city where the victorious force has prepared avenues of swift movement with which the enemy is unfamiliar; it may even indicate warfare across a series of collapsible trenches. In any event, the opposing force begins the fight at long range, and treats the entire battlefield as difficult terrain, whereas the victorious force treats the battlefield as normal terrain.

**Ambush (*threshold: 3*):** The victorious general tricks his enemy into a trap, joining battle when it is least expected! All attacks launched by his forces during the first round of combat are considered ambush attacks. All attacks launched by his forces in the following 3 rounds are considered surprise attacks.

**Pincer Attack (*threshold: 3*):** The victorious general arrays her forces to attack her opponent on several fronts simultaneously. The enemy force is considered to suffer

### STORYTELLING ADVICE: SKIP IT

We offer one final word of advice about the combat rules: sometimes you should ignore them. In some situations, breaking into a detailed blow-by-blow battle would slow things down rather than spicing the game up. For example: Six months into an ongoing chronicle, a mighty Dawn Caste warrior wielding a formidable artifact weapon comes upon an inexperienced sentry walking the walls of a fortress the Solar is storming. Deciding there's little doubt as to the fight's outcome, the Storyteller decides to simply offer the Dawn's player a chance to make a difficulty 2 (Dexterity + Melee) roll to dispatch her hapless and outmatched foe before he is able to raise an alarm. Alternately, if an infiltrating Night Caste wants to sneak up on a patrolling mortal house guard and knock him out with a sap or headlock, a simple (Dexterity + [Brawl, Melee, or Martial Arts]) roll will probably take care of the problem. If he wants to knock out Octavian, the Living Tower... that's a job for the combat engine. Ultimately, when to skip over combat is up to the judgment of the Storyteller.



a -1 onslaught penalty throughout the entirety of the battle.

## Social Influence

In **Exalted**, the words of prophets, courtiers, and princes carry as much power as a warrior's sword or a sorcerer's magic. Social influence is the system used for resolving interactions in which characters attempt to manipulate, persuade, or coerce each other. With the social actions listed below, characters can gain the trust of others and then use that to influence them, changing or shaping their beliefs over the course of a conversation, oration, or artistic performance.

The core of the social influence system is the **influence roll**. The dice pool for an influence roll is always one of your social Attributes (Charisma, Manipulation, or Appearance) plus a relevant Ability, against a difficulty of the Resolve rating of the character you're trying to influence. Successful influence rolls allow you to alter a character's feelings or beliefs or to convince him to do something for you, based on the social action or Charm used. Occasionally, you will use other Attributes and Abilities to take actions that are not influence rolls, such as rolling (Perception +

Socialize) to read a person's personality, beliefs, or agenda. All of these social actions are described in more detail below.

### Overview

Social influence in **Exalted** revolves around Intimacies. In terms of gameplay, you're either going to be *influencing someone's outlook* (by creating, destroying, strengthening, or weakening Intimacies), or using Intimacies to *persuade someone to do what you want*.

Intimacies are the key to this system—defined in full on page 170, a character's Intimacies dictate what they believe and care about. By studying and interacting with other characters, you can figure out what makes them tick. By engaging other characters socially, you can try to change how they feel about things, and thus change their Intimacies.

Without exploiting an Intimacy, persuasion isn't possible. No matter how charismatic you might be, a stranger won't give over his life to your cause just because you say so—there has to be a reason to make him take such course of action. Perhaps they *trust and respect* you; perhaps they *hate someone* you've set yourself against; perhaps by doing so, they'll *further their own goals* or *stand up for what they believe in*. All such motives are described by Intimacies. In short: You need to play on an Intimacy to be able to

talk people into doing things you want them to do. The stronger the Intimacy, the more you can convince people to do in its name.

The resulting gameplay can depict anything from angering a great warrior into declaring war, to gaining the martial support of your sworn brothers because they respect you, to alienating a queen from her consort (to lessen his influence), to using propaganda to stir a revolt, to making a mighty bodyguard distrust and abandon the man he's sworn to protect.

In such a milieu, enormous charisma and forthright conviction might win the day, but it's often more effective to first learn what people want and what they care about. You might use your personality to win over a merchant prince, the better to convince him to back your agenda—or you might find it simpler to seduce his favored and trusted concubine, who can whisper your desires into his ear.

This also means Storyteller characters will seek to influence your character's opinions and actions. Creation is a world of strife and turmoil, full of heroes with their own agendas. Some characters will seek to use or recruit you, and some will offer and take advantage simultaneously—it's up to your character's judgment to determine who to trust, who to shun, who to follow, and who to turn away. Creation is a world that thrives on social influence, and no Exalt is an island.

### Order of Actions

Social actions don't usually have special timing—there are no "Social turns." When a player's character tries to seduce a beautiful youth or convince a despot to ally with his

#### SOCIAL INFLUENCE AT A GLANCE

##### SOCIAL INFLUENCE IS ABOUT:

- Discovering the Intimacies of others.
- Protecting your own Intimacies from discovery.
- Exploiting others' Intimacies to persuade them.
- Instilling others with new Intimacies to affect their feelings or beliefs.
- Strengthening or weakening the Intimacies others already hold.

In short: The social influence system is all about discovering, building or weakening the beliefs or emotional connections of others in order to convince them to do what you want them to do.

fledgling kingdom, he'll probably be the only person rolling dice—everything else is roleplay between his character and the Storyteller character. When multiple characters attempt social actions in the same scene, who rolls when can be decided by the natural flow of the conversation, or by procedure (in a court, for example, there are strict rules regarding who speaks when). If two characters are both trying to present different arguments to a single individual, then that individual's player decides who to listen to first. If it's still not clear who acts in which order, then the characters with the highest (Wits + Socialize) go first, with the Storyteller breaking any ties.

### Resolve

The Resolve trait represents a character's mental solidity and strength of will, her ability to resist being influenced by the persuasion and manipulation of others. A character's Resolve rating is the difficulty for any influence roll made against her. Resolve is calculated as the character's ([Wits + Integrity + specialty] / 2, round up). If a character is applying her Resolve, then it means she's resistant to or skeptical of the influence being applied—there's no need to roll against a character's Resolve if she's happy to accept whatever influence is being offered. **Resolve is mainly used to resist instill, inspire, persuade, bargain and threaten actions.**

### Guile

The Guile trait represents a character's ability to conceal his thoughts and innermost feelings. A character with high Guile reveals little about himself through his expression, posture, and speech, while a character with low Guile wears his heart (and Intimacies) on his sleeve. A character's Guile rating is the difficulty for actions that attempt to figure out his Intimacies, emotions, or thoughts. Guile is calculated as the character's ([Manipulation + Socialize + specialty] / 2, round up). **Guile is typically used to defend against the read intentions action.**

### Intimacies

Intimacies represent a character's relationships, beliefs, ideals, and goals. A character's Intimacies help determine what types of influence will affect him.

### Intensity

The strength of an Intimacy is defined by its **intensity**—Minor, Major, or Defining. When a character is targeted by an influence roll that opposes one or more of his Inti-

macies, add a bonus to his Resolve based on the intensity of the most applicable Intimacy. On the other hand, if one or more of a character's Intimacies *supports* an influence roll applied against him, then he suffers a corresponding penalty to Resolve based on the most applicable Intimacy.

If more than one Intimacy supports or opposes a social action, only the most relevant Intimacy modifies the target's Resolve. For example, if you have a Major Tie of hatred against the Realm, and a Defining Tie of hatred toward Ragara Jirun, and Ragara Jirun tries to convince you to act in support of the Realm, both Intimacies would logically oppose the influence, but only the Defining Tie of "Ragara Jirun (Hatred)" boosts your Resolve, as it has the strongest intensity.

Sometimes Social influence is supported by one Intimacy and opposed by another at the same time. For example, if Righteous Thorn has a Defining Tie of hatred toward the Realm, but the Major Principle "Violence solves nothing," then an attempt to convince him to support an armed revolt against Realm occupation would face no bonus or penalty to his Resolve since the two cancel one another out (-3 for the Defining Intimacy in support, +3 for the Major Intimacy in opposition).

The effects of these different Intensities are listed below.

- **Minor** Intimacies are notable relationships or beliefs that have some influence over a character's actions without being an integral part of who he is. Characters will usually let their Minor Intimacies dictate their behavior in situations where it is directly relevant, as long as it does not act against a stronger Intimacy or their own self-interest. A man with a Minor Tie of "My Wife (Love)" has a real and profound relationship with his spouse, but it doesn't have a strong influence on his actions outside the context of his romantic and family life. A peasant with a Minor Principle of "The Immaculate Philosophy" believes sincerely in the teachings of the Immaculate Order, but her reverence has little sway over her non-religious behavior. Minor Intimacies apply a +2 Resolve bonus against influence rolls that oppose them, or a -1 Resolve penalty against rolls that align with them.

- **Major** Intimacies are relationships or beliefs that influence the way the character acts in many areas of life. Major Intimacies influence the behavior of characters even in situations where they are only tangentially or indirectly relevant, and might lead a character to act against their own self-interest as long as they do not face severe harm or life-altering inconveniences because of it. A man with a Major Tie of "My Wife (Love)" has a strong relationship that dictates how he acts outside of just the context of the

relationship. A peasant with a Major Principle of "The Immaculate Philosophy" applies the teachings of the Immaculates to almost every aspect of her life. Major Intimacies apply a +3 Resolve bonus against influence rolls that oppose them, or a -2 Resolve penalty against rolls that align with them.

- **Defining** Intimacies represent the most important things in a character's life, the relationships or beliefs that they place above all others and refuse to compromise. Defining Intimacies influence the greater part of a character's behavior in all fields of life. If there's something for which a character is willing to lay down his life, then it is best represented by this level of intensity. A man with a Defining Tie of "My Wife (Love)" is not just a committed spouse; his relationship influences almost everything he does. A peasant with a Defining Principle of "The Immaculate Philosophy" is defined as a person by her reverence for Immaculate tenets. Defining Intimacies apply a +4 Resolve bonus against influence rolls that oppose them, or a -3 Resolve penalty against rolls that align with them.

## Social Actions

The following is a list of social influence actions, what they can accomplish, and what conditions must be met to retry them after they fail ("Retrying Social Actions," p. 222).

- **Instill:** The instill action is used to change the feelings and beliefs of others. When a player takes an instill action, he declares what he wants to make his target feel or believe. The Storyteller may apply penalties to the roll if this belief is particularly implausible or hard to accept, up to a maximum penalty of -5 for truly unbelievable claims. On a successful roll, the target forms an Intimacy towards that belief.

However, there are limits to what someone will believe when they already have strong opinions to the contrary. The character may need to lessen existing Intimacies before instilling new ones. While the instill action can always be used to create new Minor Intimacies, altering existing Intimacies is more difficult:

- Strengthening a Minor Intimacy, or weakening a Major Intimacy, can only be done if the target has a **different** Minor or better Intimacy that supports the attempted influence.

- Likewise, raising a Major Intimacy, or weakening a Defining Intimacy, is only possible if the target has a **different** Major or better Intimacy that supports the attempted influence.

—Strengthening an existing Intimacy requires that the evidence raised or argument made in favor of strengthening it be **more** compelling than whatever caused the Intimacy to arrive at its current intensity. For example, if a shopkeeper gained a Minor Intimacy of distrust toward the Guild after learning that they often undercut local merchants, he would need even stronger evidence in order to strengthen his Intimacy to Major. Perhaps he learns that a Guild merchant plans to buy out his shop, or speaks to a man who once partnered with a Guildsman and was betrayed and sold into slavery.

- **Persuade:** The persuade action allows you to convince other characters to perform an action or task that you give to them. **The extent of the action you can compel with persuade depends on the Intimacies of your target.**

Without an Intimacy to support your influence roll, you can only convince others to take relatively trivial and risk-free actions—begging a coin from a passing stranger is about the limit. On the other hand, characters who have an appropriate Tie or Principle can be convinced to undertake great risks, dedicate their lives to a cause, or even die in your name. There are three categories of tasks characters might be asked to undertake, each based on the Intimacy being exploited:

**Inconvenient Tasks:** Characters who have an appropriate Minor Intimacy can be convinced to perform tasks that pose some mild danger or hindrance to them, as long as it is not severe enough to seriously disrupt their life or livelihood—the prospect of a severe injury, an angry superior, or heavy financial loss is still more than they will allow. With this level of Intimacy, you can persuade people to do things that take longer than a scene to complete, if the amount of time needed is not so long as to disrupt the target’s life.

*Example:* “I need you to deliver this parcel to that big house in Cinnabar District, with the red jade lion statues by the door. If the man on the door has a scorpion tattoo, don’t leave it with him—insist to see the master of the house.”

**Serious Tasks:** Characters who have an appropriate Major Intimacy can be convinced to perform even tasks that carry the risk of extreme harm or impediment. At this level, a farmer could be convinced to join your personal militia despite the risk of dying on the battlefield, while an apothecary might provide you with poisons even though he faces imprisonment or corporal punishment for doing so. However, they will still balk if the risk of death or ruin is almost certain. Tasks that take extended amounts of time are possible at this level, even if they require a long-term commitment such as joining an organization.

*Example:* “Just because he’s your father doesn’t make you his slave—why should his fear deny you a place in Anteng’s glorious uprising against its oppressors? This nation needs heroes; men like you!”

**Life-Changing Tasks:** Characters who have a Defining Intimacy can be made to do almost anything. At this level, you could convince a devoted follower to hold off a Wyld Hunt long enough to buy time for your escape, or make a wealthy noble donate the better portion of his fortune to your personal cult. Only in cases where death or utter ruin are absolutely, unavoidably certain will they balk, and even then the Storyteller might decide they’re willing to do it despite all odds.

*Example:* “I know the old scrolls said the heart of this temple is guarded by a fearsome beast of brass and flame. I know it’s frightening, but isn’t this why we came so far and spent our fortunes, to be the first ones to scavenge the Great Ziggurat of Lost Zarlath? I’ll never make it into the final chambers with my leg like this—you’ll have to dare it for both of us!”

• **Bargain:** Bargaining is similar to the persuade action, but doesn’t depend on your target’s Intimacies. Instead, you must offer a bribe, gift, or favor that the character you’re convincing believes is worth the difficulty or danger of the task you’re asking him to perform. The Storyteller should take into account the Intimacies, wealth, and social status of the character in deciding what they will consider sufficient payment

#### TRANSPARENCY

By default, Exalted assumes system transparency—players know what kind of dice pools they’re facing, when their enemy has used a Charm, and so forth, and this applies to social influence as well. However, some Storytellers may prefer more opaque social results in the interest of heightening drama and tension—perhaps you think it’s more interesting if players don’t know whether they really convinced the Lunar warlord, or if he simply took their bribe but plans to betray the characters. Perhaps you’ve got a player who can’t resist acting on out-of-character knowledge.

In these circumstances, you might not announce when Storyteller characters spend Willpower to reject social influence, or might even roll players’ social actions yourself, behind the screen, so that nobody is sure how well their attempt was received—in this style of play, read intentions actions become even more vital not only to gauge a character’s attitude before approaching them, but afterwards as well!



(a wealthy noble is not going to be moved to favor your cause in court by the gift of an apple, though a starving beggar might be).

- **Threaten:** When all else fails, pain and intimidation are brutally effective motivators. Sometimes also called an intimidate action, threaten works like a bargain: You can convince people to do things without having to appeal to their Intimacies, only rather than offering something they want, you present them with something they *don't*—usually the threat of bodily harm, although social blackmail, economic ruin, and general intimidation will also do the job. It can also be used as an instill action which gives the target a Tie of fear towards you, or intensifies such an Intimacy he already has. For a threaten action to be effective, the target must be more afraid of the consequences of refusing you than he is of whatever you want him to do. If the target has any awe- or fear-based Intimacies you're aware of, that's usually a good place to start.

Blackmail and bullying won't make you many friends. Using the threaten action on someone almost always causes him to form an immediate negative Tie towards you, with a context chosen by the target's player, regardless of whether the attempt succeeds or fails. It can also often weaken any existing positive Ties the target might have, although that's ultimately up to his player (p. 170).

- **Inspire:** The inspire action is used to incite emotions and strong passions in the hearts of others, usually with the Performance Ability, which those others then act on. When a player takes an inspire action, he chooses which emotion he is attempting to inspire—anger, sorrow, hope, lust, hatred, delight, or any other. On a successful inspire roll, the target is impassioned according to the emotion evoked—but the target's player chooses what form that passion takes.

An impassioned character might form a new passion, or act upon an existing Intimacy that aligns with the emotion evoked. A tribal warrior-queen who is inspired with anger after hearing a Dawn Caste's roaring oration against her enemies might decide to lead a raid against a hated rival clan, or might decide to begin harassing a political enemy within her own tribe. A merchant prince who is filled with sorrow by the song of a Zenith Caste playing outside his window might spend the rest of the scene weeping with longing for a dead wife or might resolve to undertake some act of generosity with his fortune in remembrance of her kind-hearted ways.

A character doesn't *have* to drop everything he's doing to act upon an inspire action, but he must be genuinely resolved to action. If a devout follower of the Immaculate Philosophy is inspired to make a pilgrimage to the Imperial Mountain, he will generally set his affairs in order,

supply himself for the journey, and explain to his family where he is going before setting off.

Inspiration doesn't automatically create or strengthen Intimacies, but it's often appropriate for it to do so as characters act upon their inflamed passions. An inflamed passion may be treated as a Major Intimacy for the purposes of modifying Resolve and enabling persuade actions, for as long as the character is acting on it.

The inspiring character *doesn't* automatically know what passions he has inspired in his audience; he must use read intentions (see below) to find out. Because a character does not—and without magic, cannot—tailor the outcome of an inspire action to a specific target, inspire actions aren't subject to the penalty for group influence detailed on page 221, unless specified by a Charm or other effect.

- Read Intentions:** The read intentions action allows a character to discern what another character wants to achieve in a scene of interaction. Reading someone's intentions is not an influence roll—instead, it is a (Perception + Socialize) roll against the target's Guile. On a success, the Storyteller should give a brief description of what the character wants out of the interaction: "He's seducing you to get you alone," or "She's making polite small talk and waiting for this party to end."

Alternatively, this action can be used in order to determine what Intimacies a character has. Before rolling for the action, the player should generally describe what kind of Intimacy he wants to discern ("Does he love anyone?" "How does he feel about me?" "Is he a devout Immaculate?"). On a success, the Storyteller chooses and reveals one of the target's Intimacies that fits those criteria. If there is no Intimacy that does, the Storyteller should let the player know this.

The read intentions action is not a form of magic. The character using it is analyzing the target's words and behavior to get a better feel for his motives and Intimacies, and the Storyteller should use common sense in deciding how much information can be gleaned from a character's behavior and appearance. You might deduce that a young princeling is in love from a look of longing in his eyes or a wistful sigh, but discerning his paramour's identity might be impossible unless she's physically present or if he's carrying some evidence of her identity.

Finally, a character who is unaware he's being observed suffers a -2 penalty to his Guile.

### Apearance

While the Appearance Attribute may be rolled as part of social actions, it also has another function in social influence, granting a bonus against weak-willed characters.

Those of low Resolve are more easily impressed and awed by striking, beautiful individuals, or easily intimidated by the profoundly ugly (see the Hideous Merit, p. 162).

If a character's Appearance rating is higher than his target's Resolve, then he gains a dice bonus on all instill and persuasion attempts against that individual equal to the difference. Thus, a character with Appearance 5 attempting to use a persuade action on an individual with Resolve 3 would gain a +2 bonus. This comparison is made before any bonuses to Resolve are factored in.

If addressing a group (p. 220), compare Appearance to the average Resolve of the group (usually 2 or 3) to determine any appropriate bonus.

### Resisting Influence Rolls

The base difficulty for an influence roll is always the Resolve rating of the character targeted by the roll. On a failed roll, the character is unimpressed or unmoved by whatever argument or offer was made. On a successful roll, the target is persuaded or moved by your words.

### Spending Willpower

Even if a character's Resolve is overcome, he may still have

#### ROLEPLAYING: A REMINDER

There are a lot of rules here dealing with aggressively cultivating Intimacies, convincing people to do things, or tricking people into abandoning things they care about. These mechanical hooks exist to help facilitate persuasive character concepts, from tricksters to grand orators; moreover, we've crafted these rules to determine when it's fair for such characters to fail in their aims. These rules are not a replacement for roleplaying or organic character growth, however. Just because we've devoted a number of pages to rules about provoking Intimacy growth or loss, don't forget—your character can (and should) intensify, weaken, gain, and lose Intimacies based on the course of the story and character development, without anyone using any social actions to goad such change. Likewise, characters are constantly evaluating the words and deeds of those around them when deciding what to do, even when not targeted by persuade actions.

In short: Remember that these rules are there to supplement good old-fashioned roleplaying, not to cast a net over it or box it in.

an opportunity to deny the influence. If the influence is trying to change how he *feels*, such as by creating, destroying, or changing his Intimacies, he may spend a point of Willpower to:

- Stop a new Intimacy from being created. Although the character is moved, he just can't afford to invest himself in a new person or cause!
- Stop a Major or Defining Intimacy from being weakened. Even though the influence was convincing, the character just has too much invested in the Intimacy to give up now, even if he wants to!
- Reject a successful inspire action—the character uses his force of will to deny his swelling passions.

### Decision Points

Refusing successful influence to make the character *do something* is trickier. When a character fails to resist such influence with his Resolve, he enters into a special state called a Decision Point.

In the Decision Point, the player must choose an Intimacy and explain how it justifies resisting that specific influence. The Intimacy he chooses must be of equal or greater intensity than the Intimacy which supported the influence roll, and it **can't** be the one that strengthened his Resolve against the roll in the first place—the influence already overcame that particular source of reluctance when it beat his Resolve, after all.

If those requirements are met, and if the Storyteller accepts the player's argument for why one of his Intimacies would make him reject the influence, then the character may spend one Willpower point to resist the influence roll. Otherwise, resistance is impossible.

As an example Decision Point, consider Son of Wolves, a Zenith Caste whose Resolve rating has just been overcome by the influence roll of Naya, a scheming Sidereal. The Sidereal seeks to turn him against his Circle (a serious task), and her persuade action is supported by Son of Wolves's Major Principle of belief in the Immaculate Faith, which manifests as a lingering and unshakable conviction that he and his fellow Solar Exalted are Anathema. Unless Son of Wolves can match this with an Intimacy of Major or Defining intensity, he will be powerless to defy the truth he hears in Naya's words. While he has a Defining Tie of loyalty towards his Circlemates, he already used that Intimacy to bolster his Resolve, rendering it unavailable in a Decision Point. Luckily, he also has a Major Principle of "I can't abide a traitor," owing back to a terrible betrayal he suffered long ago. His player

argues that this allows him not to betray his Circlemates even if they are Anathema. The Storyteller accepts this argument, and Son of Wolves is able to spend a point of Willpower to resist.

### Lengthy Debates

Sometimes after a character has spent Willpower in a Decision Point in order to reject influence, the initiate will return with a new or stronger argument. When this happens, the initiate is engaging the reset rules for social actions ("Retrying Social Actions," p. 221). If the *same* issue is being argued as a result, the target may **not** use an Intimacy which boosted his Resolve against the initial roll. After all, that logic was not enough to stop him from being forced into the Decision Point in the first place. To boost his Resolve against the initiate's second attempt, he must find another Intimacy to raise his Resolve—or use the one that allowed him to reject influence in the Decision Point. Remember that according to the rules of Decision Points, the Intimacy a character uses to raise his Resolve **cannot** be invoked in a Decision Point. This rule continues to apply throughout the story—as long as the

#### WHAT DOES INFLUENCE MEAN?

Social influence isn't some kind of mind control. The changes produced by successful influence rolls represent the way in which people can be affected by the opinions and attitudes of others. When a Zenith Caste prophet takes an instill action to convince a warrior-prince of the righteousness of the Unconquered Sun, he is making reasoned arguments or emotional appeals that the warlord will agree with, not brainwashing the prince into his cult.

Resisting influence means you're exerting effort to override your feelings or better judgment. You may be convinced by a person's argument or moved by his emotional appeal, but the stakes are too high and your idealism is too strong for you to back down. Alternately, an application of Resolve can be seen as rejecting an appealing or well-supported claim that contradicts one of your own strong beliefs (hello, Intimacies). However, a character need not strongly object to an idea to apply Resolve. She may just be uncertain about a course of action, wary of an unforeseen risk, or may simply hate the speaker despite his wisdom.

That said, Exalted does feature mind control and other forms of severe influence. This is always the province of powerful and dangerous magic, generally marked with the *psyche* keyword.

initiate can find new angles with which to demonstrate the rightness of her persuasion, she can cause her target to use up all of his valid excuses over the course of a story. When a character has no valid Intimacies with which to enter a Decision Point, beating his Resolve will finally convince him to agree with the initiate's arguments. Thus a prophet may soften the heart of a prince over time.

**Special note:** Because your Intimacies are the key to avoiding influence you absolutely cannot abide, it's important to spend a few moments thinking about good "safety net" Intimacies when making your character. For example, if the idea of your character violating his sworn oath is antithetical to how you imagine him, you probably want a Major or Defining Principle along the lines of "My word is my bond" or "Once I give my word, I never go back on it."

### Unacceptable Influence

There are limits on what can be achieved with social influence. No amount of charisma is sufficient to talk someone into suicide, or to convince a die-hard patriot to betray his cause. If a request is so antithetical to the nature and personality of its target that it cannot possibly succeed, it is said to be **unacceptable influence**. A character targeted by unacceptable influence may reject it outright without spending Willpower, even if his Resolve would not normally be high enough to defend against it. A *player* can still choose to have his character follow the course of action put forward by unacceptable influence, but only because he thinks it makes sense—the character cannot be coerced into doing it. Some powerful Charms and spells can also compel characters into bowing to unacceptable influence.

Unacceptable influence includes:

- Any instill action to strengthen or weaken an Intimacy which doesn't exploit an appropriately strong Intimacy to do so.

*Example:* A Deathlord's agent sits down next to a Solar in a teahouse and intimates that the Solar's Lunar companion is not to be trusted, but she gives no reasons—only dim intimations. The Solar has a Major Tie of trust toward the Lunar. Because the Abyssal exploits no Intimacies to support her suggestions, the Solar can ignore her attempt at weakening his Intimacy toward the Lunar.

- Any persuasion attempt which doesn't exploit an Intimacy strong enough to support the proposed task.

*Example:* A zealous Immaculate missionary attempts to convince the high priestess of Hamoji, great volcano god of the Wavecrest Archipelago, to abandon her life of

worship. This would be a life-changing task, and the priestess has no Defining Intimacies which would support the missionary's exhortations. As such, the priestess is free to reject the proposed influence at no cost, without the need of a Decision Point.

- Any bargain attempt which fails to offer a properly enticing incentive or threaten action which is insufficiently threatening.
- Any influence that would cause a character to kill himself, or to do something that he *knows* would result in his certain death.
- Any influence that would cause a character to completely abandon or end one of his Defining Intimacies is unacceptable. A farmer with a Defining Tie of love to his wife might be seduced by another person, but could not be convinced to abandon or murder his wife. A Solar with a Defining Principle of "I will win the allegiance of the sorceress Raksi" could not be convinced to kill her, as this would make fulfilling that goal impossible. Weakening a Defining Intimacy is still allowed, making it possible to first degrade an Intimacy from Defining to Major and then issue the otherwise unacceptable influence.

### NPCS AND WILLPOWER

NPCs don't have limitless reserves of Willpower to spend on resisting influence rolls. The average mortal has only a precious few points of Willpower at any given time, and even an Exalt is unlikely to empty his entire pool of Willpower without good cause. As a rule of thumb, most minor mortal characters won't spend Willpower to resist successful influence rolls—if every peasant, innkeeper, and hired goon is paying Willpower to defy the players' characters, it only bogs down the game.

For more significant or powerful characters, the Storyteller should base the decision to resist or not on the character's Intimacies—the higher the intensity of Intimacy that opposes the influence roll, the more likely the character is to resist. For example, a wandering Abyssal swordsman will almost always spend Willpower when his Defining Tie of love to his dead husband is opposed. However, against an influence roll that only opposes a Minor Principle of greed, he might conserve his Willpower if he believes he will need it for future conflicts. If an influence roll isn't opposed by any of the character's Intimacies, he's unlikely to resist it unless he has a pressing reason to do so.

- Any seduction attempt that violates a character's sexual orientation (as defined by the player, or by the Storyteller in the case of Storyteller characters) is unacceptable.
- Certain Charms allow characters to define special kinds of influence that they may treat as unacceptable.

## Social Complications

A number of considerations may arise when winning friends and influencing people:

### One Target vs. Many Targets

Much of the time, an influence roll only affects one character. An envoy warns a prince of a coming war; a smuggler bribes a magistrate to overlook his cargo; a hedonistic noble seduces an innocent farm boy. Sometimes, however, a character may wish to make a single influence roll against multiple characters. He can choose to target only a select group, or to apply the influence roll against anyone who hears him. However, people find it easier to ignore arguments that are not directly addressed to them.

### **Whenever an influence roll targets more than one character, it suffers a -3 penalty.**

Because the different targets of an influence roll can have varying Resolve ratings, the success or failure of the action is determined separately for each target. A Dawn Caste who rolls four successes to threaten a mercenary cadre into backing down from a fight might successfully intimidate the rank and file with Resolve 2, but not the unit's God-Blooded leader with Resolve 5.

### Written Social Actions

The written word can be used to persuade or manipulate others just as easily as speech or whisper. Characters who wish to convey influence through a letter, pamphlet, book, or other written work do so as a written social action. The time taken to create a written missive varies based on the form and length of the work. The Storyteller decides how long it takes, with a minimum time of five minutes in most cases. Likewise, the time needed to read the missive is decided by the Storyteller based on length.

The Ability used when rolling for a written social action is always Linguistics. When a character reads the message, compare the successes rolled for it to his Resolve to determine if it succeeds, as with normal influence rolls. Written social actions can be written to apply either against a single intended reader or against anyone who reads them, with the usual effects for targeting multiple characters.

### Gestures and Body Language

When a character attempts to communicate through gestures, appearance, and body language alone, the target of such silent influence adds +2 to his Resolve. This is normally only useful for attempts at intimidation or seduction, but players are free to be creative and think up with other applications. Many things are impossible to communicate silently—no amount of hand-waving or quirked eyebrows can explain the intricacies of a First Age relic or the intricate politics of a Dynastic household. This penalty doesn't apply to inspire actions using dance.

### OVERTURNING INFLUENCE

Imagine this scenario—Rellus the Glorious Mantle of Dawn, warrior of the Dawn Caste, is speaking with his Lunar lover, who has a standing grudge against the Mask of Winters. She persuades him to round up his Marukani followers and ride against the Mask's armies, using a persuade action. Upon hearing of his forces mobilizing, a Sidereal approaches Rellus and attempts to convince him that his planned war is ill-omened, and that he would be better off seeking allies rather than taking on the Deathlord alone. Rellus has already been persuaded—how to resolve this situation?

Characters in the world of **Exalted** are generally loath to abandon a course of action one they've set themselves upon it, and so overturning existing social influence with additional social influence is difficult. First, a character who has already been persuaded to do something receives a +3 bonus to his Resolve against any influence that would cause him to abandon or disregard that persuasion. This bonus stacks with the Intimacy bonus from a relevant Intimacy. Second, a petitioner who wishes to overturn existing persuasive influence must spend a point of Willpower before making her argument and roll. So, in the above example, the Sidereal must spend a point of Willpower to impress upon Rellus the dire urgency of the omens she has foreseen—and Rellus's Resolve is automatically at +3 to resist her influence, **before** Intimacies come into play.

If the contradictory persuasion succeeds, the targeted character may use a Decision Point to resist it by citing a conflicting Intimacy, *without* spending a point of Willpower to initiate the Decision Point—it's easier to stand by a hard-fought decision than to abandon it and reverse yourself. Conversely, if he wants to abandon his present course of action and accept the new influence, the character must *spend* a point of Willpower and cite the Intimacy which was used to change his mind.

It's possible to use these rules to model several reversals—if Rellus were to listen to the Sidereal and order his forces to stand down, his Lunar lover would have to spend a

**SEDUCTION**

The Exalted are often driven by their desires, inflamed by passions that span the centuries. Many Chosen while away the years in pursuit of torrid love affairs and whirlwind romances. With some of the Chosen, seduction is an art form, and with others it's an instinct. In the social influence system, seduction can be accomplished a number of ways. The seducer might rely on the instill action—through suggestion, innuendo or poesy, she plants a seed of interest in the mind of her love interest. She may then use the persuade action, insinuating herself into the comforts of her target. Others may find it easier to simply attract interest at social gatherings, through seductive gestures or facial expressions, perhaps accentuating their most provocative clothing or their favorite features in order to draw attention. In these and many other cases, the character need not use the instill action, and if a persuade action is required, it can often be perfunctory—characters who respond to such signals are usually eager to explore their significance. Generally, when the seducer's target is already interested in sex, no roll is needed. Seduction can also be accomplished through the bargain action, in a roundabout way. The Empress herself once wrote of her frustrating attraction to the "boorish" Brem Marst, whose wealth drew her as surely as his handsome brow.

**THE RED RULE**

In almost all aspects, Exalted doesn't mechanically distinguish between Storyteller characters and those the players control. Here's the exception:

A player-controlled character can only be seduced or otherwise put in a sexual situation if the player is okay with it. Otherwise, any such attempt fails automatically.

This is completely up to the player's discretion, and they can waive this rule's protection if they want their character to be seduced, if they think it would improve the story, or for whatever other reason. This is entirely up to the player, and on an attempt-by-attempt basis—waiving the rule once doesn't void your ability to call on it later against the same character, or even in the same scene. If no one in your group ever invokes this rule, that's also fine—but players don't have to watch their character put into a sexual situation they're not comfortable with.

Groups that feel comfortable in doing so should allow player characters the full range of their seductive prowess when entangled with Storyteller-controlled characters... although remember that the Storyteller is also a player and their boundaries should be respected.

Willpower point to convince him to ignore the Sidereal and follow her original advice! However, the Lunar can't use the same argument she did the first time around—that has already been rejected, and so she'll have to come up with a new tack, playing off of a different Intimacy to get Rellus to change his mind again.

These conditions remain in place for one story after a character has been influenced to take a course of action—once the next story begins, any lingering influence can be overturned with an ordinary persuasion, bribery, or intimidation attempt.

**Retrying Social Actions**

When a scheming courtier's bid to gain the trust of a prince goes awry or a young lover fails to seduce the object of her desires, they cannot simply repeat their old arguments and expect a different result. Instead, they must change the situation in a way that allows them to try again. Below are retry conditions for each of the social actions. Once this condition has been met, the character may attempt to retry.

For example, Shan Min, an Eclipse Caste merchant, tries to win the favor of a barbarian warlord with an offering of steel weapons and horses—a bargain action. However, he fails his (Charisma + Presence) roll. The warlord still takes the weapons, but refuses to ally with Shan Min. As described below, he cannot retry the roll until he can make a better offer to the warlord, such as an armory of enchanted weapons or a jade daiklave. Having done so, he can make a new roll, and win the warlord's tribe over to his cause.

The Storyteller should use common sense in adjudicating retry conditions. Once Shan Min has failed his bargain roll, he couldn't simply send one of his circlemates to offer the same bribes to the warlord in hope of a second chance—even though that character didn't make the initial roll, common sense dictates that he must still bring a bigger bribe to win over the chieftain.

**Instill:** If you fail an instill action, you must present your target with substantially greater evidence for whatever you are trying to convince him of before you can retry. A Solar who wishes to make the people of a small farming village trust him might need to defend them from a pred-

atory god or greedy Imperial tax collector before they will accept him. A strategist who fails to convince a general that a war with An-Teng would be a disaster would need to bring back intelligence reports that prove his point before he will be heard. A suitor trying to win a prince's affection would need to present a much grander display of love.

Alternately, you can try again after the current story has ended.

**Persuade:** There are three ways to retry a failed persuade action. One is by making a different argument, playing on a different Intimacy of equal or greater strength. Another is to wait and try again during the next story. The final route is to wait until the Intimacy that supported your influence roll has been strengthened to a higher level of intensity—either by using a different social action to strengthen it, or by waiting until the character has strengthened it himself—and then try again.

**Bargain:** You can only retry a failed bargain roll by making a new offering that's substantially greater than your previous one. If a peasant is unswayed by a gift equivalent to a day's wage, then perhaps he will listen to a week's or month's pay. A courtier who rejects an offer of marriage to a minor noble might be convinced by a wedding contract with a young Dragon-Blood.

**Threaten:** You can only retry a failed Threaten roll if you significantly escalate the threat used to coerce your target. A torturer might progress from light cuts to broken bones

to potentially lethal torture. A scheming eunuch who fails to cow a court rival with the threat of revealing an illicit affair might threaten to frame him for treason. A Solar might flare his anima banner, revealing that the threat behind his menacing glare is far, far greater than his foes first realized.

**Inspire:** You must wait until the scene has ended to retry an inspire action.

**Read Intentions:** Once a Read Intentions action has failed, it can't be retried on the same target for the rest of the scene.

### Social Actions in Combat

All of the social actions described above work normally during combat, although within the dictates of common sense—you can certainly shout out a fast, desperate offer to triple a mercenary's pay if he'll switch sides in the midst of battle (a bargain attempt), or even confess your hopeless love for the beautiful Abyssal trying to take your head (an instill action), but trying to engage in complex contract negotiations in the space of a single turn is probably absurd.

All social actions are considered combat actions, and may be placed in a flurry. They're resisted as normal. One special case is worth independent consideration: surrender.

Pleading for mercy can convince enemies to accept your surrender rather than killing you. This might be a per-

### PLAYING TO THE AUDIENCE

Sometimes, a player will attempt to simply sway a mass of people with social influence, rather than appealing to any one character or specific group. While a player character or significant NPC should always be allowed to resist influence with her Resolve, if all the characters in the audience are effectively minor, unimportant characters who would not normally be given their own mechanical definition, the Storyteller can simply treat the entire audience as a single entity with a single Resolve rating.

Most mortal audiences will have a Resolve of 1 or 2, while audiences of exceptional mental resilience, such as ascetic monks or spiritually powerful beings, may have a Resolve of 3 or 5 (though there are few cases when it would be appropriate to lump magical creatures into an audience) The Storyteller can assign Intimacies to the audience based on the general feelings of the crowd—an audience composed

of Gem citizens is likely to have a Tie of patriotism towards Gem, for example.

Generally, when the rules for targeting an audience are brought into play, the Storyteller shouldn't bother with the rules for rejecting influence with Willpower, but instead define what percentage of the audience is convinced, usually based on how it aligns with their Intimacies. This might range from the entire crowd, if the influence aligns with a Defining Intimacy, to only a sizable minority, if it opposes a Defining Intimacy.

Any character who has her own individual traits always resists social influence using her own Resolve and Willpower, even if she's a member of an audience being targeted by such an action. In the case of magic that specifically targets an audience, such characters are treated as separate targets, rather than automatically following the actions of the crowd.

suade action, or even a bargain (“My family will pay a great ransom for my safe return!”). On a successful roll, your enemy will allow you to surrender, taking you captive or letting you retreat rather than killing you. In most cases, this doesn’t require an Intimacy to exploit at all—letting a defeated stranger run away is no great hardship. In some cases, it might require exploiting a Minor Intimacy (when the enemy has some particular reason to want you dead rather than merely captured or vanquished), or even in extraordinary cases a Major Intimacy (such as a Solar trying to surrender to the Wyld Hunt—a course we don’t generally recommend, since the master of the Hunt is likely to have a valid Intimacy to cite in the resulting Decision Point as grounds to deny you mercy.)

## Crime and Investigation

### Larceny

#### Conceal Evidence

A character who wishes to hide an item or cover her tracks after a crime can do so with a conceal evidence action, rolling (Intelligence + Larceny) as a dramatic action that takes fifteen minutes. The Storyteller should note how many successes she rolls, and apply it as the difficulty of any case scene actions used to search that area. To save time, the Storyteller does not need to roll for evidence concealed by NPCs, but can simply assume the difficulty is equal to that character’s Larceny rating.

#### Disguise

A character can roll (Intelligence + Larceny) to create a disguise that masks her true identity. Doing so requires about five minutes spent in costuming, applying make-up, and getting in character. She may take penalties on the roll if her fake identity is of a different sex, race, or body type—in general, a -2 penalty for each that applies. On a successful roll, the disguise works. Anyone who interacts with the disguised character for around five minutes or more is entitled to a (Perception + Awareness) roll to notice that the character is in disguise and get a sense of what she really looks like. The difficulty of this roll is equal to the number of successes rolled on the initial (Intelligence + Larceny) roll.

Creating a disguise that specifically imitates another person uses the same rules, but is more involved. The character takes a -4 penalty on the roll, but reduces it by -1 for each week she spends observing the person she wishes to imitate. In addition, if an observer who knows the person she’s impersonating sees her acting “out of character” then he may make an additional (Perception

+ Awareness) roll to see through the disguise, and receive 1-3 bonus dice based on the severity of the lapse.

#### Lockpicking

Picking locks or bypassing other mechanical security devices requires a successful (Dexterity + Larceny) roll. Most mundane locks have a base difficulty of 1-2. Those found in powerful manses or First Age ruins might range as high as difficulty 3 or 4. Lockpicks are an obvious necessity for this action. A character can attempt to make do with improvised tools or unorthodox picking methods, which adds +1 to the difficulty of the roll.

#### Pickpocket

Stealing an item from another character’s person is a (Dexterity + Larceny) roll opposed by the target’s (Perception + Awareness). If the thief’s roll succeeds, he is able to retrieve the item without his victim noticing. If it fails, not only does he not steal the item, but his victim realizes that he was trying to steal from her. It is impossible to pickpocket items that are in active use by a character without magic, nor is it generally possible to steal clothing, armor, or any other item too bulky to feasibly remove without its wearer noticing. These rules can also be used to steal unattended items from a store without the shopkeeper noticing, or to perform simple feats of prestidigitation that seem like magic to those who fail their rolls.

### Investigation

#### Case Scene

A character can use a case scene action to search an area for anything of interest that might be hidden: an incriminating letter hidden in a vizier’s chambers, the concealed lever that disarms a First Age deathtrap, or a cache of con-

#### CONTRADICTORY INTIMACIES

Can a character have contradictory Intimacies? Can you love someone, and also fear them, or even hate them? Can you admire the Scarlet Empress and hate the Realm she’s built? Can you trust Panther (a former gladiator) as a friend, while distrusting gladiators and other men who live by violence?

Absolutely! Characters frequently hold contradictory feelings close to their hearts—it’s part of the complexity of good drama. In the case of contradictory Intimacies and social influence, these conflicting Intimacies act upon a character’s Resolve just the same as in any other situation where influence is supported by one Intimacy and opposed by another.

traband on a smuggler's ship. The character's player rolls (Perception + Investigation) as a dramatic action that takes fifteen minutes of searching. The base difficulty is determined by the Storyteller, and the conceal evidence action (p. 224) may be used to increase it. On a success, the character finds anything hidden.

The case scene action can also be used to uncover clues when pursuing a mystery or solving a crime. The character must actually be in a location relevant to his case in order to do so, and must have at least some idea of what he's trying to find. A successful roll uncovers a piece of information at the site that will somehow advance the investigation, allowing him to proceed to a new scene. The Storyteller should narrate the character's deductions, rather than just giving him the clue itself. Instead of telling a player "You find a smear of yellow mud," tell him "You find a smear of yellow mud—whatever did this must have come from the docks!"

### Profile Character

The profile character action can be used to read people, examining them for any clues in their posture, demeanor, or appearance. After spending at least five minutes interacting with or observing the person he wishes to profile, the character's player rolls (Perception + Investigation) against her Guile (p. 214). On a success, the Storyteller should give the player a brief rundown of basic facts about the character that aren't immediately obvious—social class, occupation, where he was an hour ago, or similar. This isn't mind reading or magical divination, but it will allow a character to get a basic idea of what someone does, and possibly notice some incongruous details.

The profile character action can also be used to look for clues, as described in the case scene action. As long as the character is observing someone involved in the mystery or crime he is pursuing, a successful roll will give him a clue that will advance his investigation.



## Leadership

Even the most modest Exalt tends to accumulate power as a rock gathers moss; those with the ambition to rule find little difficulty in amassing followers and authority. The challenge is in ruling well and holding power once gained. The following rules help to tell stories about Exalts dedicated to the leading of companies, cities, cults, and empires.

### What Do Leaders Do?

Aside from enjoying the perks of authority such as luxury and respect, leaders conceive of ambitions and delegate the work necessary to realize them. In other words, they *undertake projects*, using their available assets and resources to push these projects to completion.

### What is a Project?

A project, for the purpose of these rules, is any action a leader causes the group she leads to undertake with the aim of achieving a particular goal. Projects might be to impose law on a newly-conquered and rebellious city, to raise up a manse on a powerful demesne, to establish a trade agreement with a foreign nation or the Guild, to seed a rival city with spies, to recruit new members into a cult, or any other task. A successful project grants the character who initiated it some form of measurable gain; this usually means obtaining a new story Merit, raising the rating of an existing story Merit, or procuring some advantage relevant to the current story (such as uncovering the location of a lost First Age tomb, recovering a valuable sorcerous manual, or discovering a rival nation's state secrets).

### Step One: Is the Project Possible?

Before determining the success or failure of a project, the first step is for the Storyteller to determine if the project can even be attempted. Does the character have the necessary resources to undertake the project? If so, then the project begins. If not, then why not? What is she missing?

Let's say the character is trying to raise a manse. There are a number of reasons this project might not be feasible. Is she short of the money necessary to pay laborers to construct the manse, having beggared herself purchasing the construction materials? Does she lack the necessary architectural and geomantic expertise to design blueprints for a manse in the first place? Unless the character is attempting a *wildly* impossible project (such as overthrowing the Tri-Khan of Chiaroscuro armed only with the loyal but otherwise unremarkable staff of a dockside teahouse), the Storyteller should inform the player of what her char-

acter lacks to make the project possible. It remains up to the ingenuity of the character to resolve this deficiency—in the case of the would-be manse-builder lacking Resources, the character might try to start a different project to increase her Resources rating, or might raid neighboring settlements to obtain slave labor.

Finally, there is the all-important element of time. How long would the project take? Is there enough time to get things done? The ruler of a mighty nation blessed with wealth, material, workers, and docks cannot construct a fleet of warships in time to stymie an invasion by sea if he tries to implement his project two days before the invading fleet arrives. This element of time must always be considered, especially when there are other ongoing projects tying up crucial resources and manpower.

### Step Two: Does the Project Succeed?

After determining viability, the player doesn't need to roll anything to see if the project goes forward—if she has the assets necessary, her subordinates carry out her orders.

By default, projects succeed if undertaken properly. If you have the necessary assets, expertise, manpower, and enough time at your disposal, then the normal result of issuing an order or initiating a project is that it succeeds. But sometimes projects are threatened by *failure conditions*—complications that threaten to ruin the project.

When do failure conditions appear? Storyteller, this is your call, with the rule of thumb being: a failure condition only happens when its appearance would make the story more interesting. If you don't have a cool idea for complications in a ruler's attempt to negotiate a trade agreement with a neighboring nation, the negotiations resolve successfully and a trade agreement is signed. If you have an idea for a story wherein an agent of the Realm attempts to poison the neighboring nation's ruler against dealings with the player's character, thus threatening the negotiations—that's a cool story idea, and a good reason to present a failure condition.

Another good rule of thumb is that the more the ruler stands to gain from a project's successful resolution, the more likely it is that a failure condition will be tense and interesting, and thus should happen. (Also it's more likely that there will be parties opposed to the project's success. Indeed, players' characters might even create failure conditions for their Circlemates' projects due to infighting, jealousy, or hostile social influence!)

Failure conditions can be almost anything—a project to construct a fleet of warships could be threatened by

### COMMON SOCIAL PENALTIES

As mentioned near the beginning of this chapter (p. 188), penalties can and should frequently be used to reflect difficult or awkward social situations. While this list is by no means complete, here are some of the most common social penalties:

A -1 penalty might represent: Showing up at a formal affair in improper attire, addressing a character with improper honorifics or titles, committing a minor cultural faux pas.

A -3 penalty might represent: Showing up at a formal affair in offensive attire, addressing character with open rudeness, giving sketchy or shifting justifications for requests,

committing a major cultural faux pas, giving a performance with a musical instrument you're unfamiliar with, trying to convince someone to do something he doesn't know how to do, trying to convince someone to believe something despite significant evidence it's false.

A -5 penalty might represent: Showing up at a formal affair naked and covered in blood, trying to get favors from a character you are openly antagonizing, trying to convince someone to do something when he knows you're lying, breaking a major law or cultural taboo through your social behavior, trying to convince someone to do something dangerous that he doesn't know how to do, trying to convince someone to believe something blatantly and obviously false.

sabotage, resource shortages, or even by a hurricane smashing the docks and ships to splinters. A manse's construction might be threatened by any number of mundane problems, or even by the sudden Exaltation of one of the slaves constructing it. The point is, a failure condition challenges the ruler instituting the project to respond to it.

### Step Three: Responding to Failure Conditions

Once a failure condition appears, it has to be dealt with somehow, or else the project will fail. Advisors can provide counsel on how to best handle a crisis when rulers aren't certain of how to proceed. In courts with multiple advisors, this is resolved through the social influence system—a crisis is a ripe time for ambitious members of the court to attempt to bend a ruler's ear and suggest solutions which will both salvage the project and help advance their own agendas.

Contacts and advisors can also help the character learn more about the nuances of the failure condition before she attempts to address it, and knowledge is almost always helpful in resolving a crisis. Say a ruler's manse-construction project is being disrupted by hauntings. While there are a number of ways to deal with ghosts, knowing *who is haunting the site* and *why* will give the ruler a major edge in dealing with the situation properly. Armed with knowledge of the cause of the hauntings, a ruler who is about to hire expensive exorcists might, instead, be able to resolve the issue simply by re-interring bones disturbed by the construction project. A ruler whose city is plagued by a mad prophet would do well to discover that the figure is one of the Abyssal Exalted before trying to have her soldiers eject the man from her city—otherwise she's going to have a mad prophet *and* slaughtered soldiers to deal with.

Most often, a ruler will use her Merits to address the failure condition: the character draws on her Resources, calls in

favors from Allies, deploys Followers with skills well-suited to the situation, and so on. A leader encountering difficulties in negotiations with a neighboring city-state might cite her high Resources rating to offer lavish bribes to officers of the foreign court, securing their secret loyalty; or she might deploy a band of skilled assassin Followers to murder an agent interfering with her negotiations. Finally, the character might attempt to address failure conditions directly with her own Abilities and Charms, or through mighty sorcery. This is often an attractive option, given the prowess of the Exalted, but a leader off personally resolving problems may be neglecting other matters close to home.

### Step Four: Dealing With the Result

After the leader has implemented a solution, there are two questions to be addressed: Did her solution resolve the failure condition? And regardless whether or not the project succeeded, what are the consequences of her solution?

#### Success and Failure

If a character's response to the failure condition is inadequate, or if he's convinced to take no action at all, then the project fails. The leader doesn't get whatever she wanted to get out of the project, and assets expended are wasted. Trying again may or may not be possible, depending on the circumstances—once more, time is important to consider. If there's no hard deadline for a project, its duration could be extended and the leader might try again, but this usually means allocating even more resources and assets to get the project back on track, which might stretch the organization thin.

If the leader's actions resolve the failure condition, or if there was no failure condition at all, then the project succeeds, and the leader gets what she was after—new or increased Merits, story advancement, or whatever else the project aimed to achieve.

This is fairly straightforward, but it's also not the only thing to consider when a project ends. The consequences of how the leader went about reacting to unexpected failure conditions can often have more far-reaching consequences than the success or failure of the project itself.

### Consequences and Complication

Complications can arise as a result of both failed *and* successful projects, generally as a result of reacting to failure conditions. The wise ruler carefully considers the consequences of the solutions she implements when faced with a problem—otherwise she may find that by solving a problem today, she stirs up much greater turmoil in her future.

Complications arise naturally from a leader's actions. There's no dice roll—it's up to the Storyteller whether complications appear. As a general rule, the more carefully and appropriately a situation is handled, the less likely it is that a negative complication will emerge afterwards; indeed, particularly skillful resolution may even turn a failure condition into an opportunity for greater profit or success than the project originally encompassed!

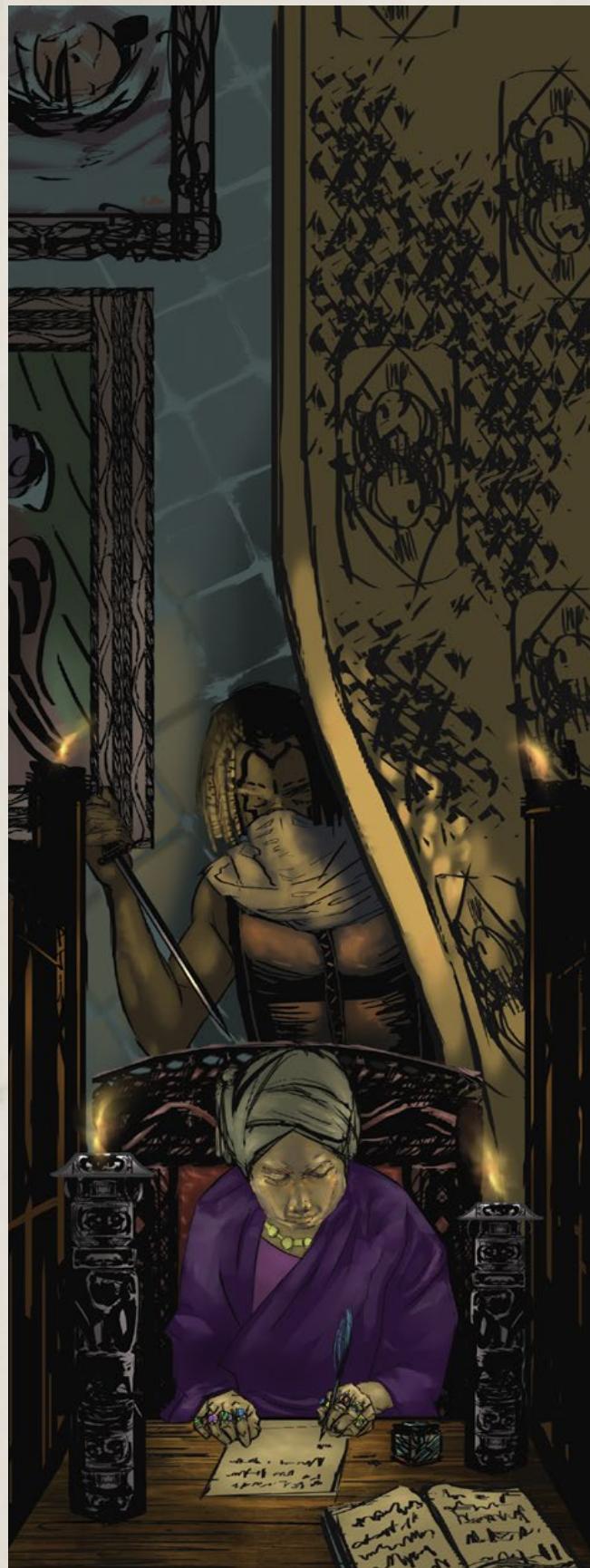
Examples of complications that might appear in the wake of an attempt to deal with a failure condition include, but are by no means limited to:

**Political unrest.** This often occurs when a leader implements solutions which may be efficacious, but which outrage the people or upset major elements of her own organization. Solving outbreaks of disease by burning entire plague-ridden districts to the ground may halt the spread of infection, but it is also likely to leave the people questioning their leader's humanity. Political unrest can also occur when a ruler addresses failure conditions personally (that is, with her Attributes, Abilities, and Charms) rather than using her assets, if doing so takes her away from her responsibilities for so long that her organization suffers as a result of neglect.

Political unrest makes it difficult to implement projects, radically increases the likelihood of failure conditions, and may lead to the erosion of Merits such as Influence or Contacts.

Left unchecked, political unrest can also lead to: Assassins, Enemies, War.

**Loss of assets.** This often occurs when a leader implements an ineffective solution due to lack of information, such as sending soldiers to fight an opponent they have no hope of defeating, or sending lavish bribes to an incorruptible priest-king. The expended resources are simply lost, and their associated Merit, if any, is depleted or vanishes. Loss of assets may also occur on successful projects,



of course—sometimes it's necessary to expend one asset to secure another. Seasoned rulers often try to cultivate re-usable assets such as Allies, Contacts, Followers, and Retainers for this reason—attempting to solve all problems through vast expenditures of wealth (in the form of Resources) or political capital (in the form of Influence or Backing) can quickly deplete any leader's strength.

**War.** This often occurs when a leader implements solutions which outrage or threaten a foreign power or rival organization. War can just as easily come from successful projects as unsuccessful ones; assassinations and violent solutions most often breed war, but successfully gaining control of limited regional resources can also provoke it. War is arguably the worst of consequences, as it can threaten the very survival of an organization.

War, if not resolved quickly, can lead to: Assassins, Enemies, Political Unrest.

**Enemies.** This often occurs when a project's success (or failure) directly harms some powerful individual who develops a grudge over it. Perhaps a leader ordered a Guild factor's son assassinated in order to secure undisputed access to a vital port; perhaps her decision to raze a hostile city-state with sorcery has earned her the undying hatred of an Exalt whose family perished in the conflagration; perhaps her ostentatious displays of wealth in resolving a dispute causes one of her ministers to covet her throne.

Enemies will work against the leader's interests when the opportunity presents itself, making failure conditions more common until they're dealt with somehow. Some enemies can be won over through social influence or bribery; others must be dispatched with force. Of course, incautiously disposing of one enemy can lead to the appearance of others...

Enemies, left to fester, could potentially lead to Assassins or War.

**Assassins.** This often occurs as the result of trying to undertake projects while suffering the un-addressed consequences of previous projects, such as political unrest or enemies. Assassins represent direct attempts to take a leader's life, or at the very least, remove her from power. These don't tend to threaten projects (although they can, if aimed at key personnel rather than the leader herself) so much as they threaten the leader's continued ability to draw breath, and are often confronted in combat scenes, when least expected. The Second Age is full of those willing to kill for money, and so resolving assassins is often contingent on resolving the pre-existing complication giving rise to them; simply killing the assassins may not be sufficient (although bribery might work).

**New Merits.** Sometimes complications are good. These often occur as a result of hands-on intervention, as the leader recognizes opportunities for gain outside the initial scope of the project and seizes them. New Merits often take the form of new Allies (won over through social influence), additional Resources (gained through quick and cunning action), or even Artifacts (seized from the battlefield).

## Environmental Rules

Not all heroic feats are directed at men or gods—sometimes Creation itself is the fodder for epic deeds or presents itself as a deadly obstacle. Sometimes the Chosen must bend or break the world before them and sometimes they must learn to become one with it

## Feats of Strength and Demolition

Sometimes the myth-hero narrative of **Exalted** turns to a certain kind of character—one who is physically mighty, drawing tremendous strength from iron will and iron thew. Such characters may call upon their gods, or the god within—their own tremendous Essence—to perform truly heroic feats of strength.

Feats of strength and feats of destruction are Strength + Athletics actions, with a difficulty determined by the chart below. Light objects can just be picked up—no roll is necessary to lift a sword or saddle. If you want to lift a boulder blocking a mountain pass, that's a feat of strength. If you want to kick down an iron-banded oak door, that's a feat of strength. **Characters must have a Strength rating of at least 3 to attempt a feat of strength**—such heroic endeavors are ill-suited to the merely average. Extraordinarily impressive feats of strength may require even higher Strength minimums—see the chart on page 231.

In the case of feats of strength to destroy an object, using a tool that would logically assist in breaking the thing (such as using a sledgehammer to smash a statue, or an axe to break down a door) adds one automatic success to the attempt. If the tool is an artifact weapon, add two.

In combat, it's generally a good idea (and a lot of fun) to ignore these rules and allow characters to use stunts to automatically break things, as long as those things aren't tactically significant to the battle or important to the story, and so long as it's within the scope of what the character might be able to accomplish. Let characters get knocked through doors in a hail of splinters, slash down stone lamp-posts with their daiklaves, and crack walls by hurling opponents into them. Also, you can allow feats of strength to automatically succeed if the character's dice pool is

three times the difficulty or more—a character with Strength 5, Athletics 5 really shouldn’t ever fail to break a board or lift a man.

Note that even though the Exalted may be able to exercise divine strength beyond the limits of mortal men, they’re still constrained by their size—no matter how strong a Solar is, he still can’t uproot a mountain, because there’s no way for him to get leverage on something that big. At best, he could tear loose great boulders, or rip open a seam in a cliff face with his hands.

Finally, while these rules establish a baseline, Storytellers are encouraged to modify them to represent particularly dramatic situations or according to common sense. For example, a Solar hero might attempt to hold up a collapsing building while her Circlemates rescue the mortals trapped within. The Storyteller decides to model this as an extended (Strength + Athletics) roll with an interval of one minute and a terminus of 5, but no goal number. At each interval, the Solar must successfully match the given difficulty to hold up the collapsing building, with failure causing the Lawgiver to take bashing damage and the terminus to decrease by 1, and a botch signaling the complete collapse of the structure. At the action’s terminus, the Solar takes even more damage, and then the feat begins anew with a higher difficulty. This adaptation creates a tense and dramatic rescue scene, highlighting the Solar’s incredible strength and dedication. In another, simpler example, a martial arts tournament challenges its competitors to break various hard substances (such as wood, blocks of ice, and finally stones) with their fists to prove their fitness to compete. Since this is a test of a character’s Martial Arts prowess, it becomes appropriate to substitute (Strength + Martial Arts) in place of (Strength + Athletics).

## Survival

Most of the time, it can be assumed characters traveling or camping in the wild have taken sensible precautions to keep from starving, dehydrating, or being gnawed on by wildlife. When characters *haven’t* prepared for being thrust into the wilderness, or are trying to forge their way through particularly hostile environments, a simple ([Intelligence or Wits] + Survival) roll is sufficient to take care of the necessities of life—food, water, shelter. The difficulty is, as usual, determined by the harshness of the environment; trying to provide for a handful of unskilled individuals in addition to oneself is likely to raise the difficulty.

It’s generally not fun to outright kill players’ characters in response to failed Survival rolls; instead, treat failure as opportunity to introduce interesting plot complica-

tions. Perhaps the only apparent source of fresh water is a mountain pool... right at the mouth of a tyrant lizard’s lair. Perhaps a poorly-weathered sandstorm injures a hired guide, or inadequate shelter results in disease-carrying insects descending on the travelers. Perhaps hostile locals appear once the characters have finally secured some game, to contest them for it.

## Tracking

Tracking (and avoiding trackers) is also a Survival action. Tracking is a contested action—(Wits + Survival) for the party attempting to cover their tracks, against (Perception + Survival) for the tracker. The terrain might inflict penalties on one party or the other, if it is particularly easy to track in, or to avoid leaving tracks in.

## Environmental Hazards

Sometimes you don’t have to worry about the creeping dangers of foraging, tracking, or finding shelter. Sometimes the world is trying to kill you outright—it’s unendurably cold, or scouring away your skin with a sandstorm, or everything is on fire. These are environmental hazards.

Environmental hazards are represented as areas that inflict damage on any character within them. They can generally be mitigated to some degree with a resistance roll, which characters are permitted every time an environmental hazard attempts to harm them. Perhaps the character is tough enough that the sweltering heat of the desert or numbing cold of the glacial tundra doesn’t faze him; perhaps he’s swift enough to dance through the maze of swinging blades in a manse’s trapped hallway—the exact roll used to try to mitigate the hazard is up to the Storyteller. (Stamina + Resistance) and (Dexterity + Dodge) are the most common, but (Wits + Survival) (for weathering extreme temperatures) or even (Strength + Athletics) (for holding open crushing traps) might be used in some situations. A character who succeeds at a mitigation roll manages to avoid injury, at least until the next roll.

Environmental hazards are presented with a damage value, an interval, and a difficulty to avoid or mitigate.

An environmental hazard’s damage is the number of dice rolled against characters subject to the hazard, as well as what kind of damage is being inflicted. This damage ignores soak and hardness, and is applied directly to the character’s health track, like a decisive attack.

An environmental hazard’s interval denotes how often its damage is applied. Some hazards, like numbing cold, kill characters slowly, while others are more immediately lethal,

**Successes      Example Feat****Strength 3+ feats**

- 1 Lift a full-grown man or an anvil. Break a pine board with a kick.
- 2 Tote a bale of cotton on one shoulder. Kick an oak door open.
- 3 Lift a mule. Break a sword over your knee.
- 4 Lift a full-grown warhorse. Bend an iron bar with both hands.

**Strength 5+ feats**

- 5 Lift an ox. Pull a fully laden wagon. Bend a horseshoe into a pretzel.
- 6 Throw a mule. Snap an axe haft over your knee. Kick an oak door to splinters.
- 7 Lift a boulder. Throw a full-grown warhorse.
- 8 Lift a rhinocerous. Snap iron manacles. Slowly bash through a brick wall.
- 9 Throw an ox. Twist a steel lock off a door with your bare hands. Kick down an iron-shod door.

**Strength 7+ feats**

- 10 Lift an elephant. Raise a drawbridge by hand. Punch through a brick wall.
- 11 Raise a locked portcullis by hand. Punch through the wooden gate of a fortress.
- 12 Pull a fully laden wagon from a sand trap. Rip iron bars out of their stone settings with one hand. Rip loose the stone supports of a city gate.
- 13 Lift a boulder with one hand. Tear down the pillars holding up a mighty temple.
- 14 Lift a tyrant lizard. Carry an enormous statue on one shoulder. Tip over a Guild wagon. Push open a locked and reinforced fortress gate.

**Strength 10+ feats**

- 15 Uproot a mighty tree. Slowly bash through the stone wall of a fortress.
- 16 Lift a mammoth. Hurl an elephant. Tear apart the welded steel bars of a portcullis.
- 17 Pull an entire caravan, chained cart-to-cart. Snap a mighty tree in half.
- 18 Lift a mighty tree with one hand. Crack a boulder in two. Rip a portcullis from its setting.
- 19 Throw a mammoth. Slowly push over a stone tower. Tow a boat away from a waterfall while on the shore.
- 20 Tear open the earth to create a crevasse. Smash through ten feet of solid stone. Lift a yeddim or outpull a team of them. Tow a boat away from a waterfall while swimming.

like fire or acid. If a hazard lists an interval of one round, it is applied to characters on their turn.

Finally, an environmental hazard's *difficulty* describes the difficulty of the roll to resist the hazard. A number of example environmental hazards are listed below:

Name	Damage/Interval	Difficulty
Acid bath	3L/round	5
Severe heat/cold	1B/hour	1
Bonfire	4L/round	5
Lava	6L/round	5
Severe sandstorm	1L/minute	3
Supernatural ice storm	2L/minute	3
The Silent Wind of Hell	4A/round	4

### Traps

Traps work the same way as environmental hazards, save that characters are allowed a (Perception + Awareness) roll to spot them before setting them off, and they *usually* take effect instantly, with no ongoing interval.

### Falling

Sometimes you don't need fire, acid, or the killing winds of Hell to put an end to a hero—gravity is more than able to do the job. For whatever reason, Exalts seem particularly prone to reckless acrobatics near long drops.

Rather than having to figure out exactly how many feet a character falls and how much damage that translates to, falls in **Exalted** are evaluated by how many range bands the character falls before hitting the ground.

Characters facing falling damage suffer a number of levels of automatic damage, as well as a number of dice of damage. All such damage ignores soak and hardness and is applied directly to a character's Health Track, as though it were a **decisive** attack. At longer ranges, Storytellers may adjust the damage suffered up and down at their discretion.

Fall	Damage Levels	Damage Dice
Close	None	None
Short	3B	5B
Medium	4L	7B
Long	5-7L	8-12L
Extreme	7-10L	10-14L

It's often a good idea to give characters who can come up with a good stunt an opportunity to make a roll to avoid or mitigate a deadly drop—perhaps they manage to land on something softer than the unforgiving earth, or stab a dagger into a ship's sails to slow themselves down before impact.

### Deprivation

Exalts and mortals both share the basic necessities of life—air, water, and food. A character will suffocate or drown after (Stamina) minutes without air, die of dehydration after (Stamina) days without water, and perish from starvation after (Stamina) weeks without food.

Characters suffer a -3 penalty to all actions after (Stamina) days without food, as well as in their final hours without water.

Characters undergoing heavy exertion (such as combat) or who didn't manage to get a deep breath before having their air cut off can drown much faster than those who are holding their breath while undergoing normal exertion (such as diving). A character who is being forcibly drowned, or who is engaging in combat underwater, will perish after (Stamina x 2) turns without air.

### Poison

Whether it is a serpent's venom, an assassin's weapon, or the distilled malevolence of a Demon Prince, there are ten thousand poisons to be found throughout the world of Creation. Mighty as the Exalted may be, even they can be laid low by such means.

In **Exalted**, a poison is treated as a debilitating status effect that deals damage to a character over an extended period of time. Each poison has four main statistics:

- **Damage/Interval**, the amount of damage that the poison deals at each interval of its duration. For example, a poison with a Damage/Interval of 1L/round deals one die of lethal damage to its victim on each round he suffers from it (soak and Hardness are never applied against damage from poison). Characters cannot naturally heal the damage dealt by a poison while that poison's duration is still in effect. Despite the name of this trait, some poisons may not damage the victim's Initiative or health track directly, instead draining Willpower, Essence, or some other resource—but these are generally the exception.

Note that most poisons that have an interval short enough to recur multiple times throughout a combat deal Initiative damage, rather than bashing or lethal damage. In combat, poison damage is rolled at the end of a round, after all characters have acted. While a character is in Initiative Crash, Initiative poisons instead apply their damage directly to the character's health track—usually as lethal damage, although some poisons may deal bashing damage, as noted in their description.

- **Duration**, the base duration that the poison lasts. When characters roll (Stamina + Resistance) to resist a poison, their rolled successes will be subtracted from this value to determine the actual time the poison lasts.

- **Penalty**, a penalty that is applied to all actions the character takes while poisoned.

- **Vector**, the usual means by which the poison is contracted. Common vectors include damage (for weapons that can be applied to poison), touch, inhalation, and ingestion. Poisoning someone with an envenomed weapon requires a successful **decisive** attack.

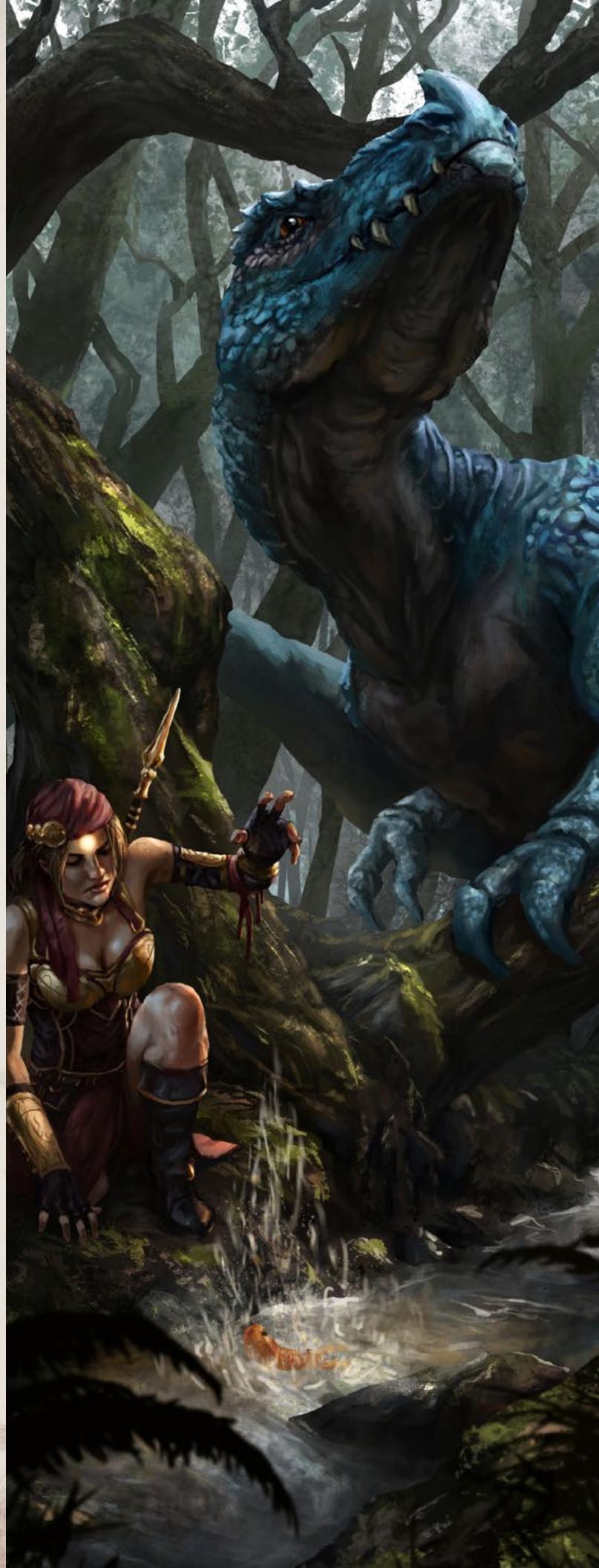
When a character is first exposed to a poison—whether he is cut with an envenomed blade, inhales noxious fumes, or eats a poisoned meal—he rolls (Stamina + Resistance). Each success rolled subtracts one unit (rounds, minutes, etc.) from the duration of the poison. The Exalted and other supernatural beings can reduce the duration of a poison down to zero; mortals can, at best, reduce the duration to half its base value, rounded up. At each interval of the poison's duration, the Storyteller rolls its damage, with each success inflicting one level/point of the appropriate type of damage (non-standard damage, such as Essence or Willpower loss, is not rolled, but subtracted directly from the character's resources).

Multiple doses of the same poison stack their durations—if a character is already suffering from arsenic poisoning, consuming a new dose will simply add to the length of the preexisting condition.

*Example:* While wandering in the warped forests of the Eastern Wyld, Illustrious Aya finds herself ambushed by a raksha who wields a flail of biting coral snakes. As he attacks her, she is exposed to snake venom, and reflexively rolls (Resistance + Stamina) to reduce its duration. She only rolls two successes, for a total duration of one round. On that round, the Storyteller rolls two dice, and deals one point of Initiative damage to Aya for each success rolled.

## Disease

In a world of capricious gods, restless dead, and nameless horrors baying at the edges of Creation, common disease still numbers among the greatest enemies of mankind. Cholera breeds in unclean water; lepers wrap their misshapen bodies in rags as their living flesh rots; plagues wipe entire villages out of existence. The gift of Exaltation makes the Chosen immune to the worst perils of disease—they suffer no risk of death from any sickness, save perhaps from extremely potent magical diseases.



Name	Damage/Interval	Duration	Penalty	Vector
Arrow Frog Venom	3i/round (L in Crash)	5 rounds	-2	Damage or ingestion
Arsenic	2L/day	7 days	-0	Ingestion
Curare	1i/round (B in Crash)	10 rounds	-2	Damage
Hemlock	2L/hour	5 hours	-4	Ingestion
Snake Venom	2i/round (L in Crash)	3 rounds	-3	Damage
Yozi Venom	1L/minute	10 minutes	-5	Damage

However, this does not mean they have nothing to fear.

In **Exalted**, a disease is treated as a debilitating status effect that progresses in severity over time. Each disease has three main statistics:

- **Virulence**, the difficulty which characters must overcome to avoid contracting the disease.
- **Morbidity**, the difficulty which characters must overcome to keep their symptoms from worsening.
- **Interval**, the duration of time after which a character must roll when to see if the disease's effects intensify.

The progress of a sickness is analogous to the increasing intensity of Intimacies—a disease first begins as a minor symptom, then progresses to a major symptom, and finally to a defining symptom. While the actual symptoms of each disease vary, **Exalted** treats them as things to be roleplayed by the player of the diseased character, rather than attempting a realistic model of real world sickness. As such, the following three stages are the same for all diseases:

• **Minor Symptom**: While the character has felt the onset of the disease's symptoms, they have not yet begun to impair his ability to function. It is sufficient for his player to simply play out the uncomfortable effects of the disease in game, with no mechanical penalties. If the Storyteller feels that the player has not done so, he may deduct a point of Willpower from the character up to once per session, to represent a general malaise.

• **Major Symptom**: The disease has progressed to the point of a serious problem. Once per session, the Storyteller may declare any action that the diseased character takes to be an automatic botch, describing how their symptoms flare up to impede their action. Alternatively, he may instead subtract a point of Willpower from the diseased character, as with minor symptoms—this option is primarily for sessions when an opportune moment for a botch never comes up, or if the Storyteller forgets until the end of the session.

• **Defining Symptom**: The disease defines the character's lifestyle, interfering in almost everything he does. Now, the Storyteller may declare an automatic botch once per *scene*, rather than once per session, a penalty that may render the character largely helpless in many situations. Note that is purely at the Storyteller's option—if it doesn't make sense for a botch to occur, there's no need to force one in ham-handedly. As with major symptoms, the Storyteller may substitute draining a point of Willpower for a botch, but should be judicious in doing so—grinding a character down to zero Willpower over the course of a session isn't going to make the game very fun. Try to limit Willpower drain from disease to once or twice per session, and stick to botches most of the time.

• **Death**: While the Exalted and other supernatural beings are immune to death from disease, mortals do not have such good fortune. Once a mortal's ailment has progressed to the level of a defining symptom, the next step is death by disease, as narrated by the Storyteller.

Not all diseases are capable of reaching all stages of this progression, with their maximum level of intensity noted in their description. In addition, some exotic or supernatural diseases may have additional effects based on symptom intensity.

Putting all this together, here's how disease works: When a character is first exposed to a vector of disease, he rolls (Stamina + Resistance) against that disease's virulence. On a successful roll, he avoids succumbing to the sickness. On a failed roll, he contracts the disease at the level of a minor symptom. After each interval of the disease has passed, the character makes another (Stamina + Resistance) roll, this time against the disease's morbidity. On a failed roll, the symptoms intensify by one step; on a success, they grow one step less intense (or are overcome entirely, if they were already at the minor symptom level).

### Common Diseases

**Consumption** (Virulence 2, Morbidity 2, Interval: One week): Consumption is a wasting disease. Its victims cough up blood and suffer fever and weakness, dying over

a course of weeks or months. Victims die when their lungs cease to pump, or when they literally drown in their own blood and phlegm. Consumption is an airborne disease, spreading through the sneezes, coughs, and spit of the infected.

**Cholera** (Virulence 4, Morbidity 3, Interval: One day): Cholera is contracted from drinking water contaminated with filth or cursed by angry water-spirits, or by eating marine life caught in such tainted waters. Victims suffer fever or a constant, watery diarrhea, eventually dying of dehydration unless they receive fluids and medicine. Cholera can become epidemic in rural villages without a sanitary source of water, as the excrement of the disease taints the same rivers that the villagers drink from.

**Hemorrhagic Fever** (Virulence 5, Morbidity 5, Interval: One day): At first, hemorrhagic fever might seem like nothing more than a sudden flu, causing fever, nausea, and chest pains.

Soon, though, the disease spreads throughout the body, causing internal bleeding and massive hemorrhaging that soon lead to an agonizing death. Blood pours out of almost every orifice, and every droplet is a potential vector for new infection.

**Infected Wounds** (Virulence 3, Morbidity 1, Interval: One week): Sometimes, the worst consequences of battle are not wounds dealt on the battlefield, but the diseases that fester within them. Characters who take lethal or aggravated damage in combat run the risk of sepsis. Sterilizing wounds with alcohol after a battle reduces the virulence of the infection to 2, while cauterizing them with a flame or heated iron prevents infection altogether—at the cost of a level of bashing damage from the minor burn. The Exalted and other supernatural characters never suffer infected wounds.

**Leprosy** (Virulence 1, Morbidity 5, Interval: One month): Leprosy rots the flesh. It begins with fever, aching, and exhaustion. Slowly, over the courses of months, the nerves go dead, wounds fester with infection, and fingers and toes begin to fall off. It's not the leprosy itself that kills most victims, but the gangrene that follows. Leprosy is not highly contagious, spreading only through close personal contact. Healers can tend to the diseased with little

#### INCUBATION

Most diseases don't take effect instantly—instead, they incubate inside their victim's bodies for hours, days, or even weeks before manifesting their symptoms. Rather than modeling this mechanically, the Storyteller can simply handle incubation by waiting until a dramatically appropriate moment to call for a character's first roll to resist the disease. For example, while a circle of Exalted might first be exposed to malaria while trekking through a mosquito-ridden jungle, the Storyteller may choose to put off calling for rolls to resist the disease until they have reached the lair of the forbidden god who haunts the jungle, upping the stakes of the boss battle. Alternatively, he might wait until after they have successfully struck down the wicked spirit and returned to the nearest seraglio to celebrate their victory before calling for the roll, tarnishing their heroic victory with real world consequences.

fear of becoming infected themselves, and the sickness can be contained by isolating lepers in closed communities or colonies.

**Rabies** (Virulence 2, Morbidity 4, Interval: One day): Victims of rabies suffer from intense thirst, high fevers, and eventually delirium and animalistic frenzy. By that point, death is all but inevitable. The disease is known to originate in the bites of animals who foam at the mouth with madness (though human bites can spread rabies as well), leading many to blame the Lunar Anathema or Wyld taint for the sickness.

**Plague** (Virulence 4, Morbidity 5, Interval: Three days): It begins with fever, diarrhea, a rash, and swollen glands. The plague could easily be mistaken for another disease in the first few days. By the end of the first week, however, it has become unmistakable—delirium, dehydration, blackened glands. Death follows

soon after. Plague is extremely communicable, spread through the air by diseased rats and infected corpses.

**Syphilis** (Virulence 3, Morbidity 1, Interval: One year, never fatal): Syphilis is a venereal disease, spread through sexual contact with the infected. Symptoms begin with a painless genital lesion, but progress over weeks into rash, fever, malaise, weight loss, or any other of a host of possible symptoms. Chronic patients may develop dementia or seizures as the syphilis spreads to their brain after years of infection.

#### Supernatural Disease

Supernatural diseases born of curses, Charms, or pestilent monstrosities have magical effects above and beyond ordinary disease progression. At each step of their intensity, these supernatural diseases have additional effects noted in their description.

**Puppeteer's Plague** (Virulence 4, Morbidity 3, Interval: One week): Born from the accursed meat of cattle fed on human flesh and made infamous as a weapon of war by the Mask of Winters, puppeteer's plague slowly seeps through the marrow of its victims, bringing their bones to accursed unlife within the bodies of their still-living hosts.

• Minor Symptom: The victim's bones begin to stir with malicious intent. Insatiable itches seem to flare up along the bones of his limbs and spine, and he dreams of committing the most horrific atrocities. Each night, the victim must roll (Stamina + Resistance) at difficulty 3. On a failed roll, he cannot regain any Willpower from that night's sleep.

• Major Symptom: The victim's skeleton begins to take on an unlife of its own, seizing control of his body to commit acts of sadism and wickedness. In addition to the above effects, whenever the Storyteller could inflict a botch on the victim from this disease, she may instead compel him to commit a physical action that is cruel or malevolent in nature—lashing out to strike an enemy in combat, stealing from a merchant, crushing a small animal beneath a boot heel. This urge can be resisted by spending a point of Willpower, but the character must enter a Decision Point to do so, drawing on a Major or stronger Intimacy.

• Defining Symptom: The victim's body houses an undead monster, constantly struggling to escape. This level functions as the major symptom, but now only defining Intimacies can be drawn on in a Decision Point to resist the evil impulses—which can now occur every *scene* in place of a botch.

• Death: The victim's skeleton wrests itself free from the constraints of muscle and nerve, killing him as it rips itself out of his body as a bonesider (p. 506).

## Medicine

### Treating Wounds

While mundane medicine can do little to speed the healing of actual wounds, certain procedures can drastically increase the likelihood of survival for the injured. A character who is bleeding out from his wounds can have the flow of blood stanched with an (Intelligence + Medicine) roll as a miscellaneous action, with a difficulty equal to his current wound penalty (minimum difficulty 1, maximum 5). A character treating his own wounds raises the difficulty by 1.

### Treating Disease

Treating disease is a protracted process, requiring the physician spend at least one hour treating the patient for each day of the sickness's interval. Depending on the disease, this may require access to medical equipment or costly treatments, the absence of which may increase the difficulty of the roll. At the end of the course of treatment, roll (Intelligence + Medicine). When the victim makes his own roll to resist the disease, he may substitute the result of the physician's roll for his own if it is higher.



*Example:* Shen is treating a young boy suffering from plague at the level of a defining symptom, tending to him over the three days of the sickness's interval. Young and frail, the child's (Stamina + Resistance) roll yields only one success, a failure that would lead to his death. However, Shen's skills as a master physician allow him to roll five successes on his (Intelligence + Medicine) roll to treat the child. Instead of dying, the boy begins to recover, as his symptoms are reduced to major intensity.

### Treating Poison

Physicians can treat cases of poisoning by administering remedies and antivenins, hoping to neutralize the harmful venoms with their medical skill. Ordinarily, treating a victim of poisoning requires at least an hour and access to appropriate remedies. At the conclusion of the treatment, the physician rolls (Intelligence + Medicine) at a difficulty based on the severity of the poison—common or relatively harmless poison may be only difficulty 1 or 2 to treat, while life-threatening poisons, exotic venoms, and magical toxins might be difficulty 3 to 4. Every threshold successes garnered on this roll reduces the duration of the poisoning by one interval. Multiple instances of treatment cannot stack their benefits—only the highest reduction of duration is applied.

On the battlefield, there is rarely time to properly treat an ally wounded by a poisoned blade or a venomous monster. A physician can treat an ally for poison as a miscellaneous action, but doing so adds 2 to the difficulty of the roll, above and beyond any difficulty increases he might suffer for lacking access to proper medical materials.

*Example:* After being poisoned by the snake-headed scourge of a raksha, Illustrious Aya attempts to treat herself, drawing vials of antivenin and beneficent herbs from her bandolier. While her own (Stamina + Resistance) roll has already reduced the duration of the poison to one round, the (Intelligence + Medicine) roll is made at a steep difficulty: a base of difficulty 2 for the relatively common snake venom, +2 difficulty for rushing treatment with a miscellaneous action, +1 difficulty for not having access to her full supply of medicines and treatments, for a total of difficulty 5. Her (Intelligence + Medicine) succeeds with one threshold success, reducing the duration of the poison to zero and curing her of it.

### Diagnosis

Sometimes, the cause of an ailment is obvious—it requires no great skill to realize that a soldier whose arm has been hacked off is missing an arm, or that a Circlemate who was just stung by a giant scorpion might be suffering from its poison. Other times, however, the cause of a malady is less obvious, requiring diagnosis before proper treatment

can be administered (forging ahead without diagnosis adds +2 to +4 to the difficulty of treating the ailment). Diagnosing a patient can be made with a (Perception + Medicine) roll to notice hints of the ailment's origin, or with an (Intelligence + Medicine) roll to interpret the probable cause of overt symptoms, based on whatever the Storyteller deems most appropriate. Usually diagnosis requires at least a few minutes of examination. It can be rushed to a miscellaneous action in urgent situations, but doing so increases the difficulty of the roll by +1 or +2.

### Lore

#### Introducing a Fact

One of the basic functions of Lore in **Exalted** is to allow the player to spice up narrative drama, forward the plot, or become the object of positive Intimacies by demonstrating valuable knowledge. Once per scene, a character with Lore 3+ and a relevant specialty or backstory can attempt to “know” something useful about Creation’s history, geography, cultures, etc.

The player states a fact they would like to introduce. If it is a fact the Storyteller deems admissible, roll the character’s (Intelligence + Lore) against a difficulty set by the Storyteller. Note that the context of this roll is important. A character with Lore 5 may have a background in the subject being discussed, or their Lore 5 may apply little or not at all. (See the description of the Lore skill on p. 153). The Storyteller should increase the difficulty and levy penalties as they see fit; conversely, if a character specializes in a certain subject, the Storyteller may declare success without a roll. In any case, if the roll succeeds, the character may introduce her fact as knowledge she knows or uncovers in the scene, allowing the plot to progress, and perhaps leaving those around her in awe of her acumen.

**Storytellers be warned!** Facts introduced in this manner must remain internally consistent. Once a character has successfully introduced a fact, that information should not be contradicted; another player cannot then choose to introduce a completely contradictory fact by rolling an even better result. Once a fact about the setting has been introduced, it becomes concrete. Therefore, Storytellers, it is up to you to decide what facts to allow into the game, and to what degree. You might deem a Solar’s “Sidereal Exalted” hypothesis to be more than the character should know, while being more comfortable with a theory that tends toward something more vague, such as speculation about “Exalted conspirators behind the world’s events.” In this case, you should clarify which facts you will allow before the roll is made.

To be clear, no matter how many dice your player is able to roll, and no matter what Charms their character wields, you can always veto knowledge of certain events or the introduction of facts that would ruin your story. If an introduced fact contradicts a canonical fact you'd prefer to keep canonical in your game, contradicts a fact from your personal setting history or a future plot development you've yet to reveal to the players, or is something you are undecided or uncertain about, you can veto it. In the former cases, you are upholding the integrity of your story. In the latter, you are allowing yourself time to decide if you want to incorporate an idea that might change your view of that story. You should also veto knowledge of any canonical information you think it would be impossible for the character to know. That said, remember that people take Lore because this is the kind of character they want to play. You don't have to treat the setting like a piñata, and Lore like a bat that will split its colorful shell and spill all the delicious secrets within, but you should always treat a character's Lore rating as a chance to make the character look good, and as a chance to make the player feel good.

### Challenging a Fact

Similar to the rules that allow the introduction of a fact, a character with a Lore rating of 3+, or Lore 1+ and a relevant specialty, has the potential to notice any information that rings false. A peasant farmer (Lore 1, with a specialty of sowing) could hear a deceitful spirit trying to mislead a Dynast into ruining his crop yield with bad information. Any time the Storyteller introduces suspect information within notice of a character with an appropriate Lore rating, the Storyteller can call for a reflexive (Intelligence + Lore) check to see if the character notices. A single success means that the character notices the falsehood, but not exactly *why* it is false. If the character is able to, on that same roll, succeed with enough successes to clear the difficulty as if she were introducing a fact, the character can then not only know that the information she's read or heard is false, but also *how* it is false.

Unlike introducing a fact, the Storyteller decides exactly what the character is able to discern in this instance. Like introducing a fact, the Storyteller may waive the need for a roll if they feel the character is overqualified for the knowledge in question.

### Assigning Difficulties to Lore Rolls

“What can a character know?” has been a tetchy question since Gary Gygax had the floor. There are too many factors involved to come up with a pat mechanic to quickly encapsulate where exact difficulties should sit. After all, one might contend that, in a world where the Sidereals can alter the very course of history, it is nearly impossible to say exactly what is true.

In **Exalted**, difficulty on Lore rolls should be based on two things, primarily:

- How thrilling is it if the character knows this fact or understands this thing, solves this riddle or answers this question? If it doesn't really matter, but it is within the realm of possibility, you probably shouldn't even roll.
- How applicable is the character's knowledge? If their knowledge of a culture comes from a dusty tome written a century ago, their knowledge of that culture today is going to be severely hampered.

A player character's Lore background—the subject their Lore rating primarily reflects—and their specialties should generally reflect information that is as accurate as possible. In most cases, if the character is challenging a difficulty that falls under her expertise, it is her expertise that makes the roll possible in the first place. If it is interesting to the Storyteller to use a difficult roll to demonstrate to a character how her knowledge might be inaccurate, flawed, biased, or in need of an update, then the Storyteller should raise the difficulty, and use it as a way of leading the character to better, more accurate information, that ultimately updates or corrects the character's knowledge without experience cost.

All in all, the difficulty settings should slide up and down based on what is dramatically appropriate. The Storyteller should not expect to get the difficulties perfectly right the first time; learning how to gauge them is just a matter of experience. Lore difficulties should not be consistent, as if run off a chart of values, because there isn't a consistent base line for truth. In general, however, a crucial fact that forwards the plot should be revealed at difficulty 1-4; at 5-7 difficulties should be reserved for challenges to the greatest minds and should be used to excite players to rise to the occasion, while Lore 8-10+ challenges should be the proving grounds of Solar masters, riddles which unlock or reveal the greatest secrets of Creation's history. Note again that it is the character's Lore background and specialty that makes such rolls possible; characters with inaccurate knowledge or different backgrounds experience much greater difficulties, if they are allowed to roll at all.

### Crafting

From repairing a wagon wheel to forging a daiklave which will be carried into battle for centuries to come, crafting in **Exalted** is encompassed by four categories describing the nature and difficulty of a project, each with its own demands and rewards. The categories of crafting projects are:

Repairing a broken artifact is generally as difficult as creating one a dot lower in rating, except that the interval may be significantly shorter depending on how extensive the damage is. Legendary artifacts, which go beyond the five dot scale, use difficulties, intervals and goal numbers chosen by the Storyteller - not all Legendary Artifacts are created equal, but they're all very difficult.

Craft can also be used to assess crafted items. This is a simple action requiring a (Perception + Craft) roll. With a success the crafter can determine how old an item is, how well it's made, what it's made of, and what condition it's in, and other similar information. A strong success may also allow the crafter to identify the maker if their style is distinctive.

## Sailing

Sail is a bit of an odd Ability—it's generally either central to a chronicle or not used at all. The following rules and guidelines exist to add excitement and drama to a sailing-centric chronicle, such as tales of piracy and naval conquest among the Western archipelagos or the Dreaming Sea, or trade, travel, piracy, and war along the great rivers of the near East. If you're going to run or play in a game focusing on palace intrigues, greedy merchants, and scheming sorcerers in a shining city deep in the Southern desert, you can probably skip this section.

## Sailing Rules

For the most part, sailing works like any other Ability—a player wants to do something and the Storyteller asks for an (Attribute + Ability) roll and sets a difficulty. (Intelligence + Sail) might be used to gauge the weather and tides, while (Wits + Sail) might be used to navigate through treacherous rocks. In addition, the quality and nature of your ship has a significant impact on your rolls, adding modifiers in many situations.

### Ship Traits

Ships are built for countless purposes, from fat-bellied cargo vessels to sleek couriers to the Realm's deadly ship-hunting triremes. A number of traits are used to distinguish them.

- **Speed**—Many elements govern the speed of a ship—currents, deployed oars, wind in the sails. Rather than a simple rating, speed is listed as a set of conditions—ships in dead calm waters and with no oarsmen have Speed 0, and raise this rating for each applicable variable listed in the ship's traits. Speed is added to rolls where getting from one place to another in a hurry is important, as well as to attempts to pursue another ship or to evade pursuit.

*Example:* A fast courier vessel, running before the wind along a known trade current would have Speed +5—+1 from the current, +1 due to its small, nimble design, and +3 due to its proportionately huge sail. If it were not sailing along with the current, it would only have Speed +4.

- **Maneuverability**—This is a relative measure of how difficult a vessel is to handle properly. It's rarely used when navigating the open ocean, but is vital in combat maneuvering, or when attempting to steer through treacherous shallows or similar conditions. Under these circumstances, Maneuverability adds to a character's Sail rolls.

- **Hull**—Hull is a measure of how much damage a ship can sustain, much like a character's Health track. As a ship loses Hull points, it suffers penalties to all Sail rolls to control it. With no Hull points left, a ship is dead in the water.

**Note:** A ship dead in the water is not *necessarily* sinking or sunk—it might have lost its oars and mast, or its deck and rigging might be consumed in flames without the ship being burned down to the water line yet (a process that can take well over an hour). Context matters.

- **Crew**—A ship's crew isn't as intrinsic to the vessel as the rigging of her sails or the draft of her keel, but they're no less vital to her operation. A ship's captain may add a +2 bonus to all Sail rolls to command her vessel if the average Sail score of her crew is 4+. If her crew has an average of Sail 1 or below, by contrast, she takes a -1 penalty to all Sail rolls.

### Pursuit

Before a pirate can plunder her prey, or a naval vessel interdict another ship, they must first close with their quarry. Pursuit is an extended, contested (Wits + Sail + Speed) roll, with the first ship to accumulate 10 more successes than its antagonist accomplishing its goal—either escaping beyond sight, or catching up to combat range.

### Troubled Waters

Exalted captains must often navigate their ships through hazards at sea—storms, deadly reefs, fields of Sargasso. Navigating through a hazard requires succeeding at a

to do to earn another roll. Chances are it won't be  
easy.

number of Sail rolls against a difficulty set by the Storyteller—the more deadly the hazard, the higher the difficulty, while the larger the hazard, the more rolls are required. Navigating through an overnight gale without being blown off-course might require five (Wits + Sail) rolls at difficulty 1, while a terrible storm would be difficulty 3, and a hurricane difficulty 5; steering through a deadly reef to reach the shores of an uncharted isle might call for a pair of difficulty 3 (Wits + Sail) rolls; navigating the legendary Sargasso sea around Bluehaven to find the hidden pirates' lair might require ten rolls at difficulty 5. Success leads the ship closer to safety or its destination. Failure may blow a ship off-course, leave it stranded in tangling weeds and in need of breaking free before it can proceed, or might inflict a point of damage to the hull, depending on the hazard.

## Naval Combat

Once two ships have closed to combat range with one another, they have entered naval combat. Naval combat proceeds in rounds; during each round, each ship's captain declares an enemy ship he wishes to oppose. The players then select a stratagem from the list below to enact, and make the indicated roll. If she garners more successes than the ship she's picked to oppose, her stratagem succeeds. This is the Naval Maneuver roll. If opposed by two or more other ships, the player's roll suffers a -2 penalty for each ship beyond the first.

The key to naval combat is *Momentum*, a pool of points gained from *positioning* stratagems. Momentum is required to attempt most stratagems, and so the goal of naval combat is to accumulate Momentum faster than one's enemies, then expend it to damage their ship or board them.

Selecting a different ship to oppose than you selected during the last round causes you to lose all your Momentum.

### Stratagems

Listed below are the naval stratagems available to most ships:

- Positioning (Roll: Wits + Sail + Maneuverability; Cost: None)**—The ship attempts to maneuver itself into a more favorable position to harm its adversary, whether by ramming them, raking them with arrows, boarding them, or whatever other tactic the captain has in mind. For each success by which the player exceeds her opponent's Naval Maneuver roll, she gains one point of Momentum.

- Broadside (Roll: Wits + Sail + Maneuverability; Cost: 5 Momentum)**—The character's ship draws alongside

its opponent and savages it with anti-ship weaponry, such as catapults or ballistae. This inflicts one level of Hull damage, or two levels of Hull damage if deploying anti-ship combat sorcery or First Age weapons such as lightning ballistae or implosion bows. A ship must have anti-ship weaponry or a crewmember capable of making such magical attacks to take this stratagem. Acquiring and installing non-magical ship weaponry such as catapults is usually a Resources ••• expense (see "The Resources System," p. 578).

- Escape (Roll: Wits + Sail + Speed; Cost: 12 Momentum)**—The ship splits out of the battle, leaving her opponents confounded as she catches the wind and attempts to escape. Successfully executing this stratagem removes the ship from battle; catching it again requires a fresh pursuit.

- Ram (Roll: Wits + Sail + Maneuverability; Cost: 7 Momentum)**—The character rams her opponent with her ship's prow, inflicting one point of Hull damage, plus one additional point per three successes above her opponent's Naval Maneuver total. Performing this maneuver without a ram affixed to the ship's prow inflicts equal damage to the attacker's vessel.

- Concealment (Roll: Wits + Sail + Maneuverability; Cost: 2 Momentum)**—The ship conceals itself from its enemy, perhaps diving into a heavy fogbank, or placing other ships, rocks, or sunken vessels between itself and its foe. This stratagem isn't possible on the open ocean with no concealment to utilize. If used successfully, concealment acts as both a positioning stratagem and adds +3 dice to the next Naval Maneuver roll.

### Boarding Actions

Boarding actions are enacted by winning a Naval Maneuver roll, just like any other stratagem, but warrant a bit of additional discussion. There are several ways to mount a boarding action, each of which is its own separate stratagem.

When a player boards a ship or has his ship boarded, drop from naval combat down to regular combat and resolve the battle according to the stratagem employed (this works much like the strategic warfare system, p. 221). When a Storyteller character's ship boards another Storyteller character's ship, the Storyteller should generally just dictate the results according to the mettle and quality of the fighters in question—it's less impartial than letting the dice dictate the results, but few players want to take a fifteen-minute break to watch the Storyteller roll dice against herself.

**SAILING SPEED**

So how fast does a ship travel, when going from place to place? As a general rule of thumb, a ship's cruising speed is twice its Speed bonus in miles per hour. Thus, a trireme moving under sail (Speed +2) along a trade current (Speed +1) with oars stowed (Speed +0), moving at Speed 3 total, will travel from isle to isle at about 6 miles per hour.

All boarding actions subject both forces to the rules of the Back to the Sea stratagem detailed on page 212—to wit, rally for numbers actions restore one point of Magnitude per three successes, and slaughter actions directed at a routed battle group are extremely effective since there's nowhere to flee on a ship but over the rail.

- Boarding Action (Roll: Wits + Sail + Maneuverability; Cost: 8 Momentum)**—Using ropes and hooks, the crew lashes their ship to another, then climbs aboard to attack the enemy. The battle plays out under no particular special conditions.

- Seize the Initiative! (Roll: Wits + Sail + Maneuverability; Cost: 10 Momentum)**—The attacking ship's crew surges across the rail and onto the deck of the enemy's ship with a terrible momentum, whipped up into a frenzy by their officers. The enemy crew takes a -2 penalty to Defense during the first round of battle.

- Shock and Board (Roll: Wits + Sail + Maneuverability; Cost: 12 Momentum)**—The attacking ship slams the enemy vessel, throwing its crew down to the deck. The enemy crew begins the resulting combat prone unless they can pass a (Dexterity + [Athletics or Sail]) roll with a difficulty equal to the attacking captain's (Sail + Threshold successes on the Naval Maneuver roll).

- Drowning Tide (Roll: Wits + Sail + Maneuverability; Cost: 15 Momentum)**—The attacking ship executes a perfect boarding action, both upsetting the enemy ship and boarding it with uncanny precision and ferocity. This stratagem combines the benefits of both Seize the Initiative! and Shock and Board.

**Sample Ships**

Below are a number of common types of ships found sailing the seas of the Time of Tumult.

**Fast Courier**

**Role:** Military, diplomatic, or civilian courier; pirate scout vessel; fast-attack craft

**Speed:** Current +1; light hull (when sailing) +1; large sail +3

**Maneuverability:** +0; **Hull:** -2/-4/Incapacitated

**Cargo:** Virtually none. Provisions are cold or precooked, while sleepers must strap themselves into small cots.

These small ships are built for one thing and one thing alone: speed. Sporting masts disproportionate to their hulls and operated by small, five-man crews, they are used to deliver priority messages or vitally important passengers; they have room for little else, and can't mount catapults or ballistae on deck. Pirates sometimes use them as scout ships.

**Large Yacht**

**Role:** Pleasure craft; personal or official blue-water transport; small pirate corsair

**Speed:** Current +1; sail +2

**Maneuverability:** -1; **Hull:** -1/-2/-4/Incapacitated

**Cargo:** Three well-appointed cabins for six passengers, plus dining and entertaining facilities. Pirates pack in many more crew in much less comfort.

These large, fast ships serve as pleasure barges for the very rich, but many are converted into cargo transports or swift pirate vessels, valued for their speed and stowage.

**Blue-Water Merchant**

**Role:** Seagoing merchant vessel; troop carrier.

**Speed:** Current +1; sail +2; empty cargo hold +1

**Maneuverability:** +0; **Hull:** -1/-1/-2/-4/Incapacitated

**Cargo:** 2,000 tons or more. Troop transports carry 125 soldiers and their gear in lower-decks stowage.

This model of ship is broadly representative of the long-range merchant vessels that ply the waters of the Great Western Ocean, carrying cargo from port to port, or transporting troops to distant shores. Pirates also occasionally prize these ships for their balance between speed and maneuverability, but tend to pair them with scout ships, operating in packs.

**Large Merchant Vessel****Role:** Heavy seagoing merchant vessel; large troop carrier.**Speed:** Current +1; Sail +1; empty cargo hold +1**Maneuverability:** -2; **Hull:** -0/-1/-2/-4/Incapacitated**Cargo:** 3,000 tons or more. Troop transports may carry between 250-500 troops, depending on the length of the voyage.

What these wallowing ships lack in speed and agility, they make up for in sheer bulk transport capability. Such prize ships are often accompanied by more nimble protective vessels; alternately, they may transport armies abroad, or act as floating artillery platforms.

**Imperial Trireme****Role:** War galley.**Speed:** Current +1; sail +2; oars +2; no marines aboard +1**Maneuverability:** +2; **Hull:** -1/-2/-4/Incapacitated**Cargo:** Triremes carry 25 marines, but no other cargo to speak of.

The Imperial trireme exists for one purpose alone: to kill other ships. All mount reinforced rams on their prow, and while they are capable of sailing, they deploy a bank of 100 oars in combat, giving them unmatched maneuverability. The trireme's standard tactic is to smash into the enemy and then disgorge its marines. Having no cargo capacity to speak of, and being unsuited for surviving violent storms, triremes deployed beyond coastal waters travel in the company of enormous supply ships known as trireme tenders, which keep them provisioned with food, water, and a place to safely tie up during dangerous weather.

**NAVAL COMBAT IN TROUBLED WATERS**

So what if you're fighting in the midst of jagged rocks or reefs or in the midst of a raging storm?

Before rolling for Naval Maneuvers each turn, all participants must make a roll to safely navigate through the hazards of the sea. Failure causes either a -3 penalty on the Naval Maneuver roll (in the case of situations like storms or weeds), or the loss of a hull point (in the case of deadly hazards like jagged reefs or rogue waves).

**Make These Rules Your Own**

While the above rules provide a framework for exciting ocean adventures and naval conflict, they're just a framework. You should come up with your own stratagems, stunting to create new stratagems for unique circumstances. Just assign an appropriate dice pool and Momentum cost, and go with it.

*Example:*

Mnemon Valen's ship is rushing to pick up a load of recovered First Age relics from a dig on a small Western isle when it encounters a mighty behemoth—something like a whale, but also like an island.

One player wants to use a Naval Maneuver to frighten the beast away with a loud, flashy display of sorcery, and the Storyteller begins devising an Intimidate stratagem—he thinks that (Wits + Sail + Maneuverability) is appropriate to get the ship into place just in time for the sorcerer to launch a spell to shock and threaten the behemoth, and that it should cost 10 Momentum—comparable to an Escape stratagem, but a bit cheaper, because the Storyteller thinks the behemoth might remember the threat, and become a problem later in the chronicle. He'll treat the behemoth like an enormous, powerful warship for the purpose of this encounter, and quickly sketches out traits for it—Speed +4, Maneuverability +1, Hull -0/-0/-0/-1/-1/-2/-4/Incapacitated, and decides that its stony brow acts as a ram which inflicts two points of Hull damage before extra successes.

However, before that plan can go anywhere, Mnemon Valen's player comes up with a more daring idea—since the behemoth seems to be headed in the same direction as the Circle, he wants to use harpoons and rope lines to attach the ship to the behemoth's shell and ride it toward their destination, cutting down on travel time immensely! The Storyteller judges this a risky plan, likely to anger the behemoth, and decides will require tricky maneuvering to pull off. He decides the stratagem will use (Wits + Sail + Maneuverability), and cost 15 Momentum—it will, after all, resolve the encounter in one stroke *and* get the ship to its destination much faster.

The players gather up the dice and begin getting their ship into position...

# A

All conversation came to a halt when Volfer entered the teahouse, and with good reason. The muscled, scarred warrior wore all the garments of a barbarian pig—which is to say that he was practically naked.

The teahouse was packed with the elite troops of House Mnemon, fresh in from the Imperial City. Their eyes followed him as he marched to the head of the room and sat atop an empty table, splaying his legs to fully display the leather subligar that encircled his manhood, and the crimson Imperial Mon that had been crudely stitched there.

The mon was a symbol used with exclusivity on the Blessed Isle; it could only be displayed on goods the Empress had personally approved. Volfer's meaning was not lost on Mnemon's house guard. Their awe-struck silence presaged a palpable hatred.

In Volfer's fist was a bottle of sake he'd swept from the table of an Imperial officer. He raised it over his lips and tipped it back as he drank noisily, his throat rising and falling in a slow and deliberate way as he reached down with his other hand to scratch at his inner thigh. The silence grew thick.

A fly buzzed in the empty quiet.

An infantryman rose and put a hand on his sword as he approached the place where Volfer sat. "You bastard son of dogs and opossums—" Volfer brought the bottle down on his head like a hammer, silencing his words.

Mnemon's finest leapt to their feet and surrounded him in a crescent. Volfer wore a wicked grin, but his lack of armor left a cold fear at the pit of his stomach. He overwhelmed it with a surge of adrenaline, and from the trip-hammer of his pulse, Essence spread invisibly across his skin until it was hard as diamond.

They came at him at once but with discipline, keeping just enough space between them to swing their weapons and not an inch more. Escape was impossible. A dash for the door would take him through a gauntlet of swords, pikes, and mauls. But he never planned on escaping.

The first man to reach him had a weapon too slow to make much of it. His mistake. Volfer kicked his knee in before he could raise the hammer, and swept off his half-helm as he fell.

Volfer caught the first sword slash with the helm around his fist, holding it by the lining and swinging it like a cestus.

A spear thrust in at his side and he tried to spin around it, but the hooked and murderous head caught him and opened him up with a gout of blood—and would have dragged his guts out if his skin wasn't so hard. Growling like a beast he whirled with his helmeted fist and smashed it into the spear-man's shocked face, shattering his nose and teeth. Volfer wrenched the spear and twisted, catching the blade of an axe with the haft, and kicked its owner in the chest, sending him back into a comrade. They both fell.

Volfer was surrounded at the center of the room. The movement of light across the floor drew his eye. He glanced up at a line of swinging lanterns, and slashed overhead. They came down around him and shattered, burning oil splashing over the floor. Suddenly the room was in flames.

Volfer dipped his fingers into the wound at his side. His blood flickered in the flames. He liked the way it looked. He flicked it into the face of the nearest guardsman, blinding him and sending his slash askew. The soldiers struck on all sides, but now that he was armed it was as if he had been reborn. He whirled the spear overhead and brought it down behind him, blocking two strikes in front, one at each side and one at his back. With each move to parry, the wicked hooked blade of his stolen spear licked out, dealing strikes in eight directions.

One man was gored in the leg. Another was raked through his armor, and another lost his sword (along with two fingers), while another lost an eye. Those who had not been struck danced back, coughing. An entire table had caught fire and the flames had found the wall and were climbing. A quarter of the room was an inferno. The remaining soldiers lost their wind and began to retreat, their weapons between themselves and the barbarian.

Volfer grinned malevolently. "Don't like the look of me when it's not twenty to one? Well, at least the flames will hide your cowardice."

"Nobody fights a lion in his den." It was a woman's voice, coming from the flames. Its owner came through the burning wall, naked and wreathed in fire that resolved into a full suit of red jade plate.

The woman's hair was redder than blazes. She raised a reaver daiklave casually and pointed it at him. "But will you dance with a dragon in the flames?"

"Any day, sweetheart," he said, and turned to face her.



# Chapter One

# Charms

The Exalted are mighty. Some break swords upon their skin or shatter stone with their fists while others sing songs that move the rocks themselves to tears. As they grow into the fullness of their power, they may form new reality out of primordial chaos, single handedly rout armies or step through shadows and minds in search of secrets.

These powers and more are represented as Charms, tidy little packages of name, flavor and mechanical

effect the game wraps around your character's supernatural prowess. This abstraction is just that - an abstraction. Simply put, we talk about Charms as power and magic and techniques, but when a player has her character use Monkey Leap Technique, the Solar leaps high enough to clear a rooftop - but the character is simply applying their skill at athletics. Charms aren't magic spells. Those who behold a Solar throwing aside a boulder would remark on her incredible strength, but not her use of Increasing Strength Exercise or Thunder's Might.

## Reading charms

### Minimums

Solar charms all require a minimum level of skill in their associated ability, and many of them expand on earlier charms in that ability. A character must meet all of a charm's Prereqs before she can learn it. Some charms offer also repurchases - by buying a charm additional times, a character can unlock further power.

A Solar treats her Essence as 2 higher for charms in her Supernal Abilities (to a maximum of 5) for all purposes. She can learn Essence 3 charms in these abilities at character creation, and use upgrades to them sooner than otherwise. When Solar's essence is 4, then a charm in one of her Supernal Abilities that lets her make (Essence + 2) attacks allows her to make 5 (her real Essence 4 + 2, to a maximum of 5).

### Costs

Most charms have a cost - they require an exertion of motes, willpower, initiative or even health levels. A character must pay the full cost before activating a charm - they cannot spend their initiative below 0, for example.

Example	Cost
3m, 1wp	3 motes, 1 willpower
2i	2 initiative
1hl	1 bashing health level
2lhl	2 lethal health levels
1ahl	1 aggravated health level

### Types and Timing

Charms come in one of four types, which explain when and how they can be activated.

- Permanent: A permanent Charm is just that - a permanent enhancement to the character's prowess, costing nothing to enjoy and providing its benefits passively at all times.
- Simple: A simple Charm counts as a combat action in and of itself, and cannot be placed in a flurry. Some take longer, as specified in their text.
- Reflexive: Reflexive Charms can be activated either before or after other actions, including between the actions of a flurry or multi-attack charm, but not in the middle of an action. Many of them list specific triggers - a charm may be used only once per triggering event.

- Supplemental: Supplemental Charms enhance an action or defense, such as an attack roll, whole craft project, or an attempt to dodge an attack. They are activated during an action - usually while it's being declared, but sometimes latter in the process of resolving it (as specified by the individual charm).

Any number of supplemental charms may apply to a single roll or defense, but a solar cannot activate the same Charm on the same action multiple times. Supplemental charms may be used to aid actions or defenses even if the character isn't aware of making them - she can use her charms to enhance an Awareness roll to notice danger, or defend herself with Integrity charms even while asleep, unconscious or drugged, for example.

## Duration

After their type, non-permanent charms list a duration in parentheses. The charm's effects continue to apply and its mote cost remains committed until it ends (those motes cannot be regained until the charm ends). Long-running charms can be ended reflexively at any time, even while the character is unconscious or asleep.

- Instant: Instant charms have their effect - often on a single action or roll - and then they're done.
- One Round: The charm lasts until the start of the character's next combat action.
- One Scene: The charm lasts until the scene changes (see pg. 184).
- Indefinite: The charm remains on as long as the character desires (even while sleeping or unconscious).

## Keywords

Some charms list one or more keywords after their duration.

- Advantage: A charm with this keyword can only be used against an opponent with less initiative than the Solar.

- Attack-action: Using this charm counts as the Solar's attack action for the round. She may not use it if she's already taken one this round (or activated another Attack-action charm).
- Counterattack: This charm may not be used in response to attacks created by other charms with the Counterattack keyword, and only one Counterattack charm may be activated for a given trigger. Attacks it creates cannot be Clashed, even with the use of charms.
- Form: A character may only have one Form charm active at a time. Ending one form charm to activate another immediately refunds all motes committed to the first form.
- Group: Any rolls this charm supplements or creates ignore the penalty for group social influence.
- Iconic: This charm may only be activated when the Exalt's anima is at the Bonfire / Iconic level.
- Mute: This charm's cost does not add to the Exalt's anima level unless she wants it to.
- Perilous: Charms with this keyword cannot be used in Initiative Crash. If the charm lasts longer than Instant, it ends if the Exalt crashes.
- Once/X: A character can only use this once per scene/day/story/season.
- Pilot: To activate charms with this keyword, the character must be the helmsman or captain of a vessel. For Sailing related charms without it, "the character's ship" refers to any vessel she's a passenger, crew, or otherwise associated with.
- Post-roll: This charm is activated after dice have been rolled, but before success has been determined. For example, a player could wait until she knows how many successes have been rolled on an attack before activating a Post-roll defense.
- Psyche: A power with this keyword is an unnatural, hypnotic, or sorcerous power that magically influences, controls, or cripples an opponent's thoughts or feelings.
- Quickshot - Attacks granted or enhanced by this Charm do not require an Aim action to succeed, regardless of range. This Charm's effects can stack.

## Conflict

When they directly affect another character, players (including the Storyteller) must openly declare and charms they're using and their effects. The majority of charms must be used before a dice roll is made (Post-Roll charms are obviously an exception!), and the active character declares first in the case of an opposed action. Below is a detailed breakdown of who can use what when, but don't be intimidated - very seldom do you need to step through all of these out loud.

1. A player declares their action and activates any reflexive or supplemental charms related to it.
2. If the action is against another character, that character's player activates any reflexive or supplemental charms to boost their defense.
3. The active player rolls, and activates any Post-Roll charms they wish to use.
4. The defending player activates any Post-Roll charms.
5. Resolve the action. An attack might hit (triggering a damage roll, and possibly more post-roll charms related to damage) or miss, or a character might be subject to social influence and have the option to spend wp to resist.
6. Both players may activate any reflexive charms triggered by the action - to counterattack, regain motes, etc.

## Limitations and Terminology

A Solar may not add more than (Attribute + Ability) dice to a single roll, and each automatic success counts as two dice. If a combination of charms would add more dice/successes than that, discard the extras.

When charms refer to increasing or decreasing a duration in increments, use the following chart:

Decades — Years — Months — Weeks — Days — Hours — Minutes — Seconds

Charms can modify dice rolls in a variety of ways. Some of these are also mentioned in the glossary, but repeated here for ease of reference. If multiple effects modify a single roll, apply them in this order.

1. Add X dice: Roll X more dice than you normally would.
2. X automatic successes: After rolling, add X successes.

## Excellencies

The Chosen enjoy a fundamental power called the Excellencies. When a Solar uses an Excellency, she channels pure Essence into her endeavors - the fundamental power of the sun quickens and strengthens her blows, sharpens her sight, or steadies her hands.

Solars may purchase the Excellency for any ability they have a dot in, as they would any other charm with its prerequisite.

### Excellent Solar (Ability)

**Cost:** 1m per die, or 2m per +1 to static value; Supplemental (Instant)

**Prereqs:** (Ability) 1

The Solar adds +(motes spent) dice to an (Ability) roll, or +(motes spent / 2) to a static value derived from (Ability). Remember the "Using Charms and Charm Limitations" section above.

## Multiple Attacks

If a charm asks the solar to divide her initiative up evenly into some number of attacks, divide as evenly as possible. For example, if she were dividing 8i among three attacks, she'd make attacks with 3i, 3i and 2i.

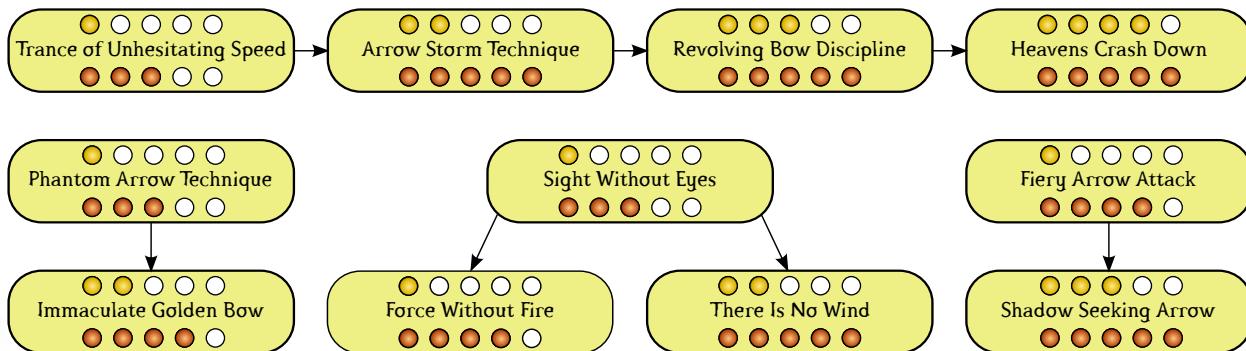
If any effect would cause her to crash in the middle of a multiattack (a counterattack or dodge charms sapping her initiative, for example), she crashes immediately and cannot make any more attacks. After all attacks complete, if she isn't crashed:

- If she hit with at least one decisive attack, she resets to base initiative.
- If all her decisive attacks missed, she loses initiative as though she'd only missed with one.

If a charm applies a single attack against multiple opponents, apply the attack to all opponents before anyone activates Reflexive effects based on it.

- If she hits at least one opponent with a decisive attack, she resets to base initiative.
- If she missed all opponents with a decisive attack, she loses initiative for missing with a single attack.

## Archery



### Trance of Unhesitating Speed

**Cost:** 4m, 1wp ; Simple (Instant) - Quickshot, Perilous

**Prereqs:** Archery 3

The Exalt makes up to (Lower of Dexterity or Initiative/3) decisive Archery attacks, dividing her initiative evenly between them. Each 10 she rolls on an attack increases the base damage of that attack by one.

### Arrow Storm Technique

**Cost:** 5m, 1wp; Supplemental (Instant)

**Prereqs:** Essence 2, Archery 5, Trance of Unhesitating Speed

This charm supplements a Decisive Archery attack. In addition to its initial target, it strikes up to

(Essence \* 3) targets up to medium range from the initial one using the same attack roll, but dividing her initiative evenly among all attacks. Each one then gains (Perception) raw damage.

### Revolving Bow Discipline

**Cost:** 6m, 1wp ; Simple (Instant) - Perilous

**Prereqs:** Essence 3, Archery 5, Arrow Storm Technique

The Solar makes a withering Archery attack against a single uncrashed target within short or close range. If it hits she may make another, repeating until she either misses or crashes her opponent (or it loses a point of magnitude if it's a Battle Group).

### **Heavens Crash Down**

**Cost:** 6m, 2i, 1wp; Reflexive (Instant)

**Prereqs:** Essence 4, Archery 5, Revolving Bow Discipline

This charm may be used when the Solar is in her -4 health levels and targeted by a withering attack from short or close range. She Clashes the attack using Archery, with (Essence) automatic successes. If she wins the clash, Initiative she would gain is instead rolled as dice of decisive damage against her target, ignoring hardness and doubling 10s.

An Essence 5+ repurchase of this Charm allows the Solar to spend Initiative she doesn't have, going into (or deeper into) the negative.

### **Phantom Arrow Technique**

**Cost:** 1m; Supplemental (Instant)

**Prereqs:** Archery 3

This charm supplements an Archery attack, allowing the Exalt to shoot without ammunition.

At Essence 3+, once per scene she may pay an additional 1wp. An arrow so infused cannot be destroyed or pulled from the target as long as she lives. A tree can still be cut down, a wall still reduced to rubble - but the arrow will remain inviolate. Only the Solar who fired this arrow, or one blessed with her permission, may remove it from its resting place.

### **Immaculate Golden Bow**

**Cost:** 5m, 1wp; Simple (One Scene)

**Prereqs:** Essence 2, Archery 4, Phantom Arrow Technique

The Exalt creates a weapon from her anima with stats identical to a powerbow or other artifact Archery weapon. It glows like a torch.

### **Sight Without Eyes**

**Cost:** 1m; Supplemental (Instant)

**Prereqs:** Archery 3

This charm supplements an Archery attack, allowing the Exalt ignores all penalties for visual conditions. Smoke, fog, and pitch darkness don't hinder her, though other factors such as high winds and cover still apply against the attack.

At Archery 5+, Essence 3+, she can momentarily see through cover, perceiving her targets as silhouettes the colors of bright anima.

### **Force Without Fire**

**Cost:** 3m; Supplemental (Instant)

**Prereqs:** Archery 4, Sight Without Eyes

This charm supplements a withering Archery attack from short or close range. If the attack does at least as much damage as her target's Stamina, that Initiative is lost rather than transferred to the Solar, and the target is knocked down and back an entire range band.

### **There Is No Wind**

**Cost:** 3m; Supplemental (Instant)

**Prereqs:** Essence 2, Archery 5, Sight Without Eyes

This charm supplements an Archery attack, allowing it to be made from up to extreme range. The Solar also ignores penalties from non-visual conditions such as high winds, bad weather, flawed ammunition, and so on (but not cover).

If the attack is withering, her accuracy is calculated as if it were made from short range regardless of the distance she's firing from.

### **Fiery Arrow Attack**

**Cost:** 2m; Supplemental (Instant)

**Prereqs:** Archery 4

This charm supplements a Decisive Archery attack, causing the arrow to explode in a spectacular flare that can be seen for miles. Every target using shadows for cover within two range bands must roll Stealth with a -2 success penalty or be revealed.

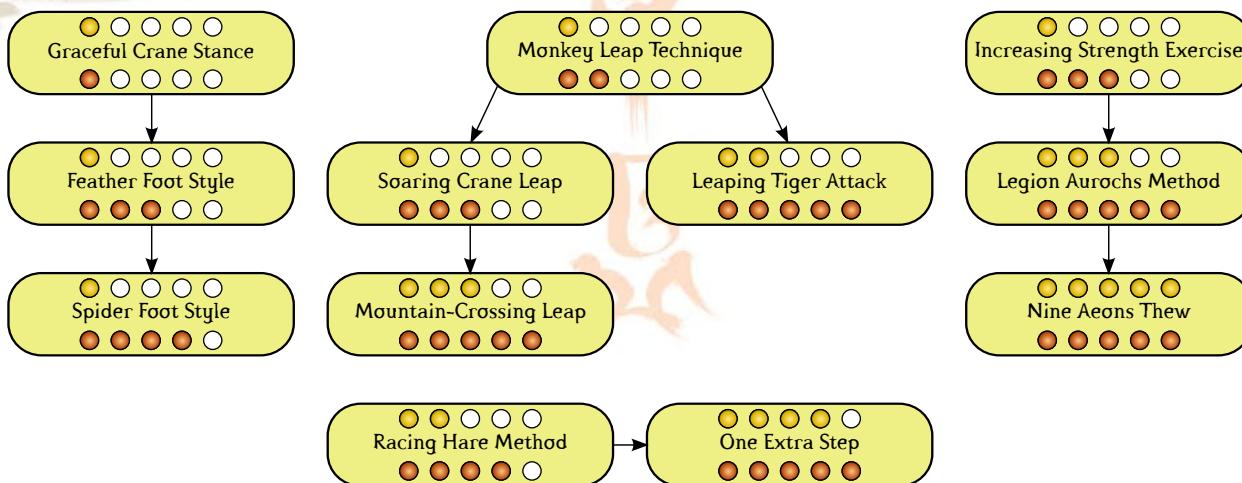
### **Shadow-Seeking Arrow**

**Cost:** 3m, 2i ; Reflexive (Instant) - Quickshot

**Prereqs:** Essence 3, Archery 5, Fiery Arrow Attack

During combat, if the Lawgiver's Awareness check uncovers an opponent, she may immediately make a withering or decisive Archery attack against that opponent. She may pay to use this Charm against each opponent, if she uncovers more than one with a single Awareness check.

## Athletics



### Graceful Crane Stance

**Cost:** 3m; Reflexive (One Scene)

**Prereqs:** Athletics 1

The Exalt has perfect balance, and can stand or run on things too narrow or weak to support her normally, with no chance of falling or breaking through. She automatically succeeds at the (Dexterity + Athletics) roll for such feats as running on a guy wire, standing on a crumbling parapet, balancing on the tip of a pine tree, and similar.

### Feather Foot Style

**Cost:** 3m ; Supplemental (Until the Exalt stops running) - Mute

**Prereqs:** Athletics 3, Graceful Crane Stance

This charm supplements a move action, allowing the Exalt to dash over liquid or unstable surfaces as if they were solid and move over surfaces as thin as rice paper without breaking through. She may also move across lava or other dangerous surfaces without getting hurt. As long as she is moving at a quick pace, she need not pay the activation cost again.

At Essence 2+, she can pause on unstable surfaces without breaking through, changing the duration of this Charm to “one stunt.” She can walk slowly across the surface of a still pond, pause on the crumbling parapet of a castle to give a speech, and so on. This mode does not protect against hazardous surfaces.

### Spider Foot Style

**Cost:** 3m ; Reflexive (Essence + 1 Turns) - Mute

**Prereqs:** Athletics 4, Feather Foot Style

The Solar can run up walls, stand upside down on horizontal surfaces such as tree branches, bridge bottoms or overhangs, lay flat against a ceiling looking down at her prey, or other similar feats.

### Monkey Leap Technique

**Cost:** 2m; Supplemental (Instant)

**Prereqs:** Athletics 2

This charm supplements a reflexive Move action, allowing the Solar to leap forward or straight up one range band. A Solar using this Charm can easily leap to the top of a twenty foot wall or cross a Nexus street over rooftops without a roll. If the Solar continues to leap each turn the cost is reduced to 1m after the first activation.

### Soaring Crane Leap

**Cost:** 2m; Reflexive (One round)

**Prereqs:** Athletics 3, Monkey Leap Technique

When falling, the Exalt may activate this charm to drop only a single range band until her next turn. In order to survive a very long falls without damage, she must use for at least two rounds before touching the ground. The Exalt can also use this Charm to drift long distances through the air as she continues to fall. If she was moving forward when the fall began, she may continue to move in that direction on future rounds, falling downward one range band for each band of forward motion.

### Mountain-Crossing Leap

**Cost:** 7m, 1wp; Simple (Until she stops leaping)

**Prereqs:** Essence 3, Athletics 5, Soaring Crane Leap

The Exalt makes a leap three up to four range bands forward or three straight up. This Charm stays active every turn until the Solar stops leaping across range bands, making it possible for the Exalt to cross a mountain in minutes.

This charm may not be activated with opponents at Close range, but as an exception to the normal Simple charm rules, may be flurried with Disengage.

### Leaping Tiger Attack

**Cost:** 4m, 1wp ; Supplemental (Instant) - Advantage  
**Prereqs:** Essence 2, Athletics 5, Thunderbolt Attack Prana

This charm supplements a non-ranged attack, allowing her to immediately move Close from up to medium range. Using it replaces her normal reflexive Move action for the round. If her attack is withering, it doubles damage dice after soak. If decisive, it adds her Essence score to the base damage of the attack.

### Increasing Strength Exercise

**Cost:** 3m or 3i per bonus; Simple (One Scene)  
**Prereqs:** Athletics 3

For every three motes of Essence or Initiative the Exalt spends, she raises the base damage of her withering and decisive attacks by one and lowers the minimum Strength of all Feats of Strength by one. She also adds that many dice to all Strength-based rolls. She cannot spend more than (Essence \* 3) motes or initiative in this way.

### Legion Aurochs Method

**Cost:** 6m; Supplemental (Instant)

**Prereqs:** Essence 3, Athletics 5, Thunder's Might

This charm supplements feats of strength. Add 50% to the Solar's rolled successes (round down).

### Nine Aeons Thew

**Cost:** 1m, 1wp; Supplemental (Instant)

**Prereqs:** Essence 5, Athletics 5, Legion Aurochs Method

This charm supplements a feat of strength, reducing its difficulty by (Solar's Essence + 2), and she counts as meeting its Strength prerequisite no matter how high that requirement might be.

### Racing Hare Method

**Cost:** 5m, 1wp; Reflexive (One Hour)

**Prereqs:** Essence 2, Athletics 4, Lightning Speed

This charm may be used any time outside of combat. The Lawgiver travels overland as fast as a running horse. If she renews this technique at the end of an hour, ignore the Willpower cost.

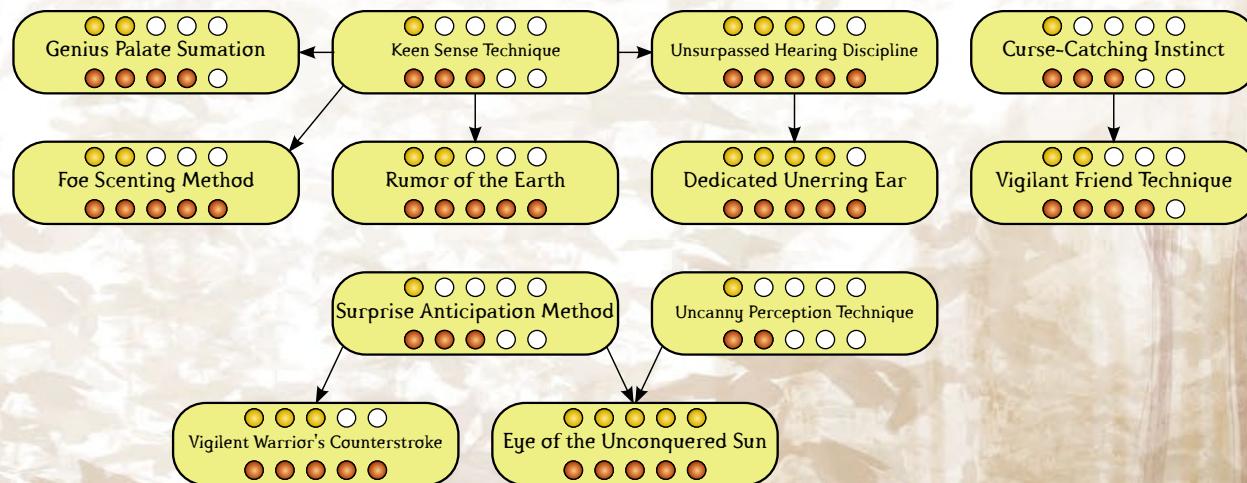
### One Extra Step

**Permanent**

**Prereqs:** Essence 4, Athletics 5, Godspeed Steps

Once per scene, the Exalt may take a second move action on her turn.

## Awareness



### Keen Sense Technique

**Permanent**

**Prereqs:** Awareness 3, Sensory Acuity Prana

When the Solar purchases this charm, choose Sight, Hearing, or Smell, Taste and Touch.

The Solar gains three dice on any Awareness roll involving the chosen sense(s).

With an Essence 2+ repurchase, she chooses a second sense. With an Essence 3+ repurchase, the bonus applies to all the listed senses. In addition, the Solar takes no penalty to rolls because of being blind or deaf. If both, she only takes -2 on tasks that would normally require those senses.

### Genius Palate Summation

**Cost:** 2m; Simple (Instant)

**Prereqs:** Essence 2, Awareness 4, Keen Sense Technique (Smell, Taste and Touch) or Keen Sense Technique x3

This Charm acts as an automatically successful read intentions action to determine the emotional state of the one who prepared a meal or poured a drink. The Solar need only sample a single bite of a meal or take a single sip of a drink to gain this understanding.

### Foe-Scenting Method

**Cost:** 3m; Simple (Instant)

**Prereqs:** Essence 2, Awareness 5, Keen Sense Technique (Smell, Taste and Touch) or Keen Sense Technique x3

The Solar makes a scent-based Read Intentions actions using (Perception + Awareness) to determine a target's disposition, out to medium range without the need to directly interact.

### Rumour Of The Earth

**Cost:** 5m, 1wp ; Simple (Instant) - Mute

**Prereqs:** Essence 2, Awareness 5, Keen Sense Technique (Hearing) or Keen Sense Technique x3

The Lawgiver places her head against the ground and listens for five minutes. She can hear any creature larger than a mouse moving within (Essence \* 5) miles, and learns their general location, number, and speed and direction of movement. Used in a city or other busy area, the results may not be that useful, but will still indicate any general motion of large numbers of people.

### Unsurpassed Hearing Discipline

**Cost:** 5m, 1wp; Simple (One conversation)

**Prereqs:** Essence 3, Awareness 5, Keen Sense Technique (Hearing) or Keen Sense Technique x 3

The Solar listens in on conversations that happened in her location up to (Essence x 5) hours prior to her arrival as though it were happening right next to her. She must sit still and listen intently for as much of the conversation as she wishes to hear.

### Dedicated Unerring Ear

**Cost:** 3m; Reflexive (One exchange)

**Prereqs:** Essence 4, Awareness 5, Unsurpassed Hearing Discipline

This charm may be activated any time the Exalt is addressed by someone for whom she holds a Major or Defining Intimacy, no matter how far away he is. So long as she's on the same plane of existence, the Solar can hear the words clearly, as if they were in the same room, so long as they are addressing their speech to her. She can hear everything her compatriot wishes to say to her, until the character has been silent for ten seconds or longer.

With an Essence 5 repurchase, the charm may also be activated whenever any character uses the Solar's name to refer to her, even if they are not addressing her, without the need for a relevant intimacy. If her name is in common use, the Storyteller should still mostly call attention to interesting and relevant references she might overhear, rather than mundane conversations.

### Curse-Catching Instinct

**Permanent**

**Prereqs:** Essence 2, Awareness 3

Whenever another character lays a curse upon the Solar or meddles with her fate, she rolls (Perception + Awareness), difficulty (meddler's Essence). Success lets the Solar know vaguely what happened (someone is meddling with your fate). With 3 threshold successes she learns a summary of what happened (Sidereal Astrology associated with The Sword is being used to make you more likely to fall ill). With 5 threshold successes she learns what happened in detail (Tekkip Nannaja, Chosen of Endings, is using Astrology associated with The Sword to increase the TN of your disease-resistance rolls to 9 until Calibration).

## What can I do with Awareness?

In addition to the obvious use of noticing assassins, a Solar with 5 successes on an Awareness roll might:

- Read a letter at a glance from across the room, quickly count masses of troops, see through smoke and fog.
- Identify an individual by scent, count the number of individuals in a crowded room, detect poison before taking a bite of food, identify every ingredient in a stew, tell how long ago a specific person left a room.
- Listen to conversations through thick stone walls, identify materials by touch, recognize counterfeits, feel an earthquake minutes or hours before it happens.

With 10 successes, she might:

- Spot a field mouse a quarter mile, read a letter at a hundred yards, critique the mating habits of insects.
- Smell blood from a mile away, identify which farm food came from by tasting each field in turn
- Listen in on a whispered conversation out to long range on a battlefield, read by tracing her fingers over the ink on a page, orient herself to the exit in complete darkness.

### Vigilant Friend Technique

**Cost:** 1m ; Simple (Indefinite) - Stackable

**Prereqs:** Essence 2, Awareness 4, Curse-Catching Instinct

The Solar touches a willing character. As long as she keeps the mote committed, she may roll (Perception + Awareness) to notice danger to the character, as though she were standing next to him. Add +1 difficulty if he's more than 1 mile away from her, +2 if more than 10, +3 if more than 100, +4 if he's anywhere on the same plane of existence or +5 if he's not. She doesn't learn the form of the danger, only that it exists, a general sense of the severity, and his location.

If the character dies, the Solar automatically notices and knows where it happened.

### Surprise Anticipation Method

**Permanent**

**Prereqs:** Awareness 3

The Solar takes no penalties to Awareness rolls to notice personal danger from being tired, asleep or unconscious. She wakes with a premonition of danger (though not its source) even if she fails such a roll.

In addition, for every 10 the Solar rolls on an Awareness check to notice or locate a hidden enemy, trap,

or any source of harm not readily apparent, she gains 1m.

### Vigilant Warrior's Counterstroke

**Cost:** 5m ; Reflexive (Instant) - Once/Scene

**Prereqs:** Essence 3, Awareness 5, Surprise Anticipation Method

The Solar may use this charm when targeted by a Surprise or Ambush attack. She may draw a weapon, then Clashes the attack. If clashing an Ambush she suffers -2 on her roll.

### Uncanny Perception Technique

**Permanent**

**Prereqs:** Awareness 2

When in the presence of dematerialized spirits, sorcerously-crafted living shadows and other generally invisible or intangible subjects, the Solar experiences strange sensory phenomena appropriate to the nature of the being, such as the sound of bells, the scent of chill winter wind or a coppery taste. She automatically notices the presence of such beings (but not their location) unless they hide from her using Stealth. These sensations are as distinctive as a voice - she'll almost always recognize a spirit or being she's met before.

## Eye of the Unconquered Sun

**Cost:** 10m, 1wp; Simple (One round)

**Prereqs:** Essence 4, Awareness 5, Surprise Anticipation Method, Uncanny Perception Technique

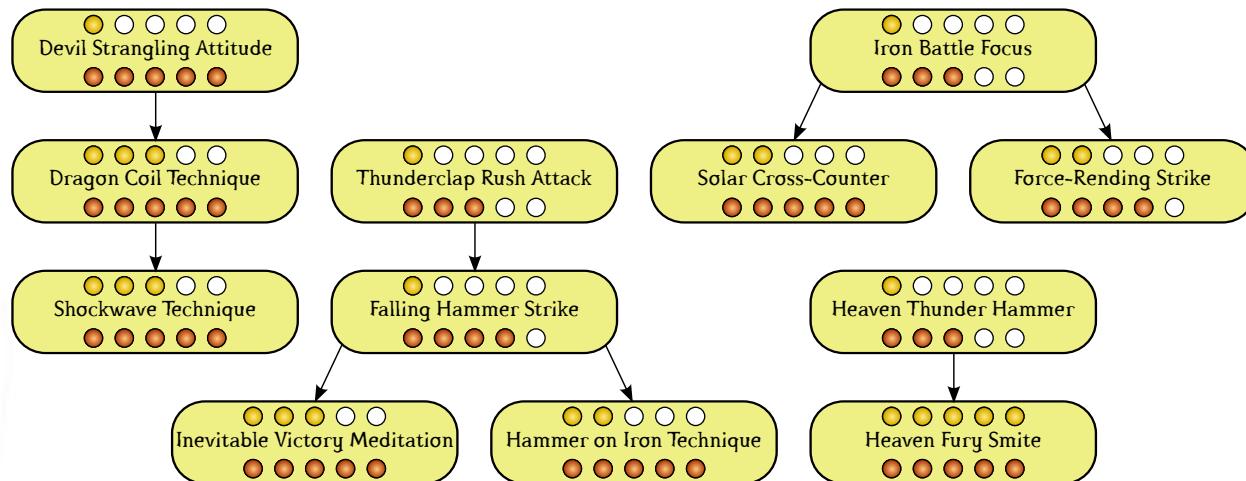
The Solar's caste mark blazes like a tiny sun, cancelling any Essence-muting magic the Solar may be using and removing her from stealth. She applies a single Perception + Awareness roll with (Essence) bonus dice against every character's Evasion out to long range. Even solid walls are no protection. Any character who didn't dodge is subject to the following effects.

- They automatically know they've been spotted, and by who.
- All magical and mundane Stealth effects are canceled, and she becomes aware of their pres-

ence.

- Fog lifts, smoke parts, and clouds dissolve.
- Dematerialized spirits are forced to materialize, paying full cost of the Materialize Charm or as much of it as they can pay.
- All disguise magic is stripped. Mundane disguises tatter and melt away, shapeshifters natural form becomes obvious to all viewers, resplendent destinies are temporarily forced into dormancy, personas are suppressed, and other transformative magic is similarly deactivated or the true form of their user revealed.
- This charm cannot contest Perfect effects, such as the Night caste anima power. The Solar learns that she's run up against such an effect, but can't break it.

## Brawl



### Iron Battle Focus

**Cost:** 3m; Supplemental (One Turn)

**Prereqs:** Brawl 3

This charm supplements any defense. Until the Solar's next turn, attacks (including this one) do not increase her onslaught penalty.

### Force-Rending Strike

**Cost:** 5m, 1wp; Reflexive (Instant)

**Prereqs:** Essence 2, Brawl 4, Iron Battle Focus

The Lawgiver may use this charm when she's the target of a non-ranged decisive attack. She clashes it

using Brawl.

If she is wielding an improvised weapon she may reduce the cost of this charm by 4m if she discards her weapon afterwards. It's destroyed, dropped or flung as the Storyteller deems appropriate.

With an Essence 3+ repurchase, she may clash energy attacks from beyond close range. Winning such a clash does no damage to her opponent, but her fists become wreathed in her attacker's essence, granting +(opponent's Essence) bonus attack and damage dice on her next attack.

### Solar Cross-Counter

**Cost:** 3m, 1i, 1wp ; Reflexive (Instant) - Counterattack

**Prereqs:** Essence 2, Brawl 5, Iron Battle Focus

This charm may be activated after the Solar has taken withering damage from an opponent at close range. She launches an immediate decisive Brawl attack with a base damage of the amount of withering damage she just took. This attack does not reset the Solar to base Initiative.

### Heaven Thunder Hammer

**Cost:** 7m; Supplemental (Instant)

**Prereqs:** Brawl 3

This charm supplements a decisive Brawl damage roll. If the damage roll scored at least two successes, the opponent is hurled into an object or surface within close range, hitting it with an impact equivalent to falling a short distance, destroying wooden furniture or the like he collides with.

At four or more successes, the foe either hits something at close range, suffering damage as though falling from a medium height, or knocked back to short range, suffering falling damage as though from a short distance.

Moving a Tyrant lizard or other such massive target requires an appropriate feat of strength.

### Heaven Fury Smite

**Cost:** 2m; Reflexive (Instant)

**Prereqs:** Essence 5, Brawl 5, Heaven Thunder Hammer

This charm can be used when the Lawgiver lands a Brawl attack that crashes her target. She immediately launches a decisive attack against the crashed opponent with any viable Ability, and she may draw a weapon to make it.

### Thunderclap Rush Attack

**Cost:** 3m ; Reflexive (Instant) - Attack-action, Once/Scene

**Prereqs:** Brawl 3

This charm may be activated any time a foe is at short range from the Solar. She immediately moves a single range band and makes a Brawl attack. The target cannot defend against the Solar's attack with a Clash unless he uses a Charm which grants him one.

Essence 3, At Brawl 5+, the character may add 1wp to the cost of this Charm to automatically strip (Essence) Initiative from her target and gain it herself before the attack is made.

### Falling Hammer Strike

**Cost:** 1m; Supplemental (Instant)

**Prereqs:** Brawl 4, Thunderclap Rush Attack

This Charm supplements any Brawl attack other than a grapple. Regardless of whether or not the attack hits, the target's onslaught penalty from the Solar does not clear on their next turn. Onslaught inflicted by other characters clears normally.

### Hammer on Iron Technique

**Cost:** 5m, 1wp; Simple (Instant)

**Prereqs:** Essence 2, Brawl 5, Falling Hammer Strike

The Solar makes a series of up to ([half Strength or Stamina, rounded up] - 1) decisive attacks against a single target, dividing her initiative evenly between them. Each attack gains +1 damage for each previously landed attack.

### Inevitable Victory Meditation

**Cost:** 3m, 2i; Simple (One Scene)

**Prereqs:** Essence 3, Brawl 5, Falling Hammer Strike

The Solar rolls (Wits + Brawl) and stores the result. She can end the charm at any time to use this result in place of a Brawl roll, or to boost Parry or Evasion by 1/2 stored successes. At Essence 4+, the roll gains (Essence) automatic successes.

This may be activated as though it were Reflexive when the Solar beats all of her opponents in a Join Battle roll, or when she knocks an opponent prone.

### Devil-Strangling Attitude

**Permanent**

**Prereqs:** Brawl 5, Vicious Lunge

This charm allows the Solar to roll (Strength + Brawl) to attack with grapple gambits.

If the Solar has Dexterity 5, she may take this charm for free, or if she already paid for it, gain an XP refund.

### Dragon Coil Technique

**Cost:** 3m; Supplemental (Until end of clinch)

**Prereqs:** Essence 3, Brawl 5, Devil-Strangling Attitude

This charm supplements a grapple gambit, allowing the Solar to grapple characters of prodigious size. Tyrant lizards, river dragons, siaka and similarly sized beasts are valid targets for the her grasp.

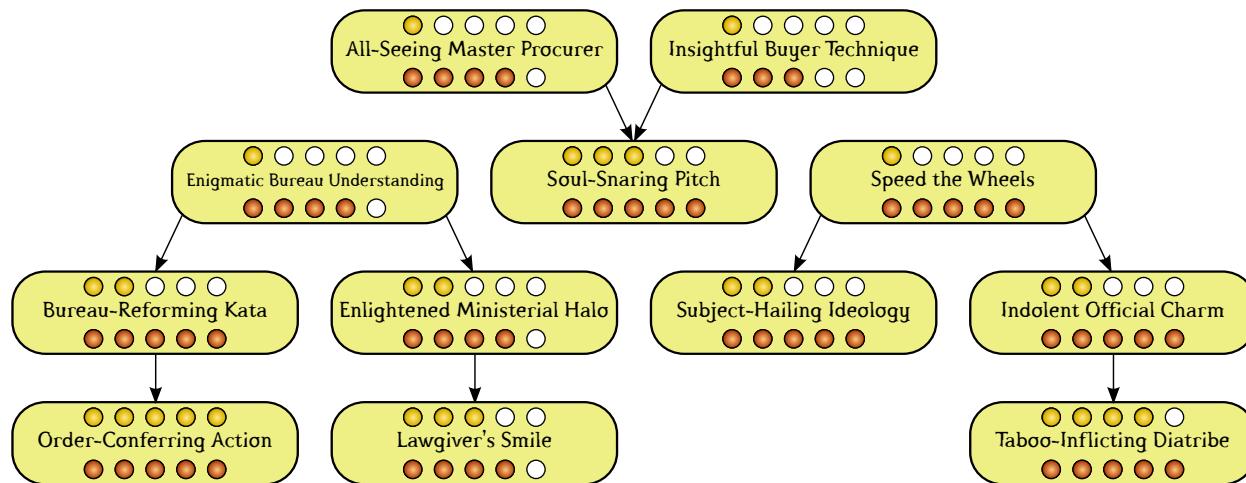
### Shockwave Technique

**Cost:** 6m, 1wp ; Supplemental (Instant) - Once/Scene

**Prereqs:** Essence 3, Brawl 5, Dragon Coil Technique

This charm supplements a Throw, allowing the Solar to toss her target out to medium range. In addition, she makes a single withering Brawl attack, base damage 7, which applies to every opponent within short range of where her target lands. If the Solar is crashed when she uses this attack, she still damages each foe, but she only gains Initiative from a single target.

## Bureaucracy



### All-Seeing Master Procurer

**Cost:** 5m; Reflexive (One scene)

**Prereqs:** Bureaucracy 4

This charm may be activated at any time. For the rest of the scene all of the Solar's customers or potential customers gain a Minor Tie of "this merchant is reliable and knowledgeable."

### Insightful Buyer Technique

**Cost:** 3m; Simple (Instant)

**Prereqs:** Bureaucracy 3

The Solar gains a feel for a particular marketplace, however distant, intuiting roughly how much a given object will fetch. The more specific the venue contemplated, the more accurate the forecast - "to the south" will give only vague ideas of how people further south will value a thing, while "the central bazaar of Gem" will give her a sharp understanding. As always, things

change - the longer she waits before acting on this information, the less accurate it may be.

### Soul-Snaring Pitch

**Cost:** 5m, 1wp ; Simple (Indefinite) - Mute, Psyche

**Prereqs:** Essence 3, Bureaucracy 5, All-Seeing Master Procurer, Insightful Buyer Technique

The Exalt makes a Persuade action to convince a character that a particular thing is his heart's desire. She rolls (Manipulation + Bureaucracy) with (Essence) automatic successes against the target's Resolve. If successful, a character must spend (Solar's Essence) willpower, or develop a Defining Tie (I must have it) towards an object of the Solar's choice as long as the charm remains active. Resisting Soul-Snaring Pitch makes a character immune to the Charm for one week.

### **Enigmatic Bureau Understanding**

**Cost:** 2m; Reflexive (Instant)

**Prereqs:** Bureaucracy 4

The Exalt may activate this charm when she enters the presence of a member of an organization she has control over or belongs to who has developed or lost an intimacy relating to it since they last met. She knows something has changed, and may make a Read Intentions action with regards to the new intimacy without needing to interact with them. If the intimacy was caused by a curse or blessing, she becomes aware of the general effect and purpose of the magic.

At Essence 3, if she succeeds on the Read Intentions action, in addition to learning of the intimacy she also gains a general understanding of what caused it - dissatisfaction, a conversation with a stranger, a bribe, etc. This charm can also now be used to detect curses or blessings that don't modify intimacies.

### **Bureau-Reforming Kata**

**Cost:** 5m, 1wp; Simple (Instant)

**Prereqs:** Essence 2, Bureaucracy 5, Enigmatic Bureau Understanding

When the Solar is aware of hostile magic such as Indolent Official Charm, astrological curses or similar affecting an organization she has control over or influence within, she spends a day moving individuals to new positions, hiring, firing and reorganizing and in so doing cleanses the magic. The organization is immune to that specific power for one month.

With an Essence 3 repurchase she can activate this charm in minutes rather than a full day, and she learns the identity of anyone whose hostile magic she cancels. The organization is immune to the effect for a full season.

### **Order-Conferring Action**

**Cost:** 6m, 1wp; Simple (One Season)

**Prereqs:** Essence 5, Bureaucracy 5, Bureau-Reforming Kata

By spending a day advising an organization (including by proxy), the Solar turns it into a bulwark of Creation. The Wyld cannot penetrate further into territories it controls or operates in (though Fair Folk themselves still might), diseases struggle to cross its borders, and Shadowlands encroach upon it more slowly.

### **Enlightened Ministerial Halo**

**Cost:** 4m; Simple (One Week)

**Prereqs:** Essence 2, Bureaucracy 4, Enigmatic Bureau Understanding

The Solar spends a day organizing, researching and otherwise participating in the workings of an organization she does not control. She rolls (Mental Attribute + Bureaucracy), difficulty 4. For the remainder of the week, the organization's leader gains (threshold successes) bonus dice on all Bureaucracy, Investigation, Larceny and War rolls related to running the organization.

### **Lawgiver's Smile**

**Cost:** 4m; Simple (One Day)

**Prereqs:** Essence 3, Bureaucracy 4, Enlightened Ministerial Halo

The Solar spends 15 minutes walking among her subordinates or comrades. Other members of the organization she belongs to or controls who are present in the scene gain a Minor Principle related to joy, optimism or some similar positive emotion related to a particular aspect of the organization, which fades when the charm ends. Employees are unnaturally enthusiastic about their jobs, and any battle groups they form the majority of have +2 dice on rout checks.

### **Speed the Wheels**

**Cost:** 8m; Simple (One task)

**Prereqs:** Bureaucracy 5

By speaking with the right individuals and in just the right way, the Solar sets a bureaucracy's wheels in motion at record speed. While this charm doesn't affect material labor (such as building a road or receiving a shipment), the organization, planning, approval, etc of a single task all occur significantly faster. Reduce the time required by two increments.

### **Subject-Hailing Ideology**

**Cost:** 5m; Supplemental (Instant)

**Prereqs:** Essence 2, Bureaucracy 5, Speed the Wheels

This charm supplements any social influence roll. For purposes of this roll, the Solar's target treats a single weakened or abandoned intimacy as though it had its former strength. The intimacy must be related to some official duty or role - marriage, bodyguard, employee, etc.

### Indolent Official Charm

**Cost:** 5m ; Simple (Indefinite) - Stackable

**Prereqs:** Essence 2, Bureaucracy 5, Speed the Wheels

This charm is the reverse of Speed the Wheels - with a sidelong glance and a word in the right ears, a single bureaucratic task grinds to halt. While this charm doesn't affect material labor (such as building a road or receiving a shipment), the organization, planning, approval, etc. of a single task all takes one increment longer.

This charm may be active multiple times on a single organization for different projects, but doesn't stack for any given request. It may be used in advance of a request, or speculatively - for example, she could stymie "any police investigation into my business". As long as the motes are committed, such an investigation would take much longer to complete.

### Taboo-Inflicting Diatribe

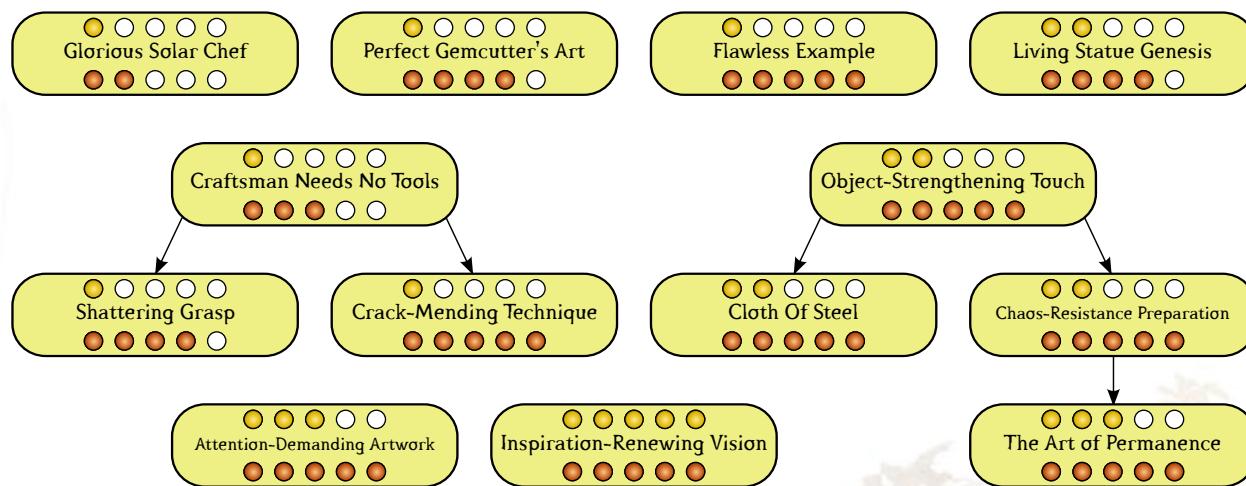
**Cost:** 6m, 1wp ; Simple (Indefinite) - Stackable, Psyche

**Prereqs:** Essence 4, Bureaucracy 5, Indolent Official Charm

The Solar repeatedly inveighs against a certain action relating to an organization she controls or has major influence within. Members of her organization gain a Major principle against the action unless they spend 1wp. The behaviors must be specific, and related to the organization - she could not inflict "Stealing is wrong," or but she could give members a Principle of "The company coffers are inviolate" or "Embezzlement from clients is a sin." This charm may be applied any number of times to a single organization (but only once for a specific intimacy). The intimacy fades if this charm ends.

With an Essence 5 repurchase, at the end of every month in which a person - member or not - interacts with the organization regularly they roll (Willpower). On a failure, they must spend 1wp or gain the intimacy at Minor strength permanently (it doesn't go away when the charm ends, and is in all ways a normal intimacy). As a rule of thumb for the Storyteller, after a season with this charm active half the populace will have the intimacy, and after a few years virtually all of them will. A particularly accepting or hostile population might speed or slow down the spread.

## Craft



### Glorious Solar Chef

**Cost:** 4m, 1wp ; Supplemental (One day) - Once/Day

**Prereqs:** Craft 2, a specialty in cooking

This Charm supplements an attempt to cook something. The Solar makes a (Charisma + Craft) In-

still action to create happiness, targeting anyone who eats her food. If it succeeds, and the target is below half their normal maximum willpower, they gain 1wp. With a suitable stunt, the Solar may attempt to instill something other than happiness.

### **Perfect Gemcutter's Art**

**Cost:** 5m, 1wp; Supplemental (Instant)

**Prereqs:** Craft 4, a specialty in gemcutting

This Charm supplements an attempt to cut and polish a gem. If the attempt is successful, the gem shines with light from within. The brightness of the glow depends on the value of the gem; a flawed quartz might only glow visibly in the dark, while a large and flawless diamond might be painful to look at. Gems cut this way glow until destroyed, and can easily become famous treasures or precious heirlooms.

### **Flawless Example**

**Cost:** 5m, 1wp; Supplemental (Instant)

**Prereqs:** Craft 5

This charm supplements a non-artifact Craft project. For as long as the result endures, any character with a related Craft specialty who examines it daily adds a success to all rolls to make a similar item. If they're trying to duplicate the item exactly, they add an additional success. A character who uses this bonus repeatedly for a month may purchase a one-dot Merit which duplicates the effects of examining the item daily, though the successes still count as coming from a charm.

### **Living Statue Genesis**

**Cost:** 5m ; Simple (Indefinite) - Stackable

**Prereqs:** Essence 2, Craft 4, a specialty in sculpture or clockwork

The Solar touches a statue or mechanical imitation of an animal that she's created. It springs to life and remains animate for as long as she keeps her motes committed. An animal created this way is in all ways like a normal animal, except that it can understand its creator's speech, it reliably obeys its creator's instructions, and it looks obviously inanimate. Animals imitated this way must be at least as large as a mouse and no larger than a dog.

An Essence 3+ repurchase allows her to spend an additional 2m to animate creatures as large as a horse or tiger. Human statues animated in this way are no more intelligent than any other creation.

An Essence 5 repurchase allows her to spend an additional 11m, 1wp (for a total of 18m, 1wp) to animate either a single statue or replica as large as a Tyrant Lizard or a magnitude 1 battle group of human-sized figures.

### **Craftsman Needs No Tools**

**Cost:** 4m ; Supplemental (One task) - Mute

**Prereqs:** Craft 3

This charm supplements a Basic project or personal-scale non-magical Major project, allowing the Solar to work on it without tools, using only her hands. Reduce the time required by two increments.

### **Shattering Grasp**

**Cost:** 6m ; Supplemental (One task) - Mute

**Prereqs:** Craft 4, Craftsman Needs No Tools

This charm supplements a Feat of Strength to destroy or dismantle an object. The Solar compares her (Perception or Dexterity) to the Strength minimum, and rolls (Perception or Dexterity + Craft) instead of (Strength + Athletics). If she succeeds, she can choose to disassemble the object rather than break it - she might end up with a pile of stone blocks or wooden beams rather than rubble, for example.

At Essence 3+, reduce the minimum Strength requirement for the feat by 2.

### **Crack-Mending Technique**

**Cost:** 10m, 1wp; Supplemental (Instant)

**Prereqs:** Craft 5, Craftsman Needs No Tools

This charm supplements a repair project for a non-magical item, allowing the Solar to repair impossibly damaged items, as long as a piece of the original remains. The repair takes as long as it would to create the item from scratch. Splintered wood can be made whole, a half-burnt manuscript returned to perfect legibility, a melted lump of metal returned to its form as a sword.

### **Object-Strengthening Touch**

**Cost:** 4m; Simple (One scene)

**Prereqs:** Essence 2, Craft 5

With a touch, the Solar increases the durability of an object up to (Essence \* 5) yards in radius. This increases the difficulty to break it by (Essence + 1), and renders it extremely resistant to fire, acid, freezing, and other forms of damage.

### **Cloth Of Steel**

**Cost:** 5m, 1wp; Supplemental (Instant)

**Prereqs:** Essence 2, Craft 5, Object-Strengthening Touch, a specialty in tailoring

This Charm supplements an attempt to make a set of clothes. If the attempt succeeds, the clothes benefit from the effects of Durability-Enhancing Technique and count as light mundane armor. They look almost identical to normal clothes; a difficulty 5 Craft or Awareness roll is needed to notice their supernatural durability. When making unusually heavy clothing, the sort that might incur a mobility penalty, the Solar may instead have them count as medium mundane armor.

### Chaos-Resistance Preparation

**Cost:** 5m; Simple (Instant)

**Prereqs:** Essence 2, Craft 5, Object-Strengthening Touch

The Lawgiver spends up an hour treating an object no more than (Essence) yards in radius. In the bordermarches of the wyld, the object and its wearer/wielder can go (Solar's Essence) weeks without rolling for exposure. This protection shortens to days in the middlemarches and hours in the deep wyld.

At Essence 3+, the Exalt may pay fifteen motes, one Willpower to use this Charm on the project scale, working for a full day to cover a considerable number of goods and vehicles or arms and armor, or perhaps a small ship.

At Essence 5+, extend the duration by two intervals.

### The Art of Permanence

**Cost:** 6m, 1wp; Supplemental (Instant)

**Prereqs:** Essence 3, Craft 5, Chaos-Resistance Preparation

This charm supplements a Basic project or personal-

scale non-magical Major project, causing it to endure forever. Candles burn eternally, a horse need never be shod again, a stone hut will endure the turning of the ages. Thy wyld will not twist it. This does not protect the items against intentional or sudden damage (a volcano or earthquake), only age and normal weathering.

### Attention-Demanding Artwork

**Cost:** 4m; Supplemental (Instant)

**Prereqs:** Essence 3, Craft 5

This Charm supplements an attempt to create a painting or a sculpture. If the attempt succeeds, the Solar may roll (Charisma or Manipulation + Craft). Anyone whose Resolve is less than half of her successes is unable to walk past the artwork without stopping to examine it unless they've already done so. In addition, anyone whose Resolve is less than the Solar's successes is unable to destroy the artwork or allow it to be destroyed. Spending 1wp allows him to ignore the art or an attempt to destroy it, while spending 2wp allows him to deliberately destroy the artwork.

If multiple pieces of art enhanced with this Charm are present in a scene, a character may resist the effects of all of them with a single expenditure of willpower.

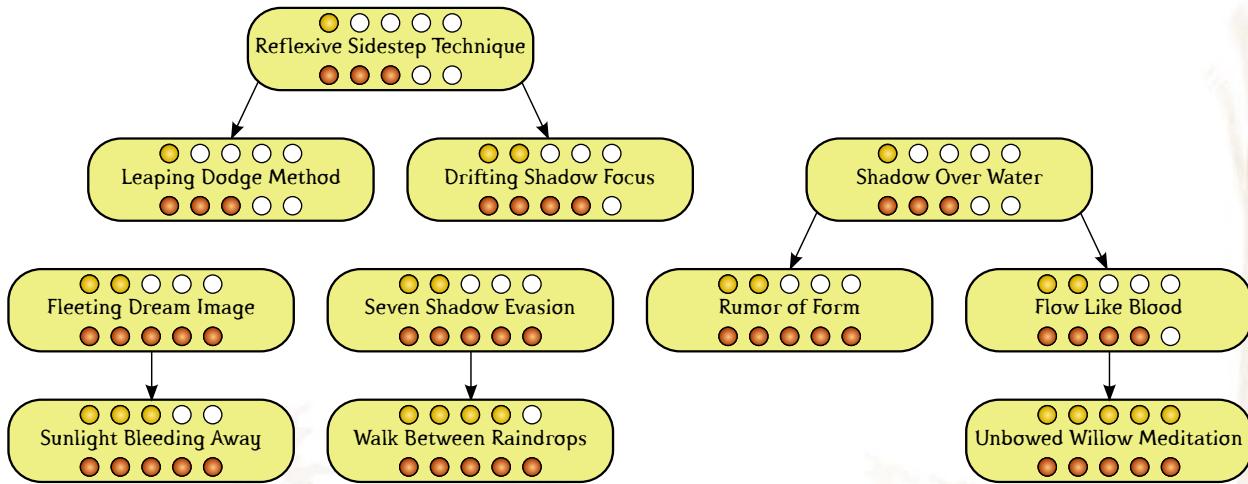
### Inspiration-Renewing Vision

**Cost:** 8m, 2wp; Supplemental (Instant)

**Prereqs:** Essence 5, Craft 5

This charm supplements a roll on a Major craft project. The roll does not count against the project's terminus. This charm may only be used once per project.

# Dodge



## Reflex Sidestep Technique

**Cost:** 5m ; Supplemental (Instant) - Post-roll  
**Prereqs:** Dodge 3

This charm supplements a dodge against an Ambush. The Solar sets her Evasion to 2 rather than 0, and gains +1 Evasion for every 1 or 2 her opponent rolled on the attack.

## Leaping Dodge Method

**Cost:** 1m, 2i; Reflexive (Instant)  
**Prereqs:** Dodge 3, Reflex Sidestep Technique

This charm may be activated after the Solar dodges an attack. She moves 1 range band in any direction.

## Drifting Shadow Focus

**Cost:** 3m, 1wp; Supplemental (One Turn)  
**Prereqs:** Essence 2, Dodge 4, Reflex Sidestep Technique

This charm supplements a dodge. If the attack (or any other against the Solar before her next turn) misses, she redirects it against any foe other than the attacker within close range.

## Fleet Dreaming Image

**Cost:** 5m; Supplemental (Instant)  
**Prereqs:** Essence 2, Dodge 5

This charm supplements a disengage action, allowing the Solar to perform it from short range. If successful, she moves to medium range, and as normal for disengaging, moves away the first time her opponent follows her.

## Sunlight Bleeding Away

**Cost:** 4m, 1wp ; Supplemental (One round) - Post-roll  
**Prereqs:** Essence 3, Dodge 5, Fleet Dreaming Image

This charm supplements a successful Disengage action. The Solar may retreat from her enemy the second time he approaches her as well as the first.

## Seven Shadow Evasion

**Cost:** 4m, 1wp ; Supplemental (Instant) - Once/Scene  
**Prereqs:** Essence 2, Dodge 5

This charm supplements a dodge, even if the attack is undodgeable. The attack misses. It may also be used to defend against uncountable, reoccurring damage, such as a rockslide or being thrown into Oblivion.

Seven Shadow Evasion can be reset by successfully dodging three decisive attacks.

## Walk Between Raindrops

**Cost:** 5m; Reflexive (Indefinite)  
**Prereqs:** Essence 4, Dodge 5, Seven Shadow Evasion

This charm may be activated at any time. The Solar can dodge undodgeable attacks, and can resist environmental hazards or effects with (Dexterity + Dodge) instead of (Stamina + Resistance) no matter how implausible doing so might seem. If a hazard would normally be unavoidable, like rain making the Solar wet, difficulty 5 is appropriate.

### Shadow Over Water

**Cost:** 2m; Supplemental (Instant)

**Prereqs:** Dodge 3, Drifting Leaf Elusion

This charm supplements a dodge. The Solar ignores all penalties that would affect her Evasion.

### Rumor of Form

**Cost:** 6m ; Supplemental (Instant) - Post-roll

**Prereqs:** Essence 2, Dodge 5, Shadow Over Water

This charm supplements a successful dodge. The Solar immediately rolls Stealth to reestablish surprise.

### Flow Like Blood

**Cost:** 5m, 1wp ; Reflexive (One scene) - Perilous

**Prereqs:** Essence 2, Dodge 4, Shadow Over Water

When attacked by enemies the Solar has Advantage against, she ignores all penalties to her Evasion. At the end of each each round during which she remained within close range of an enemy without getting hit, she gains 1i.

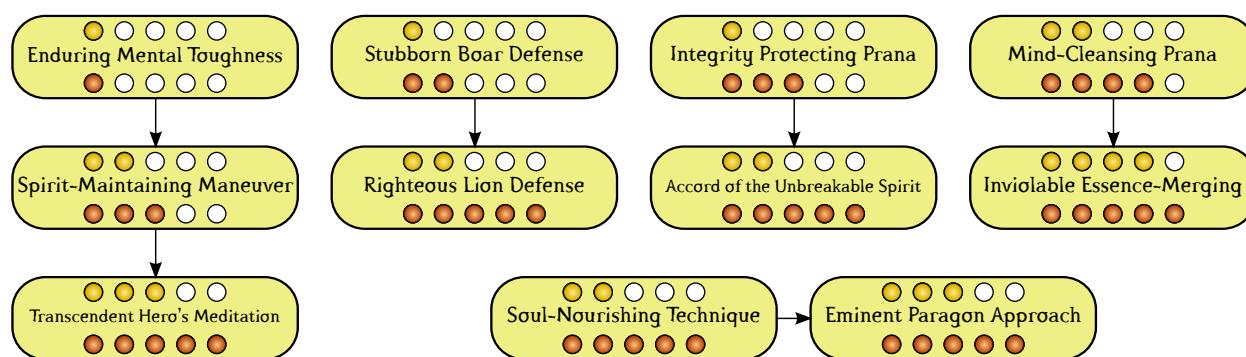
### Unbowed Willow Meditation

**Permanent**

**Prereqs:** Essence 5, Dodge 5, Flow Like Blood

Whenever the Solar dodges a non-gambit decisive attack from a dangerous opponent without using any charms, after the attack completes she steals all of his Initiative, setting him to 0i and crashing him.

## Integrity



### Enduring Mental Toughness

**Cost:** 1m; Reflexive (One day)

**Prereqs:** Integrity 1

This charm may be activated at any time. The Solar ignores all wound, illness, and crippling penalties to her Resolve or Guile.

### Spirit-Maintaining Maneuver

**Cost:** 5m per 1wp ; Supplemental (Instant) - Post-roll

**Prereqs:** Essence 2, Integrity 3, Enduring Mental Toughness

This charm supplements a defense against any Psyche effect or spirit warping attack. For every 5m spent, the effect costs 1wp less to resist.

### Transcendent Hero's Meditation

**Cost:** 7m, 1wp; Simple (Instant)

**Prereqs:** Essence 3, Integrity 5, Spirit-Maintaining Maneuver

The Solar spends five minutes meditating, and ends all Psyche affects with a hold over her.

This charm may only be activated after a Psyche effect makes her act against one of her Intimacies, and she may activate it in spite of any Psyche effects that would prevent her from doing so (including Psyche effects that would prevent her from noticing she's violated the Intimacy).

### Stubborn Boar Defense

**Permanent**

**Prereqs:** Integrity 2

Once the Solar has resisted a Persuade action, she

## Meditation

A character who is meditating for the purposes of a charm must remain in still and unresponsive. She regains 10m per hour, as per normal mote regeneration rules while relaxed. If she reacts to another character or any external stimulus, moves, speaks (chanting unintelligibly is ok) or falls asleep, she is no longer meditating and activating the charm fails.

gains +2 to her Resolve if the issue is raised again by anyone other than her Lunar mate.

### Righteous Lion Defense

#### Permanent

**Prereqs:** Essence 2, Integrity 5, Stubborn Boar Defense

When purchasing this charm, the Solar selects one of her Defining Principles. The selected intimacy must be relatively specific - "I will never kneel to Zhao Li", or "Great Forks must be conquered," but not "I will never kneel" or "Creation must be conquered."

As long as she has the intimacy, she may treat any influence that would cause her to act against it as an unacceptable order, and any attempt to weaken it takes a -3 penalty.

Once per story, the Solar may spend an hour meditating in order to select a different Principle for use with this charm.

### Integrity-Protecting Prana

**Cost:** 5m, 1wp; Reflexive (Indefinite)

**Prereqs:** Integrity 3

This charm may be activated at any time. The Solar and her equipment is immune to soul-twisting environmental effects, such as wyld addiction, mutation, or the tainted essence of a damaged manse. This does not reverse damage already suffered, or protect against directed attacks.

### Accord of the Unbreakable Spirit

**Cost:** 6m, 1wp; Simple (Indefinite)

**Prereqs:** Essence 2, Integrity 5, Integrity-Protecting Prana

The Solar leads a group in meditation, prayer, chant or song for at least an hour. As long as at least a third the group is meditating/praying/chanting at all times (and she keeps the motes committed), everyone in that group gains 3 bonus successes to resist disease, environmental exposure and wyld mu-

tation/addiction (this is enough to render them immune to all but the harshest environments and furthest reaches of the wyld).

### Mind-Cleansing Prana

**Cost:** 5m ; Simple (One scene) - Mute, Once/Day

**Prereqs:** Essence 2, Integrity 4

The Solar spends at least ten minutes in meditation. During the next scene she participates in, she gains one automatic success on Awareness, Investigation, Survival, or any other rolls requiring concentration or clarity of perception or thought (including Read Intentions). The first time she succeeds on such a roll during that scene, she gains 1wp. In addition, she ignores the up to -2 in penalties against her when attempting to see through or resist Psyche effects and illusions.

### Inviolable Essence-Merging

**Cost:** 7m; Reflexive (Indefinite)

**Prereqs:** Essence 4, Integrity 5, Mind-Cleansing Prana

The Exalt becomes categorically immune to harm. While this charm is active, she cannot take any action other than speaking, meditating and activating other Integrity charms. She may not use any non-integrity charms.

This charm may not be used in a scene where she has attacked or otherwise harmed another character.

### Soul-Nourishing Technique

**Cost:** 4m, 1wp; Simple (Instant)

**Prereqs:** Essence 2, Integrity 5

The Solar spends at least an hour giving a sermon or telling a story explaining one of her Defining Principles and why she holds it. Anyone who listens is refreshed as though they'd eaten a solid meal and drank enough water.

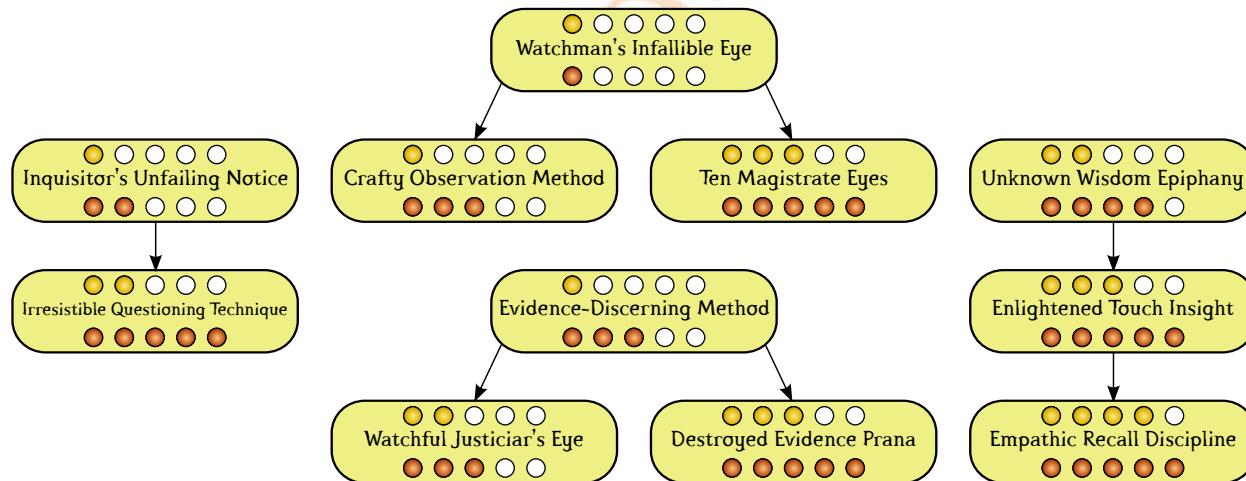
## Eminent Paragon Approach

**Cost:** 1m ; Supplemental (Instant) - Once/Story  
**Prereqs:** Essence 3, Integrity 5, Soul-Nourishing Technique

This charm supplements any action to uphold, defend or advance one of the Solar's Defining Principles. If

the action is successful, all who witness it automatically succeed (and are aware they've succeeded) on a Read Intentions action against the Solar to learn the embodied Principle. They understand that she truly holds the principle in question, and is not just pretending.

## Investigation



### Inquisitor's Unfailing Notice

**Permanent**

**Prereqs:** Investigation 2

In addition to any normal Awareness rolls the Solar might receive, she becomes automatically aware of anyone who picks a pocket, attempts to pass off a forgery, relies on a disguise or other similarly larcenous actions in her presence. This does not grant knowledge of what caught the Solar's attention, only who.

### Irresistible Questioning Technique

**Cost:** 5m, 1wp ; Supplemental (Instant) - Psyche, Once/Story per Target

**Prereqs:** Essence 2, Investigation 5, Inquisitor's Unfailing Notice

This Charm supplements a Persuade action in the form of a question, outside of combat. If she succeeds, the target must answer truthfully, and to the fullest extent of his knowledge. For each threshold success, the Solar may ask a further question elaborating on the same theme (including repeating a question the target has resisted). The target may resist any question by spending 1wp (the same question may not

be asked again during the use of this charm), or end the questioning immediately by leaving the scene (if able).

### Watchman's Infallible Eye

**Permanent**

**Prereqs:** Investigation 1

The Lawgiver becomes automatically aware of when she enters a location where a Case Scene action would be appropriate, or enters the presence of a character against whom a Profile action might reveal a clue in an ongoing investigation (she also knows which person, even in a crowd).

### Crafty Observation Method

**Cost:** 5m ; Supplemental (Instant) - Mute

**Prereqs:** Investigation 3, Watchman's Infallible Eye

This charm supplements a Case Scene action. It takes only a few seconds rather than the usual 15 minutes.

### Ten Magistrate Eyes

**Cost:** 3m; Supplemental (Instant)

**Prereqs:** Essence 3, Investigation 5, Watchman's Infallible Eye

This charm supplements a Case Scene action. The Solar doesn't need to interact with the area she's examining - no need to walk around, search through drawers, reach under the bed, etc.

### Evidence-Discerning Method

**Cost:** 2m, 1wp; Simple (Instant)  
**Prereqs:** Investigation 3

By sorting through possessions, physical evidence and so on left by a particular person, the Exalt makes a Profile action against that person. If the evidence left at this location is scanty or intentionally obscured, the Storyteller should grant him a bonus to his Guile.

### Watchful Justiciar's Eye

**Cost:** 1m, 1wp; Reflexive (Instant)  
**Prereqs:** Essence 2, Investigation 3, Evidence-Discerning Method

The Solar may activate this charm whenever she sees a character she's previously Profiled acts outside the bounds of the profile she's established. She may immediately make a new Profile action without the need for further interaction.

### Destroyed Evidence Prana

**Cost:** 6m; Supplemental (Varies)  
**Prereqs:** Essence 3, Investigation 5, Evidence-Discerning Method

This charm supplements a Case Scene action. The Solar suffers no penalties to the action due to damage to or destruction of the scene - she might understand the occupants of a building destroyed by a tornado,

or read the ashes of a burned note, for example.

### Unknown Wisdom Epiphany

**Cost:** 10m, 1wp; Simple (Instant)  
**Prereqs:** Essence 2, Investigation 4

The Solar goes over a location and chooses an event that happened there within the last (Essence) days. She then retraces the steps and mimics the actions of one of the participants. As she does so she has flashbacks, both visual and emotional, from the perspective of the person she's emulating, spread over the course of the event.

### Enlightened Touch Insight

**Cost:** 5m; Simple (Instant)  
**Prereqs:** Essence 3, Investigation 5, Unknown Wisdom Epiphany

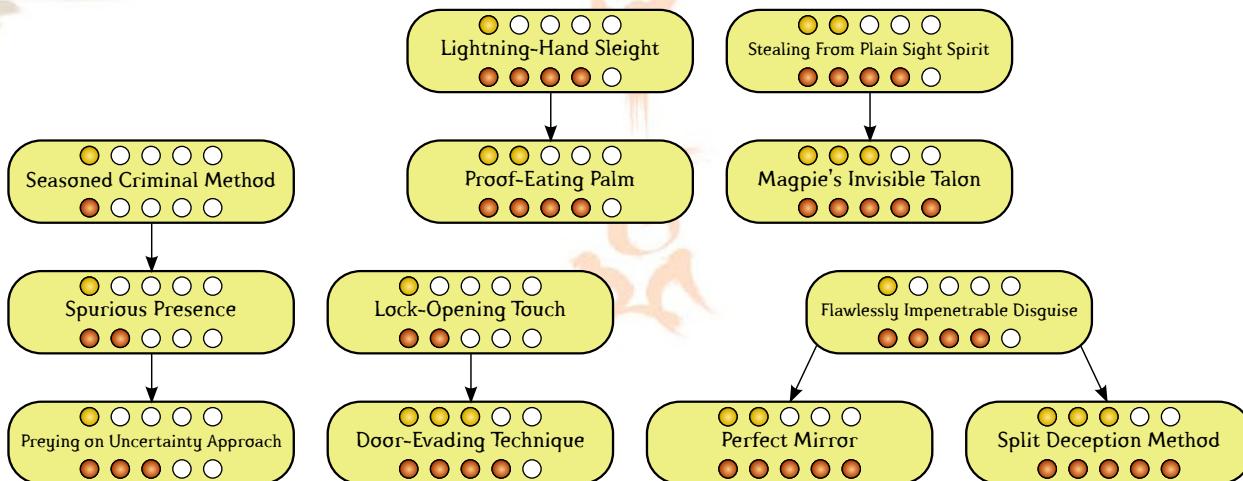
The Lawgiver touches an item and rolls (Wits + Investigation) against a difficulty equal to the number of days since the object was placed. If successful, she feels the exact emotion of the one who left the item at the moment they dropped or placed it.

### Empathic Recall Discipline

**Cost:** 1m, 1wp; Reflexive (Instant)  
**Prereqs:** Essence 4, Investigation 5, Enlightened Touch Insight

This charm may be activated when the Solar succeeds on a Case Scene action. She may immediately make a Read Intentions action against the perpetrator (even if they are long gone). If successful, she learns the intentions behind their actions.

# Larceny



## Seasoned Criminal Method

Permanent

Prereqs: Larceny 1

The Solar may adopt or discard any of the following effects reflexively:

- Familiarity: She may treat all members of criminal organizations as though they had a Minor Tie of familiarity towards her. They're likely to believe she is a fellow criminal with whom to be treated: a member of the organization, a prospect for initiation, etc.
- Dissonance: Magistrates or other officials seeking to establish her identity suffer a -2 penalty to their Bureaucracy and Investigation actions. Minor characters who do not know her personally but have seen her hanging around the scene of a crime cannot remember doing so.
- Vulnerability: The Exalt makes herself seem the best possible target for a specific type of crime. Confidence men will see an easy mark, gamblers will try to take advantage, thugs will try to mug her, etc.
- Receptivity: Criminals who spot her as someone who will partake of their particular vice. She might be seen as a drug buyer or seller, someone looking to hire a prostitute, or similar. Such parties will be likely to provide her with information about where to go and who to talk to.

## Spurious Presence

Cost: 6m; Simple (One scene)

Prereqs: Larceny 2, Seasoned Criminal Method

As long as the Solar fits into a scene reasonably well and acts as expected for the situation, minor characters receive no Awareness rolls to notice that she's out of place unless they are on special alert. Attempts to discern that she doesn't belong here suffer a -2 penalty, and she may use Larceny instead of Socialize for her Guile if questioned about her presence.

## Preying on Uncertainty Approach

Cost: 3m; Reflexive (One Scene)

Prereqs: Larceny 3, Spurious Presence

This charm may be activated when someone discovers the Solar somewhere she doesn't belong. She makes an immediate Read Intentions action to discern what sort of lie the person who found her would believe. If successful, she may treat her insight as a Minor Intimacy when trying to convince him that she belongs there, or at the very least means no harm.

## Lightning-Hand Sleight

Cost: 3m; Reflexive ((Essence + 1) hours)

Prereqs: Larceny 4

This charm supplements a Larceny action to cheat at a game or poison her target's food or drink without notice. The target's Awareness roll to oppose the Solar is delayed until the charm ends. The duration decreases by one hour each subsequent time she uses this charm in a single scene, and ends immediately if her poison knocks out or kills.

## But my character's too Smart for that!

While it comes up in other abilities, Larceny in particular is subject to the difficulty of players running characters more intelligent than themselves. Here are some tips for the Storyteller on how to work with your players.

- Cooperate with the players. When they roll well high on Larceny, work together with them on a plan - it doesn't have to be super intelligent, just "smart enough." Help them figure out how to bypass obstacles, and, here's the important bit, don't add more. Let them bypass trouble, and skip to the interesting bits!
- When contingencies come up, let them have already planned for them. Cornered by guards? "Good thing my character memorized the map, and there's another way out of here." The rules for Introducing a Fact with Lore are a good starting point.
- If something comes up after the fact, ask how their character took care of it, rather than assuming they didn't. Did they forget that a servant's dress uniform would be missed the next day? It's a chance to show off how bright the character was, taking care of it in advance, rather than playing gotcha with the player.

Obviously none of this is universal - characters can and should mess up. But it is a starting point on how to make criminal masterminds just as fun to play as brawny warlords.

### Proof-Eating Palm

**Cost:** 1m ; Simple (Indefinite) - Stackable

**Prereqs:** Essence 2, Larceny 4, Lightning-Hand Sleight

The solar performs some slight-of-hand with an object small enough to fit in her palm. Instead of merely being hidden, the object goes Elsewhere. When she ends the charm, it reappears in her hand. She may have no more than five instances of this charm active at a time.

### Lock-Opening Touch

**Cost:** 5m; Supplemental (Instant)

**Prereqs:** Larceny 2

This charm supplements an attempt to pick a lock. If the lock is mundane, it opens at her touch without need for tools or a roll. Against a magical lock, she may attempt to pick it one interval faster (usually in seconds rather than minutes).

### Door-Evading Technique

**Cost:** 10m, 1wp; Simple (Instant)

**Prereqs:** Essence 3, Larceny 4, Lock-Opening Touch

The Solar passes through a door, window, grate or other portal without opening it.

### Stealing From Plain Sight Spirit

**Cost:** 6m ; Supplemental (Instant) - Mute

**Prereqs:** Essence 2, Larceny 4

This charm supplements a pickpocketing attempt, allowing it to be used on normally invalid targets that the Solar could move without a feat of strength. The attempt takes a penalty ranging from -1 (mildly improbable - a table in the middle of the room) to -5 (blatantly unfeasible - the chair someone is sitting in, worn pants). Anyone who fails their Awareness roll to notice the theft cannot notice the absence for (Solar's Essence) minutes or until circumstances call attention to the theft.

### Magpie's Invisible Talon

**Cost:** 1wp; Supplemental (Instant)

**Prereqs:** Essence 3, Larceny 5, Stealing From Plain Sight

This charm supplements a pickpocket attempt, allowing the Solar to steal small items from up to (Essence) yards away, even if a solid barrier blocks her reach.

### Flawlessly Impenetrable Disguise

**Cost:** 5m; Supplemental (Until the Exalt sleeps)

**Prereqs:** Larceny 4

This charm supplements a Disguise action. The Solar ignores penalties for disguising herself as a different

sex, race or body type. If someone sees through the disguise, instead of getting a sense of what she really looks like he merely learns that she is not what she appears to be.

### Perfect Mirror

**Cost:** 5m, 1wp ; Supplemental (Until the Exalt sleeps) - Mute

**Prereqs:** Essence 2, Larceny 5, Flawlessly Impenetrable Disguise

This charm supplements a Disguise action. The Solar ignores the penalty for disguising herself as a specific person. In addition, the disguise may mimic the Dim level of any exalt's anima as appropriate for the role

adopted, or similar minor magical effects. Any character who attempts to pierce the disguise and fails suffers a -2 penalty on subsequent attempts.

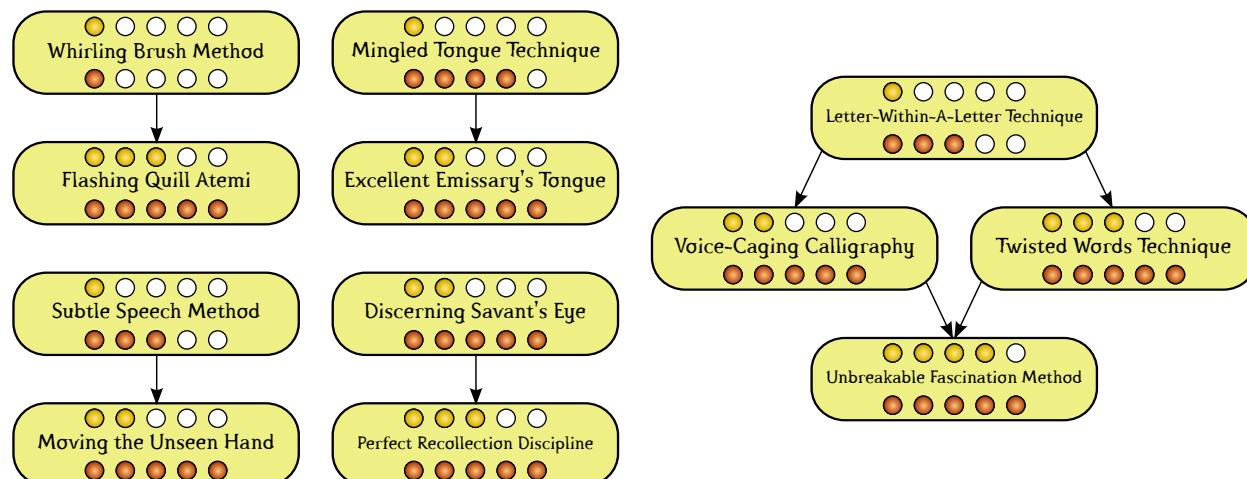
### Split Deception Method

**Cost:** 5m ; Reflexive (Indefinite) - Stackable

**Prereqs:** Essence 3, Larceny 5, Perfect Mirror

The Solar may activate this charm when she finishes a Disguise action. She immediately makes another Disguise action. When later seen by other characters, the Solar chooses which disguise each witness or group of witnesses sees. If she's unaware of them, they see the final one donned. She may have this charm active no more than (Essence) times at once.

## Linguistics



### Whirling Brush Method

**Cost:** 3m ; Supplemental (Instant) - Mute

**Prereqs:** Linguistics 1

This charm supplements a Linguistics action to copy an existing document (or a short portion of one) or to create a written work requiring little creativity or careful consideration. This action takes two intervals less time. It may also be used to transcribe a spoken conversation - the Solar can keep up with a rapid conversation involving multiple parties.

### Flashing Quill Atemi

**Cost:** 1m; Simple (One minute)

**Prereqs:** Essence 3, Linguistics 5, Whirling Brush Method

The Solar edits an existing document - changing

words on the page, adding or removing text, adjusting tone. This destroys any existing social influence or magic encoded in the text, though she may add her own as though she were writing the document herself. She rolls (Manipulation + Linguistics) - any reader must meet that difficulty with a (Perception + Linguistics) roll to notice the document has been altered.

### Subtle Speech Method

**Cost:** 3m ; Supplemental (One idea conveyed) - Mute

**Prereqs:** Linguistics 3

This charm supplements an attempt to convey information covertly during another conversation. Only the intended targets hear the subtext (which may be completely unrelated to what the conversation

seemed to be about). Attempts by other listeners to notice any covert meaning automatically fail.

### Moving the Unseen Hand

**Cost:** 4m ; Supplemental (Instant) - Mute

**Prereqs:** Essence 2, Linguistics 5, Subtle Speech Method

This charm supplements writing an unsigned message. The Exalt rolls (Manipulation + Linguistics), and chooses an effect:

- The reader believes the document was written by a specific person of the Solar's choice.
- The reader believes the message was written by the person they most wish it were from.
- If the Solar has Bureaucracy 3+, she can choose to make the reader assume it was written by a hierarchical superior.

Whenever anyone reads the document, compare this roll against their Resolve. If successful, they are taken in.

### Mingled Tongue Technique

**Cost:** 4m, 1wp + 3m per extra language; Supplemental (One scene)

**Prereqs:** Linguistics 5, Strange Tongue Understanding

This charm supplements an attempt to speak to a group. The Solar chooses two languages she knows - for the rest of the scene she may speak in a way comprehensible to speakers of either. She may add any number of additional languages to the mix, paying an additional 3m for each.

### Excellent Emissary's Tongue

**Cost:** 6m; Reflexive (Indefinite)

**Prereqs:** Essence 2, Linguistics 5, Mingled Tongue Technique

The Solar may use this charm when she hears an unfamiliar language being spoken. She learns the language, both written and spoken, though she retains a -3 penalty to social influence in the new language until the charm has been active for a week. If she uses the language (and the charm remains active) for more than a season, she learns the language naturally, and the knowledge does not fade with the end of the charm.

### Discerning Savant's Eye

**Cost:** 1m, 1wp; Supplemental (One scene)

**Prereqs:** Essence 2, Linguistics 5, Whirling Brush Method

This charm supplements an attempt to read or copy a damaged text, allowing the Exalt to ignore the damage as long as some fragment remains.

### Perfect Recollection Discipline

**Cost:** 1m; Supplemental (Instant)

**Prereqs:** Essence 3, Linguistics 5, Discerning Savant's Eye

This charm supplements reading a book or other document of any length. The Solar retains the text perfectly, and can flip through it mentally as though it were in her hands. If she retains the 1m commitment for a season, the information becomes innate and does not fade if she ends the charm.

With a repurchase, she can read the material to be memorized as quickly as she can unroll a scroll or turn pages (approximately two per second) with full comprehension.

### Letter-Within-A-Letter Technique

**Cost:** 4m ; Supplemental (Instant) - Mute

**Prereqs:** Linguistics 3

This charm supplements writing a document. The Solar infuses it with meaning for a specific recipient, who automatically notices and understands. She rolls (Manipulation + Linguistics) to set the difficulty others must meet to notice anything amiss with the document (usually Perception + Linguistics), and only with 3 threshold successes can they understand the hidden message.

### Voice-Caging Calligraphy

**Cost:** 2m, 1wp ; Supplemental (Instant) - Mute, Psyche

**Prereqs:** Essence 2, Linguistics 5, Letter-Within-A-Letter Technique

This charm supplements writing a letter or other brief work. The reader may not share the contents of the letter with anyone else - he forgets what he was going to say, writes nothing, or otherwise fails to act upon his intention to do so unless he spends 5wp to end the effect. If one of his Defining intimacies is threatened, the cost drops to 2wp.

### Twisted Words Technique

**Cost:** 1m, 1wp ; Supplemental (Instant) - Psyche  
**Prereqs:** Essence 3, Linguistics 5, Flowing Elegant Hand, Letter Within-A-Letter Technique, Subtle Speech Method

This charm supplements social influence of any ability. Though the target applies Intimacies as normal for the apparent effect, the influence has an actual effect opposite of that - if it seems like it should strengthen an intimacy, it weakens it instead. For example, the Solar might make a passionate speech on the evils of harlotry which forms an Intimacy of support in her listeners.

This influence can always be resisted by spending 1wp, regardless of intimacies.

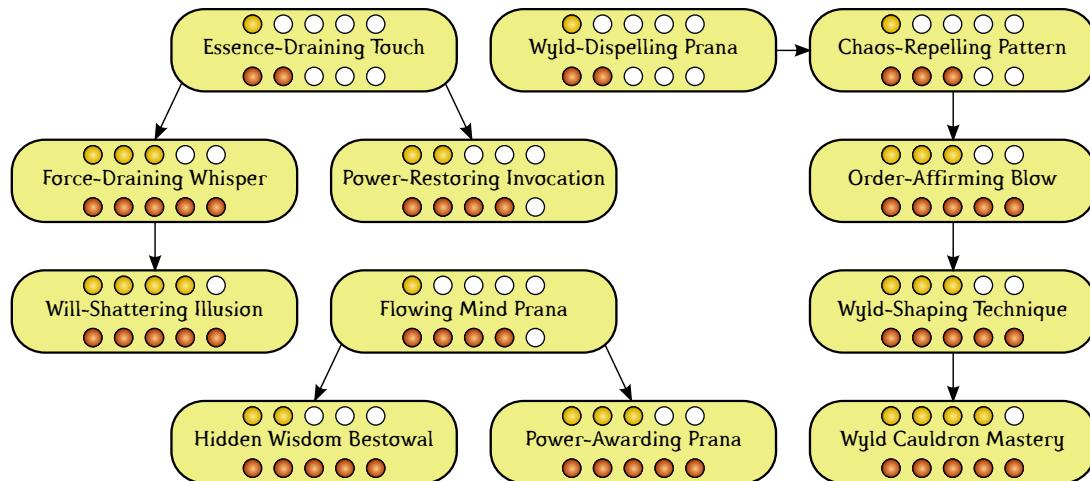
### Unbreakable Fascination Method

**Cost:** 6m, 1wp ; Simple (Indefinite) - Psyche  
**Prereqs:** Essence 4, Linguistics 5, Twisted Words Technique

The Solar speaks, and rolls (Manipulation + Linguistics) with (Essence) automatic successes, applying it against the Resolve of everyone listening. Anyone whose Resolve is met is held enraptured until she ceases speaking, even those who do not understand her language. The charm ends if the listeners come under direct physical danger.

This charm may instead be used to supplement a written work - if it is, as long as the Solar leaves the motes committed, anyone who reads even a single line is required to spend at least (Solar's Essence) minutes reading more of the text.

## Lore



### Essence-Draining Touch

**Cost:** 1wp; Simple (Instant)  
**Prereqs:** Lore 2, Essence 1

This Solar touches a target with a mote pool, and rolls (Wits + Lore) against his Resolve. She steals up to (threshold successes) of his motes, starting with peripheral and moving on to personal if he runs out. If used on an unwilling target in combat, this requires a difficulty 2 gambit with Brawl, Martial Arts or Melee.

### Force-Draining Whisper

**Cost:** 10m, 1wp ; Supplemental (Instant) - Post-roll, Once/Scene

**Prereqs:** Essence 3, Lore 5, Essence-Draining Touch

This charm supplements defense against a decisive attack after it has hit. The Exalt rolls (Wits + Lore) with (Essence) automatic successes, and reduces the of the attack by that many dice. In addition, she gains that much initiative.

Force-Draining Whisper can be reset if she or any of her allies reaches their last health level.

At Essence 4+, she may also use this charm to supplement the defense of an ally at up to Long range.

### Will-Shattering Illusion

**Cost:** 10m ; Simple (Instant) - Mute, Once/Scene  
**Prereqs:** Essence 4, Lore 5, Force Draining Whisper

The Solar rolls (Wits + Lore) with (Essence) bonus dice against a target within Long range, and he contests with ([Intelligence or Wits] + Lore). If she's successful, he loses 2wp, and (if in combat) she steals 4i. If he has equal or greater Essence, she also gains 1wp.

### Power-Restoring Invocation

**Cost:** 2i ; Simple (Instant) - Once/Scene  
**Prereqs:** Essence 3, Lore 5, Essence-Draining Touch

The Solar rolls (Perception + Lore), granting that many motes of essence divided as she chooses among herself and any allies within Extreme range.

At Essence 5, she may use this charm even in crash, spending herself into negative initiative.

### Flowing Mind Prana

**Cost:** 4m, 1wp; Simple (Varies)  
**Prereqs:** Lore 4

The Lawgiver spends time teaching or training up to (Essence \* 5) willing pupils. They gain one dot of an attribute or ability of the Solar's choice, up to a maximum of what she herself possesses. This takes one increment less than the normal training time. If any of them track experience points (other PCs, for example), they must pay for the new dot as normal. In addition, she may teach her pupils any intimacy she possesses, creating it at Minor or strengthening it - they may not resist this, having already agreed to become her student.

An Essence 3+ repurchase allows her to teach a single Charm or Spell that her pupils otherwise meet the prerequisites for instead of the normal dot, and she may give pupils intimacies she does not possess.

### Hidden Wisdom Bestowal

**Cost:** 10m, 1wp ; Supplemental (One scene) - Mute  
**Prereqs:** Essence 2, Lore 5, Flowing Mind Prana

This charm supplements any action to teach someone, disguising the Solar's lessons as harmless regardless

of their true content. Only the target understands the true meaning of her lessons. She might teach demonlogy while discussing the Immaculate texts during a casual stroll, or teach brawling during a dance lesson.

### Power-Awarding Prana

**Cost:** 10m ; Simple (Indefinite) - Mute, Stackable  
**Prereqs:** Essence 3, Lore 5, Flowing Mind Prana

The Solar touches another Lawgiver, and grants him knowledge of one of her charms he meets the minimums and prerequisites for. As long as she maintains this charm, he may use it as though he had learned it himself.

### Power-Awarding Prana

**Cost:** 10m ; Simple (Indefinite) - Mute, Stackable  
**Prereqs:** Essence 3, Lore 5, Essence Font Technique, Flowing Mind Prana x 3

The Solar touches another Lawgiver, and grants him knowledge of one of her charms he meets the minimums and prerequisites for. As long as she maintains this charm, he may use it as though he had learned it himself.

### Wyld-Dispelling Prana

**Cost:** 5m, 1wp; Supplemental (Varies)  
**Prereqs:** Lore 2

This charm supplements a defense against the soul or body twisting power of the wyld, either on the Solar or on an object, structure or character within Short range. The target ignores the effect, and the Lawgiver rolls ([Wits, Perception or Intelligence] + Lore), with (Essence) automatic successes against a difficulty of 1 for the bordermarches, 5 for the middlemarches or 7 for the deep wyld. The charm lasts (threshold successes) minutes out of combat or that many rounds in-combat. Ignore the wp cost on subsequent activations during the same scene.

### Chaos-Repelling Pattern

**Cost:** 10m, 1wp; Simple (One hour)  
**Prereqs:** Lore 3, Wyld-Dispelling Prana

The area around the Solar out to short range behaves according to the laws of Creation - it will not twist character's souls as the wyld, nor will the ground transform beneath her feet. This does nothing to protect against direct attacks or prevent the environment from being harmful. If she chooses to reactivate the charm at the end of the hour, ignore the willpower

cost.

### Order-Affirming Blow

**Cost:** 15m, 1wp; Simple (Instant)

**Prereqs:** Essence 3, Lore 5, Chaos-Repelling Pattern

The Solar touches a target, and shatters any mind, body or soul-twisting effects of the wyld upon him, returning him to his natural state. This does not affect sorcery or other, more arcane manipulations. If used on an unwilling target in combat, this requires a difficulty 5 gambit with Brawl, Martial Arts or Melee.

If used upon a Fair Folk, they instead transform, assuming a fixed form for (Solar's Essence) scenes. The form they're forced into depends upon their nature, but always exposes them as blatantly inhuman without harming them.

### Wyld-Shaping Technique

**Cost:** 15m, 1wp; Simple (Instant)

**Prereqs:** Essence 3, Lore 5, Order Affirming Blow, Truth-Rendering Gaze

The Solar stands at the edge of the world - at least the border between the Middlemarshes and the Deep Wyld, or possibly even further into chaos - and begins to shape chaos into form in a dramatic action that lasts fifteen minutes (which may be flurried if combat begins, as it likely will). She may activate Chaos-Repelling Prana without paying its cost, but any other similar effects within three range bands end immediately. While shaping the wyld, she will almost certainly be attacked. Roll one die:

- 1-4: No encounter
- 5-7: A small group of hobgoblins, pumpkin-men or other weak enemies, led by one or more fair-folk nobles.
- 8-10: A powerful wyldshaped monster or raksha hunting party
- 11+: A number of powerful wyld creatures or hundreds of weaker fair-folk and several raksha lords. Or perhaps even a behemoth, angry at having its slumber disturbed

If she survives and remains in the area until her shaping is completed, she makes an (Intelligence + Lore) roll, difficulty 5. On a failure, Wyld-Shaping Technique may not be used in the same area again for

a year and a day. If successful, she forces the wyld to retreat from (Essence x 10) square miles, adding that area to Creation. The land or water so formed matches the general surroundings, with similar climate, geography, wildlife and spirits (all of whom have an intimacy centered on the character in some way, not necessarily positive).

Further activations of Wyld-Shaping Technique in the same area add a cumulative +1 to the die roll to see what attention she attracts, and +1 difficulty on the lore roll (the third activation is at +2 to the roll and +2 difficulty, for example). She may:

- Add more land. Subsequent activations add (Essence x 30, 100, 300, 1000) square miles successively.
- Reduce the created land (and all subsequently created land) by a factor of ten, and reshape it to match a specific form and naturalistic layout - she could create a desert in the midst of the lush East, or a lush lake deep in the Southern sands.
- Choose the flora and fauna of the created land, or grant it natural resources. She could fill her lake with fish, the desert with savage predators, add a vein of gold, etc.
- Add portable, ready-made wealth to the land, such as silver nuggets ready for the picking from a stream or rubies scattered in the remains of a landslide. The first time this is chosen, the items are worth resources 2 - a second, third and fourth invocation can up it to resources 3, 4 and 5 respectively.
- Add a Minor demesne to the created land matching its elemental aspect, raise a Minor one to Major, or change the aspect of any demanse.
- If there is a demanse of the appropriate aspect, she can change a mundane resource into a similar magical one, turning the vein of gold into orichalcum or marble into jade.
- If the land already has a vein of a magical material, she may form a readily-accessible quantity of it - a single ingot's worth with one invocation, half a talent with two, or a full talent with three (enough for a single grand daiklave).

When she stops activating Wyld-Shaping Technique, the newly created area settles into stability - Wyld-Shaping Technique may no longer be used there, and if she's adjacent to Creation, the middlemarches behind her will slowly stabilize over the coming weeks and months. If left uninhabited, the land may dissolve back into chaos over time, like any other part of Creation.

### Wyld Cauldron Mastery

**Permanent**

**Prereqs:** Essence 4, Lore 5, Wyld-Shaping Technique

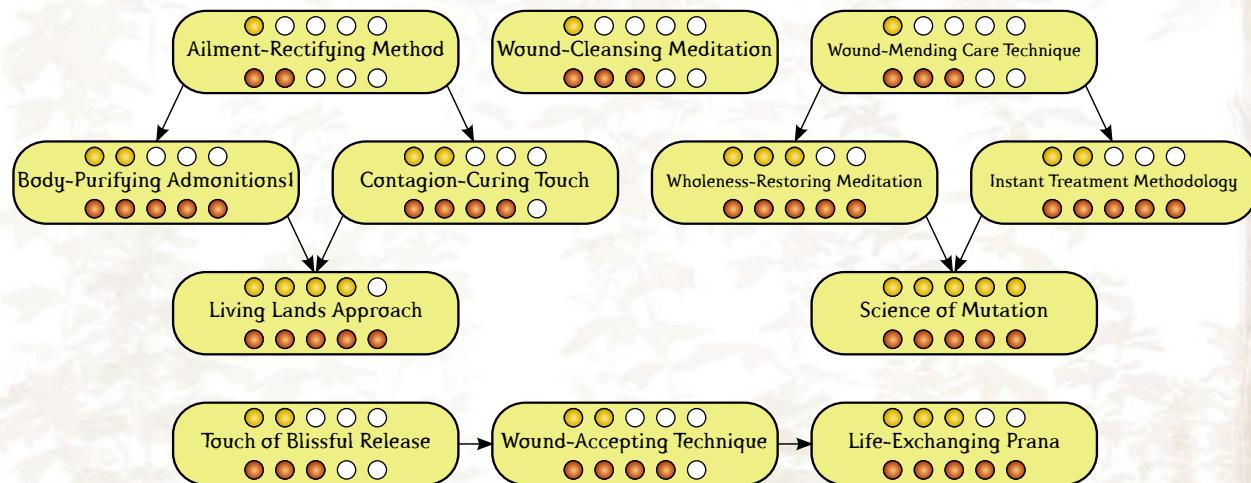
Reduce the difficulty of Wyld-Shaping Technique's Lore rolls by 2. In addition, on subsequent activations (after creating the initial land), she gains two

additional options:

- She creates a new person. They are a mortal human, with a Major intimacy of the Solar's choice. The rest of their details are fleshed out by the storyteller.
- If she's already created a person, she can define another of their intimacies (at any level), grant them an area of expertise (an attribute or ability rated 3-4 dots), or give them an innate merit.

An Essence 5 repurchase reduces the cost of Wyld-Shaping Technique by 5m, and reduces the difficulty by a further 1.

## Medicine



### Ailment-Rectifying Method

**Cost:** 3m; Simple (Instant)

**Prereqs:** Medicine 2

The Solar spends an hour treating a patient with herbs or other remedies appropriate to his disease, and rolls (Intelligence + Medicine) against the disease's Morbidity. As long as he spends his time resting and cared for, her patient receives half of her threshold successes on his next resistance roll.

With a repurchase at Medicine 3+, if she rolls twice the disease's Morbidity, she may spend an additional 3m to end it immediately - her patient recovers from the disease over the course of a day.

### Contagion-Curing Touch

**Cost:** 1m; Supplemental (Instant)

**Prereqs:** Essence 2, Medicine 4, Ailment-Rectifying Method

This charm supplements any Medicine roll to treat disease, allowing her to do so even if lacking the proper medicines or herbs. In addition, if the patient recovers, he gains (Solar's Essence) automatic successes on all rolls to resist disease for a season.

### Body-Purifying Admonitions!

**Cost:** 4m, 1wp; Reflexive (Instant)

**Prereqs:** Essence 2, Medicine 5, Ailment Rectifying Method

This charm may be activated at any time. The Solar touches a target suffering from poison. She rolls (Wits + Medicine), removing successes from the poison's remaining duration as it boils out from its point of entry.

### Living Lands Approach

**Cost:** 15m; Simple (Instant)

**Prereqs:** Essence 4, Medicine 5, Body Purifying Admonitions, Contagion-Curing Touch

The Lawgiver spends a day leading a group in planting, clearing, weeding and generally treating an area of Shadowland no larger than (Essence \* 10) acres. If living humans frequent it and attend to the land's needs over the course of the next month, it gradually returns to being a normal part of Creation.

### Wound-Cleansing Meditation

**Cost:** 10m; Simple (Instant)

**Prereqs:** Medicine 3

The Solar spends an hour cleaning and wrapping her patient's wounds, after which he converts all Aggravated damage he's suffered to Lethal. She may also reattach any severed limbs or digits, as long as they're still fresh.

### Wound-Mending Care Technique

**Cost:** 5m; Simple (Instant)

**Prereqs:** Medicine 3

The Solar spends an hour doctoring a patient with bandages, herbs or other remedies and rolls (Intelligence + Medicine) against the highest wound penalty he suffers (5 for incapacitated). If he remains in bed for the rest of the day, he heals (Solar's Essence or three, whichever's higher) levels of Bashing or Lethal damage.

With a repurchase at Essence 3+, Once/Day she may have him instead heal by the time the treatment is complete, with no need for bed rest.

### Instant Treatment Methodology

**Cost:** 5m, 1wp or 5i, 1wp; Supplemental (Instant)

**Prereqs:** Essence 2, Medicine 4, Wound-Mending Care Technique

This charm supplements any Medicine charm that requires an hour of treatment, reducing it to seconds (a single combat action). An appropriate stunt may remove the need for tools as well.

### Wholeness-Restoring Meditation

**Cost:** 7m, 1wp; Simple (Until treatment ends)

**Prereqs:** Essence 3, Medicine 5, Wound Mending Care Technique

This Lawgiver begins treating a patient with some sort of permanent debilitation. The Storyteller should decide if this is Minor, Major or Defining. She begins an extended (Intelligence + Medicine) roll, difficulty 5 and terminus 5. The interval and goal depends on the severity.

- Minor - Goal 10, interval one hour. Minor debilitates include major scars, missing ears, simple wyld mutations and Minor derangements.
- Major - Goal 20, interval one day. Major debilitates include congenital blindness, missing hands and Major derangements.
- Defining - Goal 25, interval one week. Defining debilitates include missing limbs, burned out eyes and Defining derangements.

If she succeeds in the extended roll, her patient is cured of the issue at hand. If she botches a roll or fails to reach the goal inside the Terminus, the Solar may not try again until she learns a new Medicine charm.

### Science of Mutation

**Cost:** 8m, 1wp; Simple (Until treatment ends)

**Prereqs:** Essence 5, Medicine 5, Wholeness-Restoring Meditation, Instant Treatment Methodology

The Solar takes her patient to the wyld, and spends at least a day applying powerful herbs, operating, or otherwise working on her patient as appropriate to her methods. She selects an Innate merit, and begins an extended (Perception or Intelligence + Medicine) roll, interval one day in the bordermarches or one hour on the middlemarches. The difficulty is equal to (sum of the dots of all his existing innate merits). The Storyteller should estimate the dots of innate merits possessed by an NPC without a full character sheet. The goal is 5 \* dots of new merit, and there is no terminus.

If she succeeds, her patient gains the mutation. If he tracks experience, he must pay for it as though it were a purchased Merit. If she botches or abandons the project before completion (or her patient escapes), he instead gains one or more mutations of

the Storyteller's choice (often starting with Hideous) related to the attempted change.

She may substitute a sufficiently advanced and well supplied laboratory for the wyld energy of the bordermarches by committing an additional 5m.

### Touch of Blissful Release

**Cost:** 5m; Simple (One Scene)

**Prereqs:** Essence 2, Medicine 3

The Solar touches a target (herself or another), and rolls (Intelligence + Medicine). He ignores up to (Successes) wound or other crippling penalties, down to a minimum of -1 penalty.

### Wound-Accepting Technique

**Cost:** 3m per health level, 1wp ; Simple (Instant) - Once/Scene per Patient

**Prereqs:** Essence 2, Medicine 4, Touch of Blissful Release

The Lawgiver touches another, and heals him up to (Essence) Bashing or Lethal levels of damage. She takes a like amount of damage of the same type.

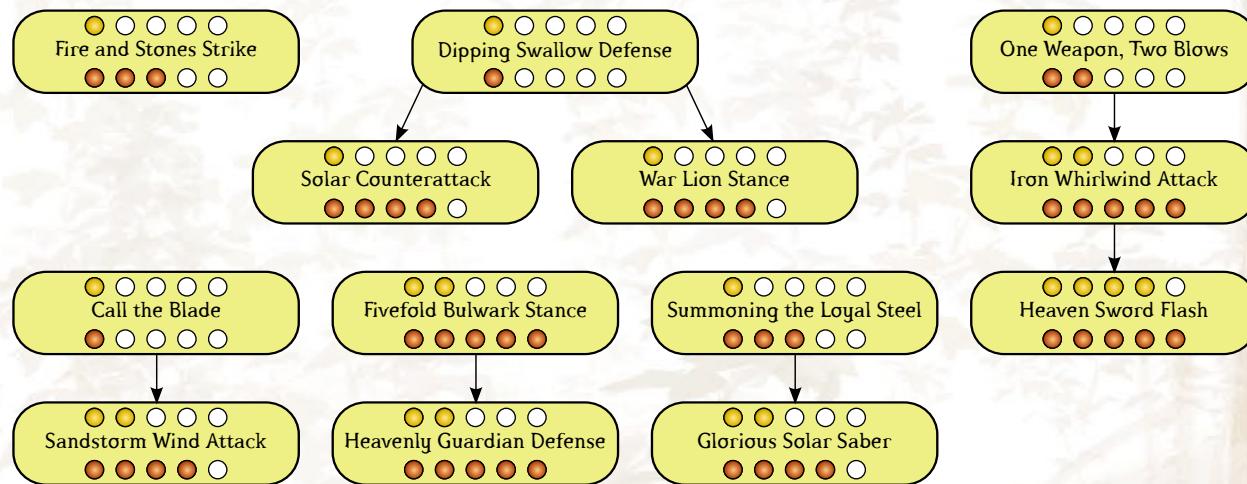
### Life-Exchanging Prana

**Cost:** 1lhl per 3m, 1wp; Reflexive (One Round)

**Prereqs:** Essence 3, Medicine 5, Wound-Accepting Technique

This charm may be activated at any time. The Solar gains 3m for every 1lhl she pays, trading her vital energies for Essence. Until her next turn, she ignores all wound and fatigue penalties. She may not reduce herself below Incapacitated with this charm, and doesn't fall unconscious until her next turn if she goes that far.

## Melee



### Fire and Stones Strike

**Cost:** 1m per die or success; Supplemental (Instant)

**Prereqs:** Melee 3

This charm supplements a Melee attack. If it's Withering, the Solar may spend up to (Strength) motes, adding that many dice to the post-soak damage. If Decisive, she may spend up to (Essence) motes, adding up to that many threshold successes from the attack roll to the raw damage.

### Call the Blade

**Cost:** 1m; Reflexive (Instant)

**Prereqs:** Melee 1

This charm may be activated at any time. The Solar summons a weapon she owns within Short range into her hand. If the path is obstructed (doors, chains, or similar obstacles block it from reaching her), she rolls (Wits + Melee), difficulty 4. On a success, she summons it anyway - it might break a weak barrier, or simply teleport into her hand. If she fails, she can't use this charm again until her next turn.

### Sandstorm-Wind Attack

**Cost:** 5m, 2i; Supplemental (Instant)

**Prereqs:** Essence 2, Melee 4, Call the Blade

This charm supplements a Decisive Melee attack, allowing the Solar to target opponents at up to Short range, or medium range if she spends an additional 3m. She ignores hardness, and her target cannot benefit from cover. Flimsy cover may be destroyed at the Storyteller's discretion.

### Dipping Swallow Defense

**Cost:** 2m; Supplemental (Instant)

**Prereqs:** Melee 1

This charm supplements a Parry. The Solar ignores all non-surprise penalties to her Parry.

At Essence 2+ she may spend an additional 3m when activating this charm to parry unblockable attacks.

### Solar Counterattack

**Cost:** 3m ; Reflexive (Instant) - Counterattack

**Prereqs:** Melee 4, Dipping Swallow Defense

This charm may be activated after an attack the Solar attempted to Parry. She makes a Decisive Melee attack against the foe who attacked her.

### Fivefold Bulwark Stance

**Cost:** 5m, 1wp; Simple (One scene)

**Prereqs:** Essence 2, Melee 5, Dipping Swallow Defense

The Solar ignores penalties to her Parry from wounds, onslaught and being grappled. Dipping Swallow Defense costs 1m less to activate.

### Heavenly Guardian Defense

**Cost:** 4m + 1i per success, or 4m, 1wp ; Supplemental (Instant) - Post-roll

**Prereqs:** Essence 2, Melee 5, Fivefold Bulward Stance

This charm supplements a Parry against a Decisive attack, after damage has been rolled. Reduce the damage dealt by one level per initiative spent.

If an attack would deal uncountable reoccurring damage (such as an exploding volcano or a swirling maelstrom of adamant blades), she may instead spend 4m, 1wp to block all damage.

### War Lion Stance

**Cost:** 2m; Reflexive (One scene)

**Prereqs:** Melee 4, Dipping Swallow Defense

The Solar chooses one ally. Her Defend Other actions for that person are Reflexive. If an attack would hit her ward, she may spend 1wp to cause the attack to strike her instead.

At Essence 3+ she may also choose to spend 1wp to redirect damage to herself from her ward that doesn't come from an attack, such as an explosion or environmental effect.

### Summoning the Loyal Steel

**Cost:** 1m ; Simple (Indefinite) - Stackable

**Prereqs:** Melee 3

The Solar banishes a weapon she's holding Elsewhere. It reappears in her hand when the charm ends.

### Glorious Solar Saber

**Cost:** 5m, 1wp; Simple (One scene)

**Prereqs:** Essence 2, Melee 3, Summoning the Loyal Steel

The Exalt forms her essence into a weapon with the same statistics as a Daiklave or another artifact Melee weapon chosen when the charm is learned. It glows like a torch.

She may supplement any attack using this weapon by spending 1m, 1wp. If she does, the blade glows with heat and at the automatically destroys any mortal weapon used to parry it or that it clashes (after the attack is resolved). This effect can also be used to carve her blade through up to two feet of rock or metal for a stunt.

### One Weapon, Two Blows

**Cost:** 3m ; Reflexive (Instant) - Advantage

**Prereqs:** Melee 2

This charm may be activated immediately after one of the Solar's Melee Withering attacks reduces her opponent from higher initiative than her to lower. She makes another Melee attack against that same opponent.

### Iron Whirlwind Attack

**Cost:** 5m, 1wp; Simple (Instant)

**Prereqs:** Essence 2, Melee 5, One Weapon, Two Blows

The Solar makes up to (lowest of Strength, Dexterity or Stamina) Decisive Melee attacks, dividing her initiative evenly among them, spread among one or more targets as she chooses. Any non-excellency supplemental charms applied to the first attack are applied to all later ones at no additional cost.

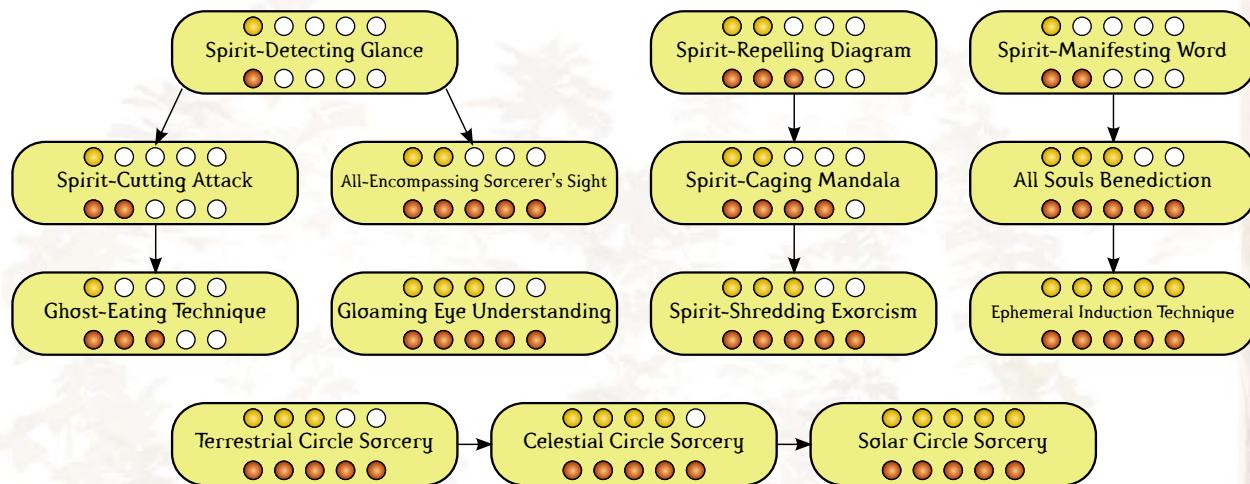
The Solar rolls a single Decisive Melee attack with raw damage of half her current initiative, and applies it against all opponents within close range. Against battle groups, she uses her full initiative value for damage. If she only hits battle groups, her initiative does not reset.

## Heaven Sword Flash

**Cost:** 6m, 1wp ; Simple (Instant) - Perilous

**Prereqs:** Essence 4, Melee 5, Iron Whirlwind Attack

Occult



## Spirit-Detecting Glance

**Cost:** 3m; Reflexive (One scene)

**Prereqs:** Occult 1

This charm may be activated at any time. The Solar can see immaterial spirits.

### Spirit-Cutting Attack

**Cost:** 1m; Supplemental (Instant)

**Prereqs:** Occult 2, Spirit-Detecting Glance

This charm supplements any attack, allowing it to harm immaterial spirits.

At essence 2+ she may spend an additional 1wp if she deals a level of damage to the spirit, forcing it become material for two rounds.

## Ghost-Eating Technique

**Cost:** 3m; Supplemental (Instant)

**Prereqs:** Occult 3, Spirit-Cutting Attack

This charm supplements any Decisive attack against a spirit. It does Aggravated damage. The Solar gains (levels of damage inflicted) motes, to a maximum of the spirit's remaining health levels. If a spirit is Incapacitated by this attack, the Solar gains an additional (Spirit's Essence) motes, and it is destroyed permanently.

## All-Encompassing Sorcerer's Sight

**Cost:** 4m; Reflexive (One Round)

**Prereqs:** Essence 2, Occult 5, Spirit-Detecting Glance

This charm may be activated at any time. The Solar can briefly see the patterns of essence that make up Creation. She can see immaterial spirits, the borders of shadowlands, wyld energy, the entrances to spirit sanctums and similar. If a character is using shaping actions, she may make an (Intelligence + Occult) roll at a difficulty of the effect's Essence minimum to determine the exact effect. She may make similar rolls for ongoing magical effects in the area and

determining a spirit's Essence rating.

The Solar gains (Essence) automatic successes on any Awareness roll to see through magical disguises, shapeshifting, or similar magic. Unless otherwise noted, the difficulty is 5.

With an Essence 4+ repurchase, the cost of this charm is reduced to 0m while she's at iconic anima.

### Gloaming Eye Understanding

**Cost:** 3m ; Simple (Indefinite) - Stackable

**Prereqs:** Essence 3, Occult 5

The Solar spends a day learning an Eclipse-keyworded spirit charm from a teacher who already knows it. She must meet the charm's trait requirements, but doesn't need to know any prerequisites. As long as she maintains this charm's commitment, she may use that charm as if she knew it.

### Spirit-Repelling Diagram

**Cost:** 6m; Simple (One scene)

**Prereqs:** Essence 2, Occult 3

The Exalt forms a barrier of visible essence around herself, extending out to short range. It remains fixed, and the charm ends if she steps outside the area. Spirits with Essence equal to or lower than hers must either materialize (using their own powers) or leave the circle and be unable to attack characters within. Against spirits with higher Essence, she may roll (Wits + Occult) with (Essence) bonus dice against their Resolve to force the same choice on them. Against demons and other cursed spirits, she instead gains (Essence) bonus successes.

With a repurchase, this can also force out possessing spirits - if forced to materialize or leave the area, they must also vacate a possessed body, and cannot return to their victim's body for a season.

### Spirit-Caging Mandala

**Cost:** 10m, 1wp; Simple (Varies)

**Prereqs:** Essence 2, Occult 4, Spirit-Repelling Diagram

The Solar attempts to bind a spirit within medium range. She rolls (Wits + Occult) against a difficulty of (Spirit's Essence). If successful, the spirit may not voluntarily move for (threshold successes + 1) rounds, at which point the difficulty increases by one and she may roll again, repeating until she fails a roll.

Spirits so trapped become material without cost to themselves until released, and may not attack unless they're attacked first. The charm ends immediately if the Solar moves further from the spirit than medium range.

With an Essence 3+ repurchase, the Solar may also trap formless or immaterial denizens of the wyld.

### Spirit-Shredding Exorcism

**Cost:** 5m, 1 wp; Reflexive (Instant)

**Prereqs:** Essence 3, Occult 5, Spirit-Caging Mandala

This charm may be activated whenever the Lawgiver succeeds at a (Wits + Occult) roll for the prerequisite charm. She rolls (Intelligence + Occult) against the spirit's Resolve, which may not be enhanced by intimacies. If successful, her victim's permanent Essence is reduced by 1 until the end of the scene (which may remove access to powers he no longer meets the prerequisites for), and she resets the difficulty of the roll to cage the spirit.

Subsequent activations of this charm in a scene on the same spirit waive the wp cost. If a spirit is reduced to essence 0, the Solar may choose to either permanently destroy it or keep it trapped without further rolls, and the duration of Spirit-Caging Mandala becomes "one scene."

### Spirit-Manifesting Word

**Cost:** 1m; Simple (Instant)

**Prereqs:** Occult 2

The Solar makes a demon she's bound or a spirit familiar within long range materialize.

At Essence 2+, she may spend up to (Occult) additional motes to materialize that many additional bound demons or familiars.

### All Souls Benediction

**Cost:** 12m, 1wp; Simple (One Scene)

**Prereqs:** Essence 3, Occult 5, Spirit-Manifesting Word

All spirits within Extreme range may roll (Wits + Dodge) against a difficulty (Solar's temporary willpower). Those who fail (or choose not to roll) materialize, and may not dematerialize while the charm lasts without the Lawgiver's permission. Ghosts may choose to go immediately into lethe rather than ma-

terialize.

### Ephemeral Induction Technique

**Cost:** 20m, 1wp; Simple (Instant)

**Prereqs:** Essence 5, Occult 5, All Souls Benediction

The Solar creates a new spirit or fair folk, either from whole cloth or by mingling the essence of spirits recently destroyed in the area with essence from the surrounding area. This spirit is the her Familiar, and begins with an Essence score equal to the Solar's. While it will rapidly grow into whatever role it's given, it begins with only the most basic of spirit or fair folk charms.

Each time the season changes, she may release her current familiar created with this charm. Until she does so, she cannot use this charm again.

## Sorcery

### Terrestrial Circle Sorcery

**Permanent**

**Prereqs:** Essence 3, Occult 3

This charm may only be learned when the Solar meets the requirements for a shaping ritual - making a pact with a demon or powerful god, studying at the Heptagram, or some other initiation deemed appropriate by the Storyteller.

She gains the ability to learn and cast Terrestrial Cir-

cle spells. She learns a shaping ritual immediately. The first spell she learns becomes her control spell.

### Celestial Circle Sorcery

**Permanent**

**Prereqs:** Essence 4, Occult 4, Terrestrial Circle Sorcery, any two Terrestrial Circle spells

This charm may only be learned when the Solar meets the requirements for a second shaping ritual - reaffirming her pact with her patron, studying in the Violet Bier of Sorrows, or some other appropriate initiation.

She gains the ability to learn and cast Celestial Circle spells. She learns another shaping ritual. The first Celestial Circle spell she learns becomes a second control spell.

### Solar Circle Sorcery

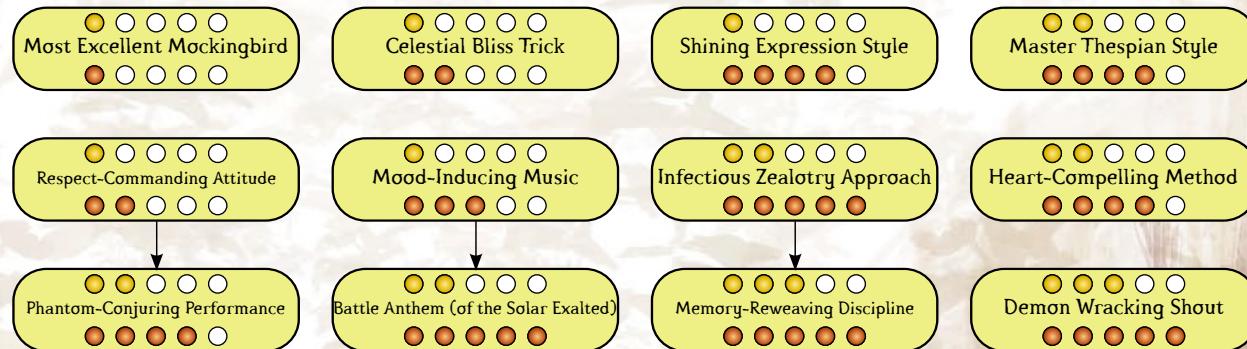
**Permanent**

**Prereqs:** Essence 5, Occult 5, Celestial Circle Sorcery, any four Terrestrial Circle spells, any two Celestial Circle spells

Like the previous circle, the Solar must meet the requirements for another shaping ritual.

The Solar gains the ability to learn and cast Solar Circle spells. She learns a shaping ritual, and the first Solar Circle spell she learns becomes a third control spell.

## Performance



### Most Excellent Mockingbird

**Cost:** 3m; Reflexive (One scene)

**Prereqs:** Performance 2

The Solar mimics the voice of any character she's spent at least an hour interacting with. Characters not closely familiar with the mimicked voice do not receive an Awareness roll to notice the imposture, and

even those closely familiar receive a -2 penalty on their roll.

### Respect-Commanding Attitude

**Cost:** 5m ; Supplemental (One Performance) - Group  
**Prereqs:** Performance 2

This charm supplements any performance. The Solar rolls (Charisma + Performance), and any character with a lower resolve who hears or sees part of it must stop and watch or listen attentively until the performance ends. He may spend 1wp to end the effect. Any character - whether or not their resolve was beaten - who wishes to attack the Solar while the performance continues must either spend 1wp or blend into her demonstration (by posing as actors, a challenging musician, etc).

It cannot be activated in combat, but lasts until she stops performing if combat breaks out.

### Phantom-Conjuring Performance

**Cost:** 2m; Supplemental (One Performance)  
**Prereqs:** Essence 2, Performance 4, Respect-Commanding Attitude

This charm supplements any Performance. The Exalt conjures phantom images around her within short range, following along with her performance and aiding it. Apparitions might be other characters seeming to curl out of the smoke of a fire, hints of scenery seen in sunbeams, or rain hitting roof sounding like war-drums to match her tale.

### Celestial Bliss Trick

**Cost:** 3m; Reflexive (Instant)  
**Prereqs:** Performance 2

The Solar may activate this charm after making love to another willing character. If he has a positive intimacy for her, it strengthens one step - if he does not, he forms one, or a negative intimacy weakens one step. She gains two automatic successes on social influence against him for (Solar's Essence) weeks.

### Mood-Inducing Music

**Cost:** 1m; Simple (One song)  
**Prereqs:** Performance 3

The Solar sings, plays an instrument or dances in support of a specific mood. All social influence by other characters that plays on the mood gains (So-

lar's Essence) bonus dice - all opposed influence takes a (Solar's Essence or 3, whichever's higher) penalty.

### Battle Anthem (of the Solar Exalted)

**Cost:** 1m; Simple (One round)  
**Prereqs:** Essence 2, Performance 5, Mood-Inducing Music

The Lawgiver sings or plays an instrument in battle. Each ally within long range gains 1i, and until her next action, their successful withering attacks grant +1i. Allied battle groups gain (Solar's Essence) bonus dice on their attacks and rout checks.

At Essence 3+, each ally affected also gains 1m, and doubles any Intimacy-derived bonuses to Resolve. Allied battle groups gain (Solar's Essence) automatic successes when rallying for numbers.

### Shining Expression Style

**Cost:** 2m; Supplemental (Instant)  
**Prereqs:** Performance 4

This charm supplements any Performance-based Inspire action. Characters affected by the influence don't realize that the Solar was the source - her motions or sounds seem like harmless background, underscoring rather than causing whatever emotion is aroused.

### Infectious Zealotry Approach

**Cost:** 3m, 1wp; Reflexive (One Scene)  
**Prereqs:** Essence 2, Performance 5

With a meaningful glance or supportive nod, the Solar selects an intimacy she thinks her target has, and rolls ([Charisma or Manipulation] + Performance) against his Resolve, unmodified by Intimacies. If successful, and he actually has that intimacy, he treats it as one level more intense until the end of the scene. If she supports a Defining intimacy in this way, her target becomes obsessed, and neglects all other cares in favor of fulfilling his obsession.

### Memory-Reweaving Discipline

**Cost:** 10m, 1wp ; Simple (Instant) - Psyche, Group  
**Prereqs:** Essence 3, Performance 5, Infectious Zealotry Approach

The Solar spends a minute or two spinning a tale, and rolls (Manipulation + Performance), subtracting successes rather than dice for any situational penalties (including bizarre, unbelievable or far-reaching

claims). Each character or groups' Resolve she overcomes gains a Minor Intimacy of belief that her story is true. If she exceeds their Resolve by three or more, they instead gain a Major intimacy of belief.

## Master Thespian Style

**Cost:** 2m; Simple (One scene)

**Prereqs:** Essence 2, Performance 4

The Exalt spends five minutes assuming a role. Against Read Intentions actions, her Guile increases by 1, and she calculates it with Performance rather than Socialize. Characters who fail at a Read Intentions action believe they've succeeded, picking up on her character's intimacies or motivations, rather than her true feelings. She may activate this charm reflexively (no preparation needed) with a suitably dramatic entrance.

A character may only hold one such intimacy from the Solar at a time - until it's eroded entirely, any of her attempts to reuse this charm on him fail. If the intimacy erodes, he still has the false memory, but for whatever reason no longer believes it to be true.

With an Essence 4+ repurchase, if the the Solar is

targeting an individual, she may spend an additional 5m to compress this charm down to a single statement, rather than requiring minutes of narrative to build up the belief.

## Heart-Compelling Method

**Cost:** 5m ; Supplemental (Instant) - Group

**Prereqs:** Essence 2, Performance 4

This charm supplements a Performance-based Inspire action by singing or with an instrument. If it succeeds, its targets must act on the roused emotion immediately - they cannot resolve to do so at a later date, or decide on a course of action that cannot be implemented within the next day.

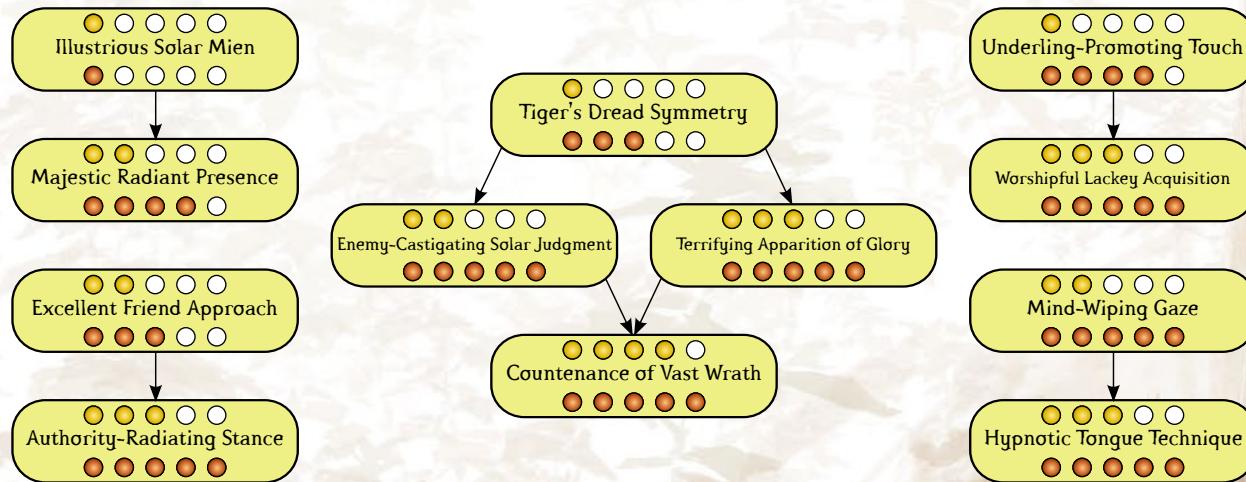
## Demon Wracking Shout

**Cost:** 8m, 1wp ; Simple (Instant) - Once/Scene

**Prereqs:** Essence 3, Performance 5

The Solar shouts, a sound physically painful to demons and other dark spirits. She makes a single undodgeable (Charisma + Performance) Decisive attack with (Essence) automatic successes, applying it to all such creatures within Long range, including immaterial ones.

Presence



## Illustrious Solar Mien

**Cost:** 1m; Reflexive (Instant)

**Prereqs:** Presence 1

The Solar may activate this charm any time she stunts, or after making a social influence attempt. Anyone who witnesses her finds her unforgettable -

if they know her name they will never forget it, and her face is burned into their memories forever.

## Majestic Radiant Presence

**Cost:** 6m; Simple (One scene)

**Prereqs:** Essence 2, Presence 4, Illustrious Solar Mien

The first time each character wishes to threaten, speak against or attack the Lawgiver, he must spend 1wp.

### Excellent Friend Approach

**Permanent**

**Prereqs:** Essence 2, Presence 3

When attempting a Persuade action against people who have a positive Tie to her, the Solar and her target treat that Intimacy as one step more powerful. If the Tie is already defining, increase the bonus or penalty from the Tie by one.

### Authority-Radiating Stance

**Cost:** 5m, 1wp; Reflexive (One scene)

**Prereqs:** Essence 3, Presence 5, Excellent Friend Approach

Minor characters who don't already know who the Solar is automatically assume she's someone of authority in their organization - a superior officer from a different unit of the army, an inspector from the Guild or something else appropriate. They will treat her with respect and defer to her unless someone with legitimate authority is present. She may treat this effect as a Minor intimacy of respectful obsequiousness for the purposes of social influence (Excellent Friend Approach will usually apply to this intimacy).

### Tiger's Dread Symmetry

**Permanent**

**Prereqs:** Presence 3

The first time in a scene a character wishes to attack the Solar from Stealth, he must either succeed on a ([Any Social Attribute] + Integrity) roll, difficulty (Solar's Essence), or spend 1wp.

The Solar may choose to make her Threaten actions covert - characters other than her target must succeed at a reflexive Read Intentions action against her to notice the attempt.

### Enemy-Castigating Solar Judgment

**Cost:** 3m, 1wp; Supplemental (Instant)

**Prereqs:** Essence 2, Presence 5, Tiger's Dread Symmetry

This charm supplements any decisive attack or social influence attempt against a creature of darkness or a character the Solar has a negative Defining Tie towards. That character's Defense or Resolve takes

a -1 penalty. Influence enhanced this way costs an additional 1wp to resist, and attacks enhanced this way inflict aggravated damage. The Solar's other magic treats him as a creature of darkness for this attack/influence.

### Terrifying Apparition of Glory

**Cost:** 7m, 1wp ; Reflexive (Instant) - Group, Once/Scene, Iconic

**Prereqs:** Essence 3, Presence 5, Tiger's Dread Symmetry

This charm may be activated at any time. Out of combat, the Solar makes a single Threaten action and applies it to all characters out to Long range.

In combat, any battle groups within Long range must make an immediate Rout check (this counts as a devastating area of effect assault), and on failure they lose a point of Size and restores all points of Magnitude rather than dissolving.

### Countenance of Vast Wrath

**Cost:** 6m ; Reflexive (One scene) - Iconic

**Prereqs:** Essence 4, Presence 5, Terrifying Apparition of Glory, Enemy-Castigating Solar Judgment

This charm may be activated at any time. The Solar gains (Essence) bonus dice on all Threaten actions against a single target, and may affect even mindless creatures and those incapable of fear. In combat, opponents within long range lose 1i each round in which they do not attack her.

### Underling-Promoting Touch

**Cost:** 6m, 1wp; Simple (Indefinite)

**Prereqs:** Presence 4, Essence 1

The Exalt touches someone who serves or follows her. Characters who have ties of loyalty to her feel the same way towards him, and recognize that he's acting at her behest. Her champion gains +2 Resolve against supernatural fear effects. If he cannot use essence, he gains a personal mote pool of 6m and learns the Solar Integrity Excellency until this charm ends.

At Essence 4+, he may (as long as cannot use essence except by the effects of this charm) use any excellency that the Solar knows, as long as the supplemented action upholds or advances one of his Defining principles.

### Worshipful Lackey Acquisition

**Cost:** 12m ; Simple ((Essence) days) - Psyche  
**Prereqs:** Essence 3, Presence 5, Underling-Promoting Touch

The Solar spends several minutes talking with another character - or any number of minor characters - who have any Tie towards her, positive or negative. Her target(s) must roll (Wits + Integrity) against a difficulty of (Solar's strongest social attribute). If they fail, they must spend 2wp or gain a Defining intimacy placing them as the Solar's underlings. They may still hate her, but they can't help but cloy and defer to her. This intimacy disappears when the charm ends.

### Mind-Wiping Gaze

**Cost:** 1m, 1wp ; Reflexive (One Scene) - Once/Scene per Target  
**Prereqs:** Essence 2, Presence 5, Terrifying Apparition of Glory

This charm may be activated at any time. The Solar chooses a specific type of social influence, such as "reveal my nature," "suggest an invasion," and locks eyes with her target. She rolls ([Charisma or Appearance] + Presence) against her target's Resolve (counting as

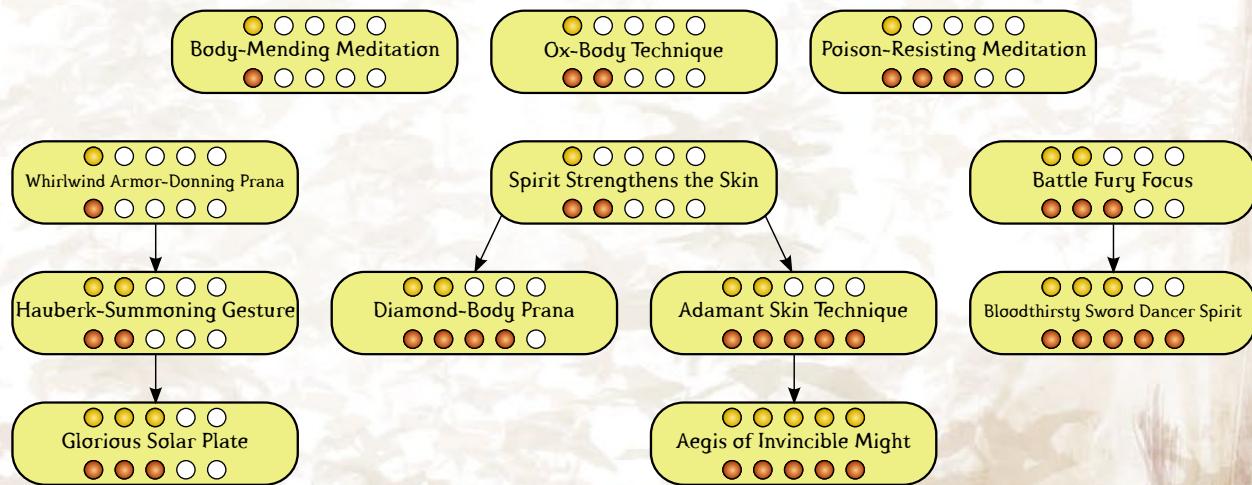
a Threaten action for purposes of charms). If successful, he forgets about his desire to perform the named action until the charm ends. If reminded of the desire, he may spend 1wp to end the effect - otherwise, it slips from his mind again immediately.

### Hypnotic Tongue Technique

**Cost:** 10m, 1wp ; Simple (Indefinite) - Psyche, Mute, Once/Story per Target  
**Prereqs:** Essence 3, Presence 5, Mind-Wiping Gaze, Listener Swaying Argument

After interacting socially with her target for at least a minute, with small talk, business, or any other subject, the Solar rolls ([Charisma or Manipulation] + Presence) against her target's Resolve, which may not be modified by Intimacies. If successful, he goes catatonic for a second, allowing the Solar to implant (threshold successes + 1) short, clear sentences worth of instructions to be carried out at the same time, either immediately or at some future time. He may immediately spend 2wp to resist, forgetting the whole incident - if he does not, then at the specified time he takes the actions as long as none of them are obviously suicidal. He does not remember why he took those actions.

## Resistance



### Body-Mending Meditation

**Cost:** 10m ; Simple (Indefinite) - Mute  
**Prereqs:** Resistance 1

The Solar takes one increment less time to heal (days -> hours, hours -> minutes).

### Ox-Body Technique

**Permanent**  
**Prereqs:** Resistance 2

The Solar gains a number of health levels depending on her Stamina:

Stamina	Health Levels
1-3	-1 and -2
4-5	-0, -1 and -2

If her Stamina later changes, update her health track to match the new bonuses. This charm may be purchased (and stacks) up to (Resistance - 1) times.

### Poison-Resisting Meditation

**Permanent**

**Prereqs:** -

Resistance 3 The Solar gains two automatic successes to resist poison, and on rolls against the Virulence or Morbidity of diseases. Reduce any penalty a poison or diseased gives her by 2. Treat any incurable or irresistible diseases she encounters as though they had a Morbidity of 5.

### Whirlwind Armor-Donning Prana

**Cost:** 3m per mobility penalty; Supplemental (Indefinite)

**Prereqs:** Resistance 1

This charm supplements donning armor. It takes ( $[armor's\ mobility\ penalty] + 1$ ) turns to put it on, rather than that many minutes. Reduce the mobility penalty to 0.

### Hauberk-Summoning Gesture

**Cost:** 3m; Reflexive (Indefinite)

**Prereqs:** Essence 2, Resistance 2, Whirlwind Armor-Donning Prana

The Solar banishes a suit of armor she's wearing, and optionally a shield, Elsewhere. When she ends the charm, it returns around her as though she's just put it on.

### Glorious Solar Plate

**Cost:** 10m, 1wp; Simple (Indefinite)

**Prereqs:** Essence 3, Resistance 3, Hauberk-Summoning Gesture

The Solar creates a suit of armor out of her anima with the stats of heavy artifact armor but no mobility penalty.

### Spirit Strengthens the Skin

**Cost:** 1m per soak ; Supplemental (Instant) - Post-roll

**Prereqs:** Resistance 2

This charm supplements the Solar's defense, after a withering attack has been rolled but before damage. She gains +1 soak per 1m spent, to a maximum of doubling her natural soak.

### Diamond-Body Prana

**Cost:** 5m; Simple (One scene)

**Prereqs:** Essence 2, Resistance 4, Spirit Strengthens the Skin

This charm is incompatible with armor. The Solar gains (Stamina) hardness and (Stamina + Resistance) soak.

### Adamant Skin Technique

**Cost:** 8m; Supplemental (Instant)

**Prereqs:** Essence 2, Resistance 5, Spirit Strengthens the Skin

This charm supplements the Solar's defense against a Decisive attack. Reduce the raw damage of the attack by (Solar's soak), but she may not apply her hardness against it.

It can also be used to completely block uncountable reoccurring damage, such as from an explosion or collapsing building.

### Aegis of Invincible Might

**Cost:** 3m ; Reflexive (One Scene) - Perilous

**Prereqs:** Essence 5, Resistance 5, Adamant Skin Technique

This charm may be activated when the Solar uses Adamant Skin Technique. She gains a hardness of 20, +(Stamina + Resistance) soak, and removes (Stamina) successes from all damage rolls against her. This charm ends if she crashes, or at the end of any turn in which the Solar has not spent at least 8m on offensive charms.

### Battle Fury Focus

**Cost:** 5m; Simple (One scene)

**Prereqs:** Essence 2, Resistance 3

This Solar gains +1 die on all pools related to combat, and her wound penalties are reduced by one. Intimacies compelling her to fight - positive or negative - are treated as one level more intense (to a maximum of Defining), but she's unable to make social influence attempts more complex than simple threats or demands for surrender. This charm ends if she is not engaged in violence or attempting to become so engaged.

She may activate this charm Reflexively whenever her wound penalty increases.

### Bloodthirsty Sword Dancer Spirit

**Cost:** 8m, 1wp; Simple (One scene)

**Prereqs:** Essence 3, Resistance 5, Battle Fury Focus

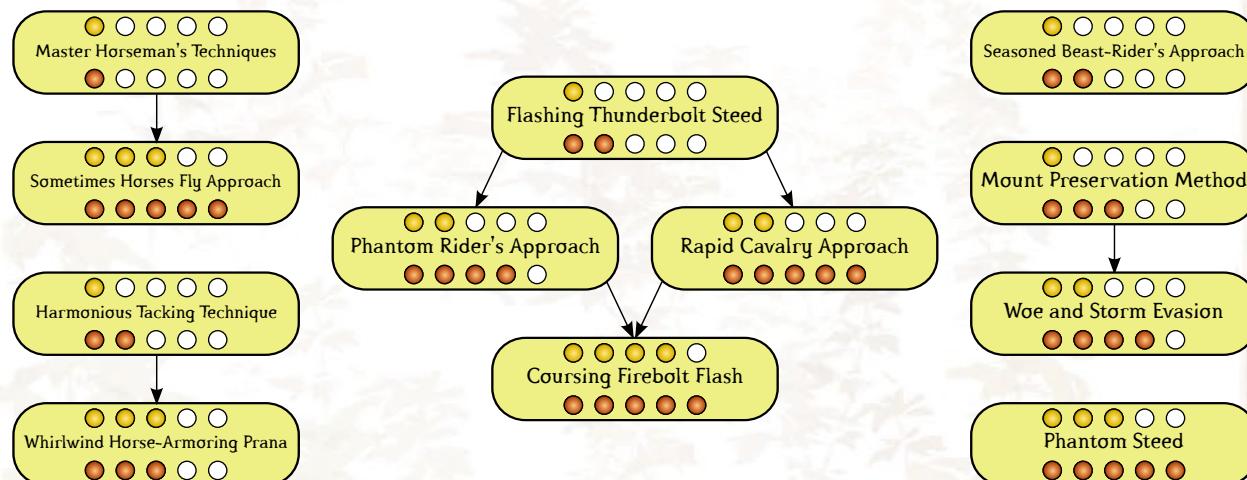
The Solar gains +2 dice on all combat related pools, ignores all wound penalties, and her mote drip increases by 1. She must continue to fight until all enemies are defeated or fleeing. She will ignore or remove as obstacles anyone who attempts to stop her

(often non-lethally, in the case of friends).

This charm may only be activated when Battle Fury Focus is already active. She may activate it reflexively whenever her wound penalty increases, but not from the same wound that activated its prerequisite.

It may not be ended voluntarily without a successful social influence attempt convincing her to do so. If it ends with enemies still present, set the Solar's initiative to -3. No one gains the Initiative Break bonus.

## Ride



### Master Horseman's Techniques

**Permanent**

**Prereqs:** Ride 1

The Solar will never chafe or develop sores from long riding, and her mount will not suffer random harmful incidents like thrown shoes or injured hooves. She will not fall off her mount during normal travel while sleeping or incapacitated, and against attacks which would knock her from her mount she gains +1 Dodge or Parry.

She may reflexively spend 1m to call a loyal mount to her side, regardless of distance. It makes its way to her as circumstances allow. The Solar may also reflexively spend 1m to prevent her mount from panicking, whether from mundane or supernatural fear.

### Sometimes Horses Fly Approach

**Cost:** 2m; Reflexive (One round)

**Prereqs:** Essence 3, Ride 5, Master Horseman's Techniques

This charm may be activated any time the Solar is mounted. Until her next turn, as long as it's moving towards a solid surface her mount can run on water, clouds or even thin air.

### Harmonious Tacking Technique

**Cost:** 2m; Supplemental (Instant)

**Prereqs:** Ride 2, Essence 1, Master Horseman's Techniques

This charm supplements an effort to tack, bard or arm a mount, reducing the time necessary to only a few seconds (one combat round).

### **Whirlwind Horse-Armoring Prana**

**Cost:** 3m; Simple (Indefinite)

**Prereqs:** Essence 3, Ride 3, Harmonious Tacking Technique

The Lawgiver activates this charm while on a loyal tacked, barded or armed mount, banishing all of its gear Elsewhere.

She may end this charm any time. If she's riding a similar creature, the gear returns to Creation, settling into place as if freshly fitted. If not, it arrives in a pile at her feet.

### **Flashing Thunderbolt Steed**

**Cost:** 4m; Reflexive (One hour)

**Prereqs:** Ride 2

This charm may be activated at any time. The Solar's mount can run full speed without becoming fatigued. If she knows them, Graceful Crane Stance and Monkey Leap Technique benefit her mount as well as herself while she's riding.

### **Phantom Rider's Approach**

**Cost:** 7m; Reflexive (Instant)

**Prereqs:** Essence 2, Ride 4, Flashing Thunderbolt Steed

The Solar may activate this charm after a successful Disengage action while mounted. She moves an additional range band away from her enemy.

### **Rapid Cavalry Approach**

**Cost:** 7m ; Simple (Instant) - Perilous

**Prereqs:** Essence 2, Ride 3, Flashing Thunderbolt Steed

This charm may only be used when the Solar is mounted and at least at Long range from all her enemies. She moves one range band towards an enemy and makes an immediate Rush action against him.

### **Coursing Firebolt Flash**

**Cost:** 4m, 1wp; Supplemental (One Scene)

**Prereqs:** Essence 4, Ride 5, Rapid Cavalry Approach

This charm supplements a Rush, Disengage or Withdraw action, or a single interval in a race while

mounted. Until she ends the charm, her mount's footsteps leaves behind a trail of flames, which burn for an hour without diminishing or spreading, regardless of any rain or the scenery (or lack thereof) they seem to be fed by. The flames do the same damage as a bonfire.

### **Seasoned Beast-Rider's Approach**

**Cost:** 1m, 1wp; Reflexive (One Scene)

**Prereqs:** Ride 2

This charm may be activated whenever the Solar rolls Join Battle. Her mount gains a separate initiative track if it didn't already have one, starting with the same value as her own. If it did already have one, it may use her roll instead of its own.

Her mount may spend 1i to make a reflexive Defend Other action on her, and its base Initiative increases by 1.

### **Mount Preservation Method**

**Cost:** 1hl per three hl; Reflexive (Instant)

**Prereqs:** Ride 3

The Solar may activate this charm whenever her mount takes damage, preventing three levels of bashing or lethal damage for each similar level the Solar takes.

### **Woe and Storm Evasion**

**Cost:** 4m ; Supplemental (Instant) - Post-roll

**Prereqs:** Essence 2, Ride 4, Mount Preservation Technique

This charm may be activated after damage is rolled against the Solar's mount that would crash or kill it. Reduce the damage dealt so that the mount survives with 1i if the attack is withering or 1hl left if decisive. It may not be used if the mount was already at 1i (withering) or 1hl (decisive).

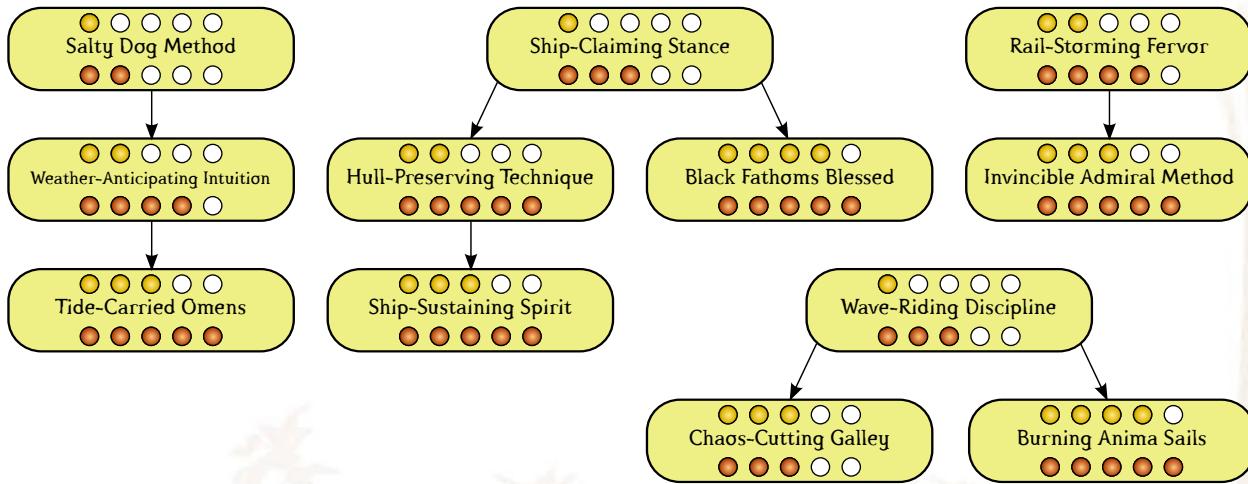
### **Phantom Steed**

**Cost:** 10m, 1wp; Reflexive (One day)

**Prereqs:** Essence 3, Ride 5

This charm may be activated at any time. The Solar conjures an obviously magical exceptional war horse that never tires, hungers, thirsts or sleeps. It is fearless, and its loyalty to the Solar is unshakable.

# Sail



## Salty Dog Method

**Permanent**

**Prereqs:** Sail 2

The Solar's automatically knows the exact distance and direction to any place she's sailed before. She adds +(Sail / 2, round up) to her Resolve against fear effects caused by horrors such as monsters, demons, behemoths and similar. Her Stamina counts as two higher for the purposes of resisting suffocation, dehydration and starvation.

If she would be thrown from a ship for any reason (and she's not already dangling over the ocean by one hand), she always finds a rail, rope, or other hold that keeps her (however precariously) aboard.

## Weather-Anticipating Intuition

**Cost:** 5m; Simple (Instant)

**Prereqs:** Essence 2, Sail 4, Salty Dog Method

By touching a body of water, the Solar gains precise knowledge of natural weather patterns for the next (Essence \* 12) hours along her course. Magic may still change the result, but without it, she foresees even freak squalls, unexpected fogs, or dying winds perfectly.

## Tide-Carried Omens

**Cost:** 7m; Simple (Indefinite)

**Prereqs:** Essence 3, Sail 5, Weather-Anticipating Intuition

While aboard a ship, the Solar becomes impossible to catch completely off guard. She has a vague sense of foreboding (Essence) minutes before any peril comes

to her or her ship, strong enough to wake her if she's sleeping.

## Ship-Claiming Stance

**Cost:** 5m, 1wp; Simple (Instant)

**Prereqs:** Sail 3

The Solar performs a five minute ceremony at the bow of a ship, claiming ownership of it. If no one objects, the vessel recognizes her as its master. Any one she doesn't welcome aboard personally suffers a -1 penalty to all actions on the ship until she does so. Her welcome may be withdrawn from an individual at any time reflexively. She may only own one vessel at a time with this charm - using it on a new ship ends her old claim.

## Hull-Preserving Technique

**Cost:** 5m, 1wp ; Supplemental (One round or roll) - Post-Roll

**Prereqs:** Essence 2, Sail 5, Ship-Claiming Stance

This charm supplements a failed Sail roll (either against an obstacle or in a Maneuver roll against a Broadside or Ram) that would result in Hull damage to the Solar's vessel. Until her next turn, or the next interval on an extended roll, the ship can't take hull damage.

the speed and maneuverability of her claimed ship also increase by 1.

### Ship-Sustaining Spirit

**Cost:** 4m ; Reflexive (Indefinite) - Stackable

**Prereqs:** Essence 3, Sail 5, Hull-Preserving Technique

This charm may be activated whenever the Solar's ship would sink, keeping it barely afloat. Any further damage sinks it - but may be staved off again by another activation of this charm. The ship begins to sink immediately when this charm ends.

### Black Fathoms Blessed

**Cost:** 10m, 1wp ; Simple (One scene) - Pilot

**Prereqs:** Essence 4, Sail 5, Ship Claiming Stance

Aquatic spirits, raksha or other intelligent aquatic creatures automatically understand the Lawgiver's speech, even if they don't know her language. She may drink salt water as though it were fresh, and doubles the amount of time she can hold her breath.

As long as the Solar is on her ship, she gains two automatic successes on all personal-scale movement-related rolls (Disengage, Rush or similar) and attacks.

### Rail-Storming Fervor

**Cost:** 2m ; Reflexive (Instant) - Pilot

**Prereqs:** Essence 2, Sail 4

This charm may be activated after Joining Battle due to a successful Boarding Action (or any of the variants). The Solar and her crew all gain 2i.

### Invincible Admiral Method

**Cost:** 10m, 1wp; Simple (One scene)

**Prereqs:** Essence 3, Sail 5, Rail-Storming Fervor

The Solar signals to her fleet with mirrors, flags or other signalling devices. She rolls ([Charisma or Intelligence] + Sail); all allied ships that can see her

orders gain (successes / 2, round up) bonus dice on their maneuver rolls this round.

Each naval combat round for the rest of the scene, she may take an action to make a new roll, granting the bonus as above. If she doesn't (usually because she's a captain and chooses to roll a maneuver for her own ship, or is busy being boarded), the charm doesn't end, but no one benefits from her leadership that round.

### Wave-Riding Discipline

**Cost:** 5m, 1wp; Reflexive (One day)

**Prereqs:** Sail 3, Essence 1

The Solar's vessel doubles its Speed bonus from its sails (assuming it has them).

### Chaos-Cutting Galley

**Cost:** 10m, 1wp; Reflexive (One day)

**Prereqs:** Essence 3, Sail 3, Wave-Riding Discipline

This charm may be activated at any time. The ship and its crew - so long as they remain aboard - are immune to soul-twisting environmental effects, such as wyld addiction, mutation, or the tainted essence of a damaged manse.

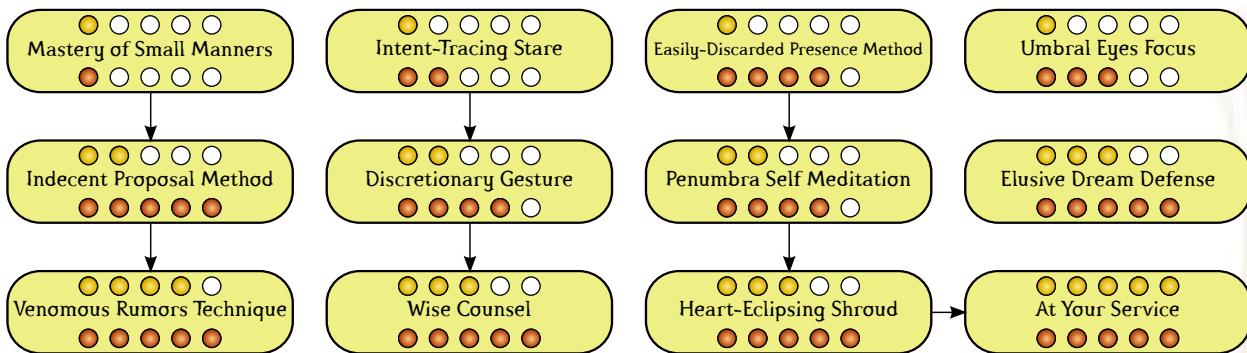
### Burning Anima Sails

**Cost:** 6m, 1wp ; Reflexive (One scene) - Iconic

**Prereqs:** Essence 4, Sail 5, Wave-Riding Discipline

This charm may only be activated any time aboard a ship. The Solar's anima crawls up the sails of her ship, or where they would be if they've been torn or burned away, in a brilliant display visible for at least 20 miles. Her ship suffers no penalty for missing or damaged sails, and is supernaturally terrifying to demons, undead and other creatures of darkness - they suffer a -3 penalty on all naval maneuver rolls against her and a -1 penalty on all actions while aboard her ship.

## Socialize



### Mastery of Small Manners

**Cost:** 5m; Reflexive (One scene)

**Prereqs:** Socialize 1

This charm may be activated at any time. The Exalt instinctively follows social customs for any culture she's immersed in - greeting, eating, flirting and responding as naturally as a native. She ignores all penalties for unfamiliarity with a culture, and will not unintentionally commit a major faux pas.

Any characters with a negative Intimacy for foreigners or outsiders treats it as one level weaker when dealing with her. Any characters with positive intimacies towards the culture she's attuned herself to act as though they have a Minor Tie of respect as long as the charm lasts if they don't already have a stronger positive Intimacy towards her.

### Indecent Proposal Method

**Cost:** 4m; Supplemental (Instant)

**Prereqs:** Essence 2, Socialize 5, Mastery of Small Manners

This charm supplements any Social Influence attempt. The Solar's words seem laughable, harmless or a necessary evil, and no one may take offense at her suggestion, no matter how inappropriate, unless they spend 1wp.

### Venomous Rumors Technique

**Cost:** 10m, 1wp ; Simple (Instant) - Group, Once/Story per Target

**Prereqs:** Essence 4, Socialize 5, Indecent Proposal Method

The Solar speaks to a group against one if its members she holds at least a Minor negative Tie towards, accusing him of betrayal, dereliction or perversion. She makes a single ([Charisma or Manipulation] +

Socialize) Instill roll and applies it against everyone present.

The relationships between the target of her accusations and everyone present are cursed - her target takes a -2 penalty on all attempts to influence them socially. This curse fades after (Solar's Essence) days without contact between the accused character and the rest of the group.

### Intent-Tracing Stare

**Permanent**

**Prereqs:** Socialize 2

The Solar becomes aware whenever she or someone she's interacting with is the target of a Read Intentions action. If she's aware of the person scrutinizing her (or succeeds on a Perception + Awareness roll to notice him), she also immediately knows who he is, even in the midst of a crowd.

### Discretionary Gesture

**Cost:** 3m; Supplemental (Instant)

**Prereqs:** Essence 2, Socialize 4, Intent-Tracing Stare

This charm supplements an ally with medium range's use of Guile. If the Solar wishes to be subtle (a gesture, stepping on his foot, a hiss), raise his Guile by one. If she's blatant (slapping him, interrupting his conversation or similar), raise his Guile by three.

### Wise Counsel

**Cost:** 6m, 1wp; Simple (Indefinite)

**Prereqs:** Essence 3, Socialize 5, Discretionary Gesture

The Solar spends a minute advising another character. He learns the Solar Socialize Excellency, and if he cannot already use essence, gains a personal mote

## Social Influence and Group Dynamics

Many Socialize charms have an effect on a particular culture or group - remember that these charms apply just as much to "the local fishermen" as they do to the politics and mores of the Tri-Khan's palace. Even small groups such as regulars at a specific tea shop often develop distinctive customs and habits that these charms can take advantage of.

pool of 6m. The first time he uses this excellency, any positive Intimacy he has for the lawgiver increases in intensity, or he gains a Minor one if it doesn't already exist.

### Easily-Discarded Presence Method

**Cost:** 4m ; Supplemental (Instant) - Post-roll

**Prereqs:** Socialize 4, Essence 1

This charm supplements a successful defense against a Read Intentions action to discern the Solar's motives. The target believes he succeeded, and sees cluelessness, incompetence, pursuit of vice, straightforward good intentions or some similarly harmless motive.

### Penumbra Self Meditation

**Cost:** 3m ; Simple (Indefinite) - Stackable

**Prereqs:** Essence 2, Socialize 4, Easily-Discarded Presence Method

The Solar meditates for an hour, hiding an intimacy. It cannot be discovered or revealed by any means. If the Solar acts on the intimacy or chooses to use it to resist a social influence attempt, this charm ends immediately (though other activations of this charm hiding other intimacies are unaffected).

### Heart-Eclipsing Shroud

**Cost:** 10m, 1wp ; Simple (Indefinite) - Mute

**Prereqs:** Essence 3, Socialize 5, Penumbra Self Meditation

The Solar spends an hour in quiet seclusion, building up a mental image of a new person. She chooses a new set of Intimacies matching her persona and gains those, replacing her real ones as long as the charm lasts. She \*acts\* (and gains Limit) according to her "real" intimacies, but uses her persona's intimacies for the all other purposes, such as social influence or magic which keys off her intimacies.

Ending this charm costs 1wp. If her persona gained

or strengthened any intimacies, those changes are reflected appropriately among her set (if her persona strengthened a Major intimacy that she doesn't share, she might gain a Minor version of the same intimacy, for example), resulting in confusion as her identities start to overlap.

### At Your Service

**Cost:** 5m ; Reflexive (Instant) - Mute

**Prereqs:** Essence 5, Socialize 5, Heart-Eclipsing Shroud

The Solar may activate this charm after a successful Read Intentions action. She activates Hearth-Eclipsing Shroud reflexively (paying the normal cost), basing her persona solely on satisfying the needs of the person whose intentions she read.

If she knows Flashing Ruse Prana, she may pay an additional 5m to make an immediate Disguise attempt. Her target will not notice her changing appearance, only that the person in front of him matches what he was looking for even more closely than he thought.

### Umbral Eyes Focus

**Cost:** 2m ; Supplemental (Indefinite) - Post-Roll, Stackable

**Prereqs:** Socialize 3

This charm supplements an Instill action after it's succeeded at creating or strengthening an intimacy. If the intimacy weakens or is lost, the solar becomes aware of this fact, regardless of distance, and the charm ends.

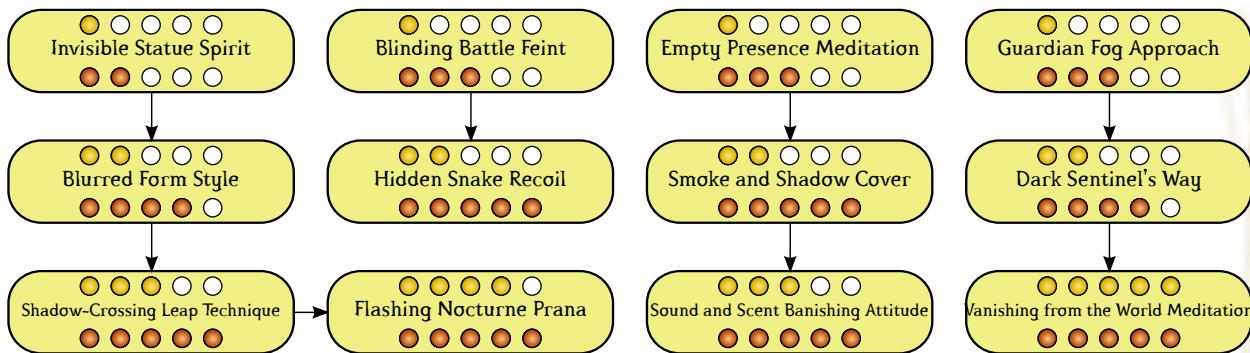
### Elusive Dream Defense

**Cost:** 1m, 1wp ; Reflexive (One Scene) - Once/Story

**Prereqs:** Essence 3, Socialize 5

This charm may be activated at any time. The Solar's Intimacies neither reduce nor increase reduce her Resolve.

## Stealth



### Invisible Statue Spirit

**Cost:** 5m ; Reflexive (Until the Solar moves) - Mute  
**Prereqs:** Stealth 2

This charm may be activated at any time, rendering the Solar invisible. It lasts as long as the Solar remains completely still.

### Blurred Form Style

**Cost:** 5m, 1wp ; Reflexive (One Scene) - Mute  
**Prereqs:** Essence 2, Stealth 4, Invisible Statue Spirit

This charm may be activated at any time. As long as she moves slowly, the Solar may make Stealth attempts even if there's no cover. The effect pauses if she moves quickly - an attack or combat movement renders her visible again until her next turn. If she's struck by an attack, the charm ends.

### Shadow-Crossing Leap Technique

**Cost:** 4m ; Supplemental (Instant) - Mute  
**Prereqs:** Essence 3, Stealth 5, Blurred From Style

This charm supplements a move action from one place of concealment to another, removing any penalties for motion or lack of cover in the intervening space.

At Essence 4+, she may spend 1wp to move between places with no clear path, as long as she can see her destination - through a closed window or portcullis, for example.

### Flashing Nocturne Prana

**Cost:** 10m, 1wp ; Reflexive (Indefinite) - Perilous, Mute  
**Prereqs:** Essence 4, Stealth 5, Shadow-Crossing Leap Technique

This charm may be activated whenever the Solar is concealed. When she releases the commitment (a reflexive action), if she's within three range bands of the place she activated the charm she blinks back to it without crossing the intervening distance. This counts as an attempt to establish concealment.

### Blinding Battle Feint

**Cost:** 3m; Supplemental (Instant)  
**Prereqs:** Stealth 3

This charm supplements a Join Battle roll at the start of a conflict. The Solar rolls it with Stealth instead of Awareness, and she starts the battle concealed from any opponents with lower initiative.

### Hidden Snake Recoil

**Cost:** 1wp or 2i; Reflexive (Instant)  
**Prereqs:** Essence 2, Stealth 5, Blinding Battle Feint

This charm may be activated whenever the Exalt incapacitates an opponent. She makes an immediate concealment roll with (Essence) automatic successes.

### Empty Presence Meditation

**Cost:** 3m; Simple (One scene)  
**Prereqs:** Stealth 3, Essence 1, Night Passes Over

As long as the Solar doesn't take overt or sudden action (dashing, drawing a weapon, yelling, etc), characters may not make Awareness rolls to notice the Solar unless they are on special alert, intend to stop everyone (such as guards at a checkpoint), or have Major or Defining intimacy that her presence threatens.

### Smoke and Shadow Cover

**Cost:** 3m ; Supplemental (Instant) - Mute  
**Prereqs:** Essence 2, Stealth 5, Empty Presence Meditation

This charm supplements a Take Cover action, allowing the Exalt to use Stealth rather than Dodge, and take cover in shadows, fog, undergrowth or other concealing but not naturally protective circumstances.

### Sound and Scent Banishing Attitude

**Cost:** 5m ; Reflexive (One scene) - Mute

**Prereqs:** Essence 3, Stealth 5, Smoke and Shadow Cover

This charm may be activated at any time. The Exalt chooses hearing, smell (and taste) or touch. She becomes, accordingly, completely silent, scentless, or impossible to recognize by touch - even a blood hound can't smell her, or someone bumping into her in a dark room wouldn't notice.

This charm may be active twice, banishing her presence from two senses, but not all three.

### Guardian Fog Approach

**Cost:** 3m ; Reflexive (Instant) - Mute

**Prereqs:** Stealth 3

The Solar may activate this charm if she's touching an ally when she hides. She makes a second Stealth check - her friend may use that result instead of his own if he hides at the same time or during the same combat round.

At Essence 3+ she may apply her second Stealth

check to (Essence x 2) allies within close range of her, and doesn't need to touch any of them.

### Dark Sentinel's Way

**Cost:** 1m ; Supplemental (Instant) - Mute

**Prereqs:** Essence 2, Stealth 4, Guardian Fog Approach

This charm supplements a Defend Other action while the Solar is concealed within Close range of her ward. Parrying attacks does not break her concealment - she flickers in to block attacks, then disappears again back to her hiding spot.

### Vanishing from the World Meditation

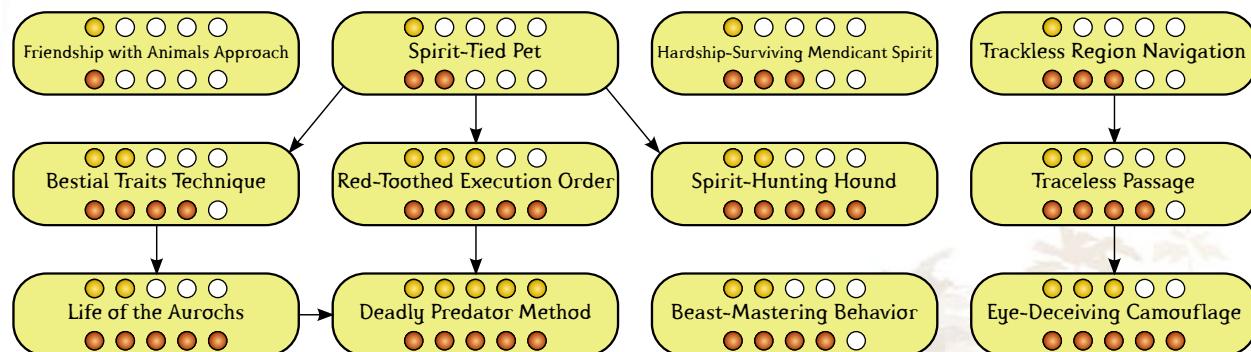
**Cost:** 5m, 1wp ; Supplemental (Indefinite) - Mute

**Prereqs:** Essence 5, Stealth 5, Dark Sentinel's Way

This charm supplements a Go To Ground action. Up to (Essence x 2) allies in the area may use her rolled successes rather than their own while attempting to Go To Ground at the same time as her.

Everyone who successfully escapes by using her rolls ends up in the same hiding place, which is somehow large enough to accommodate them all, regardless of how impossible it seems. All attempts to locate them fail until they leave hiding or the Solar ends the charm - searchers miss them no matter how careful, scrying fails to locate them, the Loom of Fate reports that they no longer exist.

## Survival



### Friendship with Animals Approach

**Cost:** 3m; Simple (One scene)

**Prereqs:** Survival 1

Herbivores and small omnivores are no longer afraid of the Exalt, and will become docile enough in her

presence that she can pet or handle them. Predators will allow her to pass unharmed through their territory without alarm. This charm doesn't work on sapient creatures or animals maddened by hunger or pain, nor on animals trained to attack.

## Multiple Familiars

While the Familiar background can be taken as many times as is reasonable, there are some considerations for players (especially the Storyteller) to keep in mind, especially when said familiars are designed for battle. A character's bond with her familiar is very personal and important. It's easier to maintain ties like that with one or a very few people than a large group. Also, don't forget to use battle groups to represent gatherings of similar combatants - such as a character's menagerie of pets.

If the Solar has more than one familiar, any Permanent charms she purchases enhance all of them. Simple, Reflexive or Supplemental charms that enhance her familiar can be used to enhance any of them (she chooses which one when activating them). Limited use effects, like Spirit-Tied Pet's once per day mote regeneration, may still only be used once per day, rather than once per day per familiar.

### Spirit-Tied Pet

**Permanent**

**Prereqs:** Survival 2

The Solar's familiar gains the a Defining Tie of loyalty to her. Any social influence which would weaken or go against this Intimacy is an unacceptable order.

She may spend a moment's concentration to settle herself in her familiar's mind, regardless of distance. Until she returns to her own body (a reflexive action) she shares its senses, rendering her incapable of taking any other action. She may also communicate simple desires across this link (such as "bring me those keys," "explore the enemy camp" or "kill that person").

### Bestial Traits Technique

**Cost:** 10m, 1wp ; Simple (Instant) - Once/Familiar per Attribute

**Prereqs:** Essence 2, Survival 4, Spirit Tied Pet

The Solar spends a week training her familiar. Increase its Strength, Dexterity, Stamina or Perception by 1, to a maximum of ten.

With a repurchase, she may instead train its Athletics, Brawl, Integrity, Larceny, Martial Arts, Performance, Resistance, Stealth or Survival by one dot. Each Ability may be raised to a maximum of the Exalt's rating. A familiar who's had this charm used on them five times increases its rating by one dot, and if it's used ten or more times, by two dots.

### Life of the Aurochs

**Permanent**

**Prereqs:** Essence 2, Survival 5, Bestial Traits Technique

The Solar's familiar grows 10% larger. It gains an 1x -1 and 2x -2 health levels.

This charm may be purchased (and stacks) up to (Essence - 1) times.

### Red-Toothed Execution Order

**Cost:** 5m ; Supplemental (Instant) - Once/Scene

**Prereqs:** Essence 3, Survival 5, Spirit-Tied Pet

This charm supplements a Decisive attack by the Solar's familiar. Threshold successes on the attack roll are added to the raw damage.

### Deadly Predator Method

**Cost:** 15m, 1wp ; Reflexive (Until Familiar Crashes) - Once/Scene

**Prereqs:** Essence 5, Survival 5, Life of the Aurochs, Red-Toothed Execution Order

This charm may be activated at any time. The Solar's familiar gains a number of benefits:

- It grows 25% larger if the Solar wishes.
- It gains (Solar's Essence) automatic successes on all Athletics rolls, and reduces the strength minimum for Feats of Strength by the same amount.
- It gains (Solar's Essence) bonus dice on all withering and decisive attacks, and on Withering damage rolls. Its base Initiative increases by 3.
- It gains 5 soak.
- It rolls Join Battle immediately, replacing its current Initiative with the rolled successes if they're higher (use this to determine how long the charm lasts outside of battle).

At the end of each round, the familiar loses 1*i*.

### Spirit-Hunting Hound

**Cost:** 3m; Reflexive (Indefinite)

**Prereqs:** Essence 2, Survival 5, Spirit-Tied Pet

This charm may be activated at any time. The Solar's familiar can see, smell and hear immaterial spirits as if they were material.

She Solar may spend 2m to allow her familiar to harm immaterial foes for one round. If the familiar establishes control of a clinch, the spirit becomes material until the clinch ends.

### Hardship-Surviving Mendicant Spirit

**Cost:** 5m; Reflexive (Indefinite)

**Prereqs:** Survival 3

This charm may be activated at any time. The Solar ignores all environmental penalties to survival rolls. Cold and heat alike are perfectly comfortable for her. She does not suffer from heat stroke, hypothermia, bug bites, plant poisons or similar harmful or uncomfortable environmental effects.

With an Essence 3+ repurchase, this charm becomes more powerful - she can withstand the heat and toxic fumes in the caldera of an active volcano, breathe underwater, and explore even the hostile environments of the Elemental Poles without danger. Reduce the damage from all environmental sources of damage by her Resistance or Survival rating, whichever's higher.

### Beast-Mastering Behavior

**Cost:** 10m, 1wp; Supplemental (One extended roll)

**Prereqs:** Essence 2, Survival 4

This charm supplements an extended roll to train an animal, whether for simple obedience or tricks, or for unlocking its innate abilities. Reduce the time required for each roll by one interval (months -> weeks, weeks -> days). The Solar does not need a specialty relevant to the particular animal she's training (falconry, lion taming, etc.).

At Essence 3+, using this charm also allows her to train any familiar (not just her own) with magical abilities (see p. 563).

### Trackless Region Navigation

**Cost:** 5m, 1wp; Reflexive (Indefinite)

**Prereqs:** Survival 3, Essence 1

This charm may be activated at any time. The Exalt can find her way safely through even the harshest terrain, leading a group of up to (Essence) Size (if they were a battle group). Enemies can still instigate trouble such as such as rock slides, wildfires, or sudden floods, but her group won't encounter them sheerly by accident. They can cover at least ten miles per day through the harshest of environments, or twenty miles per day through normal wilderness. She automatically succeeds at any Survival rolls to find oases, natural shelter, a river or similar similarly important topographical features.

### Traceless Passage

**Cost:** 5m; Supplemental (Instant)

**Prereqs:** Essence 2, Survival 4, Trackless Region Navigation

This charm supplements an attempt to avoid trackers, removing any penalty from the size of the group the Solar's trying to hide. Unintelligent trackers, such as dogs or other predators, cannot follow her at all.

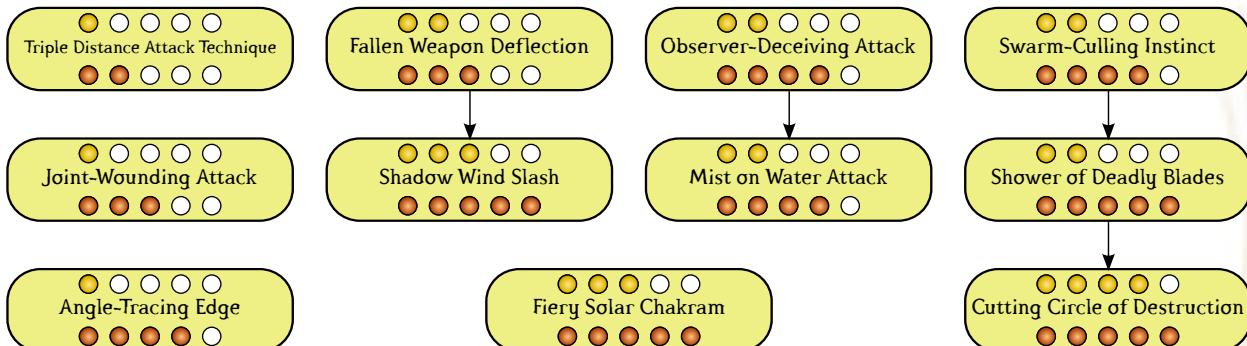
### Eye-Deceiving Camouflage

**Cost:** 6m; Simple (Indefinite)

**Prereqs:** Essence 3, Survival 5, Traceless Passage

The Solar spends five minutes camouflaging anything (including herself) less than (Essence + 1) yards wide. She rolls (Intelligence + Survival). As long as her subject doesn't move, anyone else must succeed on a (Perception + Awareness) roll at this difficulty to notice it, with a -2 penalty - otherwise, not even blundering right through the middle of her group or cache of goods will reveal it.

## Thrown



### **Triple Distance Attack Technique**

**Cost:** 1m; Supplemental (Instant)  
**Prereqs:** Thrown 2

This charm supplements a Thrown attack, increasing the weapon's maximum range by two bands.

### **Joint-Wounding Attack**

**Cost:** 3m ; Supplemental (Instant) - Stackable  
**Prereqs:** Thrown 3

This charm supplements a Decisive Thrown attack. If it does at least three levels of damage, her target receives a -3 penalty on all his rolls (but not static values) until the end of the scene. It has no effect on battle groups.

### **Angle-Tracing Edge**

**Cost:** 3m; Supplemental (Instant)  
**Prereqs:** Thrown 4

This charm supplements a Thrown attack. Her target receives no bonuses from cover. It also allows her to attack a target in full cover by taking a -3 penalty, unless the Storyteller deems it completely impossible for her weapon to reach him.

### **Fallen Weapon Deflection**

**Cost:** 2m, 2i; Reflexive (Instant)  
**Prereqs:** Essence 2, Thrown 3

The Solar may activate this charm whenever an opponent is disarmed within the base range of her Thrown weapon. She knocks the weapon one range band in any direction.

### **Shadow Wind Slash**

**Cost:** 1m, 1wp ; Reflexive (Instant) - Perilous  
**Prereqs:** Essence 3, Thrown 5, Fallen Weapon Deflection

The Solar Decisively Clashes an attack against her with Thrown. If successful, she may choose to Disarm her opponent (as though she'd succeeded on the gambit) rather than deal damage.

At Essence 5+, she may pay an additional 3m when activating this charm to both Disarm and deal damage.

### **Observer-Deceiving Attack**

**Cost:** 3m ; Supplemental (Instant) - Mute  
**Prereqs:** Essence 2, Thrown 4

This charm supplements a Thrown attack when the Solar is concealed from her foe, making the attack seem to come from a completely different direction. Characters must succeed on a ([Wits or Perception] + Awareness) roll, difficulty (Solar's Essence + 1) to find her true location - if they fail, she maintains stealth against them.

### **Mist on Water Attack**

**Cost:** 4m ; Supplemental ((Essence) turns) - Mute  
**Prereqs:** Essence 2, Thrown 4, Observer-Deceiving Attack

This charm supplements a Decisive Thrown attack against a single target. If it hits, her target cannot make a sound nor cause any sounds to be made - his screams are silent and striking a gong makes no noise. If killed, he dies in a seemingly natural pose, slumped in his chair, resting against a wall or similar.

### **Fiery Solar Chakram**

**Cost:** 8m, 1wp ; Simple (Instant) - Quickshot  
**Prereqs:** Essence 3, Thrown 5

The Solar makes a Decisive Thrown attack with pure essence, adding threshold successes to the raw damage.

age. Against ghosts, demons or other creatures of darkness, the damage roll gains (Essence) additional automatic successes.

### Swarm-Culling Instinct

**Cost:** 2m; Reflexive (Instant)

**Prereqs:** Essence 2, Thrown 4

The Solar may activate this charm when she rolls highest on Join Battle. She makes an immediate Withering Thrown attack.

### Shower of Deadly Blades

**Cost:** 6m, 1wp; Simple (Instant)

**Prereqs:** Essence 2, Thrown 5, Swarm-Culling Instinct

The Lawgiver makes a Withering Thrown attack. If it deals damage, all enemies within Short range of that

target lose (Solar's Essence) Initiative. Battle groups instead take that many levels of magnitude damage. Unless using an artifact weapon that returns to her hand after each attack, she must make two immediate ammunition checks.

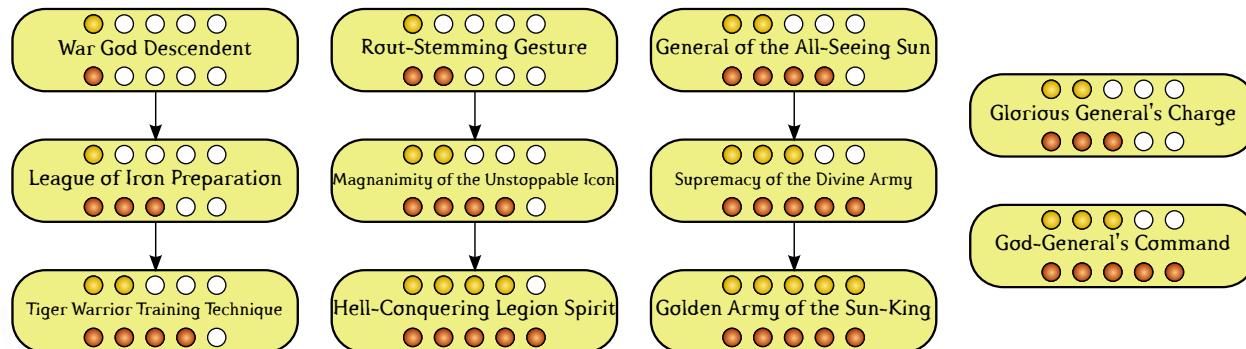
### Cutting Circle of Destruction

**Cost:** 5m, 1wp ; Simple (Instant) - Perilous

**Prereqs:** Essence 4, Thrown 5, Shower of Deadly Blades

The Solar chooses a primary target, and up to (Dexterity) secondary targets. She makes a Withering Thrown attack against each secondary target, one at a time, continuing until an attack misses or all secondary attacks have hit. She then makes a Decisive attack (usually Thrown, but any ability if she has an appropriate weapon drawn) against her primary target.

## War



### War God Descendent

**Cost:** 3m; Supplemental (Instant)

**Prereqs:** War 1

This charm supplements a Strategic Maneuver roll. The Solar ignores the -1 penalty for troops with poor drill, and upon engaging in battle, battle groups under her command count as having +1 size. The first size loss they take (reducing them to a size matching the actual number of troops involved) represents very little actual damage to the unit.

### League of Iron Preparation

**Cost:** 5m; Simple (Instant)

**Prereqs:** War 3, War God Descendant

The Solar spends at least a week training her troops with privation and hardship. They are immune to the

Demoralize stratagem, and their morale barely suffers from hunger, bad weather or physical exhaustion. Their leader ignores penalties due to these factors on Strategic Maneuver rolls.

### Tiger Warrior Training Technique

**Cost:** 10m, 1wp; Simple (Instant)

**Prereqs:** Essence 2, War 4, League of Iron Preparation

The Solar spends a week training an Undisciplined unit or a month training an Average one. Increase their drill by one rank, and raise any of their traits to match those of either combat ready troops (p. 496) or elite troops (p. 497) to match their new drill. Any characters in the group that track experience (such as player characters) must spend XP as normal for any stats they wish to increase in this way.

With an Essence 3+ repurchase, the Lawgiver may also spend a month training Elite troops, granting one of the following bonuses. A single battle group may only benefit from one of these at a time.

- +2 Might against demons, ghosts and other creatures of darkness
- +2 Might when fighting gigantic opponents, such as behemoths and Tyrant Lizards
- Perfect morale

### Rout-Stemming Gesture

**Cost:** 3m; Reflexive (Instant)

**Prereqs:** War 2, War God Descendant

This charm may be activated at any time. The Solar makes an immediate Rally action.

### Magnanimity of the Unstoppable Icon

**Cost:** 3m, 1wp; Reflexive (Instant)

**Prereqs:** Essence 2, War 4, Rout-Stemming Gesture

The Solar may activate this charm after an enemy general rallies a battle group for numbers. She makes a rallying call of her own, and a battle group under her leadership regains points of Magnitude equal to the enemy battle group's Size as enemy soldiers desert to join her.

### Hell-Conquering Legion Spirit

**Cost:** 6m, 1wp; Supplemental (Instant)

**Prereqs:** Essence 4, War 5, Magnanimity of the Unstoppable Icon

This charm supplements the defense of a battle group under the Solar's command against unnatural mental influence, mind, body or soul twisting effects, curses or supernatural environmental hazards. The Solar's troops gain five bonus dice on the roll to resist, or increase their applicable static value by three, rendering them mostly immune to effects such as short-term wyld exposure, dust storms in the infinite desert of Malfeas, and the unnerving effects of entering the underworld.

### General of the All-Seeing Sun

**Cost:** 4m; Supplemental (Instant)

**Prereqs:** Essence 2, War 4, Holistic Battle Understanding

This charm supplements a Strategic Maneuver roll,

allowing the Solar to select up to (Essence or 2, whichever's greater) stratagems at the same time. If she wins the roll, she may spend her threshold successes on as many of her chosen stratagems as they can support.

### Supremacy of the Divine Army

**Cost:** 10m, 1wp ; Reflexive (Instant) - Once/Scene

**Prereqs:** Essence 3, War 5, General of the All-Seeing Sun

This charm may be activated at any time. The Solar makes an immediate Rally for Numbers action with (Essence) automatic successes. If her rolled successes would restore more points of magnitude than the battle group has, it gains that many additional temporary magnitude points, as animals, local spirits, or even the trees themselves answer her call. These extra points of magnitude (and extra troops) fade away at the end of the scene.

### Golden Army of the Sun-King

**Cost:** 10m 1wp ; Simple (Instant) - Iconic

**Prereqs:** Essence 5, War 5, Supremacy of the Divine Army

The Solar's anima temporarily transforms into a translucent replica of any battle group she's previously commanded. She makes a Command roll to order this battle group, which immediately performs a single action before fading away. This charm cannot be used to copy an army currently present in the scene.

### Glorious General's Charge

**Cost:** 4m, 1wp; Reflexive (Instant)

**Prereqs:** Essence 2, War 3

The Solar may activate this charm after she hits with a Decisive attack (but no more than once per round). She Issues an Order (p. 210) to an allied battle group within medium range.

### God-General's Command

**Cost:** 5m, 1wp; Supplemental (Instant)

**Prereqs:** Essence 3, War 5, Supremacy Of The Divine Army

This Charm supplements a Command action, allowing the Solar to apply it to up to (Essence + 1) battle groups and eliminating any communication difficulties that would result from distance or the noise of the battlefield. The command given must be more or less the same for each unit, although there is some

flexibility - when ordering units to attack, it's not necessary that they all attack the same target. If different modifiers would apply to different units, as in the case where Drill varies, use the lowest applicable dice pool.

# Chapter Two

# Martial Arts

Creation's martial arts are the stuff of legend, powerful fighting styles that emulate the ferocity of mighty beasts or follow paths of esoteric wisdom. Martial artists come in many forms throughout the world. The vast majority are mortal men and women who've attained extraordinary martial prowess through intense study, discipline, and training. In the hands of the Exalted, the martial arts rise to even greater peaks of power, allowing supernatural martial artists to harmonize themselves fully with the Essence of a style to master its full potential.

## Styles

There is no singular "Martial Arts" Ability. Instead, there are many of them, each representing a specific discipline. A character never has dots in "Martial Arts", only in specific styles - Snake, Tiger, Dreaming Pearl Courtesan, or many others. Whenever the book refers to Martial Arts, it means all styles - a character that favors Martial Arts gains a discount when purchasing dots and charms of any style, a character with Supernal Martial Arts treats her essence as 2 higher for the purposes of buying any style's charms, etc.

Each style is limited in the weapons and armor that can be used with it. A character may only make

attacks or parries using a style ability or activate style charms while armed with weapons and wearing armor appropriate to the style (or while unarmed and/or unarmored, as most styles allow style). Artifact weapons and armor are always compatible with styles their mundane equivalents can be used with.

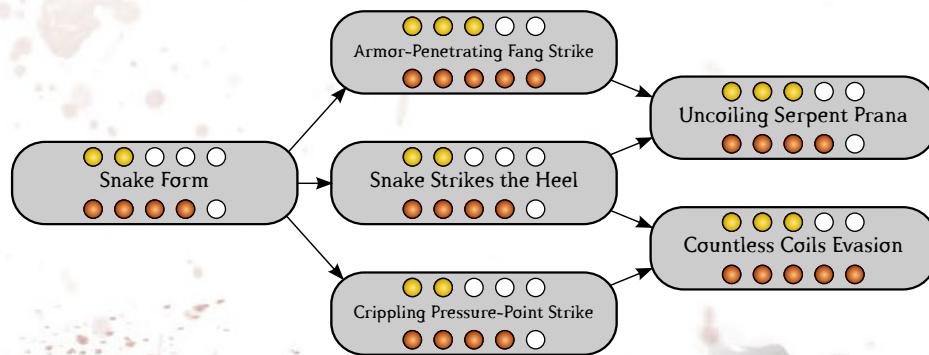
When a character arms or armors herself inappropriately for a style, she ends any active charms from that style.

## Mastery and Terrestrial

While all beings capable of wielding essence learn the same martial arts charms, not all beings are equally puissant, and some are more able to take advantage of the enlightenment these charms represent.

Some charms in this chapter have a Mastery or Terrestrial section, denoting that the charm has a greater or lesser effect when used by different Exalts. Solars and Abyssals always receive the Mastery benefit, while Sidereals have their own esoteric methods for accessing these effects. Dragon-Blooded take the lesser effects given in a charm's Terrestrial section, though certain masters of the Immaculate Order have developed initiations to overcome this limitation.

## Snake Style



Snake style is swift and agile, moving with the speed of a striking serpent to fell stronger or better-armed foes before they even have a chance to act. Its strikes emphasize precision over brute strength, and a master of the style can pierce through armor, paralyze an enemy with a pressure-point strike, or even deliver poisonous Essence through her fingertips. It flourishes in dojos of the South and the East, where students learn to emulate the motion and tactics of the native serpents, but as one of the ancient animal styles whose lineage dates back to the First Age, its practitioners can be found throughout all of Creation.

## Weapons and Armor

Snake style may be practiced unarmored or in light armor. Its unarmed attacks are usually two-fingered fang attacks that stab at pressure points and exposed tendons. It can also be used armed with a seven-section staff or hooked sword, which are wielded with extraordinary speed and finesse.

### Snake Form

**Cost:** 8m ; Simple (One Scene) - Form

**Prereqs:** Snake 4, Essence 1

The martial artist adds (Dexterity) to her soak. Enemies suffer a -1 penalty on attack rolls against the martial artist, or -3 if she has Advantage over them. She may activate this charm reflexively whenever she makes a withering attack that grants her Advantage over an opponent (where she didn't previously have it).

With an Essence 2+ repurchase, she may spend an additional 1wp when activating this charm to gain an additional +(Essence) soak, and increase the raw damage of all Withering attacks she makes by +2.

**Mastery:** The repurchase's damage bonus also applies to Decisive attacks against enemies she has Advantage over.

### Armor-Penetrating Fang Strike

**Cost:** 5m, 1wp; Supplemental (Instant)

**Prereqs:** Essence 2, Snake 5, Snake Form

This charm supplements any Snake attack, allowing the martial artist to ignore the enemy's soak or hardness.

**Terrestrial:** This charm gains the Once/Scene key-

word, and can be reset by dealing 3+ levels of damage with a decisive Snake attack and raising her initiative back up to 12+.

### Snake Strikes the Heel

**Cost:** 2m, 1wp; Reflexive (Instant)

**Prereqs:** Essence 2, Snake 4, Snake Form

This charm may be activated any time Solar is targeted by an attack from Close range (or further, if she knows and uses Uncoiling Serpent Prana). She clashes the attack with a Snake attack of her own. If she clashes with a withering attack, she does not gain any initiative even if she succeeds; if she clashes with a decisive attack, she must attempt a gambit rather than dealing damage.

**Terrestrial:** This charm gains the Attack-Action keyword.

### Crippling Pressure-Point Strike

**Cost:** 3m, 3+i; Supplemental (Instant)

**Prereqs:** Essence 2, Snake 4, Snake Form

This charm supplements a decisive Snake attack with one of the following benefits:

- Blinding Fang Strike (3i): If she hits, her enemy suffers a -3 penalty on all actions and is blinded for the rest of the scene. He may spend an unflurable miscellaneous action to remove these penalties.
- Nerve-Deadening Venom (4i): If she hits, one of the victim's arms is paralyzed for the rest of the scene, and he suffers a -2 penalty on all actions that would normally require the use of both hands.
- Withering Venom Paralysis (6i): If she hits, her enemy's lower body is paralyzed until the end of the scene, knocking him prone. Even if he succeeds on a Rise from Prone action he can only crawl, treating all terrain as difficult and taking a -3 penalty on movement actions.

**Terrestrial:** The martial artist cannot use Withering Venom Paralysis.

### Uncoiling Serpent Prana

**Cost:** 7m, 3i ; Supplemental (Instant) - Advantage

**Prereqs:** Essence 3, Snake 4, Snake Strikes the Heel, Armor-Penetrating Fang Strike

This charm supplements any Snake attack while the martial artist is in Snake Form, allowing her to strike at up to Medium range using a serpentine ribbon of essence. If the attack deals 5+ Initiative damage or any decisive damage, she may drag her enemy into Close range.

**Terrestrial:** The martial artist may only make this attack at Short range rather than medium.

**Mastery:** The martial artist does not need to be in Snake Form to use this charm.

### Countless Coils Evasion

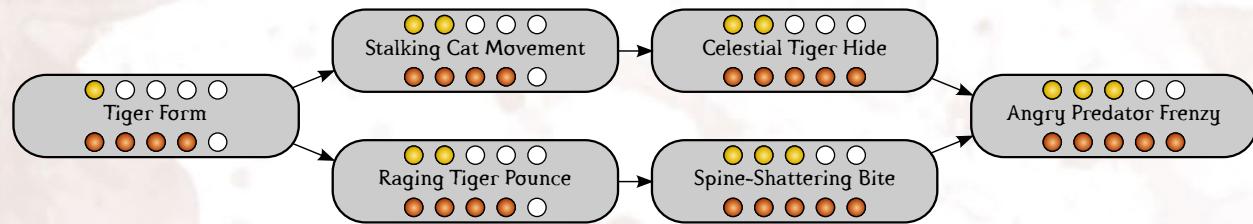
**Cost:** 7m, 1wp ; Supplemental (Instant) - Perilous, Post-Roll

**Prereqs:** Essence 3, Snake 5, Snake Strikes the Heel, Crippling Pressure-Point Strike

This charm supplements the martial artist's defense against a decisive attack, after it rolls damage. She rolls (Essence + Initiative), and each success negates one level of damage from the attack. She resets to base initiative, and if she negated all the damage, gains 2i.

**Terrestrial:** The martial artist must decide to use this charm before damage is rolled (but still rolls and applies the effects after damage).

## Tiger Style



Tiger style emulates the ferocious strength and swift, pouncing strikes of the predatory cats. A Tiger stylist treat combat as a dance between predator and prey, pursuing her foe with unmatched speed and unrelenting patience. Once she closes in on her victim, she brings him down like a tiger fells its prey - knocking him to the ground, crippling his limbs, and moving in for the killing strike. Many who follow the path of Tiger style become arrogant, impatient, or cruel, as their trust in their killing power becomes absolute. Others learn different lessons, adapting the patient bearing of a cat stalking its prey through the jungle.

## Weapons and Armor

Tiger style uses unarmed attacks - generally raking claws strikes - or tiger claws to slash the flesh of enemies. The style is compatible with light armor.

### Tiger Form

**Cost:** 10m ; Simple (One scene) - Form

**Prereqs:** Tiger 4, Essence 1

The martial artist doubles up to (Strength) threshold

successes for purposes of calculating the raw damage of withering attacks, and takes no penalty for fighting while prone. She adds (Essence) dice to Rush actions and rolls to contest Disengage attempts. She gains the initiative her enemies spend attempting to disengage from her.

She may activate this charm reflexively whenever she lands any decisive attack that deals 3+ levels of damage.

**Terrestrial:** The martial artist only doubles up to the lowest of Strength, Dexterity, and Wits threshold successes when calculating withering damage.

### Stalking Cat Movement

**Cost:** 5m; Reflexive (One Scene)

**Prereqs:** Essence 2, Tiger 4, Tiger Form

Enemies at short or medium range must use Disengage actions to move away from the martial artist as though she were at close range to them. They take -1 penalty on their defense against surprise attacks she makes.

**Mastery:** The martial artist may Rush enemies while in stealth.

### Raging Tiger Pounce

**Cost:** 4m; Supplemental (Instant)

**Prereqs:** Essence 2, Tiger 4, Tiger Form

This charm supplements any Tiger attack. If it deals at least one level of damage, the martial artist's enemy is knocked prone. As long as he remains within Close range of her, she steals 2i whenever he attempts to Rise from Prone.

**Mastery:** This charm can also supplement an attack against a prone enemy, rendering it undodgeable and adding +1 raw damage.

### Celestial Tiger Hide

**Cost:** 5m ; Reflexive (One scene) - Once/Scene

**Prereqs:** Essence 2, Tiger 5, Stalking Cat Movement

This charm may be activated at any time. The martial artist adds (Strength) to her natural soak and gains (Essence) hardness. She increases both values by +2 against attacks made from long or extreme range.

When struck by a decisive attack, she may spend 1wp and end this charm to reduce its raw damage by her Hardness.

**Terrestrial:** The martial artist must spend 2wp instead of 1wp to end the charm when struck by a decisive attack.

### Spine-Shattering Bite

**Cost:** 5m, 1wp ; Supplemental (Instant) - Post-roll

**Prereqs:** Essence 3, Tiger 5, Raging Tiger Pounce

This charm supplements a decisive Tiger attack after the martial artist rolls at least three levels of damage. She reduces the damage by two levels and cripples him instead. He may not take movement actions until he shakes off the paralysis, a miscellaneous action costing 2i and requiring a (Stamina + Resistance) roll, difficulty (Martial Artist's Strength).

**Terrestrial:** This charm gains the Once/Scene Keyword

### Angry Predator Frenzy

**Cost:** 5m, 1wp; Reflexive (One Scene)

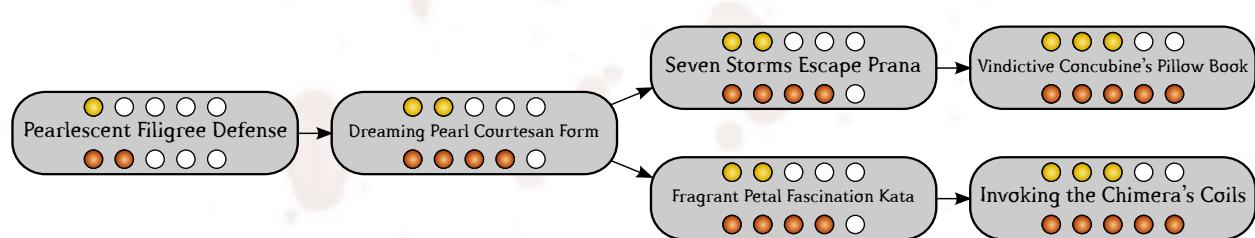
**Prereqs:** Essence 3, Tiger 5, Celestial Tiger Hide, Spine-Shattering Bite

This charm may be activated at any time while the martial artist is in Tiger Form, and it ends if she leaves the form. On decisive attacks she adds up to (Strength) threshold successes to the raw damage, and can Rush once per round as a reflexive action, in addition to her normal movement, but cannot Disengage or Withdraw. She gains a Defining Tie of savage hatred against her foes while this charm lasts

**Terrestrial:** The martial artist adds only (lower of Strength or Essence) to the damage of decisive attacks.

**Mastery:** The martial artist's base initiative increases by (Strength / 2, rounded up).

## Dreaming Pearl Courtesan



Dreaming Pearl Courtesan is a subtle style - graceful, elusive, and lethal. A student learns to maneuver herself into the perfect position to strike, gaining the confidence and trust of her victims as she navigates the veils of defenses they put up between themselves and the world. Once the Dreaming Pearl Courte-

san has reached her victim at his most vulnerable - whether that is in the tangle of his boudoir's sheets, a friendly conversation in a tearoom, or a secret meeting at court—she reveals her true nature as a killer, fighting with a deadly grace and the elusiveness of a dream.

## Weapons and Armor

Dreaming Pearl Courtesan style must be practiced unarmored. It may be used unarmed or with war fans, whips and elegant improvised weapons, such as weighted sleeves, scarves, hairpins and hand mirrors. When used with the style, the Storyteller should grant them tags as appropriate to their nature.

- **Disarming:** The Disarming tag applies to garments or accessories that can be used to leverage weapons out of their wielder's grip, such as sashes or sleeves. These weapons usually also have the Bashing and Flexible tags.
- **Grappling:** The Grappling tag applies to accessories and garments that could conceivably be used to entangle or tie up an enemy such as the sash of a kimono, a long scarf, a ball gown train, a blanket or sheet, or a length of silken rope. These weapons usually also have the Bashing and Flexible tags.
- **Piercing:** The Piercing tag applies to accessories that are small or sharp enough to slip through the defenses of armor, such as hairpins, cutlery, knitting needles, or elegantly decorated false nails. These weapons usually also have the Lethal tag.
- **Shield:** The Shield tag applies to accessories and garments that seem well-suited to fending off attacks with their broad surface, such as paper fans, hand mirrors, or the long sleeves of a robe. These weapons usually also have the Bashing tag.

### Pearlescent Filigree Defense

**Cost:** 1m; Reflexive (One scene)

**Prereqs:** Dreaming Pearl 2

This charm may be activated at any time. Clothing the martial artist wears hardens and strengthens, counting as mortal light armor which is compatible with this style (but not other styles which forbid armor). In addition, when targeted with a Withering attack, she may spend up to (Appearance) motes, increasing her armor's soak against that attack by that much.

**Mastery:** She gains Hardness 10 against the next Decisive attack which targets her. Gain this benefit only once per scene, even if she ends the charm and reactivates it.

### Dreaming Pearl Courtesan Form

**Cost:** 8m ; Simple (One Scene) - Form

**Prereqs:** Essence 2, Dreaming Pearl 4, Pearlescent Filigree Defense

The martial artist may make Dreaming Pearl attacks out to Short range, slashing a fan to create a razor wind, a stash growing long enough to wrap ankles, throwing spikes of energy from her fingertips or similar. Any weapon enhanced by Elegant Weapon Repertoire gains the traits of a light artifact weapon, and any clothing enhanced by Pearlescent Filigree Defense gains the traits of light artifact armor.

Whenever the martial artist successfully disengages with 5+ successes, she may activate this charm reflexively.

### Seven Storms Escape Prana

**Cost:** 4m, 2i; Supplemental (Instant)

**Prereqs:** Essence 2, Dreaming Pearl 4, Dreaming Pearl Courtesan Form

This charm supplements a Disengage attempt, a roll made to defend against a Rush or a control roll made to defend against a grapple. The martial artist's opponent suffers a -(martial artist's Appearance) penalty. If he wins the roll and her successes exceed his Resolve, he must pay 1wp or lose the opposed roll anyway.

**Mastery:** The duration of this charm is "one round", affecting all opposed actions it could be applied to.

### Vindictive Concubine's Pillow Book

**Cost:** 4m ; Supplemental (Instant) - Post-Roll

**Prereqs:** Essence 3, Dreaming Pearl 5, Seven Storms Escape Prana

This charm supplements a Decisive Dreaming Pearl attack after it's hit, increasing the damage by two per per condition met.

- The martial artist is making an Ambush attack against a target who knows her personally.
- She knows something about his personal life or dealings that would be embarrassing or ruinous to him, and he knows that she knows it.
- She stole Initiative from him last round with Fragrant Petal Fascination Kata this or last round.

## ...What?

Invoking the Chimera's Coils, the last charm in this style, is rather strange. Monstrous transformations, divine auras, the potential threat of unwanted enlightenment - this type of thing is the high-water mark for how strange martial arts can get. Other styles might feature powerful capstones that reach similar levels of esoteric effects and bizarre powers, but those are exceptions rather than the norm. Storyellers who find it too weird of an ending to an otherwise sensible Martial Art may wish to allow players (or their NPCs) to purchase the alternate version of the charm instead.

- She succeeded on an action or defense using Seven Storms Escape Prana this or last round.

**Terrestrial:** This charm may only be used Once/Scene.

**Mastery:** Being in Dreaming Pearl Courtesan Form counts as an additional criteria.

### Fragrant Petal Fascination Kata

**Cost:** 4m ; Supplemental (Instant) - Group, Once/Scene

**Prereqs:** Essence 2, Dreaming Pearl 4, Dreaming Pearl Courtesan Form

This charm supplements an Inspire action to fill enemies with love, lust, mercy, distraction or similar, granting it (Essence) automatic successes. In combat, she steals 1i from each enemy whose resolve is overcome, whether or not he spends willpower to resist.

### Invoking the Chimera's Coils

**Cost:** 8m, 1wp; Reflexive (One Scene)

**Prereqs:** Essence 3, Dreaming Pearl 5, Fragrant Petal Fascination Kata

The martial artist may activate this charm at the start of her turn when she is in Dreaming Pearl Courtesan Form and either she has Initiative 15+ or no undamaged -2 health levels. Her neck lengthens as she grows to five times her normal height, while her head becomes that of a delicate, gold-beaked foal with four sets of spiraling horns. Her arms and legs vanish, replaced with opalescent fins like those of a carp hold her new form aloft in the air. Countless eyes run down either side of her narrow snout and continue down her back, ranging from the size of small pearls to that of goose eggs, blazing like sapphires in the noonday sun.

She flies effortlessly, and her natural soak increases by (Essence). She may not make attacks with abil-

ities other than Dreaming Pearl (including attacks created by Reflexive charms). Other Dreaming Pearl Courtesan charms are enhanced:

- Pearlescent Filigree Defense: The enhanced clothing gains an additional +3 soak and hardness.
- Fragrant Petal Fascination Kata: She steals an additional 2i from each opponent whose Resolve is overcome.
- Seven Storms Escape Prana: This charm may now supplement any movement action (including those unopposed), allowing her to ignore intervening barriers and hazards as she dissolves into pastel fumes and reappears at her destination in a vortex of swirling light.
- Vindictive Concubine's Pillow Book: The damage increases by a further 2.

If she suffers any damage to a -4 health level, she becomes so caught up in her dream that she vanishes from the world entirely, never to be seen again.

**Terrestrial:** If she ends her turn below 10 Initiative and didn't hit with a Decisive attack or gambit on her turn, the charm ends.

**Mastery:** When activating this charm for the first time in a scene, she rolls Join Battle using (Appearance + Performance), adding to her existing initiative total.

### Invoking the Chimera's Coils (Alternate Version)

**Cost:** 8m, 1wp ; Simple (One Scene) - Perilous

**Prereqs:** Essence 3, Dreaming Pearl 5, Seven Storms Escape Prana, Vindictive Concubine's Pillow Book

The martial artist may activate this charm while at 10+ Initiative and in Dreaming Pearl Courtesan

Form, and ends if she leaves the form. She becomes dreamlike and luminous, seeming to fade in and out of reality like a half-remembered dream. Her other Dreaming Pearl charms are enhanced:

- Pearlescent Filigree Defense: The enhanced clothing gains an additional +3 soak and hardness.
- Fragrant Petal Fascination Kata: She steals an additional 1i from each opponent whose Resolve is overcome.
- Seven Storms Escape Prana: Reduce the cost of

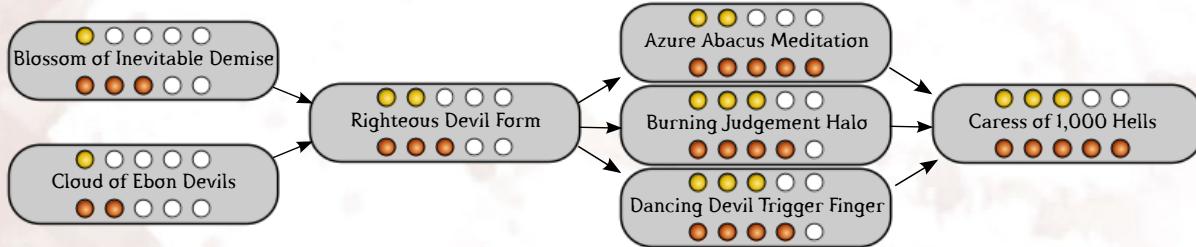
this charm by 2m. She may spend initiative she doesn't have on it, taking her into the negative (or further into it).

- Vindictive Concubine's Pillow Book: The damage increases by another 2.

**Terrestrial:** If she ends her turn below 10 Initiative and didn't hit with a Decisive attack or gambit on her turn, the charm ends.

**Mastery:** This charm loses the Perilous keyword.

## Righteous Devil



The Righteous Devil is a figure of burning fury and solemn judgment, a wandering hero who protects the innocent and banishes the wicked into a fiery hell of their own making. Students of the style master the firewand, wielding these exotic weapons with a deadly precision that's more art than archery. However, the heart of the Righteous Devil style is not in its fiery attacks, but in the judgment that precedes them. When the strong and powerful use their positions to oppress those beneath them, when the selfish put their own needs above those of the community, when the once-righteous turn from their ideals to pursue their own desires—these are the crimes which the Righteous Devil judges most harshly, and his verdict is spoken in cleansing flames. Many students of this style have a Principle encompassing this code of ethics, though there are some who turn against the moral teachings of their sifus, or who simply learn the martial techniques of the style with no heed for the ethics behind them.

### Weapons and Armor

Righteous Devil style is compatible with firewands and other similar flame weapons. It can be used with light or medium armor.

#### Blossom of Inevitable Demise

**Cost:** 3m; Supplemental (Instant)

**Prereqs:** Righteous Devil 3, Essence 1

This charm supplements a Righteous Devil Style attack with a Firewand. It allows the martial artist to attack from Medium Range, though this still requires an aim action as usual.

#### Cloud of Ebon Devils

**Cost:** 2m ; Supplemental (Instant) - Mastery

**Prereqs:** Righteous Devil 2, Essence 1

This charm supplements an aim action with a firewand. When she does so, she may reflexively draw her weapon, or reflexively reload it. This charm cannot be used if an enemy is within close range.

**Mastery:** Cloud of Ebon devils can be used to supplement a join battle roll. This allows the martial artist to reflexively aim and draw her weapon.

#### Righteous Devil Form

**Cost:** 5m ; Simple (One Scene) - Form, Psyche

**Prereqs:** Righteous Devil 3, Essence 2, Blossom of inevitable Demise, Cloud of Ebon Devils

The first time the Righteous Devil enters this form in a scene, She may roll an instill action against all enemies in combat with her. This instill action must be used to intimidate or otherwise inspire with shame, guilt, or remorse as appropriate to their sins. For the rest of the scene, any characters who possesses this intimacy takes a penalty equal to the stylist's Charisma on disengage, withdraw, or stealth-based actions. Additionally, At the beginning of each turn, the righteous devil may take a reflexive aim action against any enemy who possesses this intimacy.

The Martial Artist may also use a firewand effectively in close combat. Used in this way, treat the firewand as a medium weapon with bashing, martial arts, and shield tags. The martial artist may also affix a bayonet to gain the lethal tag. While this use is not compatible with effects that specifically modify ranged attacks, it can still benefit from other charms of this or other staff or spear compatible styles.

**Mastery:** Whenever the stylist successfully lands a decisive attack after taking an aim action, she may reflexively activate Righteous Devil Form.

#### Azure Abacus Meditation

**Cost:** 2m, 1i ; Supplemental (Instant) - Mastery

**Prereqs:** Righteous Devil 5, Essence 2, Righteous Devil Form

This charm supplements an attack roll that also benefits from extra dice from an Aim action. When used, the Righteous Devil treats all cover less then full cover as one level lower. Heavy Cover becomes light cover and Light cover becomes no cover.

**Mastery:** Against enemies that do not benefit from cover, the attack is instead piercing. (Therefore, enemy soak is reduced by 4.)

#### Burning Judgment Halo

**Cost:** 5m, 4i ; Simple (Instant) - Perilous, Mastery

**Prereqs:** Righteous Devil 4, Essence 3, Righteous Devil Form

This charm creates a ring of flames that encompasses all characters at close range. The flames need not be a complete circle. They stylist can instead choose to create an arc or semi-circle. This ring of fire is an environmental hazard that requires a difficulty 5 (Stamina + Resistance) roll to cross. Anyone too close to the flames or attempting to cross take 4 lethal damage (post-soak). The Righteous Devil is immune

to the flames.

The flames created by this charm last until the Righteous Devil's next turn unless she pays an additional four initiative to renew it at the start of each of her turns.

**Mastery:** The flames created by this charm will continue to burn for as long as the Righteous Devil remains at its center. Once she moves from that point, the flames will burn for a single round more.

#### Dancing Devil Trigger Finger

**Cost:** 10m, 3i, 1wp ; Simple (Instant) - Perilous, Mastery, Once/Scene

**Prereqs:** Righteous Devil 4, Essence 3, Righteous Devil form

This charm supplements a decisive attack allows the Righteous Devil to attack multiple targets. The Martial Artist may attack up to 1 enemy at close range, 2 enemies at short range, and three enemies at medium range (If extended using 'Blossom of Inevitable Demise'), so long as it makes sense to. She makes a single **Decisive** attack roll, rolling damage separately against each enemy.

The Martial Artist must divide her initiative evenly among all targeted enemies, and cannot assign more than (Essence + 3) initiative to any single enemy. Any additional initiative that cannot be assigned is turned into motes after the attack.

**Mastery:** The Martial Artist need not divide her initiative. Each target faces the full possible damage.

#### Caress of 1,000 Hells

**Cost:** 6m, 1wp ; Supplemental (Instant) - Aggravated, Mastery

**Prereqs:** Righteous Devil 5, Essence 3, Azure Abacus Meditation, Burning Judgment Halo, Dancing Devil Trigger Finger

This charm supplements a Decisive attack. If the attack is successful, the target must choose to repent or burn.

If they choose to repent, the target forms a Defining intimacy reflecting the nature of his atonement, chosen by that character's player. A Guild Merchant Prince who has made his fortune in the slave trade might form a defining tie of hatred for all slavers, while a hedonistic Abyssal Mass Murderer might form

a defining Principle of pacifism. A repentant enemy will generally retreat or surrender. If he chooses to reestablish hostilities, he crashes and his initiative is set to -10.

If the enemy chooses to burn, he suffers (Essence) ag-

gravated damage in addition to the damage of the attack.

**Mastery:** The target suffers health levels of aggravated damage instead of dice

## Sorcery

Across Creation, sorcerers are known and feared as figures of great and dangerous power, said to be capable of slaying a man with a gesture or calling up storms with a glance. The magic of sorcery is fundamentally different from Solar Charms. A Solar Charm is an expression of the Solar's own Essence through supreme mastery of skill. Sorcery is the art of shaping the Essence of the world itself, willing it into accordance with the sorcerer's whims. To work sorcery is to command essential forces, consort with strange spirits, and call up impossible wonders.

### Spells and Sorcerous Workings

The powers of sorcery are divided into spells and sorcerous workings. A spell is a discrete power with a defined cost and effects. Sorcerous workings, on the other hand, are

great feats and projects. Workings require considerable time and effort to complete, and their expansive scope often requires the Storyteller and the sorcerer's player to work together in defining its precise effects.

## The Three Circles

Sorcery is divided into three circles of understanding and power. In the Old Realm, these were called the Terrestrial Circle, the Celestial Circle, and the Solar Circle—for only the Solar Exalted could master the last. Realm-trained sorcerers sometimes speak of these as the Emerald, Sapphire, and Adamant Circles, though the last is spoken of only in legends and rumors since the disappearance of the Sun's Chosen.

Solar Exalted must begin by mastering the Terrestrial Circle, then progress into higher circles of understanding. The Lunar and Sidereal Exalted may master the Terrestrial and Celestial Circles, but the final secrets of the Solar Circle elude them. Dragon-Blooded, Liminal Exalted, and mortals are only capable of initiating into the Terrestrial Circle. The Abyssal Exalted command similar raw power to their Solar counterparts, but focus on the dread secrets of necromancy.

## Becoming a Sorcerer

Sorcery is a mountaintop of enlightenment to which many paths lead. Most sorcerers are guided along their path by an instructor—promising young talents receive instruction from master sorcerers of the Realm at the Heptagram Academy, while others are taught by demons, elementals, or stranger things yet. A few sorcerers forge their own path—following contemplative or meditative disciplines that purify and enlighten the mind, mastering relics or domains of power, or seeking out lost libraries and ancient grimoires. All paths demand effort, dedication, and the willingness to abandon old views and deeply-held beliefs. Those who attain sorcerous enlightenment see the world through new eyes, gaining a deeper insight into the nature of all things. For the Solar Exalted, this is expressed by learning the Terrestrial Circle Sorcery Charm (p. 360). Other Exalted have their own equivalents.

## Sorcerous Motes and the Shape Sorcery Action

When a sorcerer turns her skin to bronze, calls up a fiery kraken from the molten depths of the earth, or bind the greatest demons of Hell, she is not drawing upon her own Essence. Sorcery manipulates the energies of the world

around the sorcerer, shaping it into patterns and matrices that achieve her ends. When a sorcerer casts a spell, the motes that power it are not drawn from her own Essence pools. Instead, she must take shape sorcery actions to manipulate the flow of Essence around her and channel sorcerous motes into the casting of the spell.

To take a shape sorcery action, the sorcerer must first declare the spell she is attempting to cast, and then roll (Intelligence + Occult). Each success contributes one sorcerous mote to the casting of the spell. If this is sufficient to meet the spell's cost, it is cast immediately. If not, the sorcerer must continue focusing Essence into the spell in subsequent rounds. She may choose to take additional shape sorcery actions, rolling and adding successes towards the total, until she has enough to cast the spell. Once she has reached the total, she unleashes it immediately and reflexively.

The shape sorcery action itself is a combat action which cannot be included in a flurry. A sorcerer *can* pause in the act of gathering sorcerous motes to perform other actions, such as attacking or disengaging from an enemy, but loses three sorcerous motes at the end of every round where no sorcerous motes were gathered. If she uses a ritual that allows her to reflexively gather sorcerous motes for a turn, this counts as if she had used a shape sorcery action—sorcerer-assassins often find such techniques efficacious in their chosen trade, allowing them to fluidly switch between fighting and shaping spells.

If the sorcerer begins casting a different spell from the one she has started shaping, then her current spell is prematurely aborted, and all gathered sorcerous motes disperse and are lost. If she simply stops gathering motes, she will continue losing three sorcerous motes per round until she has none remaining, at which point the spell is lost.

Some spells require an extended period of shaping Essence to cast, generally on the order of hours or longer. Keeping track of the accumulation of sorcerous motes in these cases is less relevant than the time invested in the spell, and so they are simply noted as having a cost of "Ritual."

## ADDITIONAL SPELL CASTING RULES

- Willpower:** Most spells cost at least one point of Willpower, as it takes a significant investment of the sorcerer's will to grasp and wield the Essence of the cosmos. This cost must be paid up front, when the sorcerer first begins shaping the spell. **If the spell is cast successfully, the realization of the sorcerer's design fulfills her, restoring one point of Willpower spent to fuel the spell.** If the spell is lost, aborted, or countered, then all spent Willpower is simply lost.

- **Commitment:** Sorcerous motes are never committed, regardless of a spell's duration.
- **Casting in Crash:** A sorcerer in Initiative Crash regains no Willpower spent on her spells, even when she casts successfully. Additionally, all spells cost an additional three sorcerous motes to complete while crashed.
- **Control Spells:** All sorcerers have at least one control spell. A control spell is a signature spell at which a sorcerer excels beyond all others, imbuing it with some special measure of her mystic will and personal prowess. Many spells enjoy special benefits when selected as a control spell, and many shaping rituals (see below) give special benefits to a sorcerer's control spell.

## Countermagic

One sorcerer can unravel another's spell as it's being shaped. Countering a spell as it's cast is an (Intelligence + Occult) roll, with every two successes draining one sorcerous mote from the spell's completion. **If the sorcerer knows the spell she is attempting to counter, then each success drains one mote.** She must be within short range of the sorcerer whose spell she wishes to counter, and she must be initiated into that spell's circle. If countermagic reduces the total sorcerous motes invested in a spell to zero, the casting is broken, requiring the enemy sorcerer to attempt casting it anew. Also, the mystic backlash of a shattered spell prevents the enemy sorcerer from taking a shape sorcery action on his next turn. Countermagic is a combat action that cannot be placed in a flurry.

### DISTORTION

Once a spell has been cast, its effects cannot be undone, but a skilled sorcerer may mute, twist, or weaken them with a distort action. This is an extended (Intelligence + Occult) action, with a difficulty based on the circle of the targeted spell—1 for Terrestrial Circle, 3 for Celestial Circle, and 5 for Solar Circle. The goal number of the action, as well as the precise effects, are specified in the text of each spell if it can be distorted, often diminishing the spell's advantages or inflicting a drawback on its caster. Other spells, such as those that last only for an instant or that summon a being that exists independently of the spell, cannot be distorted. **Distortion has a terminus of five rolls**—if a sorcerer fails to achieve her goal, she cannot attempt to distort the spell again. As with countermagic, the sorcerer needs to be within short range of the spell's target or effect, and must be initiated into that spell's circle. **Attempting to distort a spell that the sorcerer does not know imposes a -2 penalty on all distortion rolls.** Distortion is a combat action that cannot be placed in a flurry.

### UNDOING A SPELL

Sometimes, a sorcerer may want to completely revoke the

effects of a long-term spell—for example, lifting the curse of Corrupted Words that prevents one of the sorceress Mnemon's minions from revealing the details of a secret alliance. Such feats require a sorcerous working (p. 483) of Ambition 3 and the same circle as the spell to be undone. The Storyteller may adjust these guidelines to better suit the circumstances or narrative, making it harder or even impossible to dispel an effect if doing so would utterly undermine the functionality of that spell, or making it easier to undo effects that he feels the players should be able to remove more easily.

## Shaping Rituals

As the sorcerer grows in knowledge, her mastery of the universe opens new paths to power, allowing her to perceive and draw upon new sources of Essence to fuel her magic. These are shaping rituals, a catch-all term for alternate ways in which a sorcerer may gain sorcerous motes. Shaping rituals can be used to represent a sorcerer's unique path to power—a bargain with a spirit, a legendary relic, a taboo that must be kept. Five sample archetypes are listed below. Each has multiple shaping rituals associated with it, along with Merits and other benefits that may be purchased by any character who has mastered one of the archetype's shaping rituals. (All such sorcerous Merits are of the purchased variety.) These archetypes are not meant to be comprehensive or confining—they're an illustration of what a sorcerer might look like, included to help players realize their character concepts.

### BARGAIN WITH MARA

You have met the demon Mara, the deer-footed creature of shadows who pursues lovers marked by dark destinies and feeds them stolen souls. You may have met her as she sojourned through Creation, or seen her lovely, wicked face in dreams—perhaps you even summoned her yourself

### MULTIPLE SHAPING RITUALS

The Charms that initiate the Solar Exalted into sorcery also give them a free shaping ritual, which is how most of the Chosen gain access to them. As a Solar sorcerer rises through the three circles, he gains more shaping rituals. These can be taken from rituals offered by his original archetype, but by no means is he limited to those. If the character has used his sorcerous power to make pacts with spirits, create great strongholds of knowledge, or transcend the mental confines of petty humanity, then it's entirely fitting for him to gain rituals that reflect those achievements.

to make your bargain. Through cunning, charisma, or pleasing offerings, you have made a pact with her, taking the power of the Shadow Lover for your own.

#### *Shaping Rituals*

Like Mara herself, the sorcerer draws power from those who love her. The Essence of their adoration is clay in her hands, taking form in her sorcery. Whenever she takes a shape sorcery action while within medium range of a character with an unrequited Tie of love (or a similar emotion) towards her, she may reap additional sorcerous motes equal to that Intimacy's value (for example, four motes from a Defining Tie). Intimacies can only be tapped for motes in this fashion once per day, and the sorcerer cannot harvest power from love she reciprocates. Normally she may only drain one Intimacy to fuel the casting of a spell, but she may draw power from any available Intimacies when casting her control spell. She cannot draw more than ten sorcerous motes per scene with this ritual.

When the sorcerer seduces and sleeps with a willing mortal, she may choose to draw the soul out of his body, leaving it an inanimate husk that soon dies of deprivation. The extracted soul lingers invisibly around her, tethered to her by umbral chains. As a miscellaneous action, the sorcerer may offer up one of her bound souls to Mara in exchange for power once per scene, rolling (Essence + Willpower) and gaining that many sorcerous motes. She retains these motes until the end of the scene, and may spend them towards any spells she casts. Additionally, a bound soul may be reflexively expended in place of a point of Willpower when paying the cost of the sorcerer's control spell. She cannot have more than (Essence + Occult) souls bound to her at one time.

The sorcerer draws power from shadow and darkness, weaving it into her spells. Whenever she begins a scene in darkness or shadow heavy enough to qualify as concealment for attempting stealth, she gains three sorcerous motes, which last until the end of the scene and can be spent towards any spells she casts. Additionally, whenever she takes a shape sorcery action to shape a spell while in stealth, she gains an additional sorcerous mote as long as the spell's target is unaware of her. She also receives these benefits while under the night sky during the new moon or Calibration, even without being concealed.

#### *Other Benefits*

**Infernal Nobility** (Merit •): Demons recognize the sorcerer as one favored by Mara. First Circle demons are treated as having a Minor Tie of terrified awe towards her, while Second and Third Circle demons have a

positive Minor Tie of respect, or some variation suited to their nature.

**Dark Paramour** (Merit ••): Mara appears in the sorcerer's dreams, feeding her with fragments of stolen souls. Once per story, the sorcerer's player may declare that she is visited by Mara in a dream while sleeping. She does not recover Willpower from that sleep, but receives some significant benefit determined by the Storyteller—tutelage in a new spell in a single night, double 9s on all shape sorcery spells for the next day, the service of a First Circle demon as a gift from Mara, or something similar. She also wakes with a Minor Principle of "I take pleasure in death and suffering," or strengthens that Intimacy if she already possesses it.

**Demonic Tattoos:** Mara has marked the sorcerer, taking one or more of her own souls and rendering it down into a midnight-black tattoo that spirals around her chakras. The sorcerer may unlock Evocations from these tattoos that allow her to manipulate or gain power from shadows or darkness, alter her control spell to incorporate elements of darkness and subversion, or manipulate or empower summoned demons, such as by turning them into living shadows.

#### **PACT WITH AN IFRIT LORD**

You have stood in the court of one of the ifrits or another elemental lord of fire. Beneath the judgment of his burning eyes, you passed whatever test of righteousness he saw fit to impose. The pact you struck lets you draw strength from the element of fire and shape its destructive power to your will.

#### *Shaping Rituals*

Whenever the sorcerer takes a shape sorcery action, she may draw an additional (Essence) sorcerous motes from any fire within medium range, coaxing its power into her spell. This diminishes the flame—a hallway of torches will be extinguished by a single invocation, while a bonfire might die down to small flames after the first, then go out altogether after the second. However, if the sorcerer is fighting near (or in!) a burning building, she has a nearly endless source of sorcerous motes to draw on. She may draw from fire elementals or other spirits of flame as well, draining (Essence) motes from their pools, but only if her shape sorcery roll exceeds their Resolve, and no more than once per scene against any one spirit. When the sorcerer draws Essence to fuel her control spell, flames are not diminished, and spirits do not lose the motes drawn from them.

The sorcerer's patron offers her power in exchange for burnt offerings, breathing in the smoke of her tribute and

rewarding her with glory. The sorcerer may make a prayer roll (Charisma + Performance, difficulty 5 minus the Resources value of any sacrifices offered along with the prayer) seeking power from her patron. Success grants her sorcerous motes equal to (her Essence + extra successes on the roll). These motes last for the duration of the story, and can be spent towards any spell she casts. She cannot pray for power more than once a day, and receiving new motes replaces any granted by past prayers.

The sorcerer has learned to cultivate the flames of passion in her own heart, using them to stoke the power of her spells. Whenever she would gain a point of Willpower from upholding an Intimacy that represents a passionate emotion or fervent belief, she may instead claim 5 sorcerous motes. These motes last until the next sunrise, and can be spent towards any spell she casts. Additionally, she may shed a level of intensity from such an Intimacy to channel its fire towards a spell she is shaping, adding sorcerous motes equal to the (original) intensity of the Intimacy. She cannot tap an Intimacy more than once per day this way.

#### *Other Benefits*

**Unburnt Majesty** (Merit ••): Having contracted with a lord of flame, the sorcerer commands the fealty of lesser fires. She doubles 8s on rolls to resist environmental hazards based on fire or heat, and adds her Essence to both soak and hardness against purely flame-based attacks such as firewand blasts.

**The Burning Name** (Merit ••): With the utterance of her patron's name, the sorcerer may call forth flames, sending them streaming from her eyes, fingertips, or mouth. She might use this to light a campfire or incinerate ropes that bind her hands, and can also use it as an attack, rolling (Intelligence + Occult) to direct the flames, which are treated as a light mundane weapon with the lethal, thrown (short), and mounted tags.

**Suzerain of Endless Flame** (Merit ••): Fire answers readily to the sorcerer's will. Whenever the sorcerer casts a spell that creates or manipulates fire as its primary effect, or summons a fire elemental, its cost is lowered by three sorcerous motes. If it's her control spell, she may also waive a single point of Willpower from its cost once per day.

#### **SCARRED BY NIGHTMARES**

Perhaps you were a child lost in the warped depths of the Wyld or a hero treading where the logic of the world crumbles away. Perhaps you were already an initiated sorcerer, wracked by maddening dreams or secrets best left unknown. However it happened, you saw it. Something

numinous, a forgotten god or primal monster that spanned the horizon, more beautiful than anything you've ever seen and more horrifying than anything you've seen since. You caught only a glimpse of this outer thing, but it has marked you. A sliver of the Wyld now resides within the deepest dreaming parts of your mind, and the power of chaos serves your sorcerous will.

#### *Shaping Rituals*

When the sorcerer sleeps, her player may describe the strange visions that haunt her. She recovers no Willpower from sleep, instead rolling (Wits + Occult) and gaining one sorcerous mote per success. These motes last until the next time she sleeps, and can be spent towards any spell she casts. If the sorcerer spends all of the sorcerous motes granted by a dream casting her control spell, each counts as two motes towards meeting the spell's cost. Once per story, the sorcerer's player may stunt to describe how the current situation was somehow symbolized by her dreams, essentially declaring that her past dreams retroactively foreshadow the present. Doing so awards her a number of sorcerous motes equal to (her Essence x [stunt level + 1]), which last for the duration of the scene.

The sorcerer abides by an esoteric taboo or is victim to a delusional belief inspired by the Wyld energies inside her mind, a Defining Derangement which cannot be removed or altered (p. 168). If she works her delusions or taboo into the description of a stunt, she gains sorcerous motes equal to the stunt's rating. If she is stunting the casting of her control spell, add two to the bonus. These motes last until the next time she sleeps, and can be spent towards any spell she casts. If the Derangement causes in-character hardship that would be sufficient to gain solar experience from the Flaw (p. 167), she gains 10 sorcerous motes, which last for the duration of the story. After the first time this bonus is awarded in a story, subsequent awards are lowered to the sorcerer's (Essence).

The sorcerer may feed on emotional energies like the raksha, shaping the passions of others through spellcraft. Once per scene, when another character forms, strengthens, or weakens an Intimacy that represents an emotional feeling, the sorcerer may feed from it, gaining sorcerous motes equal to the intensity of the Intimacy (its new rating if it was strengthened, or the old one if weakened). These motes last for the duration of the story, and can be spent towards any spell she casts. The fervent passions of the Exalted represented by Limit are even more potent nourishment. Whenever a character, including the sorcerer herself, gains a point of Limit, the sorcerer may draw power from that, gaining sorcerous motes equal to the character's current Limit. She may draw ten sorcerous

motes from a character in Limit Break, but only once during the duration of that Break.

#### *Other Benefits*

**Child of Madness** (Merit ••••): The sorcerer is immune to the twisting power of the Wyld, and need never fear mutation, delusion, or addiction from time spent in chaos. However, her Wyld affinity makes her vulnerable to iron, causing her to take aggravated damage from weapons made of it as though she were one of the raksha.

**Miracles of Shadow and Chaos** (Merit ••••): The sorcerer may warp the substance of chaos to her will. She doubles 8s on any shape sorcery rolls made in the Wyld, and can perform sorcerous workings without needing to pay experience costs. However, such miracles fade to shadow outside the Wyld. If she used a free working to give herself opalescent wings, they would fade away as soon as she entered Creation, only to reappear when she returns to the Wyld. A palace enchanted to fly could do so freely through the skies of chaos, but would fall subject to gravity in Creation. The Storyteller may retroactively charge the player experience points for any working that circumvents or cheats this limitation in play.

#### **SOUL-PERFECTING ELIXIR**

Through study of the arts of alchemy and the bodily humors, you have brewed the Soul-Perfecting Elixir, a draught that transformed your body into a living cauldron. Yours is a sorcery rooted in the corporal, sustained by the balance of vital forces and the flow of Essence along meridians. Through the consumption of alchemical catalysts and adherence to ascetic practices, you maintain your body as a pure vessel through which sorcerous forces may be channeled into the world.

#### *Shaping Rituals*

The sorcerer can brew a draught that catalyzes an upswell of power from within. Creating a single dose of this potion is a difficulty 2 (Intelligence + Craft) roll that takes a few hours, with an increased difficulty if the sorcerer lacks access to a wide range of alchemical components and/or a properly stocked workshop for brewing. Brewing a larger batch increases the difficulty by 2, but provides the sorcerer with effectively as much of the potion as she needs. Drinking this potion is a miscellaneous action, rolling (Stamina + Occult) and gaining a sorcerous mote for each success. These motes last for the duration of the scene, and can be spent towards any spell she casts. She may only benefit from one draught each scene, and the balance of reagents to humors means the potion only benefits the sorcerer who brewed it. A prepared draught retains its efficacy for about a week,

meaning that even a large batch will soon become dilute and powerless. The sorcerer may prepare special elixirs that permanently retain their efficacy, but provide sorcerous motes that can only be spent casting her control spell.

By abstaining from rich foods, drugs, sexual intercourse, and other indulgences that compromise the balance of forces within her body, the sorcerer may draw greater power from within. So long as she abides by this ascetic lifestyle, she receives (Stamina) sorcerous motes after a night of sleep, plus additional sorcerous mote for every point of deprivation penalties she suffers. These sorcerous motes last until she next sleeps, and can be spent towards any spell she casts. Additionally, once per story, she may spend a scene in meditation to unlock (Essence + Stamina) sorcerous motes which last the duration of the story. Compromising the ascetic lifestyle of this shaping ritual causes the sorcerer to lose all motes granted by it, and denies her its benefits for the remainder of the story.

#### *Other Benefits*

**Deep Breath Cultivation** (Merit •••••): The humors governed by the element of air reside in the lungs, nourishing the entire body with vital energies. As long as the sorcerer abides by an ascetic lifestyle, she may completely refill her Essence pools with an hour of meditation, and adds her Stamina to the number of motes she recovers each hour while active.

**Flowing Intention Cultivation** (Merit ••••): The humors governed by the element of water gather in the kidneys, the corporal embodiment of the sorcerer's perseverance and effort. As long as she abides by an ascetic lifestyle, she may waive the Willpower cost to add a bonus success to an action once per day.

**Living Spirit Cultivation** (Merit •••): The humors governed by the element of wood reside in the liver and are the physical medium of spiritual awareness. The sorcerer rolls (Stamina + Resistance) against a poison or disease, her mastery over these humors adds her Occult in bonus dice to the roll.

**Pure Heart Cultivation** (Merit ••): The humors governed by the element of fire find their seat in the heart, animating the body and bridging the boundary between flesh and mind as blood flows from the heart to the brain. Once per day, when her Resolve is overcome by influence that opposes an Intimacy based on temperance or abstinence, she may lower the Willpower cost to resist it by one point.

**Vital Focus Cultivation** (Merit •••): The humors governed by the element of earth rest in the spleen, the

### CRAFTING SORCEROUS RELICS

While a character may gain Talisman of Ten Thousand Eyes at character creation by learning one of its shaping rituals, rather than investing dots in the Artifact background, it is still a four-dot artifact, as are any other relics of comparable sorcerous power. A character attempting to craft such a wonder must first design the perfect shape of a relic to channel mystical energies. This is an Ambition 1 working of the Celestial Circle. If the sorcerous working succeeds, the character may then begin crafting the artifact using the usual rules (p. 241), unlocking one of its shaping rituals for free upon completion. If the working fails, then the design is intrinsically flawed, and the sorcerer may not attempt to recreate it again without some source of inspiration for a new design.

bodily fulcrum through which the mind's intelligence permeates through the spirit. Deprivation penalties and wound penalties do not apply to any mental actions that the sorcerer takes, including shape sorcery actions.

#### THE TALISMAN OF TEN THOUSAND EYES

A phylactery of great sorcerous puissance, this talisman is wrought from rune-etched orichalcum and set with a gleaming ruby of ten facets. Each facet seems to reflect ten more within its depths, which reflect even more, creating the illusion of infinity that gives this relic its name. You have claimed the talisman as your own, using it either to initiate yourself into sorcery or as a wellspring of power to draw upon. Its ten thousand eyes are ever watchful, giving warning when malefic forces roam unchecked, and serving as a lens through which you may cast your sight or presence.

#### *Shaping Rituals*

The sorcerer may hone her senses through the talisman to open her inner eye, paying a point of Willpower whenever she makes an Awareness roll to Join Battle or notice a hidden threat while wearing the talisman. She gains one sorcerous mote for every two successes on this roll. These motes last for the duration of the scene, and can be spent towards any spell she casts. If she is joining battle against or searching out malevolent sorcerous forces—enemy sorcerers, bound demons, strange beings created by sorcery—she also adds her Occult in bonus dice to the roll.

When the sorcerer takes the first shape sorcery action to begin casting a spell and stunts it with a description of how she casts the spell through the talisman or draws on its power, she gains (stunt rating + 2) sorcerous motes

towards completing this spell. This benefit can only be received once per scene. Stunts to enhance the sorcerer's control spell do not count against the once per scene limit.

A sorcerer with an Essence pool may spend a scene in meditation to commit ten motes to the talisman. Once she begins shaping a spell while wearing the talisman, she may draw on the power she's invested, contributing up to (Essence + 2) sorcerous motes towards the spell until the full commitment of ten motes has been converted into ten sorcerous motes, or the spell is cast (or countered). Committed motes are converted to sorcerous motes on a one-to-one basis normally, but are converted into two sorcerous motes when casting the sorcerer's control spell. The sorcerer must wait until she's had a full night's sleep before she can charge the talisman again.

#### *Other Benefits*

**Astral Meditation** (Merit •): The talisman serves as a gateway through which the sorcerer may send her presence to distant corners of Creation. Once per day, while wearing the talisman, she may waive the Willpower costs of a spell that allows her to sense things remotely or project her presence from afar, such as Silent Words of Dreams and Nightmares.

**Eye of Crimson Warning** (Merit ••): The ruby set in the talisman pulses with warning light when it comes within ten miles of dangerous sorcerous forces—a sorcerer wreaking havoc with spells, a demon bound to ill ends or unbound and rampaging, an ancient curse fallen upon the land. Any tracking rolls the wearer makes to pinpoint or chase down such perils enjoys double 9s.

**Evocations:** Exalted sorcerers may master Evocations of the Talisman of Ten Thousand Eyes. These Evocations typically enhance the wearer's senses, both mundane and spiritual, or directly enhance or alter spells.

#### **...AND MANY MORE**

The archetypes above are only examples of what sorcerous

### MORTAL SORCERERS AND SHAPING RITUALS

Mortal sorcerers initiate into the Terrestrial Circle by mastering a shaping ritual, which they may purchase as a five-dot Merit that requires Occult 3. The first spell they learn becomes their control spell. Most mortal sorcerers only ever attain one ritual, but at the Storyteller's discretion, they might be able to gain more from the same sorcerous archetype, or even different ones.

**EXAMPLE: TWO SORCERERS**

Will decides that his Solar learned sorcery before even Exalting, serving as a cultist to the demon Glafira, the Zodiac of Blood. This is just a name and a title he made up, but he and the Storyteller work out that Glafira is a Second Circle Demon who dwells in the stars of Hell, and hungers for the end of time itself. Will takes Terrestrial Circle Sorcery at character creation, and decides to pick a shaping ritual that represents his infernal past. He decides to use the second ritual from "Pact with an Ifrit Lord," gaining power by praying to the Zodiac of Blood. He also picks a few Merits that he and the Storyteller agree fit that background: Infernal Nobility from "A Bargain with Mara," and a modified version of Eye of Crimson Warning from "The Talisman of Ten Thousand Eyes" that lets him sense infernal cults, demons, or secret paths and portals to Hell.

Elliott, meanwhile, waits until a few sessions in before his Solar character learns sorcery. Over the course of the game, the circle has defeated and imprisoned a powerful raksha noble, and Elliott asks the Storyteller if he could compel the raksha to initiate him, and just use the "Scarred by Nightmares" archetype to represent this, even though the background isn't quite the same. This is reasonable, so the Storyteller agrees.

initiation might look like. Here are a handful of assorted shaping rituals that players might use to fit their concept for a sorcerer or as a starting point to design a new sorcerous archetype.

The sorcerer has been tutored in the arcane arts at the Heptagram or a similar sorcerous academy. Once per story, she may perform sorcerous research and then roll (Intelligence + Lore), gaining sorcerous motes equal to the successes that last for that story's duration. Access to a library or a mentor adds one to two bonus dice to this roll.

The sorcerer may draw power from the forces of wind, rain, and storm, gaining two sorcerous motes each turn she takes while exposed to a thunderstorm, heavy winds, or other harsh weather. Rain showers or light gusts still offer some power, allowing her to gain (Essence) motes at the start of the scene but not on any subsequent turns. Taking damage from a weather-based environmental hazard gives her five motes per level of damage. These motes last for the duration of the scene.

The sorcerer may bathe in the geomantic fires that burn

in her manse's heart to gain (Essence + Willpower) sorcerous motes, at the price of taking a level of aggravated damage. These motes last for a fortnight, or until she next claims motes from the manse. While within the bounds of the manse, she also gains one additional sorcerous mote each turn while casting a spell.

The sorcerer builds on the emotional resonance of song through her spells, gaining (Performance) sorcerous motes towards a spell once per scene after using song or music to inspire an audience with an emotion that resonates with that spell or with the purpose she's using it to achieve.

**Terrestrial Circle Spells****CIRRUS SKIFF**

**Cost:** 15sm, 1wp

**Keywords:** None

**Duration:** Until ended

The sorcerer calls down a Cirrus Skiff to bear her skyward, a small white puffy cloud just large enough for her and one other passenger to ride upon. The cloud descends from the sky and hovers near the sorcerer like a faithful puppy until she steps on, at which point it rises into the air, obeying her mental commands. It is slow-moving, managing a pace of only (Essence x 6) miles per hour, but is virtually unlimited in its flight capability, able to rise upward with no limit other than the ability of its caster to endure the rarefied air of the upper atmosphere. In combat, the sorcerer rolls (Wits + Occult) in place of standard movement rolls to mentally direct the cloud, but otherwise faces no complications or penalties.

If the sorcerer wishes to sleep, study, or otherwise rest on the Cirrus Skiff without having to give it constant instructions, she may give it a set command, such as "Fly a mile up into the air and stay there" or "Circle around the satrap's palace," which it will obey until she gives it new orders. The sorcerer may disembark from the skiff for up to one scene without ending this spell, but any absence beyond that ends the spell, sending the cloud flying back up into the stratosphere.

A character who knows Cirrus Skiff as her control spell may cast it with an Indefinite duration. Her conjured cloud will follow after her after she disembarks, eagerly awaiting her return without ever leaving. It will follow simple instructions from the sorcerer, even when she's not riding it, and can be summoned by the sorcerer's call from anywhere in Creation, proceeding to her side at the best speed it can manage.

**Distortion** (Goal Number: 7): Distorting a Cirrus Skiff weighs it down, turning the cloud into a heavy, dense fog for a scene. The sorcerer suffers a -3 penalty on the (Wits + Occult) rolls to control the distorted skiff's movement, and it cannot fly above long range from the ground. If it is already higher than that, it begins dropping at a rate of two range bands per round, in addition to any other movement the sorcerer takes.

#### CORRUPTED WORDS

**Cost:** 15sm, 1wp

**Keywords:** Psyche

**Duration:** Indefinite

The sorcerer speaks words that bind the tongue—she evokes a seething, bilious mass of green Essence between her hands and casts it down the throat of a victim at short range, where it dissolves into a ward that censors that character's mind. As she does, she forbids the victim from speaking of a single subject, which may be as specific as “The letters I secretly send to the All-Seeing Eye at the end of every month” or as broad as “The existence of Sidereal Exalted.” It is impossible to defend against this curse barring magic that can perfectly dodge or parry uncountable damage such as Heavenly Guardian Defense, but the sorcerer must roll (Intelligence + Occult) against the victim's Resolve to successfully bind his will.

A cursed character feels waves of nausea if he even thinks of trying to communicate anything about the topic. If he tries to do so despite this warning, he becomes overwhelmed with wracking pain and begins vomiting up dozens of fat, white maggots, rendering that action or any other impossible for at least a turn. This applies to all forms of communication—speaking, writing, telepathy, or any desperate signals the victim tries to use to circumvent the restriction of this curse—and persists until the cursed character ceases trying to violate the ban. This spell may be ended by the sorcerer's death or may be willingly released, as the sorcerer reaches a hand down the victim's mouth and recites the last word of this spell backwards to extract a slimy egg-sac full of squirming larvae that is

#### THE RIGHT DEMON FOR THE JOB

Demon summoning isn't a trap or a surefire path to corruption. Most sorcerers view it as a source of supernatural slaves, and they're usually right. A bound demon follows the letter and spirit of the sorcerer's commands to the best of its understanding. The greatest difficulty most summoners face is coping with the alien natures and inhuman desires of their servants.

the physical embodiment of this curse.

A sorcerer who knows Corrupted Words as her control spell may cast it with no obvious display of magical intervention other than a faint flash of green in her eyes, leaving her victim uncertain as to the affliction's source.

**Distortion** (Goal Number: 15): Distorting this curse makes it possible for the victim to speak around the forbidden subject matter for five minutes. He must speak using circumlocutions, flowery metaphors, or cryptic symbolism to communicate the broad gist of the topic, and cannot go into any level of detail beyond the most superficial. This does not avert the inevitable tide of maggots, but gives the victim enough time to speak before he must disgorge them.

#### DEATH OF OBSIDIAN BUTTERFLIES

**Cost:** 15sm, 1wp

**Keywords:** Decisive-only, Perilous

**Duration:** Instant

Sculpting Essence into volant black glass, the sorcerer unleashes a cascade of obsidian butterflies. She rolls (Perception + Occult) as an undodgeable **decisive** attack applied in a line against enemies out to medium range. This line is wide enough to strike all opponents within the width of a single range band and reaches high enough to strike aerial enemies who are at short range to the ground (medium range enemies in the air can still be targeted by directing the butterflies to fly along an upward path, rather than a horizontal one). Battle groups are especially vulnerable to being cut down by this spell, taking a -2 penalty to Defense against it.

The attack deals raw damage equal to the sorcerer's (Essence + extra successes), or (Essence + Occult + extra successes) against a battle group. It does not reset the sorcerer to base Initiative. Scenery made of wood, glass, or other fragile materials is generally destroyed. After this spell has been cast, the obsidian butterflies fall to the ground and shatter, creating terrain that may be hazardous for barefooted characters to traverse—treat as an environmental hazard inflicting two dice of lethal damage, difficulty 2 to resist with a (Dexterity + Athletics) roll, and if the character is barefoot, difficult terrain as well. Any character wearing armored boots can generally ignore the debris.

A sorcerer who knows Death of Obsidian Butterflies as her control spell gains (Essence) bonus dice to the spell's attack roll. When her emotions run hot, butterfly silhouettes rise from her shadow. When she is angry, her fingernails turn to sharp volcanic glass, making it possible to cut cloth or paper, rend wood or flesh and other similar stunts.

### DEMON OF THE FIRST CIRCLE

**Cost:** Ritual, 2wp

**Keywords:** None

**Duration:** Instant

The sorcerer conjures one of the least monsters of the Demon Realm into Creation, breaking and binding it to her will. This spell requires a ritual that begins at sundown, and ends at the stroke of midnight. A faint green glow traces out a rift between Creation and Hell, and a First Circle Demon of the sorcerer's choice is drawn forth, howling with rage, fear, or sorrow.

Demons summoned by this spell must be bound with an (Intelligence + Occult) roll against their Resolve. The sorcerer may choose to make the demon her personal slave for a year and a day, giving it a Defining Tie of loyalty to her that cannot be weakened or altered by any means and setting its Resolve to 0 against any influence rolls she makes. Alternatively, she may assign it to complete a specific task—"Construct a tower using these plans," "Murder Magistrate Yang," "Dig a tunnel through this wall"—for as long as it takes to complete. Task-bound demons form a Defining Principle of "I must complete my task," which is similarly impervious to tampering. On a failed binding roll, the sorcerer is unable to bind the demon, and must make a (Wits + Occult) roll against a difficulty of the demon's Willpower to banish it back to Hell. If she fails, then the demon is unleashed, unbound, into Creation—and is most likely very angry at her.

### FLIGHT OF THE BRILLIANT RAPTOR

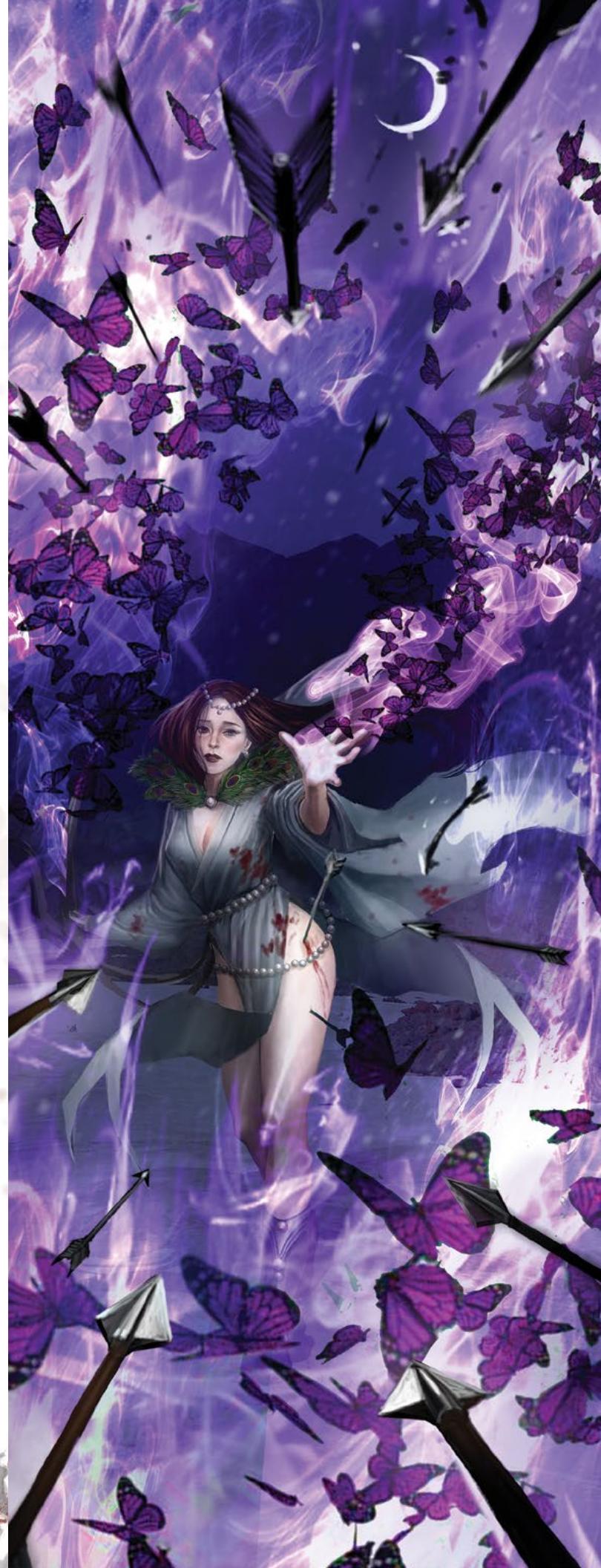
**Cost:** 15sm, 1wp

**Keywords:** Decisive-only, Perilous

**Duration:** Instant

The sorcerer shapes flames of diamond and ruby into the form of a majestic bird of prey, evoking the elemental majesty of the garda birds. The player rolls (Perception + Occult) as a **decisive** attack against an enemy at up to long range, then sends the raptor streaking forth to consume her foe in deadly flames. The brilliant raptor embodies the sorcerer's will, with a base lethal damage equal to (her Initiative + current temporary Willpower), and resets her to base Initiative on a successful attack. As long as the raptor deals 3+ levels of damage to its target, it ignites a bonfire (p. 230) that engulfs him and all terrain within short range of him, and burns until the end of the scene.

A sorcerer who knows Flight of the Brilliant Raptor as her control spell may use it to attack a target one range band beyond long range by paying an extra 5sm when casting the spell.



**INFALLIBLE MESSENGER****Cost:** 5sm, 2wp**Keywords:** None**Duration:** Until message is delivered

The sorcerer shapes a small, six-winged messenger spirit to convey her words to another character. The spirit flies with immense speed, capable of crossing hundreds of miles in an hour or all Creation in less than a day—only the boundaries between realms of existence will stop it from delivering its missive. Upon arrival, the cherub is visible only to its intended target, to whom it can deliver a message of up to five minutes in length before dissipating. Sorcerers can convey social influence through the Infallible Messenger, but cannot normally use their Charms to enhance the roll.

A sorcerer who knows Infallible Messenger as her control spell may pay an additional point of Willpower to project her senses through the cherub's own, allowing her to use Awareness and Investigation Charms while delivering the missive. Having this spell as her control will also cause a number of tells to begin manifesting in the sorcerer's vicinity, even when the spell has not been cast. It may appear in murals or paintings that she owns, carved amongst the gargoyles of her residence, or briefly fluttering in the periphery of a mirror's reflection.

**INVULNERABLE SKIN OF BRONZE****Cost:** 20sm, 1wp**Keywords:** None**Duration:** One day

The sorcerer suffuses the void between her skin and the surrounding air with Essence, weaving a second skin of shining bronze, supple and flexible as silk but cold and impervious as any metal. The Invulnerable Skin of Bronze gives the sorcerer +6 natural soak and Hardness 6, while rendering her immune to poison delivered through contact. Her metal-armored limbs deal lethal damage and use the traits of medium weapons when she makes unarmed attacks. While her mobility is not normally impaired, she is considered to be wearing medium armor, which might deny her the use of certain Martial Arts styles or other effects. Her bronze skin is also heavy—she will sink in water or mud, and fragile surfaces won't support her weight.

In addition, characters with an Essence pool gain access to the following powers while this spell is active:

- **Brazen Aegis Rebuke** (3m, 1wp; Reflexive; Instant; Counterattack, Decisive-only): Even hardened steel recoils from the Invulnerable Skin of Bronze, ringing off its indestructible surface. After being hit with an

attack in close combat, the sorcerer may use this power to counterattack with a disarm gambit. This counterattack is both unblockable and undodgeable.

• **Invincible God-Metal Flash** (10m, 2a or 3a; Reflexive; Instant; Decisive-only): When even the Invulnerable Skin of Bronze cannot withstand the force of an enemy's blows, the sorcerer may shed it in a burst of protective Essence. While her anima is at the burning or bonfire level, she may use Invincible God-Metal Flash to reduce the raw damage of a **decisive** attack by her (Essence + 5), discharging her anima through the spell. The skin of bronze shatters as it absorbs the attack, and the sorcerer cannot cast it again until its original duration has elapsed. Her anima is returned to the dim level.

• **Sorcerer's Impervious Mantle** (4m; Reflexive; Instant; Withering-only): The sorcerer's Essence surges through her armored skin, reducing the minimum damage of a **withering** attack by one.

A sorcerer who knows Invulnerable Skin of Bronze as her control spell may add her Essence to the soak and Hardness bonus she receives as long as she is unarmored. Even without the spell, her skin takes on a faint bronze tint. She may also add her Essence to her soak when the spell is not in effect.

**Distortion** (Goal Number: 12): Distorting the spell forces the sorcerer to feel the full weight of her metal skin bearing down on her, imposing a -4 mobility penalty for one scene. If her total mobility penalty exceeds (the higher of her Strength or Athletics), then she loses the ability to take reflexive move actions, and must take a miscellaneous action to cross a range band even under normal circumstances. Distortion also disables all three of the spell's special powers.

**MISTS OF EVENTIDE****Cost:** 7sm, 2wp**Keywords:** None**Duration:** Three rounds

The sorcerer lulls the Essence of air into sleep, transforming it into an opalescent fog of slumber. Mists of Eventide creates a cloud centered on a point out to medium range from the sorcerer, spreading to engulf all characters within short range of the center. Each round that a character breathes or has skin exposed to the mist, he must roll against its poison (Damage 3i/round, Duration 6 rounds, -3 penalty). Characters who are crashed while suffering from the Mists of Eventide's effects do not take damage from it—instead, they fall into magical slumber, rendered comatose for a single day.

**Special activation rules:** Mists of Eventide can only be cast once per scene, unless reset when a Mists-poisoned opponent falls into Initiative Crash.

A sorcerer who knows Mists of Eventide as his control spell can control the dreams of anyone who sleeps within his mists, causing them not only to dream what he commands, but to physically act out those dreams while sleepwalking. They can even be forced to battle their allies. Controlling someone in this fashion costs one point of Willpower per individual. Sorcerers with Mists of Eventide as their control spell sleep fitfully with their eyes wide open unless surrounded by the mists.

*Distortion* (Goal Number: 5): Distorting the mists weakens their efficacy, halving the duration of each dose. Additionally, an opposing sorcerer may wake a character forced into magical slumber with distortion actions targeting him, made at the same goal number.

#### SILENT WORDS OF DREAMS AND NIGHTMARES

**Cost:** Ritual, 1wp

**Keywords:** None

**Duration:** One dream

Staring into a polished mirror, still pond, or other reflective surface, the sorcerer brandishes a scrap of clothing, lock of hair, or similar symbolic link to another character, using it to gain power over that person's dreams. The next time the target sleeps, he experience an especially vivid and memorable dream created by the sorcerer. She rolls (Intelligence + Presence) to instill, persuade, or inspire the dreaming character, as best fits the imagery and emotional tenor of the dream she creates. He cannot apply any Intimacies to enhance Resolve against this influence, nor can he pay Willpower to resist unless the influence threatens one of his Intimacies. The symbolic link to the dreamer is burnt to a fine white ash upon his waking, requiring the sorcerer to procure another before she can cast this spell on him again.

A sorcerer who knows Silent Words of Dreams and Nightmares as her control spell may cast it without needing a link to her target, so long as she has interacted with him in person previously. Once she has done so, she must meet with him once more before she can cast this spell without a link again.

*Distortion* (Special): Distorting the Silent Words of Dreams and Nightmares requires the opposing sorcerer to find either the character who cast it or the spell's victim before he sleeps. Instead of having a set goal number, every two successes the distorting sorcerer accumulates before the terminus of the action elapses adds +1 to the victim's Resolve against the dream's influence, up to a maximum bonus of +4.

#### STORMWIND RIDER

**Cost:** 15sm, 1wp

**Keywords:** None

**Duration:** One hour

Bending the winds to her will, the sorcerer creates a servile dust devil to ride. The Stormwind Rider is treated as a flying mount (p. 202), although it cannot take the sorcerer to more than short range above the ground. (Wits + Occult) replaces the usual rolls for all combat movement actions. The whirlwind can carry up to (Essence x 2) additional characters, or one hundred pounds of cargo in place of a single passenger. While it cannot soar as high as the Cirrus Skiff, the Stormwind Rider can travel at nearly 100 miles an hour and maneuver through forests or cities. In a race with other characters, the sorcerer rolls (Intelligence + Occult + current temporary Willpower) for each interval. In combat, characters within the Stormwind Rider are treated as having light cover against attacks made from outside of it, and vice versa. A passenger who is crashed or hit with a **decisive** attack is knocked out of the whirlwind, and suffers falling damage if applicable.

A sorcerer who knows Stormwind Rider as her control spell is buffeted by winds whenever she is beset by strong emotions. Sudden movements cause a small vortex powerful enough to scatter papers, upset furniture and topple someone caught off-guard. Her vertical leaps are buoyed by wind, allowing her to leap upward a single range band as her movement action; she can do so up to (Stamina) times before needing to rest.

In addition, characters with an Essence pool gain access to the following powers while this spell is active:

- **Enduring Tempest** (5m; Reflexive; Instant): Once this spell's duration has elapsed, the sorcerer may use Enduring Tempest to extend its duration for another hour. She may do so for as long as she has Essence to continue using this power.
- **Zephyr Rush** (1m, 1wp; Supplemental; Instant): The sorcerer whips the Stormwind Rider into a sudden frenzy of speed, allowing her to move up to two range bands with a single movement action in combat or doubling 8s on one interval of a race.

*Distortion* (Goal Number: 15): Distorting a stormwind rider causes it to buck and swerve violently in its flight, threatening to throw off its riders. All characters carried by the whirlwind must succeed at a difficulty 4 (Dexterity + Athletics) roll to maintain balance, although the sorcerer who cast it may substitute (Wits + Occult). Characters who fail their roll fall out of the whirlwind.

#### SUMMON ELEMENTAL

**Cost:** Ritual, 2wp

**Keywords:** None**Duration:** Instant

Drawing and shaping Essence through one of the five elements, the sorcerer calls an elemental into being and binds it to her will. Casting this spell requires a ritual of four hours as the sorcerer channels Essence through icons of the element, draws up sigils of creation and binding, or communes with the appropriate Elemental Dragon. At the end of her ritual, she summons an elemental of up to Essence 3 into existence, creating it out of pure Essence rather than calling it from somewhere else.

Once summoned, the elemental must be bound to the sorcerer's will, as per Demon of the First Circle (p. 473), except that an elemental cannot break free—if the binding fails, the elemental simply disperses back into raw Essence, and the sorcerer doesn't regain the Willpower spent on the spell. At the end of a bound elemental's term of service or assigned task, it usually undergoes the same fate of dissipation, although elementals who have developed a fully-formed personality and identity may persist past the end of their binding at the Storyteller's discretion. Summon Elemental can only be cast once per day.

#### WOOD DRAGON'S CLAWS

**Cost:** 5sm, 1wp**Keywords:** None**Duration:** Until dismissed

The sorcerer transforms her hands into huge, gnarled claws of thorny oak, like those of the majestic elemental dragons of wood. Slashing with these claws uses the traits of a light artifact weapon with the same tags as an unarmed attack, save that its damage tag is lethal rather than bashing. They are compatible with Martial Arts styles that use claw-type weapons or rending strikes, such as Tiger style. They render the sorcerer's hands incapable of fine manipulation such as writing, wielding a weapon, or turning a doorknob.

In addition, characters with an Essence pool gain access to the following powers while this spell is active:

- **Bramble Hell Torment** (10m; Simple; Instant; Decisive-only): When the sorcerer makes a **decisive** savaging attack against a clinched enemy, her claws explode into impaling spikes, adding (Essence) successes to the damage roll. This power can only be used once per grapple.

- **Living Thorn Transformation** (3m; Reflexive; Instant): Warping and twisting her claws, the sorcerer may grant them the tag of her choice for the rest of the scene. She might extend them into a lash of scourging brambles to grant them the flexible tag, reshape them into a bludgeoning

#### SUMMONING AND BATTLE GROUPS

A sorcerer with summoning spells such as Demon of the First Circle or Summon Elemental can easily amass large forces of spirits bound to her will. In combat, keep in mind that these should usually be represented as battle groups (p. 205) rather than giving each spirit its own turn, unless it is a distinct and powerful being such as a Second Circle demon.

club-fists to grant them the smashing tag, or similar. Only one tag can be granted by this power at a time.

A sorcerer who knows Wood Dragon's Claws as her control spell may create and master Evocations for the claws, which can only be used while this spell is active.

*Distortion* (Goal Number: 12): Distorting the Wood Dragon's Claws causes them to begin growing wildly, engulfing the enemy sorcerer's arms in a tangle of twisting roots. He cannot take any actions that require the use of his arms, including attacking, until he has succeeded on an extended (Strength + Athletics) roll (difficulty: 2; interval: one round; goal number: 10) to break free of this entanglement. If he is grappling an enemy when the distortion occurs, the distraction of his own spell turning on him allows that character to reflexively break free. The spell cannot be dismissed while it is distorted.

#### Celestial Circle Spells

##### CANTATA OF EMPTY VOICES

**Cost:** 15sm, 2wp**Keywords:** Perilous**Duration:** Instant or until ended

A choir of silver-white wraiths surrounds the sorcerer, inciting utter agony with their keening song. This is an environmental hazard against all enemies within short range, with a resistance difficulty equal to the sorcerer's Intelligence (use [Stamina + Resistance]) and Damage 2L. Characters who fail the roll lose a point of Willpower, while battle groups instead immediately check for rout.

Once the sorcerer has begun the Cantata of Empty Voices, she may sustain it with an unrolled shape sorcery action taken on each subsequent turn at no additional cost. As she continues the song, its range expands—to medium range on the first subsequent turn, then to long range. Every three turns after that, it expands to cover another range band, until it ultimately spreads to a maximum radius

of one mile. At this point, the Storyteller should not make individual rolls for each trivial opponent or hapless bystander caught in the cantata, but simply describe the mass deaths and panicked, fleeing mobs that result.

A sorcerer who knows Cantata of Empty Voices as her control spell may maintain it even during Initiative Crash. As long as she recovers from the crash without being hit with a **decisive** attack, the casting of the spell proceeds uninterrupted.

*Distortion* (Goal Number: 10): Distorting the cantata neutralizes its killing power, converting all damage dealt by it to bashing and preventing it from rolling over to inflict lethal damage. While the enemy sorcerer might be able to inflict wide-scale harm, the spell will not result in death by itself, and recovery will be much easier for its victims.

#### DEMON OF THE SECOND CIRCLE

**Cost:** Ritual, 3wp

**Keywords:** None

**Duration:** Instant

Celestial sorcerers may call upon demons of the Second Circle, baleful spirits that serve the Yozis. The ritual to summon a Second Circle Demon is much like that described in Demon of the First Circle, save that it can only be performed on the night of the new moon (and then only once per lunar cycle), or once during one of the five black nights of Calibration. Instead of pulling the demon through a glowing green glyph, tongues of green fire trace out a mandala that is the demon's name written in the alphabet of Hell, and it emerges from this circle at the sorcerer's call.

The roll to bind Second Circle Demons is the same as with First Circle Demons, but failure is more dangerous. If the sorcerer fails her (Intelligence + Occult) roll against the demon's Resolve by three successes or more, then she is unable to banish the demon, and must contend with its wrath or wiles.

#### IMPERMEABLE VEIL OF NIGHT

**Cost:** 30sm, 1wp

**Keywords:** None

**Duration:** One day

A twisting nexus of living shadows takes form between the sorcerer's hands. As she completes the spell, she casts the umbral tangle upward, where it expands into a column of ebon darkness centered on the sorcerer that extends out one mile in horizontal diameter and immeasurably high vertically. Within the Impermeable Veil of Night, torches, lanterns, and even anima banners cast light out only to half their usual range, while speech and noises

#### NO SHORTCUTS IN HELL

Demons of the Second Circle and other entities that can be summoned by powerful sorcery are sometimes initiated into sorcery themselves. A player might think that he could just have a demon perform a sorcerous working for him, allowing him to reap the benefit without having to pay the experience point cost of the working. Sadly for him, this isn't the case. The experience spent to finalize a sorcerous working represents the sorcerer's time and effort to bring the working into being, and summoning a demon to aid in undertaking the working is just another aspect of that effort. While having a bound demon will certainly help complete the working successfully—enhancing the sorcerer's Means, generally—it won't let the sorcerer avoid having to pay the experience point cost.

echo in strange, unnatural ways. Even characters with supernatural senses capable of seeing in mundane darkness still suffer a -2 penalty on all Awareness or Perception-based rolls made within the veil. A battle group that is caught within the darkness immediately makes a rout check at +1 difficulty.

A sorcerer who knows Impermeable Veil of Night as her control spell speaks with a distorted voice, as if she were always standing within the nihil of the spell. Light subtly flees her body. She gains three bonus dice on Stealth rolls made to stay hidden while moving in combat at night or in shadowy environs, but loses the same amount of dice in broad daylight while in open spaces. She also gains a +2 bonus to movement actions made at night, but a -2 penalty to movement actions made in open daylight.

*Distortion* (Goal Number: 15): Distorting the veil causes the darkness to part around the sorcerer, out to medium range from her, for up to an hour.

#### INCOMPARABLE BODY ARSENAL

**Cost:** 30sm, 2wp

**Keywords:** None

**Duration:** (Essence) hours

The sorcerer reshapes her body into a clanking metallic form of rust-streaked black iron, mimicking her human appearance but roughly cast, studded with rivets where segments of her metal skin meet. While in this form, the sorcerer may reflexively produce any manner of mundane weapons from her body—rusty iron spikes burst from her skin, knives extend from fingertips, an arm lengthens into a broadsword or warhammer, and jagged metal blades fire

from her mouth. None of these weapons can be disarmed or destroyed. The spell grants her benefits and drawbacks equivalent to heavy artifact armor (p. 599), while rendering her capable of functioning without air, completely immune to mundane poisons, and unaffected by extremes of temperature, even when they manifest as environmental hazards. She doubles 9s on all ([Strength or Stamina] + Ability) rolls, and adds one success to all **withering** and **decisive** attack rolls.

A sorcerer who knows Incomparable Body Arsenal as her control spell may create and master Evocations for it, which can only be used while this spell is active. These Evocations can enhance the armor-nature of this spell, its weapons, or a combination of both.

In addition, characters with an Essence pool gain access to the following powers while this spell is active:

**God-Weapon Armament** (8m; Reflexive; Indefinite; Stackable): When the sorcerer manifests a weapon from her Incomparable Body Arsenal, she may use this Charm to grant it the traits of an artifact weapon. The weapons created with this Charm can take on exotic and overtly magical forms—an artifact firewand might manifest as a dragon-headed helm that spit fires, while razor claws might take the form of foot-long serrated claws extending from the fingers of one hand. Multiple invocations of this Charm can be stacked to create multiple artifact weapons.

**Metal Behemoth Might** (10m; Supplemental; Instant): When the sorcerer attempts a feat of strength, she may add +2 to her effective Strength for determining what feats she may attempt. This is not added to her dice pool.

**Unstoppable Juggernaut Endurance** (5m, 1wp; Simple; Indefinite): The sorcerer may reinforce her vitality with this spell, gaining one -2 health level and two -4 health levels. Damage fills these temporary health levels before the sorcerer's natural health levels of the same wound penalty, and the levels fade away when filled with damage. This power can only be used once during the spell's duration.

*Distortion* (Goal Number: 15): Distorting the Incomparable Body Arsenal wreaks a terrifying transformation on the opposing sorcerer as the metallic components of his transformed body spike inwards, goring innards and mutilating limbs. This inflicts a crippling comparable to an amputation (chosen by the original caster), as the enemy's arms are rendered useless by the jagged metal spikes exploding inside them or metal plates weld themselves over his eyes to blind him. Once the spell ends, the distortion's mutilation is undone along with the usual transformation. The caster may attempt to recover the distorted spell to

full functionality by making an extended roll with (Wits + Occult), with a difficulty of 3, an interval of one action (which cannot be flurried) and a goal number of the total number of cumulative successes achieved on the distortion roll, rounded up. If she succeeds, the distortion is reversed.

### IVORY ORCHID PAVILION

**Cost:** Ritual, 1wp

**Keywords:** None

**Duration:** One day

As the sorcerer spends a few minutes tracing the borders of this spell with her footsteps, a spire of ivory rises from the ground like the calyx of an immense flower carved from marble. Once she completes the circuit, the central pillar unfurls its petals to reveal a splendid mansion. Ornate furniture, silk curtains, and fine beddings adorn the chambers of the palace, and the pleasant scent of fresh orchids is everywhere. Feasting tables within the mansion's dining room are replete with fresh fruits and nuts and bowls of wine, never seeming to run empty, though vanishing if taken outside. Any character who enters the Ivory Orchid Pavilion and partakes of its amenities or sleeps within it is treated as having a Major Tie of blissful contentment towards dwelling within it until the end of his stay—most spirits and cultured sorcerers consider this a luxury rather than an imposition, relishing the chance to forget their troubles. Once this spell ends, the mansion folds back into the ground, safely depositing all guests outside. For five years after the casting of the spell, white orchids will grow from the ground where it was cast.

A sorcerer who knows Ivory Orchid Pavilion as her control spell may cast it with a duration of Indefinite. The mansion will remain standing for as long as she stays within it.

*Distortion* (Goal Number: 10): Distorting an Ivory Orchid Pavilion subtly inverts the blissful atmosphere of the sanctum, transforming the Intimacy imposed by this spell into a Major Tie of suspicion and distrust of all other characters within the pavilion. This inversion lasts until it leads to a scene in which built-up suspicion comes to a head in a dramatic fashion.

### MAGMA KRAKEN

**Cost:** 30sm, 1wp

**Keywords:** None

**Duration:** One scene

Calling to the Essence of fire and earth that roils deep beneath her, the sorcerer wills ten tentacles of lava to erupt from the ground, shaking the earth as they burst forward in torrents of molten stone. She designates where each appears, out to as far as long range from her. Together, these form the Magma



Kraken. It is rolled into battle with the sorcerer's (Wits + Occult), and has a base Initiative equal to her Essence. As it erupts from the ground, any character who is at the point where a tentacle emerges must make a difficulty 2 (Dexterity + Athletics) roll to avoid it, or else be flung one range band away and knocked prone by the eruption.

The Magma Kraken may act on its turn to make a **withering** or **decisive** attack, grapple an enemy, or wreak general havoc on the scenery. It uses the sorcerer's (Intelligence + Occult + Essence) for all attack and feat of strength rolls, and each tentacle can strike out to short range from its location. If it becomes necessary for the kraken to make a roll for another action, such as opposing an enemy's stealth attempt, its dice pool is equal to the sorcerer's ([Relevant Attribute] + Occult + Essence). Magma Kraken tentacles have Parry and Evasion values of 5, and 10 points of soak.

- **Withering** attacks made by the Magma Kraken are treated as medium artifact weapons with the lethal, grappling, and reaching tags. If the kraken uses multiple tentacles to attack, it makes a single attack roll and divides the successes among all targets to determine who is hit, before rolling damage separately for each. Its base

Strength is equal to the sorcerer's Essence rating.

- **Decisive** attacks add the sorcerer's Essence to their base damage. If the kraken attacks multiple enemies, it makes one attack roll and does not divide those successes, but instead divides its Initiative among each enemy that it strikes to determine the raw damage of the attack. It must assign at least three points of Initiative to each enemy.
- The kraken may only attempt to grapple a single enemy each turn, and receives a flat total of (five + sorcerer's Essence) successes on the control roll. The kraken suffers no penalties from grappling, but a tentacle being used to clinch an enemy cannot make attacks against anyone else.
- Destroying scenery such as setting fire to vegetation, melting through stone walls, or uprooting statues counts as a feat of strength. The kraken is treated as having Strength 10 for determining the feats it may attempt, and doubles 7s on the roll. It may use multiple tentacles together to perform a feat with no penalty.

The Magma Kraken cannot be grappled or defeated with standard **decisive** attacks; destroying a tentacle instead requires a difficulty 5 gambit, stunted in a way that could

reasonably disrupt a living pillar of molten stone. At the Storyteller's discretion, attacks or hazards that affect an area or multiple targets and deal 5+ levels of damage can also destroy any tentacles within their range. Destroying a tentacle frees any character being grappled by it. If all ten of the kraken's tentacles are destroyed, the spell ends. At the end of the scene, the tentacles or their broken remains harden into obsidian and remain fixed where they stand or lie.

A sorcerer who knows Magma Kraken as her control spell is forever chased by magmatic flame. An open fire curls into tentacles around her, or a torch flame licks out from its sconce to light her pipe. When she is angry, the walls or ground become blistered and hot, with faint tentacle shapes writhing in rising smoke. The sorcerer can use these effects to intimidate, set fires, melt minor obstacles and perform other similar stunts.

*Distortion* (Goal Number: 10): Distorting a Magma Kraken renders it incapable of perceiving and attacking the distorting sorcerer as well as all allies within close range of her (though this is of limited use if it is already grappling her). If this distortion renders the kraken incapable of perceiving any enemies at all, it will begin using its tentacles to lash out at random in hopes of striking a hidden foe.

#### SHADOWS OF THE ANCIENT PAST

**Cost:** 10sm, 2wp

**Keywords:** None

**Duration:** One scene

The sorcerer calls up the lingering echoes of the past to reenact themselves before her. The sorcerer may choose a specific time in the past she wishes to view, such as "One hundred years ago, on the first day of Ascending Air," or a subjective time that relates to something in the scene, such as "When this corpse died." The spell creates translucent, insubstantial illusions that fill the room or area and display the events of the specified point in time. The sorcerer may mentally pause the action for detailed examination with Awareness or Investigation actions, or accelerate the flow of time within the illusion so that up to an entire day passes by in the space of the scene. Attempting to view events from more than five centuries ago call only vague, indistinguishable images that rarely convey useful details. The events of the recent present—within the past year or so—have yet to form substantial echoes, providing only the barest of imagery conjured.

A sorcerer who knows Shadows of the Ancient Past as her control spell may mentally record all illusions conjured by any

casting of this spell. She may cause them to reappear at a later point at any time by taking a shape sorcery action at no cost.

*Distortion* (Goal Number: 5): Distorting this spell allows the opposing sorcerer to falsify the illusions for the duration of the spell, warping and obfuscating the truth. While she cannot totally eliminate the information the casting sorcerer is attempting to discern, she may introduce all manner of contradictory evidence, red herrings, or misleading images in an attempt to throw him off the trail.

#### TRAVEL WITHOUT DISTANCE

**Cost:** 25sm, 2wp

**Keywords:** Perilous

**Duration:** Instant

The sorcerer shapes a blazing corona of Essence around herself through mudras that describe the warp and weft of space. As she completes the spell, she is engulfed in whirling clouds of Essence and energy, and then is gone. She may reappear in any location within (Essence x 10) miles, as long as she has seen it before, either firsthand or through scrying magics. She appears in a safe location at the chosen duration in a swirling vortex of light sure to impress the locals. Travel Without Distance is mildly disorienting—the sorcerer suffers a -2 fatigue penalty on all actions for (6 - Stamina) hours afterwards, and cannot cast it again until this penalty has run its course. This spell is highly valued by both the Sidereal and Lunar Exalted, who maintain hidden meeting-places that can only be reached with this spell.

A sorcerer who knows Travel Without Distance as her control spell may bring up to (Essence + 1) willing characters within short range along with her when she casts this spell. All transported characters suffer the fatigue penalty from disorientation.

#### Solar Circle Spells

##### BENEDICTION OF ARCHGENESIS

**Cost:** Ritual, 3wp

**Keywords:** None

**Duration:** Instant

Chanting from one sunrise to the next, the sorcerer calls down a soft, warm rain that carries life-giving Essence. Over the course of this spell's ritual, the rain falls on up to (Essence x 100) squares miles of land which the Solar wishes to revitalize with the Benediction of Archgenesis. If the land is infertile, such as an arid desert, marshy bog or rocky mountain face, then the Benediction transforms it into arable terrain, encouraging plant growth and making

it possible to sustain a productive agricultural community off the land. Weather is temperate, with only enough rain to keep crops well-watered and unseasonably pleasant temperatures year-round. Animal populations from other regions migrate to the newly-fertile ground, while indigenous species have been known to grow to prodigious sizes off the bounty conjured by the benediction. Even the spirit world is affected—elementals become far more likely to arise from the blessed land, while displaced gods may seek to find a position of stewardship over the terrain, flora, or fauna of the region.

If the land is already fertile, Benediction of Archgenesis causes life to grow at an almost impossible rate. Fields of wheat grow to tower over those that tend them, while man-sized pumpkins and gourds become a common sight. Animals flock to the lush vitality of the region to the point of overpopulation. While this swell is enough to multiply the bounty of a single year's harvest by nearly a hundredfold, the surge of growth can easily deplete the soil of nutrients and create ecosystem imbalances that will persist for years. Unless the sorcerer is vigilant in counterbalancing the effects of this lush growth, she may leave famine in her wake for years thereafter.

Benediction of Archgenesis can only be cast once per story. The geomantic upheaval it causes prevents the sorcerer from casting it within one thousand miles of any region that she has previously blessed with the spell within the same year, with the exception of performing a second casting of the spell to transform a barren region made fertile into a supernaturally lush overgrowth.

A sorcerer who knows Benediction of Archgenesis as her control spell reduces the distance requirement to one hundred miles. Wherever she goes, life tends to spring up in her wake—flowers grow around her when she sleeps, grasses become taller in her footsteps and her home becomes a veritable wildlife sanctuary if she isn't careful.

**Distortion (Goal Number: 30):** Distorting the Benediction of Archgenesis causes all plant life within (Essence) miles of the distorting sorcerer to wither and die, leaving a barren dead zone within the blessed land. Animals in the blighted region are driven outwards as the ecosystem collapses in an instant. Herbivorous creatures may stampede or raid the food supplies of settlements within or near the blessed lands, while predators respond to the flight of their prey by turning man-eater, attacking any human settlements they can find. Even the spirits of the blighted land are corrupted, each one gaining a Major Derangement (p. 168) that somehow turns them against their original purpose or makes them harmful to humankind, assigned by the

Storyteller. Note that spells can only be distorted once—an enemy sorcerer could create a rotting nexus of corruption at the heart of the Benediction of Archgenesis, but she could not utterly undo the spell without a sorcerous working.

### DEATH RAY

**Cost:** 25sm, 2wp

**Keywords:** Aggravated, Decisive-only, Perilous

**Duration:** Instant or until ended

The Solar Exalted devised this spell to terrify the enemies of the gods. Holding her arms out before her and her hands closely together, the sorcerer makes a series of motions with her fingers that turns her conjoined hands into a channel for a flow of destructive energy. The sorcerer unleashes a violent stream of red Essence that pours from her hands, slicing through scenery and incinerating those who stand in its path. Wherever the Death Ray passes, it leaves a trail of molten slag behind it. Only the strongest magical substances are immune to the melting and carving power of this attack. The sorcerer rolls Intelligence + Occult as a **decisive** attack roll, adding Essence successes. The attack strikes all enemies in a line out to short range from her, adding extra successes and the Solar's current temporary Willpower to the raw damage roll. Mundane weapons cannot parry the attack and are immediately destroyed upon such an attempt. Any enemy that takes 3+ levels of damage from the Death Ray is blown back one range band and falls prone. Making this attack does not immediately reset the Solar to base Initiative. Death Ray is a tremendous torrent of power. While it is being released, the Solar may not move herself to a different range band without ending the spell, though she may be conveyed to another range band by other means (atop the deck of a ship, for example).

On the Solar's next turn, she may continue casting this spell by rolling another shape sorcery action—maintaining the spell for another round costs 5 sorcerous motes. Each additional round of casting extends the range of the spell by one band, out to a maximum of six. The Solar may continue focusing the attack along its original path, or change its direction to a different angle, even an aerial one. She keeps the successes of her original attack roll, but rolls damage separately for each new round. If the sorcerer lacks the sorcerous motes needed to continue casting this spell or chooses not to continue it, then she immediately resets to base Initiative (if not already lower). Her turn is then delayed appropriately.

In addition to incinerating enemies, the destructive energy of this Charm also wreaks havoc on the terrain. A single

round of exposure to Death Ray will reduce anything made of earth or stone into molten slag, creating a lava hazard (p. 230). Death Ray can scythe through oak trees like stalks of grain and can cut a wooden ship in half with relative ease. The Storyteller may adjudicate alternative, but equally punishing, effects for terrain that cannot be sliced or melted into lava. Sorcerers may take advantage of this stone-melting power to carve messages into mountainsides, liquefy fortress walls, or perform similar feats of massive but precise destruction.

A sorcerer who knows Death Ray as her control spell may gain sorcerous motes whenever the Essence blast directly incapacitates a character or deals damage to a battle group. She gains sorcerous motes equal to the Essence of an incapacitated character, or the Size of a damaged battle group. These last for the duration of the scene, but may only be spent to pay the cost of subsequent castings of Death Ray.

**Distortion** (Goal Number: 10): Distorting the Death Ray gives the opposing sorcerer a measure of protection from it, causing the destructive energy to bend and warp around him before continuing on its original course. This causes Death Ray to automatically miss the opposing sorcerer for one round.

#### DEMON OF THE THIRD CIRCLE

**Cost:** Ritual, 4wp

**Keywords:** None

**Duration:** Instant

The Demons of the Third Circle are the very souls of the Yozis themselves. They are beings of world-shaping power and apocalyptic fury. The ritual to summon one of these dread fiends into Creation can only be performed on a night of Calibration, the five days of darkness that takes place between years, and only once each Calibration. Each Third Circle Demon has its own unique manifestation upon being



summoned. Ligier, the Green Sun, appears in a pillar of emerald flames that descends from the starless sky to strike the earth. Ienimea, the River of Faces, condenses as a cloud of mist from the breath of all present before erupting forth from its ephemeral depths. Erembour, That Which Calls to Shadows, rises out of the sorcerer's own shadow, laying an inhumanly alluring hand on her shoulder.

Failure to bind a Third Circle Demon is catastrophic. Reversing a failed summoning is impossible, leaving the demon unbound to fulfill its malevolent urges or alien agenda.

#### RAIN OF DOOM

**Cost:** 40sm, 3wp

**Keywords:** Aggravated

**Duration:** Until sunrise

The Rain of Doom can be called down only as the setting sun touches the horizon, as the sorcerer stands at the boundaries of what she'd consign to destruction. The sky darkens at an unnatural pace, with thick, oily clouds that roil with thunder forming over an area the size of a small city (or a major district of a metropolis such as Nexus). The storm gathers for an hour, building in intensity, until it finally climaxes in a downpour of apocalyptic devastation that lasts until sunrise. The spell can be countered by any opposing sorcerer within the affected area during the one hour period in which it takes form, assuming a sorcerer can recognize the signs of an oncoming Rain of Doom.

The Rain of Doom has the following effects:

- Caustic rain falls, a difficulty 4 environmental hazard that deals one die of aggravated lethal damage per round to anyone beneath the open sky. Even after a character has found shelter, he continues suffering from the corrosive rain at a reduced difficulty of 2 until he's stripped off all clothing and armor worn in the downpour. Most mortals and animals die within seconds of exposure, and the Storyteller need not roll dice for each individual victim.
- The Rain of Doom wreaks mass destruction on any structures or objects caught in its downpour. Any mundane object left unattended in the rain is destroyed. Wooden structures may be dissolved entirely by the downpour, while even stone and metal are damaged, their faces burned and pitted. Only manses, magically reinforced structures, or deep subterranean buildings are safe from this desolation. If it becomes dramatically relevant to see if a structure will remain intact to provide shelter to characters, the Storyteller can make a roll of five dice at intervals of an hour. One success is sufficient to damage structures made of wood or any weaker material, three

successes will damage structures made of stone, and five successes will damage those made of metal. It takes two intervals of damage to destroy a house-sized structure, and five to collapse a mighty palace—prior to total collapse, the structure may begin to partially dissolve, creating openings in the roof and walls through which the rain might enter to menace those within.

- Any character bold or insane enough to try and fight while exposed to the storm must contend not only with the corrosive rain, but with harsh winds that impose a -3 penalty on all actions he takes. In addition, at the end of each round that a character spends under the open sky, the Storyteller rolls one die. On a 1, that character is struck by a lightning bolt, and takes ten dice of lethal damage which ignores Hardness.
- The runoff from the Rain of Doom remains potent until neutralized by the touch of daylight, causing any character who comes into contact with the runoff to roll against the environmental hazard of the rain. Even after sunrise, the rain's poison guarantees that nothing but stunted scrub will grow on the land washed by the storm's runoff for years or even decades to come.

A sorcerer who knows Rain of Doom as her control spell may move the storm through the sky at a rate of (Essence x 3) miles in an hour. She is often followed by dark clouds and natural light becomes gray in her presence, making others feel uneasy. When outdoors, she takes a -2 penalty on all social influence actions other than threaten.

*Distortion* (Goal Number: 20): Distorting the Rain of Doom creates a break in the storm's downpour surrounding the sorcerer, large enough to shelter a single structure or a large group of people. Within this break, no acidic rain falls and lightning will not strike, although the mundane effects of the storm's winds still remain in force.

#### Sorcerous Workings

Sorcerous workings allow characters to permanently reshape the world through their occult skill, enacting blessing, curses, or transformations. Renewing the fertility of a barren field, creating life in a vat of alchemical reagents, raising a city up from its foundations to sit in the sky—all of these miracles can be achieved through sorcerous workings.

Every working begins with the sorcerer's intention: what she wishes to accomplish. Once this intention has been established—usually between the player and the Storyteller, if the sorcerer is a player's character—the working is then assigned three separate traits of Ambition, Finesse, and Means, which are discussed below. Enacting the working

### SORCEROUS WORKINGS AND BOTCHES

Unlike most extended actions, botching a roll to complete a sorcerous working doesn't automatically ruin the entire effort—instead, it adds a complication to the outcome of the overall project, whether it is a success or a failure. If the working is completed successfully, then the Storyteller should come up with one complication to its outcome for each botch. A loyal minion created by a botched working might require a diet of solid gold, or a blessing laid on a field might be disrupted by the presence of any steel tools. These complications shouldn't negate the core benefit of the working, but should introduce narratively interesting difficulties for the players to work around. On a failed working, each botch becomes a disastrous consequence of the working. A failed working to create a servitor results not in a useless heap of inanimate flesh, but in a sorcerous creation that is berserk and hell-bent on the destruction of its creator. A failed enchantment to fortify the walls of a town against dematerialized spirits turns patches of the walls themselves immaterial, breaching them for opposing armies.

is an extended (Intelligence + Occult) roll, with a difficulty set by the Finesse of the working, a goal number set by its Ambition, and a terminus set by its Means. It has a base interval of one week.

While most of the actual process of performing the sorcerous working over a span of weeks can be relegated to downtime or off-screen, the sorcerer must remain active in its completion, spending time performing ritual actions, arcane experiments, or whatever methodology fits her aesthetic of sorcery to bring about the working. If the sorcerer is unable to attend to these duties for at least part of an interval—for example, a pressing crisis draws a Twilight Caste away from his sorcerous laboratory for a month of heroics elsewhere—then no roll can be made for that interval (though it does not count towards the terminus). If a sorcerer persistently ignores a working in progress, the Storyteller might introduce complications as a result of this—hostile demons might emerge from a half-finished portal to Hell, or an incomplete blessing of fertility over a field might vent into the local wildlife, causing them to grow huge and aggressive. This should be thought of not as a way of penalizing the sorcerer, but as a way to bring narrative focus back to the working in a dramatic way.

Once a sorcerous working has been successfully completed, the sorcerer must pay experience points to finalize it. An Ambition 1 working costs 2xp, an Ambition 2 working is

4xp, and an Ambition 3 working is 8xp. Experience points spent on a working are not meant to be a poor investment—if a supernatural minion is slain, an enchanted bridge is washed away, a village under the sorcerer's blessing is put to the sword by a deathknight, or a working is otherwise made irrelevant, **the experience points spent on a neutralized working are refunded to the sorcerer at the end of the current story**. If the sorcerer is performing a working of a Circle below her level of mastery (for example, a Solar Circle sorcerer performing a Terrestrial Circle working), the cost is reduced by two experience points per Circle of difference, to a minimum of 1xp.

### AMBITION

The *Ambition* of a sorcerous working is the power and scope of the miracle the sorcerer wishes to perform. Ambition is rated on a scale of 1 to 3, but each circle of sorcerous working has its own separate scale of Ambition—what might be a trivial feat of spellcraft for a master of the Solar Circle is a nigh-impossible feat for a newly-initiated sorcerer of the Terrestrial Circle. For each circle, an Ambition 1 working is what most sorcerers might consider a simple feat of magic, similar in power to what might be achieved by a spell of that circle. An Ambition 2 working is an exceptional feat of magic, with considerable power or scope beyond what any spell could achieve. An Ambition 3 working is the highest and most difficult feat of that circle's magic that can be imagined, defining the upper bound of what that circle of sorcery can accomplish. The Ambition of a working is set by the Storyteller based on the effect the sorcerer's player wishes to create, and determines the goal number of the working, listed in the tables below.

**Terrestrial Circle Workings:** Workings of the Terrestrial Circle are generally rooted in transforming, enhancing, or weakening pre-existing elements of the natural world, rather than directly invoking supernatural forces. When outright supernatural forces are invoked, their intervention is generally constrained or specialized in some significant way. Emerald Circle workings are typically limited either in power or scope. An Emerald Circle working might enchant all the fields of a village, but only with a minor blessing—something that would still be a marvel to the inhabitants of the village, but augments the natural properties of that area or protects it against a mundane threat or nuisance, rather than completely overwriting the nature of that region through magic. Conversely, the most powerful workings of this circle are confined to the scope of a single chamber within a larger structure or the transformation of a single character. As a general rule, any sorcerous feat the Storyteller feels should be routine for a Dragon-Blooded or mortal sorcerer should fall under this circle. Below are some examples.

**Ambition 1 (Goal Number 5):** Create or bind magical entities capable of performing mundane, household chores, but not much else, in service to a person, organization, or structure. Enchant a path to prevent travelers from becoming lost or lead them to a particular location. Invite an unbound First Circle demon into Creation in a ritual that culminates at midnight. Make permanent but small-scale geographical alterations, such as drawing up a freshwater spring or flattening a hill. Ward a town or neighborhood-sized region against a particular type of mundane nuisance, such as forest fires, crop-eating pests, or rabid animals.

**Ambition 2 (Goal Number 10):** Cross two different species of plant or animal to create a hybrid species with the best traits of both. Grant mutations to oneself or a willing subject. Instill a plant, animal, or object with human-level intelligence. Ward a chamber against scrying, teleportation, or intrusion by a particular type of spirit.

**Ambition 3 (Goal Number 20):** Bless a region to enhance its natural properties, causing a field to always deliver a bountiful harvest or a freshwater river to always run clean. Create a completely new but mundane form of life, or breed a specimen of an existing species with a minor supernatural power that augments its strongest traits. Place a curse on a small region in a way that diminishes, warps, or blights its mundane aspects such as flora, fauna, or natural resources, making it all but impossible to make a livelihood off the cursed land. Create a rift between two realms of existence that allows communication, possession, or similar forms of limited interaction, but not actual transportation.

**Celestial Circle Workings:** Workings of the Celestial Circle are miracles of outright supernatural power, either rewriting the laws of the natural world on a relatively large scale or instilling supernatural power into the mundane world. They can have scope sufficient to place powerful blessings or curses upon an entire village or a particular neighborhood or feature of a city, and their power is either an overt manifestation of supernatural magic, or a dramatic and drastic change to the properties of the natural world. As a general rule, this is the circle for sorcerous workings that the Storyteller feels established Lunar and Sidereal sorcerers, as well as accomplished Solar sorcerers, should be capable of achieving without excessive effort, or that an exceptionally potent Dragon-Blood or mortal might be capable of attaining with great dedication, skill, and risk. Examples include:

**Ambition 1 (Goal Number 25):** Create a sorcerous bond between two characters that allows them to mentally communicate at any distance, or bestow a similarly useful but limited supernatural blessing. Create persistent illusions

that haunt a structure or town-sized region. Invite an unbound Second Circle demon into Creation in a ritual that culminates on the night of the new moon. Transform a chamber so that its interior emulates the environment of any natural terrain within Creation. Ward a chamber or structure against all intruders with magical traps or barriers.

**Ambition 2 (Goal Number 30):** Alter the weather of a town-sized region over a long duration, extending the harvest season by a month every year or making every winter exceptionally harsh. Enchant fortifications to strengthen them against mundane assault or give them a measure of resilience to supernatural powers. Grant a supernatural power to one's self or to a willing subject, such as a burning gaze, a hypnotic tongue, or cursed blood that turns into deadly scorpions when shed. Make alterations to the nature of a willing supernatural being, such as imbuing a fire elemental with the aspect of earth to turn it into a being of molten magma, or reshaping a demon to express a different facet of its oversoul and altering its Charms to match. Spread mutations throughout the mundane flora and fauna of an entire ecosystem.

**Ambition 3 (Goal Number 35):** Create a loyal minion with supernatural powers comparable to a Second Circle demon or notable god. Enchant the architecture of an entire structure to grant it limited mobility, the capacity to rearrange its internal structure, intelligence comparable to a human, or similar powers. Open a permanent portal between two different realms of existence, such as a small shadowland or a faerie ring that leads travelers into the deep Wyld.

**Solar Circle Workings:** Solar Circle workings are the height of what can be accomplished by sorcery. They can rewrite the laws of reality, or write new ones into being. Their scale can be huge, encompassing entire cities at the low end of Ambition 1 or the whole of the cosmos at its upper, nigh-unattainable end. Its power can bend time, space, or the boundaries of worlds to the sorcerer's will, and manipulate the fine workings of Essence down to the level of changing a being's very soul. As long as the Storyteller feels that something should be possible through a sorcerous working, it can be attained through workings of the Adamant Circle. Examples include:

**Ambition 1 (Goal Number 40):** Completely transform the terrain of a region to raise lush tropical paradises out of deserts, curse forests to wither away into scrubland, dry up seas, and so on. Enchant a village or small city-sized region to emulate the nature of another realm of existence, possibly acting as a point of meeting between the two worlds. Purify a hundred miles of shadowland or Wyld zone. Extract the soul of a willing mortal from his

## THE LIMITS OF SORCERY

Some things are beyond the power of even the mightiest sorcerers. While this is ultimately a matter for the Storyteller to decide, a few specific prohibitions are listed below, along with the reasoning behind the restrictions.

- **Immortality Has A Catch:** Sorcery can make a character immortal, but never in an unconditional, guaranteed fashion. There may be periodic rituals needed to renew a character's immortality, certain conditions under which he can die, a regional restriction he cannot travel outside of without risking his immortality, or similar. This does not mean that immortality is a trap or a waste of effort—instead, the purpose of this is to preserve the relevance and power of death as a dramatic element within the game, even if the players do bestow immortality to all their friends, allies, and family.
- **No Resurrection:** Dead is dead. A sorcerer might try all manner of clever tricks—binding someone's ghost into a sorcerously-created vessel, imprinting his memories onto a cloned body, even altering the nature of reincarnation within a region so that souls retain all memories of their past lives—but once someone has died, he can never be truly brought back. While a sorcerer's most powerful workings might create a simulacrum or duplicate of him as he was in life, it will never be the same as the original person. The purpose of this restriction is to maintain the dramatic significance of death as a narrative element within the game, and to prevent players from reversing the consequences of their actions.
- **No Time Travel:** What has happened, happened. Sorcery cannot be used to travel back into the past or to rewrite past events. The purpose of this restriction, like that on resurrection, is to emphasize the importance of the players' choices and their consequences, as well as to avoid the tangle of narrative confusion that comes from introducing time travel and altered pasts into a collaborative narrative.

body and transfer it into a new vessel, such as an automaton, manse, or similar form. Restore someone's body to the prime of its youth. Ward an entire city against invasion with supernatural traps, barriers, or concealment.

**Ambition 2 (Goal Number 50):** Alter major metaphysical properties of a city-sized region: make it capable of moving across Creation, cause it to rise up and float in

the sky, alter the nature of space within it so that it's bigger on the inside of its borders than the outside, meddle with the flow of time within it, make it invisible or intangible to those who do not meet certain conditions. Enchant a city-sized region or a group to change the nature of the afterlife for those who die within it, such as designating particulars of how they reincarnate or transforming the souls of the dead into elementals. Lay a potent curse on a city, region, or group of people that can only be broken when specific circumstances are met. Utterly transform the nature of a supernatural being—remaking a demon as a god, or turning an elemental into a specter composed of the corpse-elements of the Underworld, or similar.

**Ambition 3 (Goal Number 75):** Make subtle alterations to the metaphysics of the entire cosmos. Create a supernatural being of a singular nature and considerable power. Cast a city-sized region into a different realm of existence, or outside of time and space altogether, with set conditions for when it returns or how it can be accessed.

## FINESSE

The *Finesse* of a sorcerous working is the extent to which a sorcerer controls how its effects manifest and what form they take, rated on a scale of 1, 3, or 5 and set by the player. **The base difficulty of the (Intelligence + Occult) roll to perform a sorcerous working at each interval is equal to the working's Finesse.** While every sorcerous working is defined by the sorcerer's intention or goals in performing it, *Finesse* determines the extent to which the sorcerer's player gets to dictate *how* this intent is fulfilled by the working. If, for example, a sorcerer wished to ward a chamber against demons, a *Finesse* 1 working and a *Finesse* 5 working would both be equally efficacious in fulfilling that goal—but the nature and mechanics of the *Finesse* 1 working would be decided almost entirely by the Storyteller, while those of the *Finesse* 5 working would be decided by the sorcerer's player.

## Finesse Effect

- 1 The Storyteller determines how the working manifests in the world. This will always be in accordance with the basic intent of the working—a sorcerer wishing to create a magical servant from clay who succeeds at a *Finesse* 1 working will never end up creating something that refuses to serve him—but all details of the final result are in the Storyteller's hands.
- 3 The sorcerer's player comes up with a rough description of how the working plays out in the world,

which the Storyteller can then polish or embellish with catches, quirks, or twists that make the working more interesting or flavorful without undermining the core intent of the working.

- 5 The sorcerer's player defines exactly how the sorcerous working plays out in the world, subject to Storyteller approval.

If the success of a sorcerous working is in jeopardy, the sorcerer's player may choose to lower its Finesse mid-project, abandoning some of her control over the outcome to make it more easily attainable. However, there are consequences to taking this patchwork approach to sorcery—each step of Finesse the sorcerer drops counts as one botch to complicate the final outcome of the working, as the sorcerer's abandoned designs leave metaphorical rough edges on her finished project.

#### MEANS

The *Means* of a sorcerous working are the resources that a sorcerer has available to put to use beyond the baseline of her own sorcerous power. Means can take many forms, but all of them have the same benefit—adding to the working's terminus. Multiple Means stack their benefit, and it is intended that more ambitious workings will require the extra rolls from these to succeed. **A sorcerous working with no Means has a terminus of 5 rolls.**

Common Means include:

**Complementary Abilities:** A sorcerer who's mastered an Ability that naturally lends itself to the sorcerous working she's undertaking may claim that as one of her Means, allowing her to make one additional roll. Examples include using Medicine for a sorcerous working intended to create a new form of organism, or Performance for a working to fill the air around her home with songs which befuddle those who approach uninvited. In order to claim this benefit, the sorcerer must have a rating of 5 in the complementary Ability, or a rating of 3+ along with an appropriate specialty. At the Storyteller's discretion, a sorcerer who's invested in a significant number of Charms or other supernatural powers that are either based on or enhance the complementary Ability may instead receive an additional two intervals from that Ability.

**Complementary Spells:** A sorcerer may claim one of her known spells as a Means if its function is related to the working she is trying to perform, allowing her to make one additional roll. A sorcerer attempting to breed a species of obsidian butterflies would obviously benefit from knowing Death of Obsidian Butterflies, while one

attempting to create a rift through which demons can possess mortal cultists could claim benefits from knowing the spell to summon demons of the same circle as those brought through the rift.

**Cooperation:** The assistance of another sorcerer initiated into the Circle of the working allows for one additional roll. Alternatively, the sorcerer could receive assistance from a supernatural entity who, while not a sorcerer, possesses powers that naturally lend themselves to the completion of the working—a sorcerer trying to revive a dry riverbed might seek the assistance of a river god or water elemental, while one attempting to open a portal into the Underworld might seek help from an Abyssal Exalt. As a third alternative, a character might use a group of characters who are not sorcerers, but are well-versed in Occult, such as an infernal cult or a Heptagram class. Each of these alternatives can add one roll, but they don't stack with each other. In theory, a sorcerer who had access to a large organization of fellow sorcerers initiated into the Circle of the working could add two additional rolls from this Means, but such organized networks are few and far between in the current, fallen era.

**Extra Time:** A sorcerer willing to invest months or even years of preparation, research, and diligent practice into a sorcerous working may claim that extra time as one of her Means. Extending the interval of the roll from one week to one month allows the sorcerer to make one additional roll, while extending the interval to one cycle (three months) allows for two additional rolls. A sorcerer could receive three additional rolls by extending the interval to one year, but only the most dedicated of sorcerers are willing to retire from the world for that long.

**Exotic Components:** Esoteric or rare materials that the sorcerer has accumulated over the course of the story may be consumed in the process of a working to count as a Means, allowing the sorcerer to make one additional roll. What counts for this category is left largely to the Storyteller's discretion, as he will generally be the one introducing these exotic components into the game. The severed head of a Wyld behemoth, carved with glyphs of abjuration and displayed prominently from the walls of a city, might aid in warding that city against the influence of the Wyld, while an orichalcum lantern lit with a tongue of sunfire found in a First Age ruin could be used as part of a working to purify a shadowland. At the Storyteller's discretion, exceptionally rare or powerful components, such as the withered corpus-fragments of a slain Deathlord, can add two additional rolls to an appropriate working.



**Sorcerous Infrastructure:** Sorcerous laboratories or ritual chambers stocked with esoteric texts, occult reagents, and other tools of the sorcerer's trade add one additional roll to a sorcerous working. It is no easy thing to assemble such infrastructure—even among the opulence of the Realm, most sorcerers must make do with basic, rudimentary study chambers tucked away in the far wing of a family manse. For a newly-Exalted sorcerer to assemble her own sorcerous infrastructure would be an adventure in itself. Sorcerous infrastructure from the First Age could provide two additional rolls to a working, if repaired and restored to full functionality.

#### BEYOND THE BOUNDARIES

Unlike spells, which demand initiation into the proper circle before they can be learned, it is possible for a sorcerer to perform a working of a Circle that she has yet to master. Working beyond the boundaries is difficult, dangerous, and always requires extraordinary effort on the part of the sorcerer. The sorcerer's player must describe the extraordinary efforts of her character and the great lengths to which she goes as she describes the enactment of the sorcerous working—it's not something that can be done routinely, easily, or safely.

Going beyond the boundaries of one's sorcerous initiation has the following consequences:

- The base difficulty of the (Intelligence + Occult) roll at each interval is increased by 2 for each Circle beyond the sorcerer's own initiation. For example, a Terrestrial Circle sorcerer attempting a Solar Circle working would make rolls at a difficulty equal to (4 + Finesse), rather than (Finesse). Because of this, most sorcerers deliberately choose a low Finesse for such workings.
- Each failed interval roll on a working counts as one botch to complicate the final outcome of that working. Actually botching a roll completely ruins the effort, in addition to adding disastrous consequences to that failure.
- Even the extraordinary efforts of working beyond the boundaries has limits. A Terrestrial Circle sorcerer cannot attempt Solar Circle workings of Ambition 3. Aspiring to such world-shaking miracles requires the sorcerer at least be initiated into the Celestial Circle.
- The default interval of such workings is increased from one week to three months, if reaching one Circle above the sorcerer's capacity, or one year if reaching two levels above the sorcerer's mastery. The requirement to gain additional means by dedicating extra time and effort to the working rises to one year, three years, or five years (for those reaching one Circle above their mastery), or three years, five years, or ten years (for Terrestrial Circle sorcerers attempting Solar Circle workings).



- The experience point cost of such workings are increased by four points per Circle the sorcerer has not mastered.

#### UNDOING A SORCEROUS WORKING

Sorcerous workings are permanent marvels of magic. Once created, they cannot be countered or distorted. The closest thing to dispelling a working that a rival sorcerer can do is performing a working of her own intended to achieve the opposite effect. For example, if a Dragon-Blooded sorcerer of the Heptagram has blessed a trade route to speed travel along it, a Solar sorcerer might contest this working with one of her own to slow travel along that route to oppose the Dynast's working. However, while the mechanics of this might equate to the two workings canceling each other out, the Storyteller should keep in mind that both workings are still in place within the world. For example, if the Dynast's working was described as speeding travel by binding the native spirits of the region to tend to the road and provide aid to travelers along it, while the Solar's was as a curse of fear that panicked any steed brought onto the path and forced an irrational caution on travelers, then the Storyteller might narrate the interaction of these two effects. A merchant prince's horses refuse to set hooves upon the enchanted road, but eventually he finds minor elementals willing to haul his caravan. His heart is struck with worries and anxieties, but spirits whisper soothing reassurances into his dreams. In effect, he is able to complete the journey in the normal time it would take, neither benefitting from the Dragon-Blood's working nor hindered by the Solar's, but the effects of both workings make his journey very strange.

Of course, the easiest way to stop a working is to prevent it from being completed. Sabotaging a sorcerer's Means makes it more difficult for her to complete the working, while killing her before it's complete ensures its failure. This will most often come up in the context of players attempting to stop a working being enacted by an enemy sorcerer. Such preemptive measures require realizing that a working is taking place at all. Noticing the encroaching effects of a sorcerous working over a region is a difficulty 3 (Intelligence + Occult) roll, while discerning the exact effect of the working is difficulty 5. Lower both difficulties by one for characters who are sorcerers themselves, and by an additional one for characters who witness the sorcerer or his subordinates performing the ritual actions needed to enact the working.

#### A SAMPLE WORKING

Ivory Eyes, a Twilight Caste initiated into the Celestial Circle of sorcery, wishes to imbue her workshop with limited intelligence and mobility. The Storyteller, consulting the Ambition tables above, determines that this would be an

Ambition 3 working of the Celestial Circle, requiring a total of 35 successes to complete. Ivory Eyes's player assesses her Means—she has a Craft rating of 5 and has invested in numerous Craft Charms, which the Storyteller agrees qualifies her for two additional rolls, for a total of seven intervals. Knowing she needs an average of about five threshold successes per interval to succeed on the working, Ivory Eyes's player decides to set the Finesse of the working at 3 to make sure she succeeds—risky, but she has a particular image in her head for how she wants the working to play out, so she's willing to gamble and hope her Occult Excellency can pick up the slack.

Over the next seven weeks, Ivory Eyes performs numerous arcane experiments and sorcerous modifications to her workshop. She successfully attains the 35 successes needed to complete the working, but also botched one of the rolls. Because the working had Finesse 3, Ivory Eyes's player describes how the working plays out in the world—she wants her workshop to be able to move around on spindly metallic limbs animated by sorcerous energies, and to have an intelligence that speaks to her through the flame of the forge. However, the Storyteller determines the exact details, such as how fast it can move and what dice pools its animating intelligence has access to, and might make some twists to the player's concepts—for example, deciding that the fire of the forge doesn't just speak, but becomes a living fire elemental bound inside the workshop, controlling its movement. However, because the intention of the working was to create a

#### LOSING MEANS

Sometimes, a sorcerer might lose access to her Means mid-working. A cooperating sorcerer has a change of heart and ends his collaboration; the sorcerer's laboratory is raided and razed by her enemies; a pressing issue denies the sorcerer the luxury of taking her time, forcing her to change the interval of her rolls from months to weeks. Losing Means obviously denies the sorcerer the extra rolls they also grant, but also counts as a botch to complicate the final result of the working, representing the complications of adapting to the loss of the resource.

If the sorcerer has already completed the base five intervals, and is working on the extra intervals granted by one of her Means when it is lost, then her working is placed in dire jeopardy. She is allowed to finish the last interval, but cuts the number of threshold successes she receives in half (rounded up). If this is not enough to finish the working, then it has failed.

mobile, intelligent workshop, the bound fire elemental's personality should remain generally amicable to the purposes of moving the workshop where Ivory Eyes commands, and assisting in its operation.

However, there is one botch from Ivory Eyes's attempts, which complicates the outcome of the working. The Storyteller decides that this manifests as the workshop's animating elemental being hopelessly in love with the sorcerer, having a Defining Tie of obsessive infatuation towards her. While this doesn't hinder the working's ability to fulfill Ivory Eyes's original intention, it may lead to awkward situations and dramatic twists in play (or possibly to a very strange love story).

## Thaumaturgy

While this book devotes itself to the greater magic of the Exalted—Charms, Evocations, and Sorcery—there is a fourth type of power, a species of unique occult miracles and holistic, ritualized magic known collectively as thaumaturgy. Thaumaturgy refers to efficacious rituals and useful tricks that can be deployed by those who have a special communion with the occult world. Those who can perform thaumaturgy are properly known as thaumaturgists.

Thaumaturgy is unique. As a form of magic, it is nowhere near as versatile as the Charms of the Exalted, nor as powerful as sorcery. Thaumaturgy is a bit of a cipher in that regard—most thaumaturgists are mortals who, for unknown reasons, form an instinct for a single mystic ritual, a communion with an occult secret of Creation that remains invisible to anyone else.

As thaumaturgists are unique individuals, so too are their rituals. This means that the instinctive secret or trick developed by one thaumaturgist might be completely unique to him, unseen in the world before his birth, and lost to the world after his death—unless he passes it on.

Thus thaumaturgy bears another distinction: books of thaumaturgy are useless for teaching thaumaturgy. A thaumaturgic ritual known to one thaumaturge may **only** be passed to another through direct teaching and practice. Simply observing the ritual in practice, or reading about it in a book isn't sufficient. Such rituals are directly communicated and transmitted from thaumaturgist to thaumaturgist in a fashion that is one part spiritual communion, one part demonstration, and one part teaching lesson.

A thaumaturgist who is so inclined may keep his unique power a secret, never revealing the procedure behind his art. Such a specimen may rely on his unique talent for his

daily bread, or even to curry the favor of sorcerers or the Exalted, who need the use of his power.

While this is sometimes the case, there is nevertheless a certain traffic in occult mysteries, particularly in places like Sijan, where the order of funerists depends on the induction of thaumaturgists into their ranks, so that they might pass on the secrets of the funerary arts to future generations. Sijan puts a high premium on persons of such talent, offering them excellent housing, education, and official placement in the ministry of morticians. Fortune tellers, soothsayers, exorcists and shamans may all be examples of thaumaturgists who have used their unique power to take on a role in their environs, though such titles are not exclusive to those with power, any more than a mortician need also be a sorcerer.

### ON SORCERERS AND THAUMATURGES

Mortal thaumaturges are exceedingly rare. In system terms, a mortal with thaumaturgy has the Thaumaturgist Merit (p. 166). When one of the Chosen unlocks the power of sorcery, she gains this Merit automatically. Mortal sorcerers do **not** gain this Merit automatically, and it cannot be taught, either to mortals or the uninitiated Chosen. One is either born with the power of thaumaturgy or one is not.

A character with the Thaumaturgist Merit may learn thaumaturgic rituals. One-dot rituals cost three experience points to learn. These rituals represent the simplest and purest ritual magic available. Two-dot rituals are slightly more complex or difficult, and cost five experience points to learn. Training time for a thaumaturgy ritual is (dot rating) weeks.

## Example Rituals

### READING THE TEA LEAVES (• OR ••)

The one-dot ritual involves the taking of tea in order to divine a character's destiny. The character whose destiny is to be read must empty tea leaves into a hot teacup, then dwell over the steam and reflections in the cup, and drink it down while emptying his mind of clutter. When the tea is gone, only the leaves remain, and the mystic may divine her target's greater destiny with a difficulty 2 (Perception + Occult) roll. A greater destiny informs the character's next defining accomplishment. It is not a prediction of where the character's life will end, but rather the next major course it will take. The mystic may also read a character's immediate destiny to get an idea of the most important life-event the character will engage in that day, though it is difficulty 4. Failing this roll still gives the thaumaturgist an accurate result, but the details are extremely hazy. Even when successful, the tea-reader often cannot explain or doesn't understand what she sees.

She might see her client bumping into a woman on a nearby dock at sunset, but this doesn't mean she knows who the woman is or why the event is significant.

The two-dot version of this ritual has almost the exact same procedure, but a different use. The mystic can use different flavors of tea with different seasonal associations to divine the best opportunities for success and failure a character has during a certain month. The mystic cannot dictate exactly what the tea will show her—she can't tell whether a merchant taking a trip down the Diamond Road to Gem will be beset by Yena's daughters—but she can generally see either the largest failure or success in the merchant's life during the time in which he plans to take the trip. This is a difficulty 3 roll, and failing it still gives accurate but hazy information, with the potential for misinformation. A botch for either ritual *always* misinforms.

Reading tea leaves is *generally* common. In a populace of ten thousand, there will be at least one tea reader if tea consumption is an important part of regional culture.

#### **UNQUENCHABLE FLAME (•)**

The mystic gathers kindling into a circle of rocks arranged so that the largest stones point to the four corners of Creation, and speaks a guttural, instinctual word. The kindling leaps to flame, even if it is soaking wet. If it is raining, the rain refuses to fall within a five foot radius of the fire's edge.

Unquenchable Flame is fairly uncommon. It was last seen practiced over ten years ago, by a huntsman of the Tenjosi Wetlands.

#### **SECOND BREAD (•)**

One who has this gift holds a piece of bread in his hands and tears it perfectly in half, then turns and tears the resulting ends, and continues turning and tearing according to his instinct. The resulting pieces equal twice the bread he started with. It costs one Willpower to use this ritual on a single large loaf of bread or several smaller hanks.

Almost every century since the rise of the Scarlet Empress has seen a prophet with the gift of Second Bread. The most recent was a madman in Nexus, who used old crusts to feed starving children until a Guildsman beat him into a coma for slowing down foot traffic.

#### **EXORCISM (• OR ••)**

With the one dot ritual the exorcist may attempt to banish a ghost with chanting, ritual gestures, and a variety of mystical appurtenances. She may pay one Willpower to begin an extended action with a difficulty of the ghost's

Essence and a goal number of its Willpower, rolling (Intelligence + Occult) dice at each interval. Each roll is a combat action that cannot be placed in a flurry. She must remain within short range of the ghost she's exorcising, which takes a -3 penalty on all actions while the exorcism is underway. Success dispatches it back to the Underworld. The exorcist must maintain concentration, and automatically fails if she is damaged by a **decisive** attack or crashed.

The two dot ritual allows an exorcist with a specialty in demonology, and with a specialty in knowledge of a specific demon, to drive that demon out of a host, causing spirit to flee into a clay vessel, statue, tree, cattle or other proxy for a month and a day. This ritual's procedure is the same as that of one to drive out a ghost, save that it uses the demon's Resolve as a difficulty. A sorcerer who has bound a sealed demon may free it by commanding it out of the containing vessel—if she can find it.

There is another two dot version of a demonic exorcism that involves forcing a spirit back into its sanctum, but this works for no more than a single night, has a goal number of (the spirit's Willpower x2), and a terminus of three, after which the same exorcist may not attempt to banish it for a year and a day.

Exorcists are uncommon, but not extremely so, and tend to be born near shadowlands.

#### **SPEAK WITH OZASHUN (••)**

There is a stream running through the mountains ten miles west of Medo's capital. The Frozen Spring pass overlooks a section of this stream, where it runs into an open-mouth cave in the side of the mountain. This is the place where Ozashun may be called, during the night of the new moon, by thrusting a burning branch into the muddy shore opposite the cave and speaking the name of a child who trusts you. The darkness intensifies and drinks what little starlight makes it down through the towering pines, giving the impression of a wrinkled, ancient face, gape-mouthed, toothless. From its mouth comes a shadow on the water, four-legged, a predator like a fox or a wolf. Ozashun knows all the secrets of the mountain and the stream running through it, but only back through the last new moon. For every question it answers, it gains the power to enter a child's dream, to speak with and influence them. Perhaps it is a coincidence that the mountains and especially the area around the Frozen Pass are thick with child ghosts.

Speak with Ozashun is extremely rare, though it has been recorded more than once as a gift among the hill tribes of Medo.

# T

The Seven-Degreed Physician of Black Maladies took in the reeking air from a balcony on the side of the corpse-fortress mountain called Juggernaut. He pushed his gloves into the pockets of his apron and pulled his hands free. Then he began to pack a bowl full of marijuana, to smoke while he took a rest from his efforts.

Tens of thousands of tons of reeking meat hung viscidly over the bones of the great dead man-beast. The Seven-Degreed Physician was merely a youth himself, in terms of his powers. He could not even begin to imagine how the Mask of Winters kept the gigantic corpse animate; what the vast cost in Essence must have been. The Physician concerned himself, as he had for weeks, with the most basic elements of fundamental necromancy.

The Abyssal Exalt lit his bowl and leaned on the iron railing, breathing in the unspeakable charnel aroma of Juggernaut's presence when he wasn't inhaling the smoke of his piece. The Mask of Winters provided his living servants with charms against the odor, which was strong enough to kill some men immediately. Those it did not kill swiftly would sicken and die within days. Even with protective magic in place, the air was cloying with the stink of rotting flesh. The Physician knew from experience that anything exposed to the aroma for just a few hours would stink for weeks or even months.

That the stench of the air outside could be considered "fresh" spoke volumes about the sort of ingredients and processes the Abyssal used in the course of his necromantic workings. He adjusted the pack of the pipe with his thumb, and puffed on it again.

The quotas had been raised again. Spine chains, particularly, were required for the Deathlord's war machine, and so spine chains the Abyssal provided; hacking the legs off the corpses of sacrificial victims, sewing the torsos together, breathing a terrible parody of life into the tissue through the use of black sorcery.

At first, it had been delicious evil, but currently the sheer desperation of the effort had made it absolute torture, sor-

cerous enslavement. The Physician had given up on the psychological manipulation of his victims when living beings were used. It was easier to just impel the Essence to consummate the act of animation through brute force than to go through the pantomime again and again.

The Mask of Winters was also frequently busied with necromancy, and that did everything to exacerbate the situation. The tireless ghost of a monstrously powerful sorcerer, his robes studded with countless hearthstones, the Deathlord saw no reason why his apprentice could not perform similar prodigies.

The Physician reflected that the hellish part of his experience was that he could not tell what part was logistical desperation, what part was intended to act as a training course in fundamental necromancy, and what part sprang from the fact that his master was a mad, evil ghost intent on fulfilling his ambition on the world. There was no doubt in the Exalt's mind that all three were a distinct part of his current experience. When was the raising of the quotas mere arbitrary madness, and when was it designed to force the Abyssal to learn what corners could and could not be cut in production line necromancy? Was that uncertainty itself somehow part of whatever twisted scheme the Mask of Winters harbored for the development of his Chosen?

The Exalt looked downwards, toward the mar shalling yard, where the hundreds of spine chains that the Deathlord's efforts had produced were drawn up together. The Seven-Degreed Physician wasn't entirely sure where they would be scuttling off to, but they'd be going there soon. Off to terrify some frontier or cow a tributary perhaps. He hoped whoever they horrified into submission or infected with terrible plagues appreciated just what an incredible amount of work had been put into the weapons used to kill them.

You see that all over Creation these days, the Abyssal reflected. People just didn't respect the value of craftsmanship. The Physician knocked the ashes out of the bowl and on the balcony railing, pulled on his gloves, and got ready to return to his sewing. Who would have known that practicing black magic would involve so much cobbler's twine?



# Antagonists

## Quick Characters

Not all Storyteller characters are created equal. Some are intended to play grand roles in the group's story, while others will only appear for a single night of gaming, or even a single scene. Many won't even be named. While a Storyteller is certainly free to render every bit player in her stories with the same level of detail as the players' Exalts or important Storyteller characters, this isn't necessary. The Quick Character (QC) system presents a faster, simpler alternative for putting together minor characters in a hurry.

We recommend that QCs be used for unimportant characters who aren't intended to stick around for long or who play unimportant roles—minions, merchants met on the road, nameless bandits, demon bodyguards, even Exalts who pass briefly through the story and are never seen again, such as Dragon-Blooded riding with the Wyld Hunt. Ultimately, though, the choice of how often to use QCs is up to you.

### TRAITS

Rather than having a full character sheet, Quick Characters use the simplified mechanics described below.

#### ESSENCE, WILLPOWER, JOIN BATTLE, AND HEALTH TRACK

Each QC stat block begins by listing a Quick Character's Essence rating, Willpower, Join Battle dice pool, and Health Track. These are determined as follows:

- Essence:** The Storyteller simply assigns what seems like an appropriate value. Mortals are Essence 1, as are the newest of Exalted and the weakest of spirits and Wyld denizens. Most supernatural beings possess Essence 2-3. Essence 4 or 5 indicates that a being is very experienced, puissant, and mighty in its command of supernatural forces—it's the hallmark of accomplished, centuries-old Exalts, demons of higher Circles, and the great potentates of the Wyld.

Essence 6+ is exceptionally rare, denoting the mightiest of spirits, the most terrible prodigies of the Wyld, and Exalts

who have spent countless lifetimes focusing their Essence—such beings probably shouldn't be Quick Characters.

- **Willpower:** This value denotes the amount of Willpower the QC has available to spend when it encounters the players' characters. The Willpower chart on page 170 explains the commonality of different Willpower ratings; the Storyteller simply picks something that seems typical for the QC. QCs should rarely have Willpower in the 8-10 range—even if their Willpower *rating* ought to be 10, it's unlikely that they'll be completely rested and relaxed at the time they meet the players' characters.
- **Join Battle:** This describes the QC's Join Battle dice pool. It's determined according to the normal methods for determining dice pools (see below).
- **Essence Pool(s), if any:** If the QC has an Essence pool, it's determined here, according to the chart in the relevant section (p. 509 for spirits, p. 534 for Fair Folk, p. 540 for Exalts).
- **Health Track:** This section describes the size and makeup of the QC's Health Track. Most beings have seven Health Levels (-0/-1/-1/-2/-2/-4/Incapacitated); some small creatures have fewer, while larger beasts (as well as many supernatural beings) might have more.

### DICE POOLS

QCs don't have Attributes or Abilities listed. Instead, their description lists their dice pools for particular actions that they're expected to engage in. These include any bonuses a character would receive from equipment, specialties, and Merits. A QC's dice pools can cover broad or specific actions, ranging from "Archery" and "Combat movement" to "Seduction" or "Climbing."

In general, QCs will only have pools listed for actions likely to be germane to their role as stock characters. A burglar's QC description, then, might list his dice pools for breaking and entering, stealth, desperate knife-fighting, and running away, but would not bother to describe the character's prowess (or lack thereof) with oratory, bureaucratic know-how, or field medicine—they're just not important things to know about a burglar who's only going to show up for one scene to try to steal something.

In order to settle on a dice pool for a QC, consult the table below and pick a number that looks right. Don't worry too much about precise bonuses from things like weapons and specialties—if the QC is using good equipment or is specialized for a task, just feel free to nudge him toward the upper end of a given dice pool range. They're Quick Characters, not Precise Characters.

If it becomes necessary to declare a QC's dice pool for some action not listed, it's generally safe to default to 3 dice.

### Dice Pool      Description

1-2

The QC is untrained or otherwise deficient in this area. He has a good chance of failing even low-difficulty actions, and will be easily overcome by players' characters with even a moderate investment in that area. This rating is intended to highlight a character's lack of capacity with something of importance to their function as QCs.

3-6

The QC is skilled in this area, with competence to rival well-trained mortals or the heroic prowess of the Exalted. He is almost certain to succeed on low-difficulty actions, and is a fair challenge for players' characters who are moderately to significantly invested in that area. This is the range most QCs will probably fall into for most actions.

7-10

The QC is exceptional. Mortals with this level of skill are rare, true masters of their art—even Exalts will rarely have this degree of competence in more than a few areas. He has a fair chance of success even at high difficulty actions, and is a match for highly-invested specialists. This is the rating of skilled veterans (at the low end) and of elite masters (at the high end), such as the Brides of Ahlat on the field of battle or a Guild factor during financial negotiation.

11-14

This level of competence is the absolute maximum of what can be achieved through a combination of skill, specialization, and equipment. A QC with this dice pool is likely to defeat even specialized player characters if they're not equally optimized or using magic—the Storyteller should be cautious in using

them, so that players do not feel forced to maximize their stats just to have a fighting chance. Such ratings should be uncommon and noteworthy even among the ranks of the Exalted.

### Social Actions

If a character is expected to engage in social influence, any social actions they're likely to use (such as instill, persuade, intimidate, and bargain) should be listed. Dice pools for these abilities are determined the same as any other QC dice pools.

Social QCs will also list their Resolve and Guile. 1-2 indicates a weak-willed or average character, 3-4 indicates a character who is comfortable resisting social pressure or who is adept at hiding his motives, and 5-6 indicates characters who are unshakable pillars of resolve or inscrutable masters of manipulation.

### COMBAT ACTIONS

The dice pools for combat actions (such as "Sword attack" or "Unarmed attack") are determined the same way as the dice pools for any other QC actions (don't bother altering dice pools for **withering** and **decisive** attacks). However, these actions will also list a damage rating, which acts as the base damage of **withering** attacks. Damage is determined according to the weapon used, with the chart below provided for quick reference:

Mortal Weapons	Damage
Light	+7
Medium	+9
Heavy	+11

Artifact	Weapons Damage
Light	+10
Medium	+12
Heavy	+14

Weapons have access to whatever tags are appropriate (see chapter 10). Add 1-5 to the weapon's damage value to reflect the character's Strength, and you have a QC's combat actions. If an attack has an Overwhelming value higher than 1, this should also be noted. Thus, a hulking street tough might have Unarmed Attack 5 (Damage 11) to reflect his moderate fighting skill, considerable strength, and the fact that unarmed attacks do light damage.

Finally, a QC's Combat Actions will list his Parry and Evasion ratings and his Soak/Hardness. The two Defense ratings, Parry and Evasion, are like dice pools in that they reflect a character's general martial prowess, and are chosen by the Storyteller eyeballing and consulting the following chart:

**Parry/Evasion Description**

- 0-1 The QC is an unskilled combatant who may be relying on armor and nothing else to protect him.
- 2-3 Violence is part of how the QC gets along in the world. This is the rating of bandits, militia, thugs, low-rent mercenaries, and Exalts who don't focus on martial prowess.
- 4-5 The QC is a seasoned fighter, such as a veteran soldier, a duelist, a high-priced bodyguard, a gladiatorial champion, or an Exalt who can carry himself well in battle.
- 6-7 The QC is a world-class fighter with an excellent weapon or shield. This is the Defense value of the Realm's elite troops, the Brides of Ahlat, and the mightiest warriors among the Chosen.

Soak/Hardness is determined by selecting the appropriate values off the following list, and then adding 1-5 to Soak to reflect the character's Stamina.

**Mortal Armor Soak**

Light	3
Medium	5
Heavy	7

**Artifact Armor Soak Hardness**

Light	5	4
Medium	8	7
Heavy	11	10

**POWERS**

Finally, should a QC have any Charms, spells, or other miscellaneous powers, these will be listed here. QCs appearing in this book and in supplements will usually list all necessary mechanics in the power itself, and may simplify the mechanics of certain Charms for the sake of making the QC easier to run. For example, if a Solar Charm adds the Exalt's Stamina in automatic successes to a certain kind of action, the QC power may simply say "Add three automatic successes." It's about in the right ballpark for the QC in question, and it lets the Storyteller get the action resolved faster—making sure all the modifiers line up perfectly isn't that vital.

Writing powers for your own QCs is a matter of either eyeballing existing written Charms, powers, etc., or grabbing published powers and plugging in reasonable numbers. If a spell, for example, requires you to roll (Wits + Occult)

and there's no indication of what the QC's Wits or Occult ratings are, just plug in a dice pool that makes sense.

Specific areas of this chapter will give further guidelines on what sorts of powers are appropriate for various QCs.

This is the general format for a QC power:

**Name** (*cost, type, duration, any relevant Keywords*): *Rules*.

For example, **Dragon-Graced Weapon** (3m, supplemental, instant): *Wreaths daiklave in flames, adding +5 raw damage to withering attacks, or +1 damage die to a decisive attack*.

Finally, some QCs, such as Exalts, are able to spend Essence to raise their dice pools or static values. The cost to do so and the motes necessary will be listed after the dice pool in question. Later sections of this chapter will describe how different sorts of supernatural beings can raise their dice pools.

**Mortal Antagonists****BRIGAND / CONSCRIPT / MILITIA**

The distinctions between village militia, conscripts, and bandits are political and situational. By and large, they're ill-equipped, have little to no training, and would rather go back to their farms or shops than fight.

**Essence: 1; Willpower: 3; Join Battle: 5 dice**

**Health Levels:** -0/-1x2/-2x2/-4/Icap.

**Actions:** Senses: 4 dice; Stealth: 5 dice; Threaten: 4 dice; Tracking: 4 dice  
Appearance 1, Resolve 1, Guile 1

**Combat**

Attack (Self bow): 8 dice at short range (Damage 9)

Attack (Short sword): 6 dice (Damage 11, minimum 2)

Attack (Grapple): 4 dice (5 dice to control)

Combat Movement: 4 dice

Evasion 2, Parry 2

Soak/Hardness: 6/0 (Buff jacket)

**BATTLE-READY TROOPS / MEDIUM INFANTRY**

Footsoldiers include well-trained militia, solidly equipped peasant levies, and mercenaries. Few city-states can afford to maintain standing armies indefinitely, so common troops spend much of the year in agricultural labor, going to war only between harvests or when princes can afford wartime pay. Unpaid soldiers often turn to banditry.

Most Realm legionnaires are peasant volunteers seeking a hot meal and a roof over their heads, but caught stealing rice to feed her husband and daughter, Rain Plum

chose the legions over the shaming her family would face if she went under the lash. Now she serves stolidly, waiting only for her term's end so she can go home.

Rain Plum is a soldier, not a warrior. She obeys military discipline and fights in formation with her fang, all of them equipped with long spear, chopping sword, tower shield, reinforced buff jacket and pot helmet. Though loyal to her officers and fangmates, if faced with overwhelming odds she will surrender or flee rather than fight to the death.

**Essence:** 1; **Willpower:** 4; **Join Battle:** 6 dice

**Health Levels:** -0/-1x2/-2x2/-4/Icap.

**Actions:** Senses: 4 dice; Threaten: 4 dice  
Appearance 2, Resolve 2, Guile 1

### Combat

Attack (Chopping sword): 7 dice (Damage 12, minimum 2)

Attack (Long spear): 5 dice (Damage 14)

Attack (Shield bash): 6 dice (Damage 12)

Combat Movement: 4 dice

Evasion 2, Parry 4

Soak/Hardness: 8/0 (Reinforced buff jacket)

### NOMADIC HORSE-ARCHER / MEDIUM CAVALRY

Mounted troops are generally better-trained than infantry levies, as riding skill typically comes with good health and skill at arms—either from military training, or from the rough upbringing of nomadic peoples. Cavalry forces range from lightly equipped irregulars, used primarily for scouting and skirmishing, to heavily-armored cataphracts employed as shock troops. All rely heavily on their mobility, making them superior to infantry for seizing (though not holding) key locations, outmaneuvering enemy formations, and serving as a tactical or strategic reserve.

**Essence:** 1; **Willpower:** 4; **Join Battle:** 6 dice

**Health Levels:** -0/-1x2/-2x2/-4/Icap.

**Actions:** Read Motives: 4 dice; Senses: 7 dice; Threaten: 6 dice; Tracking: 9 dice  
Appearance 2, Resolve 4, Guile 1

### Combat

Attack (Long spear): 8 dice (Damage 14)

Attack (Scimitar): 9 dice (Damage 12, minimum 2)

Attack (Self bow): 11 dice at short range (Damage 10)

Combat Movement: 6 dice (8 dice while mounted)

Evasion 3, Parry 4

Soak/Hardness: 8/0 (Lamellar)

Fighting Mounted Opponents

Combat rules for mounted characters can be found on page 202.

### LINTHA REAVER / BRIGAND LEADER / GRIZZLED MERCENARY

Not every brigand is a starveling peasant who barely knows which end of the spear to point. Even without formal training, years of fighting—and perhaps a little talent—can harden an ordinary bandit or soldier into a ruthless killer.

**Essence:** 1; **Willpower:** 5; **Join Battle:** 6 dice

**Health Levels:** -0/-1x2/-2x2/-4/Icap.

**Actions:** Assess Wealth: 6 dice; Climbing: 7 dice; Senses: 5 dice; Threaten: 7 dice; Sailing: 5 dice  
Appearance 3 (Hideous), Resolve 3, Guile 1

### Combat

Attack (Axe): 7 dice (Damage 12, minimum 2)

Attack (Dagger): 9 dice (Damage 10)

Attack (Javelin): 8 dice at close range (Damage 12)

Attack (Grapple): 5 dice (6 dice to control)

Combat Movement: 7 dice

Evasion 3, Parry 4

Soak/Hardness: 8/0 (Reinforced buff jacket)

### ELITE TROOPS / CHAMPION / ELITE BODYGUARD

Military elites receive the finest arms and training, the better to support their role as shock troops or personal guards. Some are handpicked from the citizenry for size and strength, or from the rank and file for skill and valor. Others are raised for war—usually social elites groomed for great things, or indoctrinated janissary slaves.

**Essence:** 1; **Willpower:** 5; **Join Battle:** 10 dice

**Health Levels:** -0/-1x2/-2x2/-4/Icap.

**Actions:** Read Intentions: 6 dice; Senses: 9 dice; Threaten: 6 dice  
Appearance 2, Resolve 4, Guile 1

### Combat

Attack (Slashing sword): 11 dice (Damage 12, minimum 2)

Combat Movement: 5 dice

Evasion 3, Parry 5

Soak/Hardness: 10/0 (Enchanted brocade)

### BRIDE OF AHLAT

Duah Omorose wears her order's black and red tasseled cloak and horned turban with pride. She did not join Harborhead's royal guard out of adolescent adoration of the god to whom she has been ritually wed, nor out of family tradition. She craved the respect of her peers and the terror of the enemy. The vow of chastity she took upon joining Ahlat's brides seemed a trivial sacrifice.

But Omorose now harbors a deadly secret. She is no longer a virgin; she has forsaken her vow to love none but Ahlat and her fellow brides. Should her liaison be discovered,



that would normally mean death for her and her lover. But he is a Prince of the Earth, one whose power may suffice to save them from the bull-god's altar.

Like all brides of Ahlat, Omorose is strong, swift, and resilient. Her war-gear includes sling, firewand, spear, ox-hide shield and turban-wrapped horned steel helm. In battle, she utters terrifying roars as she and her fellows swarm the foe in close formation. All maintain strict discipline, though some refuse to retreat due to battle-madness or to protect fallen comrades.

**Essence:** 1; **Willpower:** 6; **Join Battle:** 8 dice

**Health Levels:** -0/-1x2/-2x2/-4/Icap.

**Actions:** Command: 5 dice; Senses: 4 dice;

Threaten: 7 dice

Appearance 3, Resolve 4, Guile 2

### Combat

Attack (Short spear): 10 dice (Damage 11)

Attack (Shield bash): 5 dice (Damage 13)

Attack (Firewand): 9 dice at short range (Damage 11, minimum 2)

Attack (Sling): 8 dice at close range (Damage 11)

Combat Movement: 10 dice

Evasion 5, Parry 4

Soak/Hardness: 4/0

### Merits

**Blessing of Ahlat:** A Bride of Ahlat may sacrifice a bullock and pay a point of Willpower before a battle to gain double 9s on three rolls made in that fight. If an entire battle group partakes in this rite, they gain Might 1 for the duration. Should a Bride fail to fight bravely after making this prayer, she is struck bedridden with palsy for a day by Ahlat's wrath.

### SIJANESE DEADSPeAKER / EXORCIST / SHAMAN

Ghosts and other possessing spirits can threaten the integrity—or the survival—of a community. Exorcists labor to protect the living from the dead, whether by negotiation or more direct supernatural methods of coercion. (Shamans have similar tools at their disposal for use against gods, demons, and other spirits.)

**Essence:** 1; **Willpower:** 4; **Join Battle:** 4 dice

**Health Levels:** -0/-1x2/-2x2/-4/Icap.

**Actions:** Funerary Ceremonies: 7 dice; Knowledge of the Undead: 6 dice; Prayer to Ghosts: 5 dice;

Read Intentions: 5 dice; Senses: 6 dice;

Social Influence: 6 dice

Appearance 2, Resolve: 3, Guile: 3

### Combat

Attack (Staff): 6 dice (Damage 10)

Attack (Unarmed): 10 dice (Damage 8)  
 Attack (Grapple): 6 dice (5 dice to control)  
 Combat Movement: 4 dice  
 Evasion 3, Parry 3  
 Soak/Hardness: 6/0 (Breastplate)

#### Merits

**Exorcism:** The exorcist may attempt to banish a ghost with chanting, ritual gestures, and a variety of mystical appurtenances. She may pay one Willpower to begin an extended action with a difficulty of the ghost's Resolve and a goal number of its Willpower, rolling six dice at each interval. Each roll is a combat action that cannot be placed in a flurry. She must remain within short range of the ghost she is exorcising, which takes a -3 penalty on all actions while the exorcism is underway. Success dispatches it back to the Underworld. The exorcist must maintain concentration, and automatically fails if she is damaged by a **decisive** attack or crashed.

**Ghost-Hunter's Tools:** As long as the exorcist is armed with her silver-inlaid staff and bracers, she may pay a point of Willpower to make them capable of striking dematerialized ghosts for one action. She still suffers a -3 penalty on attacks if targeting a ghost she cannot see.

**Warding Talisman:** The exorcist carries a talisman of blue glass filled with salt that carries a sorcerous enchantment laid on it by a master of her order. If she would be possessed by one of the undead or fall under a psyche effect used by one of them, she may pay a point of Willpower to shatter the talisman and negate the effect.

#### MONK / WARRIOR-PRIEST

It's not uncommon for religious orders, from the Immaculate Order to sizable Threshold cults, to provide their members with martial training. This is, to some extent, an ascetic or meditative exercise. It also helps priests and monks protect their temples and flocks, oftentimes by passing along their training to the peasantry.

**Essence: 1; Willpower: 5; Join Battle: 6 dice**

**Health Levels:** -0/-1x2/-2x2/-4/Icap.

**Actions:** Knowledge of Spirits: 4 dice; Medical Treatment: 5 dice; Prayer: 4 dice; Senses: 5 dice; Social Influence: 6 dice  
 Appearance 2, Resolve 4, Guile 2

#### Combat

Attack (Hook swords): 6 dice (Damage 11)  
 Attack (Unarmed): 8 dice (Damage 8)  
 Attack (Grapple): 7 dice (6 dice to control)  
 Combat Movement: 6 dice

Evasion 4, Parry 3  
 Soak/Hardness: 3/0

#### ASSASSIN / SPYMASTER

Professional assassins and spies, like artisans, typically require the patronage of wealthy masters to pursue their trades. Instead of murdering or surveilling full-time, they serve their patrons in a variety of covert roles.

**Essence: 1; Willpower: 5; Join Battle: 7 dice**

**Health Levels:** -0/-1x2/-2x2/-4/Icap.

Lockpicking/Pickpocketing: 7 dice; Senses: 6 dice;  
 Stealth: 9 dice; Social Influence: 7 dice  
 Appearance 3, Resolve 4, Guile 4

#### Combat

Attack (Knife): 9 dice (Damage 10)

Attack (Slashing sword): 7 dice (Damage 12)

Combat Movement: 6 dice

Evasion 4, Parry 4

Soak/Hardness: 6/0 (Breastplate)

#### Strange Folk and Monsters

##### SNAKEFOLK MERCHANT

Smoking Crescent comes from Calani, an ancient Ixcoatlí client state near the heart of the empire. Once a porter and caravan guard, she invested her pay in the caravan's operations until she had a large enough stake to enter the trade herself. Now she accompanies caravans as a merchant, carrying Ixcoatlí woodwork to Serpolet and bringing back copper, bronze, and salt.

When traveling beyond Ixcoatlí's sphere of influence into the near Threshold, Smoking Crescent goes veiled to conceal her brightly patterned scales and slitted green-gold eyes. She wears a buff jacket on the road and keeps a short sword at her side at all times, but relies on guards and diplomacy rather than personal combat acumen.

**Essence: 1; Willpower: 4; Join Battle: 4 dice**

**Health Levels:** -0/-1x2/-2x2/-4/Icap.

**Actions:** Assess Goods: 6 dice; Disguise: 5 dice; Read Motives: 6 dice; Social Influence: 7 dice; Senses: 4 dice  
 Appearance 2, Resolve 4, Guile 4

#### Combat

Attack (Short sword): 5 dice (Damage 10, minimum 2)

Attack (Bite): 6 dice (Damage 10 and poison

when **decisive**, damage 2*i*/round, duration 3 rounds, -3 penalty)

Combat Movement: 4 dice

Evasion 2, Parry 2

Soak/Hardness: 9/0 (Buff jacket over scales)



### **WALKING STATUE / JADE EFFIGY / MAN OF GOLD / AUTOMATON / GOLEM**

When a Wyld storm swept through the Eastern city of Arashon—built amid the ruins of the Shogunate city of that name—a bronze statue of the city's founder, the daimyo Tahaki Shant, came to life. When the statue entered the palace and evicted Arashon's prince from the throne, the people hailed it as Tahaki returned and worshipped it as a god.

More recently, a neighboring city hired the outcaste Dragon-Blooded general Saffron Ground to lead an army against Arashon. When she squared off against the statue, the air rang with the sound of their duel. Though powerful enough to give the experienced Exalt a ferocious fight, the statue found itself pressed back until, battered and beaten, it knelt before its conqueror. Saffron chose that moment to renounce her role as mercenary and claim Arashon for her own. Now the statue stands at her right hand as her most trusted advisor.

The statue of Tahaki Shant resembles an eight-foot-tall sculpture of an elaborately mustachioed man in Shogunate costume, all of bronze with a deep green patina. Paired bronze swords hang at its waist. Though it cannot speak, its deeply expressive features exhibit the intelligence—and the ferocity—that Arashon's people attribute to the original Tahaki.

**Essence:** 1; **Willpower:** 5; **Join Battle:** 8 dice

**Health Levels:** -0x4/-1x4/-2x2/-4x2/Icap.

### **WYLD BARBARIANS**

The fearsome folk who dwell at the verge of the Wyld can be easily modeled by taking the mortal templates in this chapter and adding supernatural Merits found on pages 165-167.

**Actions:** Appear Inanimate: 10 dice; Command: 6 dice; Feats of Strength: 12 dice (may attempt Strength 7 feats); Threaten: 7 dice  
Appearance 3, Resolve 5 (see Automaton), Guile 4

### **Combat**

Attack (Slashing sword): 8 dice (Damage 16, minimum 2)  
Attack (Unarmed): 10 dice (Damage 14)  
Attack (Grapple): 6 dice (10 dice to control)  
Combat Movement: 6 dice  
Evasion 1, Parry 4  
Soak/Hardness: 13/7

### *Special Attacks*

**Colossus Strike:** The automaton may make a powerful but slow-moving blow, devastating enemies but leaving itself vulnerable to attack. It may double 9s on a **decisive** attack, but takes a -2 penalty to Defense until its next turn.

## *Merits*

**Automaton:** Automatons are immune to poison and disease, and have no need to eat, drink, breathe, or sleep. As a general rule, they treat all social influence as unacceptable, unless following the orders of their master or faced with magic such as the Dawn Caste anima power. Automaton battle groups have perfect morale. Independent sapient automata, such as the statue of Tahaki Shant, are exceptions, but usually remain immune to fear.

## **FOGSHARK**

The fogshark prowls the chill shores of the White Sea. Whenever the mists rise, it ascends from the spume and spray of the surface waters to swim through the fog and feed on land-dwelling creatures. Its lean white body is almost invisible in the brume—at least until it’s stained red with blood. Only rarely are such creatures beached when a fog bank dissolves; their instincts lead them back to the water when the mists recede.

A related species, the rainshark, is rumored to dwell in the storm-swept jungles of the farthest Southwest, emerging from its aquatic feeding grounds to hunt through the monsoon rains.

**Essence:** 1; **Willpower:** 5; **Join Battle:** 6 dice

**Health Levels:** -0/-1x3/-2x3/-4/Icap.

**Actions:** Senses: 6 dice (see Blood Scent); Stealth: 8

dice; Tracking: 4 dice (see Blood Scent)

Appearance 4 (Hideous), Resolve 3, Guile 1

## **Combat**

Attack (Bite): 7 dice (Damage 16)

Combat Movement: 8 dice

Soak/Hardness: 9/0 (Shark skin)

Evasion 4, Parry 2

## *Special Attacks*

**Frenzied Bite:** The fogshark may pay a point of Willpower when it makes a **decisive** attack against a character with a wound penalty of -1 or higher to double 8s on the attack roll and add all extra successes to the raw damage of the attack.

## *Merits*

**Blood Scent:** Fogsharks adds three automatic successes on any Perception-based roll to scent blood, and can track it from miles away. If one is specifically attempting to track or detect a character who is bleeding, it adds an additional automatic success for each point of wound penalty that character is suffering.



**Fog Swimmer:** Fogsharks ignore any visual penalties or other environmental impediments from fighting in fog—usually a one-die penalty on any roll involving vision.

#### MIST, THE ETERNAL REVOLUTIONARY

Generations ago, the tyrant Storm Hawk seized power in the city of Kahla at the fringes of the world. Unable to oppose Storm Hawk's rule, the young farmer Mist sought power in the Wyld to set his people free. He returned a changed man, taller and handsomer, with a strange fire in his eyes. Like something out of a folktale, he raised an army of his downtrodden countrymen, stormed the palace, and slew Storm Hawk in single combat on the ramparts in full view of the people.

Though he could easily have claimed Kahla for himself, Mist moved on to other lands at the world's edge, overthrowing rulers wherever he went—whether cruel despots or benevolent elected officials. Fortune aligns to aid him in his quest, while unlikely events follow at his heels. Although sometimes defeated, he is never destroyed, escaping from every confinement and recovering from every injury.

Though decades have passed since he freed his homeland, Mist has not aged a day. Now, for the first time, he has ventured from the backwater borders of Creation into the Threshold proper, the sword Interregnum in his hand, to pursue his endless quest.

**Essence:** 2; **Willpower:** 7; **Join Battle:** 10 dice

**Personal Motes:** 20

**Health Levels:** -0x2/-1x4/-2x2/-4/Icap.

#### Sample Intimacies

- Defining Principle: “Overthrow all tyrants.”
- Major Principle: “My past all seems like a dream.”

**Actions:** Command: 8 dice; Feats of Strength: 6 dice (may attempt Strength 3 feats); Read Motives: 7 dice; Senses: 8 dice; Social Influence: 10 dice  
Appearance 5, Resolve 6, Guile 1

#### Combat

Attack (Interregnum sword): 11 dice (Damage 15, minimum 5)

Attack (Unarmed): 8 dice (Damage 10)

Combat Movement: 8 dice

Evasion 4, Parry 5 Soak/Hardness: 11/7  
(Lucky breastplate)

#### Merits

**Implacable Drive:** Mist's Defining Principle of "Overthrow all tyrants" cannot be changed or eliminated by non-magical means.

**Never Found the Body:** If Mist would die under circumstances where his death can't be verified—he falls off a cliff, is trapped in a burning building, or is impaled and left to bleed out—he survives through some inexplicable stroke of luck.

#### Offensive Charms

**Denounce the Tyrant** (10m, 1wp; Simple; Instant; Decisive-only): With a successful difficulty 4 gambit, Mist delivers a stinging slap to an authority figure's face, leaving a pale indelible mark. Thereafter, those who serve the target regard her as domineering and cruel, which is equivalent to a Minor Intimacy in strength. Any battle groups serving under that leader add +1 to the difficulty of rout and rally rolls while acting under his orders. The ruler may flee this curse through abdication, though the magic of spirits or sorcerers may also be able to lift it.

**Prince's Doom** (2m per die; Reflexive; Instant): When a ruler or the direct agent of a ruler makes a roll in Mist's presence, he may use this Charm to convert dice that came up successes to 1s at a cost of two motes per die, starting with the character's 10s and moving downwards. He cannot convert more dice than the original 1s on the roll. If a roll fails because of this interference, it is automatically considered a botch.

#### The Dead

##### ZOMBIE

Regard the zombie: its face crusted with clotted gore, scraps of others' flesh clinging beneath its fingernails. Though maggots cluster around its eye sockets and the left side of its face is torn away to expose ragged muscle and bone, it's recognizable as having once been human.

Driven by unnatural forces rather than muscle, zombies can absorb punishment that would incapacitate mortal warriors and retaliate with inhuman strength. Worse, their putrid flesh is riddled with disease. Their greatest weakness is mindlessness. Zombies can only obey the simplest commands, and they gnaw at slain foes despite their handlers' best efforts, as though living flesh and blood might somehow fill the emptiness within.

**Essence:** 1; **Willpower:** 1; **Join Battle:** 2 dice  
**Health Levels:** -0x2/-1x3/-2x3/-4/Icap.  
**Actions:** Senses: 4 dice; Threaten: 4 dice; Tracking: 4 dice  
Appearance 3 (Hideous), Resolve 1, Guile 1

### Combat

Attack (Bite): 5 dice (Damage 16)  
Attack (Grapple): 4 dice (8 dice to control)  
Combat Movement: 2 dice  
Evasion 2, Parry 0  
Soak/Hardness: 3/0

### Special Attacks

**Deathly Stench:** The first time a living character comes into close range of a zombie in a fight, he must roll (Stamina + Resistance) at difficulty 2. On a failed roll, he loses a point of Initiative and takes a -1 penalty on all rolls for the rest of the fight from nausea. Characters who have fought zombies more than once acclimate to their stink and become immune to this attack.

**Plaguebearer:** Infected wounds left by a zombie's bite have virulence 5 (p. 233).

### Merits

**Mindless:** Zombies treat all social influence as unacceptable. Zombie battle groups have perfect morale.

### HUNGRY GHOST

Kina of Swanmare served as a soldier for most of her adult life. Her superiors found her ideally suited to atrocious tasks, for while she lacked the desire to commit such acts—making her unlikely to develop a taste for them on her own time—she could be relied upon to do her duty. Now, with her sword set aside and her health broken by age and illness, Kina's flesh cannot keep a firm grip on a lower soul bloated from decades of death. It oozes from

### THE BENEFITS OF BEING DEAD

Undead creatures—ghosts, hungry ghosts, zombies, and the like—are immune to poison and disease, have no need to eat, drink, or sleep, and are otherwise immune to things that only affect living creatures. They are likewise unaffected by powers and techniques based around inflicting nerve strikes, damaging vital organs, or otherwise affecting things that spirits don't have and corpses no longer use.

her body in the night and creeps through the town, committing the killings that Kina herself no longer performs.

As with the more typical hungry ghosts that rise from improperly buried corpses—or from those ritually tortured to death by necromancers for this purpose—Kina's lower soul appears as a smoky, translucent image of herself as a young warrior. (This youthful manifestation is unrecognizable to her neighbors.) Its buff jacket and polearm are merely cosmetic. The trappings of armament and mortality fade when it attacks, revealing a leathery, vulpine body with enormous talons and slavering jaws.

The lower soul thirsts for living blood, fleeing only from overwhelming force and turning aside only from unbroken lines of salt or germinated grain, which it cannot cross. It dematerializes at sunrise to return to Kina's body, as other hungry ghosts would return to rest in their improperly-interred corpses, for the light of the sun would blast it to ash. If it drinks mortal blood, Kina awakens refreshed and in rare good health. But wounds delivered to the thing are reflected on her body, and she dies if it's destroyed.

**Essence:** 1; **Willpower:** 3; **Join Battle:** 4 dice

**Health Levels:** -0/-1x2/-2x2/-4/Icap.

**Actions:** Disguise: 4 dice; Feats of Strength: 9 dice (may attempt Strength 5 feats); Senses: 5 dice (see Blood Scent); Tracking: 6 dice (see Blood Scent)  
Appearance 3 (Hideous), Resolve 2, Guile 1

### Combat

Attack (Bite): 6 dice (Damage 17)  
Attack (Claw): 10 dice (Damage 13)  
Combat Movement: 5 dice  
Evasion 4, Parry 3  
Soak/Hardness: 3/0

### Merits

**Blood Scent:** Hungry ghosts adds three successes on any Perception-based roll to sense the presence of spilt blood, and can smell battles or massacres from five miles away. If it is specifically attempting to track or detect a character who is bleeding, it adds an additional success for each point of wound penalty that character is suffering.

**Earthbound:** At night, hungry ghosts will naturally materialize upon sensing potential prey (see Blood Scent, above). They become immaterial when no prey is present, and may pass through solid obstacles in order to flee back to their corpse once the light of dawn begins to brighten

the horizon, even while materialized. The touch of sunlight inflicts 3 automatic levels of lethal damage to a hungry ghost per round, unless the hungry ghost is resting in its corpse or vessel.

#### HONORED ANCESTOR

In life, Zoria served as a priest of Agate Plover, one of the nine hot spring gods of Luster. She has used the town's new shadowland to return home and bless her descendants with fertility, healing and prophecy, both from compassion and to feed on the delicious warmth of their prayer. In doing so, she puts herself at odds with the priestly order to which she once belonged and the gods whom she once served.

Though she appears translucent during the day, at night one could easily mistake Zoria for a living woman, albeit one of unusual pallor. She wears no armor, and the knife at her hip is more for leechcraft than combat. Luster is a peaceful place; she fears no violence while surrounded by her people, especially when her grasp of ghostly magic is well known.

**Essence:** 2; **Willpower:** 6; **Join Battle:** 3 dice

**Personal Motes:** 70

**Health Levels:** -0/-1x2/-2x2/-4/Icap.

**Actions:** Medicinal Treatment: 8 dice;

Read Intentions: 5 dice; Senses: 7 dice;

Social Influence: 6 dice

Appearance 2, Resolve 4, Guile 3

#### Combat

Attack (Knife): 7 dice (Damage 9)

Combat Movement: 4 dice

Evasion 3, Parry 2

Soak/Hardness: 3/0

#### Merits

**Cult 1-2:** Ancestor ghosts generally have small cults made up of their families, although ancient ghosts whose descendants are dedicated in their worship may have Cult 2.

**Voice of the Oracle:** At times, an ancestor ghost may utter a dire prophecy concerning a person, place, or group she sees, the words spilling unbidden from her mouth and heard by all, even if she is not materialized. If a character takes steps to prevent the foretold doom by making preparations that take the ghost's prophecy into account, he may add a bonus die on relevant rolls to resist or oppose the threat (or to bring it about, if that is his wish).

#### Offensive Charms

**Chilling Touch** (7m; Supplemental; Instant; Withering-only; Essence 1): The ghost's strikes pass through metal,

leather, and flesh to freeze blood and soul, allowing her **withering** attacks to ignore up to four points of natural or armored soak.

**Curse of the Dead** (5m, 1wp; Simple; Indefinite; Eclipse, Psyche; Essence 2): Uttering a dreadful imprecation, the ghost curses her victim to dream of the direst horrors of the Labyrinth, making a threaten roll against the Resolve of a victim within medium range. A cursed character cannot regain Willpower from his nightmare-haunted sleep, and gains Paranoia as a Minor Derangement after (Integrity) days of this restless sleep (p. 169). An occultist may break this curse by succeeding on a difficulty 3 (Intelligence + Occult) roll to conduct an abjuring ritual by the light of dawn.

#### Miscellaneous Charms

**Apparition** (1m; Simple; One scene; Essence 1): Few ancestor ghosts are capable of materialization. Instead they may use this Charm to become visible, but not corporeal, for one scene.

**Honorable Descendant Blessing** (1m, 1wp; Simple; Instant; Essence 1): An ancestor ghost may bless one of her living descendants with this Charm, granting him a pool of three bonus dice that he may spend on a single dice roll within the next day. She may invoke this to benefit any descendant she perceives, or who makes a successful prayer roll to her.

#### WAR GHOST

A peasant footsoldier in the last days of the Shogunate, Sard died of the Great Contagion. Those few of his kin that survived the plague perished in the ensuing collapse of civilization and passed into Lethe. He has since served in the armies of one ghostly warlord after another, as if he might expiate through battle his long-ago inability to protect his family.

Sard appears as a short, firmly built man of indeterminate age. His skin bears the greenish tint of the Contagion dead; his eyes are hard and cold. In the Underworld, he wears grotesquely adorned armor of black iron. When in the living world, he animates a suit of mundane armor, so that it moves eerily without a body visible within.

**Essence:** 1; **Willpower:** 5; **Join Battle:** 5 dice

**Personal Motes:** 60

**Health Levels:** -0x2/-1x3/-2x3/-4x2/Icap.

**Actions:** Feats of Strength: 5 dice (may attempt Strength 3 feats); Senses: 5 dice; Stealth: 4 dice; Threaten: 5 dice

#### Combat

Attack (Sword): 7 dice (Damage 12, minimum 2)

Attack (Grapple): 4 dice (5 dice to control)

Combat Movement: 5 dice



Evasion 2, Parry 4

Soak/Hardness: Special (see Forge-Born Form)

#### *Offensive Charms*

**Chilling Touch** (7m; Supplemental; Instant; Withering-only; Essence 1): The war-ghost's blade flickers ethereal for a moment, ignoring up to four points of natural or armored soak.

#### *Miscellaneous Charms*

**Forge-Born Form** (20m 1wp; Simple; Indefinite; Essence 1): Most war-ghosts cannot materialize, but interact with the living world by animating a suit of armor. In this form, it cannot speak, forcing it to rely on body language if it wishes to communicate (p. 221), but may otherwise act as though it were materialized. Its soak and hardness become equal to those of the armor. Taking more than four levels of damage while using this Charm ends its duration, as the armor clatters to the ground and leaves the ghost bodiless.

#### **MORTWIGHT**

Those whose hearts are consumed in life by hatred, fear, or despair are touched in death by oblivion. Those who succumb to its call are twisted into mortwights. These specters haunt the Labyrinth, traveling alone or in short-lived packs, howling as they hunt down stray ghosts, weird Underworld beasts, and one another. Some come to serve the dark powers of the Underworld—the Deathlords, the nephwrack priest-kings, or any of a thousand other hellish entities. Others serve only the whispers in their own skulls.

Whatever their masters, mortwights are often sent to the Underworld, the shadowlands, or Creation proper on missions of kidnapping, defilement, or murder.

A mortwright soon abandons all resemblance to its living shape, becoming an avatar of the hateful hungers of the void. These fiercely clawed and barbed creatures are long-limbed and skeletal, their bodies gleaming as palely or as darkly as jade. Maddened by hatred and the black fires of oblivion, they have little sense of self-preservation, and may fight to obliviation unless their survival will serve some greater purpose.

**Essence:** 2; **Willpower:** 5; **Join Battle:** 5 dice

**Personal Motes:** 70

**Health Levels:** -0/-1x2/-2x2/-4/Incap.

**Actions:** Feats of Strength: 6 dice (may attempt Strength 3 feats); Senses: 5 dice; Threaten: 6 dice; Tracking: 5 dice

Appearance 4 (Hideous), Resolve 3, Guile 2

#### **Combat**

Attack (Claw): 11 dice (Damage 10)

Combat Movement: 5 dice

Evasion 4, Parry 5

Soak/Hardness: 8/0

#### *Offensive Charms*

**Black Breath of the Abyss** (8m; Simple; One scene; Eclipse; Essence 2): A cloud of unnatural darkness forms around the mortwright out to medium range. While the

### GHOSTLY EXISTENCE

The dead rarely change much from their living days. Storytellers can represent many ghosts with an appropriate mortal Quick Character template, adding only an Essence pool of (50 + [Essence x 10]) motes and a few ghostly Charms. A typical ghost cannot cross a line of salt or germinated grain. An especially powerful ghost may cross such a line by spending one Willpower.

Ghosts are naturally immaterial, and use the same rules for materializing as other spirits (p. 510), but few ghosts are capable of doing so. Most either use the Apparition Charm, or else possess corpses, objects, or the living when they wish to interact with the material world.

dead may see through it, the living suffer the penalties of blindness unless Awareness-enhancing Charms augment their sight. A Solar anima banner at the bonfire level instantly disperses the cloud.

**Flying Time Technique** (15m, 1wp; Reflexive; One scene; Perilous; Essence 2): Like something out of a nightmare, the mortwright moves with impossible speed as everything around it seems to slow to a crawl. Treat its Initiative as three points higher than it actually is when determining turn order each round. It adds two automatic successes on any attack roll against a character that has not acted yet during this round, and adds +2 Defense against attacks made by characters that act after it in turn order.

**Thrashing Ghost Tantrum** (8m, 4i, 1wp; Simple, One round; Perilous; Essence 2): Small objects—clods of earth, firewood, cobblestones, swords—rise and whirl through the air in a violent storm, creating an environmental hazard that applies against all material creatures within medium range. This hazard has a default difficulty of 3 and damage 4B, but the Storyteller may adjust this based on the scenery.

### Miscellaneous Charms

**Apparition** (1m; Simple; One scene; Essence 1): While some mortwrights are capable of materialization, they may also use this Charm to become visible, but not corporeal, for one scene.

**Materialize** (35m, 1wp; Simple; Instant; Essence 2): Only particularly old and powerful mortwrights are capable of materializing. Many lack this Charm.

### BONESIDER

Mortals eschew the meat of animals that have feasted on human flesh, for tainted animals may carry the puppe-

teer's plague (p. 235). The disease and the creatures it creates have been used as terror weapons throughout this fallen age. In the modern day, warlords from the Bull of the North to the Mask of Winters have driven infected cattle to the gates of besieged cities, using starving citizens' hunger to bring about their doom.

The bones of an infected victim die, taking on an evil existence of their own as a skeletal creature still clothed in their host's living flesh. Soon the skeleton begins to move, dragging the body along with it to commit mayhem—a struggle the host inevitably loses, as muscles tire but the bones do not. Insanity born from atrocity and the endless maddening itch of unliving bones is a blessing; it spares the victim from full awareness of the disease's final stage, when the skeleton tears free from its husk of meat to continue its wicked work.

Fleshless, these coal-black skeletons creep through thinly populated regions in the North and East, haunting small villages and isolated farmsteads. They feed on fear and pain, horror and madness—cravings they satiate by stalking, torturing and slowly slaying helpless mortals.

**Essence:** 1; **Willpower:** 5; **Join Battle:** 6 dice

**Health Levels:** -0/-1x2/-2x2/-4/Icap.

**Actions:** Stealth: 7 dice; Tracking: 5 dice; Threaten: 6 dice Appearance 3 (Hideous), Resolve 2, Guile 1

### Combat

Attack (Claw): 6 dice (Damage 11, see Osseous Contagion)

Combat Movement: 6 dice

Evasion 4, Parry 1

Soak/Hardness: 4/0

### Special Attacks

**Osseous Contagion:** Living characters that take damage from a **decisive** claw attack are exposed to the puppeteer's plague (p. 235).

### NEPHWRACK

The enemies of the gods lie forever dying in the Underworld, and the nephwracks are their prophets. Ancient, powerful ghosts who have delved deeper than any being ever should into the world—carcasses of the slain ancients, the nephwracks have been broken by the revelations found within. What emerges from the cracks of the Underworld's depth are the priest-kings of oblivion, deranged but coldly intelligent, wielding power beyond any ghost save the Deathlords.

The Prince of the Red Chamber holds court in a shadowland cavern-palace beneath a mortal city, attended by the rotting

corpses and hungry ghosts of those mortals whom its minions have kidnapped over the years and brought down into the dark. It is a mighty necromancer, and its servants labor tirelessly to aid it in its great work. They capture savants from whose minds and souls it wrings every scrap of sorcerous lore; merchants and thieves who might reveal the locations of precious books and relics; or youths ripe with fresh young blood and an untempered potential to know terror.

Though it hates the sensations of the living world and is in any case immersed in its great necromantic working, on occasion the Prince's craving for cruelty drives it forth to act without intermediaries. Its preferred mode is to confront its victim while wearing the body of one of her loved ones, whose soul it has already devoured. When its business is done, it sheds the stolen flesh to appear in its own form—tall, bone-pale, skeletally thin, imperially robed and masked in scarlet and black. Its shattered right foot drips a yellow ichor; it leans on a red jade daiklave shot through with black, spidery veins.

At the center of its palace stands the pool of blood that is the heart of its magic, to whose surface it brings forth the faces of those whose lives were bled into it and whose souls drown endlessly in its red depths. When the pool holds enough deathly Essence, the Prince will perform its dark rite. And it has learned so many rites from its tutelage on the edge of the abyss—Heart-Binding Miasma, Ten Thousand Wingéd Serpents, The Beast That Was a City, The Kinslayer Plague. Ancient and steeped in the perilous cruelties of the cities of the Labyrinth, it has many plans for many contingencies, each more dire than the last.

**Essence:** 5; **Willpower:** 9; **Join Battle:** 11 dice

**Personal Motes:** 100

**Health Levels:** -0x3/-1x3/-2x6/-4x6/Incap.

**Actions:** Command: 5 dice; Feats of Strength: 9 dice (may attempt Strength 5 feats); Read Motives: 8 dice; Prayer: 11 dice; Senses: 8 dice; Shape Sorcery: 13 dice; Social Influence: 9 dice; Stealth: 7 dice; Strategy: 8 dice; Underworld Lore: 10 dice

Appearance 5 (Hideous), Resolve 4, Guile 5

### Combat

Attack (Soulsteel daiklave): 13 dice (Damage 17, minimum 5)

Combat Movement: 9 dice

Evasion 4, Parry 6

Soak/Hardness: 17/10 (Soulsteel articulated plate)

### Merits

**Cult 1-2:** Most nephwracks are attended by sizable cults.

**Void-Eaten Soul:** The nephwracks have seen the void at the end of all things and dreamt the dreams of dead gods. They are insane, almost always having one or more Derangements (p. 165), but their madness only makes them more dangerous. Any social influence opposed by a Derangement or the nephwrack's absolute enmity to life is unacceptable, as is any Psyche effect, sorcerous control, or healing magic that would undo their madness.

### Sorcery

Nephwracks are almost all initiates of the Terrestrial Circle of sorcery, their tattered minds realizing the dark truths that underly the cosmos. Most know at least a few spells, while some will know all listed in this book and potentially more (though as spirits, they cannot learn Demon of the First Circle or Summon Elemental). Common control spells include Death of Obsidian Butterflies, Corrupted Words, and Mists of Eventide (pp. 472-474).

A nephwrack may draw power from its madness once per scene, reflexively rolling its current Willpower and losing a point for each die that does not come up a success to gain  $(10 + [\text{Willpower lost} \times 2])$  sorcerous motes that last for the duration of the scene or until spent, whichever comes first. Whenever they kill a living creature, they gain sorcerous motes equal to (its Essence).

### Offensive Charms

**Accursed Wraith Body** (2i; Reflexive; Instant; Perilous; Essence 4): The nephwrack may double 9s on any dice roll it makes while in combat, or add +1 to either of its Defenses.

**Clinging Shadow Miasma** (5m, 4i, 1wp; Reflexive; One scene; Perilous; Essence 4): An unnatural darkness radiates from the nephwrack out to medium range. While the dead can see through this, the living are treated as blind—and worse, shadowy hands rise up from the ground to cling at them. The nephwrack's shadowy aura is treated as difficult terrain, and any character who fails a movement action through it is dragged prone by the hands, with difficulty 4 to rise. This ends if the nephwrack is crashed and cannot be reused in the same scene.

**Dawn of Dead Stars** (10m, 1wp; Simple; One scene; Psyche; Essence 5): The nephwrack unleashes its madness into the world, filling the mind of everything living or dead with the dark dreams of the Neverborn. Undead battle groups under its command gain +1 Might, and it doubles 9s on all command rolls to issue orders to these. Enemies, on the other hand, must contend with terrifying hallucinations and dark urges, rolling (Wits + Integrity) against difficul-

ty 4 at the beginning of each turn. On a failed roll, they lose two points of Initiative, which the nephwrack gains, and take a -3 penalty on all actions that turn. Enemies crashed by this lose a point of Willpower—or gain a Derangement at Minor intensity, if they have none to lose.

**Soul Destruction** (5m, 1wp; Supplemental; Instant; Aggravated, Decisive-only; Essence 5): The nephwrack annihilates the souls of the living it slays. Soul Destruction doubles 9s on a **decisive** damage roll. Double 8s if the victim is crashed or out of Willpower; double 7s if both are true. If this incapacitates the enemy, his soul is utterly destroyed, leaving his body nothing more than a comatose husk and restoring two points of Willpower to the nephwrack.

**Thousand Deaths Curse** (8m, 1wp; Simple; Instant; Psyche; Essence 4): To glance into the eyes of a nephwrack is to see one's death a thousand times. At Initiative 20+, the nephwrack may roll nine dice against the Resolve of an enemy within medium range. Success forces that character to live out his death in waking nightmares, rendering him unable to take any actions other than flailing around and seeking cover from imaginary threats for the rest of the scene. The cursed character automatically fails rolls against Dawn of Dead Stars. Allies can break this illusion with 10+ successes on an instill action. Thousand Deaths Curse also ends if the victim takes damage. It resets the nephwrack to base Initiative if successful.

#### Defensive Charms

**Broken Mirror Tragedy** (7m, 4i; Reflexive; Instant; Psyche; Essence 4): The nephwrack clouds the mind of an attacker with shadows and paranoid impulses, rolling nine dice against his Resolve. If it succeeds, it may redirect the attack to any other character within range. Eye of the Unconquered Sun or comparable effects render characters immune to this illusion. Waive the Initiative cost of this Charm if Dawn of Dead Stars is active.

#### Social Charms

**Black Heart's Call** (—; Permanent; Essence 3): Nephwracks are so deeply in tune with their own dark urges that they can perceive that same darkness in others. When the nephwrack interacts with a character who shares with it a Major or Defining Intimacy that is a negative Tie or a malicious or nihilistic Principle, it adds three bonus successes on rolls to discern such Intimacies.

#### Miscellaneous Charms

**Hurry Home** (10m, 1wp; Simple; Instant; Essence 5): The Nephwrack fades away and vanishes on its next turn,

drawn instantly back to its master's lair at the heart of the Labyrinth.

**Materialize** (50m, 1wp; Simple; Instant; Essence 4): The Nephwrack can manifest itself in the living world in a chilling, liquid surge of anti-light.

**Nemissary's Ride** (20m, 1wp; Simple; Indefinite; Essence 1): While nephwracks can materialize, they may also possess human corpses. They use the physical Attributes, soak, and health track of the corpse's former life in place of his own, but otherwise retain their traits. Freshly dead or well-embalmed bodies suffer a -1 penalty on rolls to disguise their dead nature; this penalty rises with advancing decay until disguise becomes impossible. The possessor is ejected if the animated corpse runs out of health levels. Attacks capable of striking the immaterial damage both the corpse's health track and the nephwrack's.

### Spirits

A supplicant approaches a malachite altar in one of the pagoda-shrines of Great Forks, startling back and dropping his offering as a woman with eyes of blue flame appears out of the air to greet him. An infernal cult spills the blood of two unblemished twins onto a mandala of sand, opening one of the cracks in the world through which an unbound, hungry denizen of Hell may enter. A petty thug succumbs to panic as he sees his victim's ethereal face reflected in the mirror, slowly descending into madness as his vengeful victim haunts him. All of these are spirits—the mystical, powerful forces that move above and below the world of humanity. Savants divide the spirits into four main categories (though unclassifiables abound): gods, elementals, demons, and ghosts. Most spirits are immaterial by nature, invisible and intangible to the mortal denizens of Creation. Most are capable of assuming material forms when they have need, though ghosts and lesser spirits may sometimes need to possess the corporeal form of a person or object to interact with the world. The elementals, born from the physical substance of Creation, are an exception, existing in a material form just like any human or beast. They cannot usually dematerialize, though they may enter places such as spirit sanctums that are normally barred to material beings.

A slain spirit is often not dead forever—instead, his Essence will slowly gather and re-form over the course of weeks, months, or even years, weakened but not gone. Gods who tend to domains in Creation and keep sanctums there reform within those sanctums, while the celestial deities that govern their domains from Yu-Shan reappear within the celestial city. A god's immortality may be threatened



if its domain is destroyed or stripped from it, in which case it must rely on the worship of its cult to sustain it beyond death. A slain elemental disperses into the natural Essence flows of the world, and cannot reform unless it has the worship of a cult to sustain it, or a powerful patron willing to sacrifice part of their Essence to restore it. Demons of the Second and Third Circles, the most powerful, reform in Hell if slain, while a demon of the First Circle perishes forever unless sustained by a cult or mighty patron, as with an elemental. Ghosts can sometimes survive destruction, reforming at the site of their first death or some other meaningful location such as their grave, but just as often are unable to maintain the stubborn will that sustains their unlife, and pass into the cycle of reincarnation.

The details of spirit reformation are largely left to the Storyteller's dramatic choices—if he wishes, he might have the slain spirit roll Willpower or (Willpower + Cult) to determine if it reforms, how long it takes, and how much it is weakened by its destruction.

Gods possess  $50 + (\text{Essence} \times 10)$  motes. Finally, most gods, as well as certain other spirits, have access to three common Charms:

**Hurry Home** instantly carries the spirit back to its sanctum—a tiny otherworldly realm with a fixed entrance somewhere in the world, which is only visible and accessible to other spirits (and occasionally to Exalts with appropriate magic).

**Materialize** allows the spirit to take on flesh, and is explained in detail in the Materialization sidebar.

**Measure the Wind** enables a spirit to measure someone's "nature." This reveals, broadly, *what* the individual is—a mortal, a demon, another god, a denizen of the Wyld, and so forth. If an Exalt is scrutinized, Measure the Wind provides a strong "feeling" of their patron, allowing the Charm to tell a Solar from a Dragon-Blooded (and, incidentally, to tell what Elemental Dragon or Maiden a Terrestrial or Sidereal derives from, although the Castes and Aspects of other Exalts remain indistinguishable to the Charm). Measure the Wind can pierce mundane disguises, but not any deception created or reinforced by Essence, such as Solar Larceny Charms or Lunar shapeshifting.

## GODS

### DISEASE SPIRIT

The gods of disease are tasked by Heaven to oversee the progress of diseases, so that neither too many nor too few become sick, or in special cases to ensure certain destined persons remain healthy or fall ill. But few remain in contact with their celestial superiors, let alone feel inclined to obey. Many arrange protection rackets, disseminating their diseases so mortals pray for their families to be left untouched or obtain a cure. Their priests typically propitiate them to remain at a safe remove, though a few deranged or heartless cultists collaborate with their patrons to propagate their illnesses.

These gods appear as men or women afflicted by the worst strains of their diseases. Smallpox and leprosy spirits look ghastly and horrific, while spirits of lesser ailments such as anemia or the common cold merely seem pathetic. Disease spirits' size and power vary with virulence and lethality. Spirits of minor sicknesses look dwarfish and withered, while plague spirits are as massive and mighty as elephants.

**Essence:** 2; **Willpower:** 5; **Join Battle:** 4 dice

**Personal Motes:** 70

**Health Levels:** -0/-1x2/-2x2/-4/Icap.

**Actions:** Knowledge of Diseases: 8 dice; Read Intentions: 6 dice; Senses: 7 dice; Social Influence: 6 dice Appearance 4 (Hideous), Resolve 4, Guile 3

### Combat

Attack (Claw): 12 dice (Damage 8)

Combat Movement: 7 dice

Evasion 5, Parry 4

Soak/Hardness: 5/0

### Merits

**Cult 1-3:** The potential cult of a disease spirit can vary widely based on the disease it oversees, the size of nearby human populations, and its level of proactiveness in seeking out prayer. A syphilis god trading protection for prayer in a back-alley Nexus brothel might only have Cult 1, while a plague god who actively extorts worship from multiple large cities in the Scavenger Lands in exchange for leaving them alone might have Cult 3.

**Walking Vector:** Disease spirits of illnesses that can be spread through personal contact or proximity—*influenza*, *consumption*, *venereal disease*, and many others—are always considered carriers of that disease, though they suffer no ill effects from it.

### MATERIALIZATION

Many incorporeal spirits such as gods, demons, and ghosts are capable of assuming a material form, allowing them to interact with the mortal world. Doing so is equivalent to a Simple Charm activation and costs half their total mote pool and one point of Willpower, but this cost is not committed. Reverting back costs half as many motes as materializing, requires another Simple activation, and causes the spirit to fade back to its natural state over the course of a round, becoming fully immaterial on its next turn. Solars may learn Charms such as Spirit-Manifesting Word (see p. 355) to let allied spirits materialize without having to pay this steep cost.

### Offensive Charms

**Fester Revelations** (5m; Simple; Instant; Uniform; Essence 2): The claw of the disease spirit awakens dormant sickness. With a touch (which may require an attack roll), disease spirits may use this Charm on any character who was exposed to a vector of their disease but succeeded on the roll to resist it. That character must then make a second roll against the disease's virulence (p. 233). Failure reveals that he was infected all along, and the disease was simply in incubation. Success renders him immune to further use of the Charm.

### Social Charms

**Blight Decree** (10m; Simple; Instant; Essence 2): The disease spirit conveys a malign influence, making an inspire roll and adding three automatic successes. It does not have to speak, and may even use this Charm while dematerialized. This influence does not inflame passions, but instead causes those affected to act in ways that will create vectors for the spirit's disease, such as fouling a river to spread cholera, killing cats to hasten the spread of a rat-borne plague, or simply being seized with the urge to spend all day in a café while infected with early-stage smallpox.

### Miscellaneous Charms

**Contagion-Honing Methodology** (15m, 1wp; Simple; Indefinite; Stackable; Essence 2): Disease spirits may hasten the spread and progression of their disease within an area about the size of a village or a neighborhood of a larger city. Contagion-Honing Methodology can be used either to make vectors of the disease more potent, adding +1 virulence, or to quicken the decline of infected victims, halving the disease's interval. The spirit may commit Essence separately to two activations of this Charm to stack both benefits. A disease spirit could also use this Charm to weaken their disease, doubling the interval and lowering morbidity by one for infected patients, though most are loath to do so, considering it a dereliction of duty—this is a serious task for purposes of social influence (p. 216).

**Hurry Home** (10m, 1wp; Simple; Instant; Essence 1): The spirit fades away and vanishes on its next turn, drawn instantly back to its sanctum.

**Materialize** (35m, 1wp; Simple; Instant; Essence 1): The disease spirit may take on flesh, solidifying out of swirling darkness.

**Measure the Wind** (5m; Simple; Instant; Essence 1): The disease spirit can discern the nature of someone infected by its disease.

**Scent of Plague** (1m; Reflexive; Instant; Essence 1): Disease spirits can tell with a whiff if someone is infected with or incubating their disease, or discern the last time a healthy individual came into contact with a vector for their disease.

#### DOG OF THE UNBROKEN EARTH

These night-black deities stand as large as tigers, with feral eyes blazing like emeralds or rubies. They are small gods of the wilderness; only those places uninhabited by mortals for a century or more lie within their purview, and they guard their territory jealously. Even their sanctums resemble wild places—caves or thickets adorned with trophies of their prey. Those who would carve away the wilds to build homes, farms, or roads may seek to propitiate the dogs with regular sacrifices of meat, alcohol, and grain. But if the offerings are insufficient or the intrusion too great, one had best curry favor from the gods of civilization—spirits of city and hearth, field and road, bridge and canal, all eager to extend their influence—as protection from the dog-gods' fangs.

Travelers, too, must fear the dogs of the unbroken earth. They particularly despise roads, and all who travel man-made routes had best obtain the protection of a road or caravan god. Still, the dogs are not fundamentally antagonistic to mortals. Folk that do not raise structures in the wild—such as hunter-gatherer tribes and hermits—are safe from their wrath, and may even forge alliances with them.

**Essence:** 2; **Willpower:** 6; **Join Battle:** 7 dice

**Personal Notes:** 70

**Health Levels:** -0/-1x6/-2x6/-4/Icap.

**Speed Bonus:** +2. Dogs of the unbroken earth cannot be tamed, but might consent to carry riders to battle if the need is great enough.

**Actions:** Feats of Strength: 10 dice (may attempt Strength 7 feats); Resist Poison/Illness: 9 dice; Senses: 8 dice; Stealth: 10 dice; Threaten: 6 dice; Tracking: 10 dice Appearance 4 (Hideous), Resolve 4, Guile 1

#### Combat

Attack (Bite): 10 dice (Damage 17)

Attack (Grapple): 10 dice (12 dice to control)

Combat Movement: 5 dice

Evasion 3, Parry 4

Soak/Hardness: 10/2

#### Merits

**Cult 1:** Most dogs of the unbroken earth receive a trickle of propitiatory prayers from humans who build on their

territory, and the hermits or tribesfolk that live in the wilderness often worship them.

#### Offensive Charms

**Fangs of the Hunt** (6m, 1wp; Simple; Instant; Decisive-only; Essence 1): This Charm doubles 10s on a **decisive** damage roll, and inflicts a crippling penalty on all movement actions the victim takes equal to the levels of damage dealt. If the penalty exceeds a character's Dexterity, he can no longer move reflexively, and must take a miscellaneous action even to take his normal movement each round. The penalty lasts until the wounds are healed or the character receives adequate medical treatment.

#### Mobility Charms

**Swift Hunting Stalker** (10m, 1wp; Simple; Indefinite; Essence 2): The dog may roam the wilderness unhindered, walking secret ways of the earth and speeding over the wild soil. It may travel overland through wilderness at a speed of sixty miles an hour, and ignores hindering terrain. It may run over quicksand, brambles, and even the surfaces of lakes unimpeded. In combat or a test of speed, it adds two successes on all movement rolls, in addition to ignoring hindering terrain.

#### Miscellaneous Charms

**Broken Earth's Anguish** (8m, 1wp; Reflexive; Indefinite; Eclipse; Essence 2): The dog may sense when trespassers intrude upon its domain, including traveling roads that run along its borders. It makes a (Perception + Awareness) roll with its senses dice pool at difficulty 3 to notice the intruder as a dark intimation at the edges of its mind. Trespassers who enter under stealth add their successes on the (Dexterity + Stealth) roll to the difficulty the dog must overcome. If any hermits or barbarians who have made allegiances with the dog of the unbroken earth come under attack within its domain, it may also sense this. Eclipses who use this Charm may use it while in any area that falls under the domain of the dogs of the unbroken earth, not just that of the dog who taught it to him.

**Five Winds Scent** (4m, 1wp; Supplemental; Instant; Essence 2): The dog of the unbroken earth may double 7s on any Perception-based roll using scent. In addition, simply by breathing in a character's scent, the dog gains a general measure of their magical puissance—it can tell a Solar Exalt is far more powerful than an ordinary human, or distinguish a Third Circle demon from one of the First Circle. It must overcome any stealth or disguise being employed to gain this benefit. Using this Charm to track a trespasser detected with Broken Earth's Anguish is free.



**Hurry Home** (10m, 1wp; Simple; Instant; Essence 1): The dog fades away and vanishes on its next turn, drawn instantly back to its sanctum.

**Materialize** (35m, 1wp; Simple; Instant; Essence 1): Natural detritus (leaves, soil) swirls together and becomes the living form of a god.

**Measure the Wind** (5m; Simple; Instant; Essence 1): The god can take the measure of anyone intruding upon its domain.

**Steel-Shattering Fangs** (3m, 1wp; Supplemental; Instant; Essence 2): The dog of the unbroken earth may double 7's on a feat of strength to destroy a man-made construction.

#### FIELD GUARDIAN

Arising in patches of cultivated land, field guardians devote themselves to that land's care. They send dreams to farmers instructing them in how best to improve crop yields, and to ward off pests and blight. In exchange, they ask that a small part of the field—which serves as a sanctum—remain unharvested, and that no structures be raised in the field without a suitable offering of animal blood and strong drink. To violate these simple rules is to risk death, for these spirits can slay mortals as easily as a farmer reaps grain.

Field guardians appear as hale and strong mortals, though touched by the nature of the fields they guard. They may have hair of leaf green or wheaten gold, and skin peach-pink or eggplant-dark. Some are beanpole-thin, others

round as cabbages or sturdy as apple trees. Spirits of grain fields may be skittish, orchard spirits merry, or vegetable-patch spirits phlegmatic. All wear farmer's garb and bear accouterments to match—a rake, spade, wood-axe, or scythe.

**Essence:** 1; **Willpower:** 6; **Join Battle:** 5 dice

**Personal Motes:** 60

**Health Levels:** -0/-1x2/-2x4/-4/Icap.

**Actions:** Agricultural Knowledge: 9 dice; Feats of Strength: 10 dice (may attempt Strength 5 feats); Read Intentions: 6 dice; Senses: 6 dice; Social Influence: 5 dice; Tracking: 8 dice

Appearance 2, Resolve 3, Guile 3

#### Combat

Attack (Scythe): 10 dice (Damage 20)

Combat Movement: 7 dice

Evasion 4, Parry 3

Soak/Hardness: 6/0

#### Merits

**Cult 1-2:** Field guardians typically have only the least of cults, although those whose fields provide for entire villages might have Cult 2.

#### Offensive Charms

**Good Earth Resilience** (10m; Simple; One scene; Essence 1): While standing on the earth of its field, the spirit gains the resilience of the land itself, adding 10 to its soak value.

**Harvest Moon Sickle** (8m; Supplemental; Decisive-only; Instant; Essence 1): The field guardian may add a success to a **decisive** damage roll made with its scythe. If its enemy is bleeding on the field it guards, it also adds their wound penalty to the damage roll. Enemies slain by this Charm dissolve into the soil, leaving that patch of earth particularly fertile for years to come.

**Towering Wheat Blessing** (10m, 1wp; Simple; Instant; Eclipse; Essence 1): A field guardian may bid plants to grow far beyond their usual size in an instant. Some use this blessing to provide food for their worshippers in times of famine, creating a bounty that can sustain a dozen people or so for a day if properly prepared. At other times, they use it to snare enemies in patches of elephantine wheat stalks or overgrown tree-roots. The spirit chooses a point within long range, and creates a patch of overgrowth from existing plant life that spreads out to medium range from that point. The ground counts as difficult terrain for enemies, but the plants part and make way for the god's allies. This Charm can be used once per scene.

#### Miscellaneous Charms

**Dream-Sown Wisdom** (5m; Simple; One growing season; Essence 1): Field guardians may bless farmers with dreams that reveal how best to tend to their fields. Certain words whispered to seeds might encourage them to grow, while raiton-bones strung up in a certain design might repel blights. To the extent that any rolls are made for agriculture, this blessing adds one success for any farmer who heeds the god's advice, but for the most part, it simply improves the harvest. In a good season, a farmer might harvest twice as much as usual under this blessing, and their crop is slightly more resistant to poor weather, vermin, or disease. Field guardians can also use this Charm to send dreams that reveal secrets hidden in their domain, like treasure buried in a field, at Instant duration.

**Hurry Home** (10m, 1wp; Simple; Instant; Essence 1): The spirit fades away and vanishes on its next turn, drawn instantly back to its sanctum.

**Materialize** (30m, 1wp; Simple; Instant; Essence 1): The field guardian grows up from the earth in a matter of moments.

**Measure the Wind** (5m; Simple; Instant; Essence 1): The field guardian can take the measure of anyone who sets foot in its field.

**Legendary Reaper** (30m, 1wp; Simple; One day; Eclipse; Essence 1): While they are loathe to do so, a field guardian may use this Charm to harvest an entire field with a single day's work. The Storyteller determines exactly

how many people this can feed based on the size of the field and quality of the harvest, and crops like wheat must still be baked into bread or other commodities before they can be eaten. Most field guardians consider this exertion a serious task (p. 216) for purposes of social influence—in their eyes, the harvest is the farmers' work, not theirs.

#### STORM MOTHER

Storm mothers are unlovely creatures, with their scaly greenish skin, balding pates, and eyes like a storm-shot cloudy night. Even so, some are more inhuman and grotesque than others, exhibiting hunched backs, bulging eyes, or broad mouth full of jagged teeth.

These aquatic gods love the storms for which they're named, surfacing on wet, foggy evenings to call down wind, rain and lightning for their own pleasure. At other times they will do so on a mortal's behalf. When passing through a storm mother's territory—which is wide enough to take days for a ship to cross—islanders, merchants, and pirates pray to the storm mothers for safe passage, or (with greater success) for an enemy's vessel to founder.

Experienced sailors know what arouses a typical storm mother's temper. Failure to offer a sacrifice is one; harming a mortal the spirit favors is another—so long as the favored one fights back, as a storm mother has no use for the weak. They have a weakness for ravens and black dogs, and hurting one for any reason other than sacrifice arouses their rage. Many grow jealous of beautiful women. Lastly, they cannot abide the sound of a crying child.

It's said that storm mothers have no power over red-haired women. For protection, many female sailors dye their hair red, while captains adorn their ships' prows with crimson-daubed feminine figures.

**Essence:** 3; **Willpower:** 8; **Join Battle:** 6 dice

**Personal Motes:** 80

**Health Levels:** -0/-1x3/-2x3/-4/Icap.

**Actions:** Senses: 6 dice; Social Influence: 7 dice;

Swim: 10 dice; Tracking: 6 dice

Appearance 5 (Hideous)

Resolve 4, Guile 2

#### Combat

Attack (Bite): 8 dice (Damage 16)

Attack (Claw): 12 dice (Damage 12)

Attack (Grapple): 8 dice (10 dice to control)

Combat Movement: 6 dice

Evasion 3, Parry 4

Soak/Hardness: 8/2

*Merits*

**Cult 3:** Storm mothers rarely have cults proper, but are propitiated by sailors the world across, allowing them to partake in a considerable sum of communal prayer.

**Spirit Companion:** Each storm mother has a familiar, traditionally either a raven or a black dog, which may act as friend, helper, and lover. These familiars are themselves minor spirits, though with animal traits. They are naturally dematerialized, materializing along with their master. They may travel underwater along with her, and benefit from the unbreakable loyalty and sense-riding discipline powers of the Charm Spirit-Tied Pet (p. 216).

*Offensive Charms*

**Storm-Stirring Lash** (15m, 1wp; Simple; Essence hours; Eclipse; Essence 3): The storm mother bids black clouds to darken the sky and strong winds to rage, creating a heavy rainstorm at sea with a radius that can range from half a mile to three miles. The storm forms over the course of about half an hour, generally too slowly to be applicable in combat. The precise effects of the storm are narrated by the Storyteller, but it generally imposes a -3 penalty on ranged attacks and vision due to rainfall and heavy winds, while denying ships any Speed bonuses from sails and imposing a -2 Speed penalty. Each hour of the storm, a ship's captain must succeed at a (Wits + Sail) roll at a difficulty of the storm mother's Essence to avoid suffering shipwreck, being blown off course, or a similar fate. The storm mother herself is immune to the inclement effects of her own storm, though this does not extend to any ships she is on.

**Wrath From the Sky** (8m, 1wp; Simple; Instant; Eclipse, Perilous; Essence 3): A storm mother may use this Charm during an ongoing storm, either naturally-occurring or created by her magic, to call down a lightning bolt to strike an enemy or object within long range. The lightning strike is treated as an environmental hazard with a difficulty of the storm mother's Essence and (Essence + 3)L damage, and can also be used to set wooden structures ablaze or wreak similar havoc. Once per fight, unless reset with a two or three-point stunt that interacts with the storm.

*Miscellaneous Charms*

**Clear Sky Benediction** (5m; Simple; Indefinite; Essence 3): Storm mothers may place their blessing on a seafarer or a ship. This ensures generally fair weather for the sailor's vessel or the blessed ship, dispelling minor storms or disruptive winds before they have a chance to begin. Severe weather such as hurricanes or magically-created storms are undeterred by this blessing, but the blessed mariner

**THE ECLIPSE KEYWORD**

Solar Exalted of the Eclipse Caste are capable of learning certain Charms belonging to spirits, raksha, and other beings through their anima power (p. 177). Charms that qualify for this are marked with the Eclipse keyword.

or ship adds one bonus success on any rolls to steer through these hazards. For an additional point of Willpower, the storm mother may use this Charm in answer to a prayer without needing to be physically present.

**Hurricane-Hunted Wanderer Malediction** (3m; Reflexive; Indefinite; Essence 3): A storm mother's wrath marks its victim as the prey of violent seas, roiling storms, and furious winds. Laying this curse requires touching the victim, which may require an attack. As long as he is at sea, foul weather will follow him wherever he goes, subtracting -1 from the Speed of any boat he is on, and generally causing minor foul weather whose effects and hazards are left at the Storyteller's discretion. Additionally, once per story, a storm mother may use Storm-Stirring Lash from afar to create a storm centered on a cursed character's boat. Unlike the stationary storms created by ordinary uses of that Charm, this one will follow the vessel that the cursed character is aboard, forcing the ship to either endure the full duration of the storm or throw the storm mother's victim overboard. Red-headed women are thought to be immune to this curse, even by the storm mothers themselves, though the truth of this is left to the Storyteller to decide.

**Hurry Home** (10m, 1wp; Simple; Instant; Essence 1): The storm mother fades away and vanishes on her next turn, returning to her watery sanctum.

**Materialize** (40m, 1wp; Simple; Instant; Essence 1): The storm mother manifests with a rumble of distant thunder, in a whirl of black water.

**Measure the Wind** (5m; Simple; Instant; Essence 1): The storm mother can take the measure of anyone caught within a storm, save for red-haired women.

**AHLAT, SOUTHERN GOD OF WAR AND CATTLE**

Though Ahlat is worshiped throughout the South, and even as far as Ysyr and Goldenseal, the center of his cult is the great nation of Harborhead. There, cattle raids are part of everyday life and skill at arms is part of coming of age. He views those innumerable warriors who swear themselves to him as his sons and daughters. But virgin girls may swear vows of chastity to join Harborhead's royal guard and the ranks of Ahlat's brides.

Ahlat has no pity for weakness. His curse falls upon worshipers who disobey orders or flinch in the face of battle. But to those who die heroically, he offers immortality of a sort. He sends his spirit aurochs to devour their corpses; his other servants draw forth the spirits of the dead and weave them into the tassels that adorn his cloak. A petitioner may perform a quest for the god—something requiring great courage, ideally involving the sacrifice of cattle—in order to borrow a tassel, allowing her to draw upon the dead warrior's spirit and legend. Otherwise, he rarely interferes with mortal wars except to counter another god's meddling.

The god of Harborhead appears as a massive bull-headed man with dark skin, red eyes, and golden horns; he wears only a kilt and a tasseled red-and-black cloak. His spear is of ebony and blood-red metal, his bow of lion bone inlaid with gold. He dwells in the Celestial City of Yu-Shan, in a steppe-girded palace guarded by spirit aurochs and crammed with trophies of ancient battles.

**Essence:** 7; **Willpower:** 10; **Join Battle:** 11 dice

**Personal Motes:** 120

**Health Levels:** -0x10/-1x10/-2x10/-4/Icap.

### Sample Intimacies

- Defining Principle: “War is the crucible of heroes.”
- Defining Principle: “I suffer neither cowards nor traitors.”
- Major Tie: Harborhead (Protective Interest)
- Minor Tie: The Brides of Ahlat (Possessive Affection)

**Actions:** Command: 10 dice; Feats of Strength: 12 dice (may attempt Strength 7 feats); Read Intentions: 8 dice; Resist Poison/Illness: 14 dice; Senses: 11 dice; Social Influence: 10 dice; Strategy: 12 dice; Tracking: 9 dice Appearance 3, Resolve 5, Guile 4

### Combat

Attack (Bloodspike spear): 14 dice (Damage 21, minimum 5)

Attack (Glad-of-War bow): 14 dice at short range (Damage 19, minimum 4)

Attack (Grapple): 11 dice (13 dice to control)

Combat Movement: 10 dice

Evasion 5, Parry 6

Soak/Hardness: 22/10 (Soul-tasseled cloak)

### Merits

**Cult 5:** Ahlat receives worship from warriors and their families all across the South, and is especially revered by the nation of Harborhead, where he demands his worship in the form of the hecatomb: the sacrifice of 100 head of cattle in his name.

### Offensive Charms

**Auroch King's Wrath** (1wp; Reflexive; Instant; Essence 7): Ahlat may call upon the blood sacrifices of cattle offered unto him to roll Join Battle at any point during combat, doubling 9s and gaining motes equal to the number of successes. This can be used even while he is in Initiative Crash, and ends the crash if it restores him to his base Initiative or above. This Charm can only be used once per season, but is reset whenever a hecatomb of one hundred sacrificed cattle is offered up to him.

**Blood Kisses Sand** (10m, 1wp; Supplemental; Instant; Decisive-only; Essence 5): When Ahlat makes a **decisive** attack with his spear, Bloodspike, he may gore an enemy, leaving a wound that bleeds ceaselessly. All extra successes on the attack roll are added to the raw damage of the attack. As long as it deals 3+ damage, the victim suffers heavy bleeding, taking another level of lethal damage at the end of each subsequent round and losing Initiative equal to her current wound penalty. This damage will never fill a character's Incapacitated health level—Ahlat curses his enemies with endless bleeding, and prefers to take the lives of fellow warriors by his own hand. Medical treatment can stop the bleeding with a difficulty 5 (Dexterity + Medicine) roll, which cannot be placed in a flurry.

**Boundless War-God Arete** (1m+; Reflexive; Instant; Perilous; Essence 4): Ahlat may add dice to any action in combat. He cannot add more dice to a roll than his current Initiative, to a maximum of ten dice. Join Battle rolls prior to combat may always have up to ten dice added.

**Horizon-Breaker Shot** (10m, 1wp; Supplemental; Instant; Decisive-only; Essence 5): When Ahlat makes a **decisive** attack with his longbow, Glad-of-War, each aim action he has taken prior to the shot adds one success to the damage roll, to a maximum of three. He may also attack from extreme range, ignoring any penalties from foul weather or visual obstruction as he does so.

**Horned God's Prowess** (4m; Supplemental; Instant; Withering-only, Essence 3): Ahlat may double extra successes on a **withering** attack for the purpose of determining damage. With at least 5+ extra successes (after this Charm's effect), he may double 9s on the damage roll. 10+ extra successes doubles 8s, while 15+ doubles 7s.

**Ruin-Smiting Strike** (15m, 5i, 1wp; Supplemental; Instant; Aggravated, Decisive-only; Essence 7): At Initiative 16+, Ahlat may invoke the image of the Southern sun behind him as he strikes, searing an enemy with overwhelming radiance. He doubles 9s on both the attack and damage rolls of

a **decisive** attack. Every 9 or 10 on the attack roll adds one success to the damage roll, while every 9 or 10 on the damage roll adds +1 to the base Initiative he resets to afterwards.

**Whispering Warrior Souls** (1wp; Reflexive; Instant; Essence 7): Ahlat's cloak is tasseled with the souls of fallen warriors whose bravery and might impressed him. He may use this Charm to call on the memories, skill, or legend of the countless heroes he bears on his back. This can provide a wide variety of effects, adjudicated by the Storyteller. The most generic bonus is providing him with an instant Initiative Break bonus of five Initiative, but it could also include effects such as granting him temporary knowledge of a Martial Arts style or letting him use all the Evocations of a fallen hero's weapons for a scene, unlocking useful memories or tactical knowledge, or gaining a unique advantage to counter the abilities of an extraordinarily powerful foe. Once per fight.

#### Defensive Charms

**Aegis of Invincible Authority** (10m, 1wp; Reflexive; Instant; Dual, Perilous; Essence 5): Ahlat may reduce any **withering** attack against him to its minimum damage as though he had infinite soak while halving any damage dice added after soak, or halve the damage of a **decisive** attack against him. Once per scene, also add his current Initiative to his hardness against a **decisive** attack.

**Bellowing War-God Mien** (15m, 1wp; Reflexive; One scene; Essence 4): Ahlat radiates a terrifying prowess, subtracting two success from all attack rolls made against him. Characters may resist this aura for one scene by paying two Willpower. Characters with an Intimacy representing valor, courage, or a reason to fight fearlessly need pay only one Willpower. Against battle groups, this Charm also forces them to make a rout check before they can even make their attack roll, denying them the chance to strike if they fail.

**Whirlwind Dervish Defense** (1i+; Reflexive; Instant; Uniform; Essence 5): Ahlat may pay up to five points of Initiative when defending against an attack. Each point spent adds +1 Defense against it, and reduces the post-soak damage of a **withering** attack or the raw damage of a **decisive** attack by one.

**Thousand Strikes Dance** (15m, 1wp; Simple; Until next turn; Clash, Perilous; Essence 7): When outnumbered, Ahlat uses this Charm, which allows him to make a reflexive clash attack (p. 410) in response to all attacks made against him until his next turn. He may clash using any of his weapons, and may reflexively draw or switch weapons to attack if necessary.

**Unbroken Warrior's Will** (8m; Reflexive; Instant; Essence 7): Whenever Ahlat recovers from Initiative Crash, he regains a point of Willpower and rolls his Essence. Each success heals a level of damage.

#### Miscellaneous Charms

**Hurry Home** (10m, 1wp; Simple; Instant; Essence 1): Ahlat fades away and vanishes on his next turn, reappearing on the steps of his divine estate in Heaven.

**Materialize** (60m, 1wp; Simple; Instant; Essence 1): Ahlat appears in a wash of brilliant crimson light at the heart of a cloud of dust.

**Measure the Wind** (5m; Simple; Instant; Essence 1): Ahlat can take the measure of any warrior who prays to him, as well as anyone who stands before him bearing arms or armor.

**Might of the Bull God** (1i+; Supplemental; Essence 5): Ahlat may draw on a surge of divine might when he attempts a feat of strength in combat, adding one to his Strength for every point of Initiative he spends. This bonus both adds to his dice pool for the roll and increases his effective Strength rating for attempting epic feats. Initiative spent on this Charm does not lower the maximum amount of dice Ahlat may add to his roll with Boundless War-God Arete. Once per scene, if he has spent at least 5+ Initiative increasing his Strength, then he may attempt a feat of strength regardless of its Strength prerequisite.

**War-God Mandate** (50m, 1wp; Simple; Indefinite; Essence 7): Ahlat may bestow a powerful blessing on an army, granting all battle groups that are part of it +2 Might and adding three bonus success to any Strategic Maneuver rolls the army's general makes. The war-god's blessing is also a curse on traitors and deserters, causing any character who flees the ranks or turns on his fellow soldiers to begin bleeding out horribly, as per Blood Kisses Sand. He may use this blessing on an army that stands at attention before him, or in response to a prayer, though he tends to avoid granting such favor unless another god is meddling in a war. Ahlat may also bestow a blessing on individual warriors, though he generally requires them to prove themselves on a quest of martial prowess before he will do so. He may grant the warrior a tassel from his robes, which allows her to invoke the benefits of Whispering Warrior Souls. The Storyteller should define the effect the tassel can grant at the time of the blessing, and may limit it based on the Essence and nature of the blessed warrior. A mortal Bride of Ahlat might receive a tassel that grants her a dot of Strength and numerous specialties taken from the warrior's soul, while a mighty Dawn Caste might gain one that lets him channel all the Evocations of the legend-

ary daiklave Volcano Cutter whose Essence minimum he meets through his weapon for a scene. This use of War-God Mandate requires no committed motes from Ahlat.

#### ELEMENTALS

##### GARDA BIRD

The garda birds are wise beyond reckoning. This is because they are immortal beyond the agelessness common to elementals; when one dies, it is reborn nine days later in a flowering of flame. They only truly perish when two garda birds unite in fire, becoming a single new individual—a sacrifice born out of love, and thus rare indeed.

Brilliant plumage drapes their six-foot bodies and twenty-foot wingspans, with feathers that shed a cool indigo glow. They can take male or female shape, but most often appear in the so-called “Emperor” form, as a gold and purple peacock with a pheasant’s head. When threatened, they take on the “Empress” form—a silver pheasant with lethal claws. Rage calls forth the “Phoenix” form: a many-armed human body with an eagle’s head, wings, claws and tail.

Garda birds have no interest in mortals and their societies. They inhabit isolated places like mountain peaks, volcanic calderas, and desert plateaus, consuming only morning dew and gathering no material possessions. Mortals who approach them seeking wisdom gain little, for though they never lie, they are whimsical and proud, typically responding with silence. Even the spirit courts see them but rarely.

**Essence:** 4; **Willpower:** 10; **Join Battle:** 8 dice

**Personal Motes:** 90

**Health Levels:** -0/-1x6/-2x6/-4/Icap.

**Actions:** Feats of Strength: 8 dice (may attempt Strength 3 feats); Fly: 10 dice; Lore: 5 dice; Occult: 6 dice; Read Intentions: 6 dice; Secret Wisdom: 7 dice; Senses: 8 dice; Social Influence: 9 dice; Threaten: 10 dice Appearance 5, Resolve 4, Guile 3

##### Combat

Attack (Phoenix sword): 12 dice (Damage 13, minimum 2). Phoenix form only.

Attack (Talons): 9 dice (Damage 11). Empress or phoenix form only.

Combat Movement: 8 dice

Evasion 4, Parry 6

Soak/Hardness: 9/0

##### Merits

**Born of Flame:** Garda birds are immune to any environmental hazard based on fire damage or heat, and auto-



matically reduce any **withering** attack made with fire-wands, sorcerously-conjured fire, or similar to minimum damage. **Decisive** attacks from such sources can only ever deal bashing damage to them and can never fill their Incapacitated health level.

#### *Offensive Charms*

**Blazing Wing Flash** (10m, 1wp; Simple; Instant; Decisive-only; Essence 4): With a beat of its powerful wings, the garda bird sends burning feathers falling on its foes. This is a **decisive** attack rolled against up to three enemies within short range, dividing the garda bird's Initiative evenly among all of them and doubling 9s on the damage roll.

**Fiery Talon Strike** (15m, 3i; Supplemental; Dual; Instant; Essence 3): The garda bird's attacks burn enemies to ashes. On a **withering** attack, it does not add extra successes to its raw damage, but instead rolls them as dice of lethal damage against its enemy, which ignore hardness as they burn the enemy alive. A **decisive** attack adds extra successes to its damage.

**Immolating Pyre** (10m, 1wp; Simple; Instant; Eclipse; Essence 4): Garda birds may call up an eruption of flame, forcing all enemies within medium range to roll against a hazard with the traits of a bonfire (p. 230). Allies are unburnt, the flames washing over them harmlessly. Upon being Incapacitated, this Charm activates reflexively and for free, burning the garda bird's body to ashes. Nine days later, it rises out of the ash, unless slain with Charms such as Ghost-Eating Technique. Once per fight, unless being used upon Incapacitation. Eclipse Castes who learn this Charm do not gain the ability to return from death, though they may still invoke it reflexively upon being Incapacitated.

#### *Defensive Charms*

**Fiery Terror Aura** (8m, 1wp; Reflexive; One scene; Essence 4): While in its phoenix form, the garda bird may emanate a terrifying aura, subtracting one success from all attack rolls made against it. Characters may resist this aura for one scene by paying two Willpower. Characters with an Intimacy representing valor, courage, or a reason to fight fearlessly need pay only one Willpower.

#### *Miscellaneous Charms*

**Threefold Firebird Form** (5m; Simple; Instant; Essence 1): A garda bird may use this form to shift between its three forms. The emperor peacock form is beautiful but harmless, the form it wears in repose or when making a show of non-aggression. In the empress pheasant form, it may use its deadly talons to strike foes. In the dreaded six-

armed phoenix form, its full wrath is unleashed. Upon shifting into empress or phoenix form, the garda bird may reflexively pay to invoke Immolating Pyre, cloaking the transformation behind an eruption of flame.

#### **GREENMAW**

These elementals are creatures of the deep forests and jungles of the East and the Southwest. Despite their vegetative nature, young greenmaws feel an overwhelming hunger for meat, and they seek out and consume animal matter—living or dead—with unrelenting vigor. Most perish at the hands of incensed mortals or wilderness gods, or under the fangs and hooves of underestimated prey. But as greenmaws grow larger and older, their appetite fades. Most of their elders have not troubled mortal communities in millennia, preferring to tend strange wild gardens and ponder philosophical conundrums.

The greenmaw's body is thick as a tree trunk but green and flexible as a young vine. Its tail is a mass of prehensile roots; its head—rising from a ruff of leaves—has the sticky jaws of a venus flytrap, with a great honeyed tongue like a sundew. Galls dot the bodies of older greenmaws; these contain objects of metal or stone, like dinars or jewelry or weapons, which the creatures can neither digest nor remove unaided. The very eldest, which are monstrously large, contain treasures dating back to the First Age—or earlier.

Baby greenmaws are occasionally born from stray root fragments or from flowerings in forest demesnes, but a dying elder may give its life to create new elementals. Dozens of newborns erupt from its body, unleashing a greenmaw plague upon the region.

**Essence:** 3; **Willpower:** 6; **Join Battle:** 8 dice

**Personal Motes:** 80

**Health Levels:** -0/-1x6/-2x6/-4/Icap.

**Actions:** Feats of Strength: 8 dice (may attempt Strength 5 feats); Resist Poison/Sickness: 9 dice; Senses: 9 dice; Threaten: 6 dice; Tracking: 10 dice Appearance 2, Resolve 3, Guile 1

#### **Combat**

Attack (Bite): 8 dice (Damage 19, minimum 2)

Attack (Tail slam) 10 dice (Damage 17)

Attack (Grapple): 8 dice (10 dice to control)

Combat Movement: 5 dice

Evasion 2, Parry 5

Soak/Hardness: 10/3

#### **Merits**

Older greenmaws grow considerably in size as they eat more and more organic matter throughout their lifespan,

gaining both higher Essence and increased physical mass. Eventually, they are capable of attaining the Legendary Size Merit possessed by creatures such as tyrant lizards (p. 573). However, these are generally the greenmaws least likely to cause trouble for human settlements.

#### *Offensive Charms*

**Swaying Sundew Tongue** (5m, 3i; Simple; Instant; Essence 3): A greenmaw may use the adhesive tip of its prehensile tongue to grapple an enemy or lift up objects. The greenmaw may double 8s on both a clinch attack roll and the roll to establish control using its tongue. It suffers no penalties while grappling an enemy on the end of its tongue, and may drag that enemy along with its movement without needing to take a restrain/drag action. If the greenmaw uses Thorn-Toothed Maw to savage an enemy grappled with this Charm, the Initiative cost is waived and each round of control remaining over the grapple adds one die to the damage roll.

**Thorn-Toothed Maw** (7m, 3i; Simple; Instant; Essence 3): A greenmaw may attempt to swallow an enemy whole with a **decisive** bite attack, doubling 9s on the damage roll. As long as it deals 3+ levels of damage, the enemy is swallowed alive. Within the greenmaw's digestive tract, they must contend with its digestive acids, an environmental hazard with the traits of an acid bath (p. 230). A swallowed enemy may attempt to cut his way free with a difficulty 5 gambit rolled against the greenmaw's Defense, but cannot otherwise damage the elemental while inside it, as the digestive tract is completely dissociated from its vitals. This may be bypassed with appropriate stunts, but the swallowed character must still contend with the greenmaw's full Defense and soak.

**Titanic Coils Crush** (3m, 1wp; Supplemental; Instant; Essence 3): When the greenmaw uses its coils to savage a grappled enemy, it doubles extra successes on a **withering** attack or adds them to raw damage on a **decisive** attack. This Charm is incompatible with Swaying Sundew Tongue.

#### *Defensive Charms*

**Unbroken Root Endurance** (4m, 1i; Reflexive; Until uprooted; Essence 2): The greenmaw may dig into the terrain with its roots to become almost immovable. It adds +5 soak and cannot be thrown or dragged in a grapple, but may not take movement actions without ending this Charm. If the greenmaw is hit with an attack or effect that would forcibly move it, such as Heaven Thunder Hammer, it may negate this by paying two points of Initiative per range band. If it does not negate all of the forced movement, this Charm ends as it is forcibly uprooted.

**Voracious Flesh Feeding** (—; Permanent; Essence 3): A wounded greenmaw may heal by consuming organic matter, new growth covering over old wounds. Whenever a living enemy is killed by its bite attack or dies while swallowed whole, the greenmaw rolls one die, healing levels of damage equal to the successes. Attacking a battle group made up of living characters also allows it to roll a die to heal. If it makes a slaughter attack against a fleeing battle group or devours a large group of helpless creatures such as a herd of cattle, it automatically heals two levels of damage.

#### *Miscellaneous Charms*

**Prey-Tasting Premonition** (8m; Supplemental; Instant; Essence 2): A greenmaw may add three bonus successes on any Perception-based roll to find living prey, whether this is an Awareness roll to notice a hidden enemy in combat or a Survival roll to track down the nearest human settlement. If it is attempting to find a character or group of characters suffering a wound penalty, the highest wound penalty is also added as bonus successes to the roll.

**Thousandfold Serpent Strength** (5m, 1wp or 5m, 4i; Supplemental; Instant; Essence 3): A greenmaw may make two rolls for a feat of strength and combine the successes from both as long as the nature of the feat allows it to take advantage of its powerful, crushing coils or its dextrous, adhesive tongue.

#### **TIDEMARE**

These oceanic elementals resemble enormous seahorses, measuring dozens of feet from head to prehensile tail. Unlike their mundane equivalents, tidemares have enormous, brightly colored fins that shimmer with many brilliant colors, and can stretch out behind them in miles-long rainbow trails before retracting to their usual length. They're inordinately proud of their fins, and spend much of their time preening. Gatherings of tidemares typically involve elaborate contests and games in which they form webs and labyrinths of colored streamers across miles of open sea.

Sorcerers and pearl divers alike bargain with tidemares for transportation, for when one wishes, it can distend its belly large enough to encompass a dozen mortals. Its belly is a glassy membrane through which others can easily pass, as if through a thick soap bubble, and within which the air is always as fresh and crisp as the ocean breeze. Tidemares can communicate with their passengers, though they tend toward gossip regarding other elementals and prattle about the magnificence of their own fins.

**Essence: 2; Willpower: 5; Join Battle: 5 dice**

**Personal Notes:** 70

**Health Levels:** -0/-1x4/-2x2/-4/Icap.

**Actions:** Inspire: 8 dice; Senses: 6 dice; Swim: 11 dice; Tracking: 6 dice  
Appearance 5, Resolve 2, Guile 2

### Combat

Attack (Venomous spines): 10 dice (Damage 10 and poison when **decisive**, damage 1i/round, duration 5 rounds, -2 penalty)

Attack (Grapple): 6 dice (6 dice to control)

Combat Movement: 11 dice

Evasion 4, Parry 3

Soak/Hardness: 5/0

### Merits

**Living Ship:** A tidemare may swim tirelessly without need for rest or sleep. More impressively, it can carry other characters in its belly—up to about two dozen—providing them with the air and atmosphere they need to survive even as it plumbs the deepest depths of the seas. It travels at a pace of about twenty miles per hour. In combat, the tidemare is not treated as a mount, but as an individual character, though its movement actions also move all characters riding in its belly. Depending on the scale of the battle, the tidemare's belly may consist of one to three range bands itself, and enemies may move into it with a difficulty 5 gambit against the tidemare, allowing them to enter melee with its passengers or make unblockable, undodgeable attacks against the elemental. It is also possible to attack through the membrane of its belly from either side, though these take a -3 penalty.

### Offensive Charms

**Coiling Tail Strike** (10m; Supplemental; Instant; Essence 1): The tidemare may add an automatic success to both the attack and control roll for a grapple. It cannot savage or throw an enemy clinched with this Charm, but may restrain/drag them as a reflexive action.

### Defensive Charms

**Billowing Veil Defense** (5m, 2i; Reflexive; Instant; Essence 1): The tidemare obstructs an attack with its shimmering fins as a diversion, subtracting dice equal to its Appearance from the attack roll. Each time this Charm is used against a **decisive** attack but the tidemare still takes damage, its fins become shredded and tattered, lowering its Appearance by one until the damage from that attack is healed.

### Mobility Charms

**Prismatic Sea-Spoor Streamers** (8m, 1wp; Simple; Indefinite; Eclipse; Essence 2): The tidemare lets its

glowing, rainbow-colored fins trail behind it for miles, leaving luminous trails under the sea. This can be used to confuse enemy ships chasing the tidemare in a naval pursuit (p. 244), subtracting one success from their roll at each interval. Alternatively, it can assist other ships in sailing through a hazard at sea that the tidemare has already navigated, adding three successes to their rolls if they follow the trail of light. The Storyteller should provide similar bonuses to reward clever uses of this Charm. Eclipses may use this Charm to exude a rainbow streamer from their anima, but its luminescence is only visible when the streamer passes through water.

**Racing Sailfish Surge** (4m, 4i; Simple; Instant; Eclipse; Essence 2): The tidemare shepherds the water at its back into a surge that drives it forward, allowing it to move two range bands. In a test of speed or naval pursuit, this doubles 9s on the tidemare's roll. Unlike other Simple Charms, this may be placed in a flurry. Once per scene unless reset by successfully disengaging while at Initiative 3 or less. Eclipses may learn this Charm, but can only use it underwater.

### VAKTRI

The glittering, deadly vaktri serve as emissaries to the subterranean spirit courts of earth elementals and deep gods. They appear as statues of varicolored prisms, each gemstone segment no larger than a mortal's thigh bone. Rows of crystals slide in and out like pistons as a vaktri moves. It has three legs and five arms, though it can shift its crystals around to flow around obstacles or through narrow spaces as a long, snake-like pillar of crystalline spars. Its voice sounds like glass breaking. Its heart is a single fist-sized jewel. It has no face.

These taciturn, expressionless beings seem to have unlimited patience in discharging their duty, whether that be investigation, negotiation, or assassination. At rest, a vaktri's utter stillness is disquieting, such that onlookers wonder whether it ever moved at all. But it is no automaton. Though the passions of the cold, calculating vaktri are slow to rouse, once aroused they are equally difficult to appease. The heart-jewel shines with an inner light equal to its ardor, colors shifting to divulge its emotional state.

**Essence: 2; Willpower: 8; Join Battle: 6 dice**

**Personal Motes: 70**

**Health Levels:** -0/-1x2/-2x2/-4/Icap.

**Actions:** Feats of Strength: 9 dice (may attempt Strength 5 feats); Read Intentions: 6 dice; Navigate Underground: 7 dice; Social Influence: 8 dice; Senses: 8 dice (see Earthsight); Stealth: 6 dice Appearance 5, Resolve 4, Guile 6

**Combat**

Attack (Crystalline fist): 9 dice (Damage 16)  
 Attack (Grapple): 9 dice (10 dice to control)  
 Combat Movement: 5 dice  
 Evasion 1, Parry 3  
 Soak/Hardness: 12/0

*Merits*

**Crystalline Anatomy:** The gemstone body of the vaktri does not bleed, and is immune to all mundane poisons and diseases. Some crippling effects may not apply to it due to its unique anatomy.

**Earthsgift:** Vakrtri do not have the conventional senses of sight, hearing, or smell, but instead perceive the world through vibrations travelling through the ground. This sense is acute—they can dodge an arrow by sensing the vibration of the archer's feet as he looses it, or hear a person's words through the subtle resonance that travels from their throat to the ground. However, in cases where earthsgift would not apply—such as being attacked by an aerial enemy—the vaktri suffers the penalties of blindness and/or deafness.

*Offensive Charms*

**Diamond Needle Strike** (7m; Simple; Decisive-only; Instant; Essence 2): The vaktri extends a single needle of its gemstone body as it makes a **decisive** attack. Every extra success on the attack roll allows it to reroll one die that turned up a failure on the damage roll. The vaktri may pay three Initiative to actually fire the spike from its limb, allowing it to attack out to medium range.

**Shattered Crystal Spray** (15m, 1wp; Simple; Decisive-only; Instant; Essence 2): Once the vaktri has taken any levels of damage to its health track, it may use this Charm to unleash an eruption of broken fragments from within its body. It rolls a **decisive** attack against all enemies within short range, dividing its Initiative evenly among them to determine the raw damage of the attack and adds any wound penalties it suffers to the damage of each attack, resetting to base Initiative only after all attacks are completed. Once per fight, unless reset by taking enough damage to increase its wound penalty.

*Defensive Charms*

**Unbreakable Gemstone Armor** (5m, 3i; Reflexive; Instant; Essence 1): The vaktri gains bonus soak and hardness against an attack equal to the number of dice that turn up failures on the attack roll. This Charm must be invoked before the attack roll is made.

*Mobility Charms*

**Needle-Body Extrusion** (15m, 1wp; Simple; Indefinite; Essence 2): The vaktri may reconfigure the crystalline spars that make up its body to enter narrow or tight spaces, allowing it to move through any opening the size of a man's forearm. It cannot actually bend the crystals of its body, making it impossible for it to maneuver through extremely twisty spaces. If the vaktri uses this Charm to assist in a feat of strength to tunnel through a structure or barrier, it doubles 7s on the roll.

**Stone-Spider Grip** (5m; Reflexive; One scene; Essence 2): The vaktri may climb up stone or metal surfaces as easily as it can walk, its crystalline limbs merging seamlessly with the surface before releasing. It is even possible for it to climb upside-down across a roof or scale an otherwise unclimbable surface with no need for a roll.

*Social Charms*

**Faceless Envoy Proclamation** (8m; Supplemental; Instant; Essence 2): The vaktri serve as emissaries of earth elemental lords or subterranean deities, for they are the most excellent messengers among the earth courts. Whenever the vaktri makes a social influence roll on the orders of another character, it may add that character's Essence in bonus dice to the roll. Most of the spirits that the vaktri serve are of Essence 4 or 5.

**Many-Faceted Radiance** (10m; Reflexive; One scene; Essence 2): Glowing with the radiance of its diamond heart, the vaktri becomes a beautiful living mosaic, converting any bonus dice it receives from its Appearance on social influence rolls to successes and doubling 8s on all Appearance rolls. However, the luminous glow is telling of the crystalline being's emotions, imposing a -2 penalty to its otherwise impeccable Guile, and it cannot use stealth at all. If the vaktri's passions are inflamed by a successful inspire action, this Charm activates automatically and for free, but the vaktri cannot willingly end it.

**FAKHARU, LESSER ELEMENTAL DRAGON OF WATER, CENSOR OF THE WEST**

The dragon Fakhru holds the post of censor, making him responsible for investigating misconduct in the spirits courts of the West. He once served Heaven loyally, but since the breakdown of the celestial hierarchy, lesser spirits have seduced him with bribes and gifts. Now, instead of pursuing improprieties, he dwells in a luxurious golden palace on a distant Western isle, whiling away the years in artistic and scholarly pursuits.

For all his size and might, Fakhru is a graceful creature. His scales are the green and silver of sun-spangled ocean,

his eyes the ruddy gold of the setting sun. His body glides like silk on glass, and his claws are deft enough to handle delicate porcelain and produce the most elegant calligraphy. His voice is warm and good-humored, his conversation witty and thoughtful.

Aside from his mortal lover Amarel and her handmaids, Fakharu has little use for humankind. He has grown accustomed to favorable treatment from lesser spirits—servants and visitors alike—and has little cause to interact with his divine superiors in the Celestial City. The only guests he regards as peers are the occasional Lunar or Sideral Exalted, whom he greets with genteel hospitality. He would doubtless offer Solars similar treatment.

**Essence:** 6; **Willpower:** 8; **Join Battle:** 10 dice

**Personal Notes:** 110

**Health Levels:** -0x5/-1x10/-2x10/-4/Icap.

### Sample Intimacies

- Defining Principle: “I have earned this furlough.”
- Major Tie: Amarel (Love)
- Minor Principle: “What is more precious than erudition and the arts?”
- Minor Tie: The Celestial Exalted (Wary Respect)

**Actions:** Craft Sculptures: 10 dice; Feats of Strength: 15 dice (may attempt Strength 10 feats); Fly: 15 dice; Knowledge of Spirit Courts: 12 dice; Read Intentions: 8 dice; Resist Poison/Disease: 13 dice; Senses: 10 dice; Social Influence: 12 dice; Stealth: 7 dice; Swim: 15 dice; Writing: 10 dice Appearance 4, Resolve 5, Guile 4

### Combat

Attack (Bite): 11 dice (Damage 22, minimum 5)

Attack (Claws): 15 dice (Damage 18, minimum 3)

Attack (Grapple): 10 dice (12 dice to control).

Fakharu rolls unopposed against smaller enemies to determine how many rounds of control he establishes, unless his victim uses magic that allows them to clinch larger enemies, such as Dragon Coil Technique.

Combat Movement: 15 dice (see Soaring Dragon Flight)

Evasion 7, Parry 6

Soak/Hardness: 24/10

### Merits

**Cult 4:** There is no cult of Fakharu, but his position as censor entitles him to a tithe of worship from all spirits across the West (as well as bribes from miscreant gods hoping for him to turn a blind eye) that amounts to a sizable sum of prayer.

**Legendary Size:** Fakharu’s size makes it extraordinarily difficult for human-scale enemies to engage him in combat. He takes no onslaught penalties from attacks made by smaller opponent, unless magically inflicted. **Withering** attacks made by smaller enemies cannot drop him below 1 Initiative unless they have a post-soak damage of 10 dice (although attackers can still gain the full amount of Initiative damage dealt). **Decisive** attacks made by smaller enemies cannot deal more than (3 + attacker’s Strength) levels of damage, not counting any levels of damage added by Charms or other magic.

**Soaring Dragon Flight:** An elemental dragon is both tireless and graceful, capable of traveling up to five hundred miles an hour through the sky or its native element. In combat, it doubles 9s on all movement rolls and may rush enemies on the ground from two range bands above them while flying. If one deigned to accept a rider, it would have a +5 speed bonus

### Offensive Charms

**Claw-Fang Maelstrom** (25m, 1wp; Simple; Instant; Decisive-only; Essence 6): Fakharu may make three **decisive** attacks, two with his claws and then a single bite. Each attack must be directed against a different enemy, unless he is savaging a grappled foe. His Initiative does not reset until all three attacks have been completed. Once per fight unless reset by being attacked 5+ times in a single round by non-trivial opponents.

**Drowning-in-Coils Constriction** (10m, 5i, 1wp; Reflexive; Until released; Perilous; Essence 6): Upon successfully grappling an enemy, Fakharu may turn the coils of his body into liquid water that engulfs them for the duration of the clinch, causing them to begin drowning (p. 232) for as long as they remain grappled. Fakharu may choose to spare a character who runs out of air while grappled, leaving them merely unconscious instead of dead.

**Raging Dragon Strike** (12m; Supplemental; Instant; Uniform; Essence 4): Fakharu adds his current temporary Willpower to an attack roll, and doubles 9s on the damage roll. At Initiative 20+, he adds 10 dice to attack and doubles 8s on damage instead.

**Seven Venoms Exhalation** (25m, 4i, 1wp; Simple; Instant; Withering-only, Perilous; Essence 6): Fakharu exhales a torrent of venom, rolling 15 dice as a **withering** attack against all enemies in front of him out to medium range. In general, his breath can target up to one character at close range, three at short, and five at medium. The attack has a damage of (20 + extra successes over each individual enemy’s Defense), and exposes all damaged characters

to a poison with damage 3*i*/round, duration 10 rounds, and a penalty of -4. Points of Initiative damage dealt by the attack are not awarded to Fakharu, but are instead converted to a dice penalty on the victim's roll to resist the poison. Characters that take 5+ Initiative damage from the torrential blast are knocked back one range band and fall prone. Once per fight unless reset by going three rounds without taking any **withering** or **decisive** damage.

#### *Defensive Charms*

**Flowing Body Dispersal** (4m, 2*i*; Reflexive; Instant; Essence 6): Fakharu's body becomes liquid as he is struck, letting attacks pass through it as though it were water. Every die that came up a 1 or 2 on the attack roll subtracts a success from both the attack and damage rolls.

**River-Drinking Renewal** (30m, 1wp; Simple; Instant; Perilous; Essence 6): Fakharu may drain the water from a large cistern, lake, river, or similar body of water within medium range in order to heal wounds, rolling his Initiative and healing levels of damage equal to the successes. Healing 10+ levels of damage with this Charm also resets Seven Venoms Exhalation if it is currently down. If he is submerged in a body of water, invoking this Charm is Reflexive. Once per fight unless reset with a two or three-point stunt that alters the battlefield to introduce a new source of water to draw from.

#### *Social Charms*

**Censor's Geas** (20m, 1wp; Supplemental; Instant; Essence 5): Fakharu may double 7s on a roll to persuade a character by invoking his authority, whether through appeal to an Intimacy or simply stunting the influence appropriately. Persuaded characters cannot abandon the task unless they fully erode the Intimacy that supported it and then pay three Willpower. Spirits subordinate to Fakharu—technically almost all gods and elementals in the West—treat the influence as exploiting at least a Major Intimacy, and cannot abandon the task once persuaded.

#### *Miscellaneous Charms*

**Clothed with Humanity** (5m; Simple; Instant; Essence 1): Fakharu may assume a human form to interact with guests, courtiers, and lovers. He loses much of his physical prowess and offensive magic while in this form, but may revert to his true draconic nature reflexively and at no cost.

**Draconic Might** (4m, 1wp or 4m, 4*i*; Simple; Instant; Essence 6): Fakharu may double his Strength rating for a single feat of strength, both adding 10 bonus dice and allowing him to attempt legendary feats that would require Strength 20.

**Dematerialize** (60m, 1wp; Simple; Instant; Essence 1): Fakharu may shed his fleshly body, becoming as immaterial as a god. This effectively works like the Materialize Charm, but in reverse. When he vanishes or reappears, his vast body weaves or unweaves itself from flows of glistening water.

**Measure the Wind** (5m; Simple; Instant; Essence 1): Fakharu can take the measure of anyone brought for judgment before him in his role as Censor of the West.

#### **DEMONS**

##### **AGATA, THE BEAUTEOUS WASP,**

##### **DEMON OF THE FIRST CIRCLE**

No one forgets their first glimpse of an agata. The demon shimmers like a giant wasp carved from rainbow crystal. Its wings hum like cascading water; its voice is birdsong at dawn. An uncanny golden nimbus crowns it with a dream of glory.

Lovely as they are, the agata are perilous to approach. Their minds work on an abstruse level beyond the understanding of mortals, while their emotions are fluid as quicksilver. Thus, for all their brilliance, their philosophies are largely untranslatable, while their behavior often appears childlike, eccentric, or even mad. A beauteous wasp may destroy a thing it treasures or abandon a friend in time of need, then laugh or weep, or continue on its way as though nothing had happened. To the agatae themselves, such actions are both normal and reasonable, such that they stare uncomprehendingly at those who question their motives.

The agata is a riding-beast by nature. It feels an immediate bond to its rider, an intense love mixed with wild, overwhelming outbursts of other emotions. It is rare indeed for an agata to harm its rider, but they have been known to shake mortals off to their deaths—sometimes to mourn thereafter in deep and elaborate ways, at other times to shrug off all thoughts of mortality and move on to other things.

**Essence:** 2; **Willpower:** 6; **Join Battle:** 6 dice

**Personal Motives:** 70

**Health Levels:** -0/-1x3/-2x3/-4/Icap.

**Speed Bonus:** +3

**Actions:** Demon Lore: 6 dice; Flying maneuvers: 12 dice; Inspire: 6 dice; Resist Poison/Illness: 8 dice; Senses: 7 dice; Tracking: 5 dice  
Appearance 5, Resolve 3, Guile 2

#### **Combat**

Attack (Claw): 6 dice (Damage 14)

Attack (Sting): 5 dice (Damage 13 and poison when **decisive**, damage 2*i*/round, duration 5 rounds, -3 penalty). Agatae can only sting while airborne.



Combat Movement: 6 dice (12 when airborne)  
Evasion 3 (5 while airborne), Parry 3  
Soak/Hardness: 8/0

#### *Merits*

**Shimmering Crystal Beauty:** Anyone who looks upon the agata is treated as having a Minor Tie of wonder towards it for purposes of social influence rolls.

**Vigorous Steed:** The agata can bear two fully armored people on its back while flying at a speed of thirty miles an hour. It may use its Evasion in place of its Parry to protect a rider with a defend other action.

#### *Offensive Charms*

**Principle of Motion** (10m, 1wp; Reflexive; Instant; Essence 2): The agata moves with blinding speed, taking a flurry without the usual restrictions—it can flurry two of the same action if desired, and it ignores the usual penalties to dice pools and Defense.

#### *Defensive Charms*

**Kaleidoscopic Dodge** (5m, 3i; Reflexive; Instant; Essence 2): For a moment, the beauteous wasp seems to disintegrate into rainbow brilliance, as though it were refracted through a prism, adding +2 Evasion against an attack. A successful dodge allows the agata to reflexively move one range band in any direction, if it wishes.

**Jeweled Heart Allure** (6m; Reflexive; One scene; Essence 2): The agata radiates beauty that dumbfounds even battle-hardened warriors, forcing characters to pay a point of Willpower before they can attack it in a scene unless they have an Intimacy that represents ruthlessness, pitilessness, or a desperate reason to fight it that is greater than the Minor Tie created by Shimmering Crystal Beauty.

#### *Mobility Charms*

**Wind-Stirring Wing Tempest** (5m, 1i; Supplemental; Instant; Essence 1): The agata doubles 9s on a movement roll. If it is moving downward while airborne, it doubles 8s as well.

#### *Miscellaneous Charms*

**Hurry Home** (10m, 1wp; Simple; Instant; Essence 1): The demon fades away and vanishes on its next turn, drawn instantly to its summoner's side. This Charm is unavailable when the demon is unbound.

**Materialize** (35m, 1wp; Simple; Instant; Essence 1): The agata solidifies itself in a flash of prismatic light.

**Measure the Wind** (5m; Simple; Instant; Essence 1): The agata can discern the nature of anyone who rides it.

#### ERYMANTHUS, THE BLOOD-APE, DEMON OF THE FIRST CIRCLE

An erymanthus has the body of a massive, gnarled ape. Tufts of rust-red fur spatter its rubbery black hide, while jagged spurs of black bone jut from its shoulders, spine and skull. Its heavy, twisted limbs end in great black talons, and its pupil-less eyes glow as golden as a snake's. Though its shambling gait appears clumsy, it moves with uncanny speed to match its unnatural strength. When pressing itself to its utmost, the blood-ape can leap or strike faster than the eye can see, or bellow with such force that its voice alone shatters stone or steel.

Most erymanthoi prefer to remain in physical form. Even when compelled to dematerialize, their thick animal stench hangs heavy on the air. Their snuffling and grunting likewise remains audible, as does the scrape and thump of their lumbering gait, and one can sometimes catch glimpses of them out of the corner of the eye.

These vicious, brutal creatures prize hot fresh gore. While a few have unusually eclectic or catholic tastes, most favor the blood of humans and cats. This craving makes them difficult to control. If a blood-ape grows hungry enough, only its master's express command will hold it back from satiating its appetite.

**Essence:** 2; **Willpower:** 5; **Join Battle:** 6 dice

**Personal Notes:** 70

**Health Levels:** -0/-1x3/-2x3/-4/Icap.

**Actions:** Climbing and Brachiation: 7 dice; Feats of Strength: 10 dice (may attempt Strength 5 feats); Resist Poison/Illness: 8 dice; Senses: 6 dice; Stealth: 6 dice; Threaten: 7 dice; Tracking: 5 dice  
Appearance 3 (Hideous), Resolve 3, Guile 1

#### Combat

Attack (Claw): 11 dice (Damage 15)

Attack (Grapple): 8 dice (10 dice to control)

Combat Movement: 7 dice

Evasion 2, Parry 4

Soak/Hardness: 7/0

#### Offensive Charms

**Brutal Ape Pounce** (4m; Simple; Instant; Withering-only; Essence 1): If the blood-ape deals 5+ damage to an enemy with this **withering** attack, that character is knocked prone.

If the Initiative damage brought them below the demon's Initiative, the blood-ape may pay a point of Willpower to reflexively make a **decisive** attack against them. The reflexive attack power of this Charm can only be used once per fight unless reset by landing three successful **withering** attacks.

**Principle of Motion** (10m, 1wp; Reflexive; Instant; Essence 2): The blood-ape moves with blinding speed, taking a flurry without the usual restrictions—it can flurry two of the same action if desired, and it ignores the usual penalties to dice pools and Defense.

**Rending Claw Slash** (5m, 1i; Supplemental; Instant; Uniform; Essence 1): When the blood-ape savages a grappled enemy, it doubles 9s on the damage roll. If it receives 6+ extra successes on the attack roll, double 8s as well.

**Shattering Roar** (15m, 1wp; Simple; Instant; Dual; Essence 2): The blood-ape emits a howl potent enough to pulp flesh and pulverize bone, attacking an enemy out to medium range with a roll of nine dice. **Withering** howls have a base damage of 20. **Decisive** attacks add extra successes to their raw damage, and deal bashing damage. Once per fight, unless reset by moving to pursue an enemy after a successful rush.

#### Miscellaneous Charms

**Destructive Force** (3m or 1i; Supplemental; Instant; Essence 1): The erymanthus adds three bonus successes on a feat of strength to destroy an object or obstacle.

**Hurry Home** (10m, 1wp; Simple; Instant; Essence 1): The demon fades away and vanishes on its next turn, drawn instantly to its summoner's side. This Charm is unavailable when the demon is unbound.

**Materialize** (35m, 1wp; Simple; Instant; Essence 1): Bloody, stinking ropes of muscle and flesh lash themselves together from thin air, building the blood-ape a physical form.

**Measure the Wind** (5m; Simple; Instant; Essence 1): The erymanthus can discern the nature of anyone whose blood it tastes.

#### NEOMAH, THE MAKER OF FLESH, DEMON OF THE FIRST CIRCLE

When a neomah enters a new place—whether some new region of the Demon City or a summoning sorcerer's demesne in Creation—its first act is to rebuild its home. Upon finding an open space, it spins a thread of brass and fire from its throat like a spider building a web, which it weaves into a tower over the course of an hour. From there it conducts its business as an infernal courtesan.



The makers of flesh appear as sleek and hairless androgynes. Elegant and alluring, their graceful movements and entrancing scent appeal to mortals across Creation—and to a range of other beings besides. Indeed, one may become male or female, both or neither, in accordance with its current companion's desires.

The typical neomah has little interest in money. Instead, it offers its services as a concubine in exchange for some small part of its client's substance—blood or seed, flesh or nails. When it has collected enough materials, it casts them together into the fire burning atop its nautilus-horn tower, where it shapes them into an infant, a hybrid child made from many parents. Once this is done, the neomah unweaves and inhales its tower, then moves on, leaving the baby behind.

Some sorcerers summon the neomah for licentious purposes. Others procure their services as bodyguards or spies. But these demons are most often called upon to create children. Through their magic, barren women or sterile men can have children of their own flesh and blood, while couples of the same gender may likewise mingle their lineages. Such children are wholly mortal. Not so the other creations of neomah artifice! Many a sorcerer has guarded her lair with bizarre beasts born in the neomah's fire.

All neomah are creatures of passion. Most invest their fervor in their craft, seeking to master the arts of love and procreation. A few find themselves enthralled by other

arts—music, dance, painting, poisons. Rarely do their passions involve lovers and progeny, for whom they feel at most a cool, distant affection.

**Essence:** 2; **Willpower:** 4; **Join Battle:** 4 dice

**Personal Motes:** 70

**Health Levels:** -0/-1x3/-2x3/-4/Incap.

**Actions:** Disguise: 7 dice; Senses: 6 dice; Read Intentions: 7 dice; Sensual Amusements: 10 dice; Social Influence: 5 dice; Stealth: 7 dice; Weave Flesh: 11 dice; Writing: 7 dice

Appearance 5, Resolve 3, Guile 4

### Combat

Attack (Brass hairpin): 7 dice (Damage 8 and poison when **decisive**, damage 1L/hour, duration 6 hours, -3 penalty)

Combat Movement: 7 dice

Evasion: 4, Parry: 3

Soak/Hardness: 5/0 (Unarmored)

### Merits

**Alluring Scent:** Neomah are universally attractive to all creatures, regardless of species. Their beauty compels humans, demons, raksha, and stranger things yet. When taking a persuade action to seduce a character, the neomah is always treated as exploiting a Minor Intimacy, and never faces penalties for seduction across lines of species.

**Expressive Demeanor:** Neomah takes no penalties for communicating via body language, and can communicate even complex messages or carry out conversations with nothing more than their extraordinarily expressive faces and posture.

**Weave Flesh:** Neomah may shape infants from a combination of flesh and sexual fluids, creating the hybrid offspring of two or more parents. The demon shapes an infant from some combination of flesh, semen, or menstrual fluids. The more people that provide the flesh, and the more types of creatures among them, the greater the odds that the child—though appearing normal—will develop *strangely*, its personality aberrant in some unexpected manner. This is treated as a crafting project, using the weave flesh dice pool listed above. Creating a human or human-like child is a basic project that typically takes a day of labor. More unusual or monstrous prodigies take major projects to create. Neomah receive five points of silver crafting experience to spend on these projects when they conclude their business as demon concubines.

#### Offensive Charms

**Spit Fire** (5m; Simple; Instant; Decisive-only; Essence 2): A neomah may spit the same flames it uses to weave its tower at its enemies. This is a **decisive** attack that can target enemies out to medium range, with an attack roll of eight dice. An enemy damaged by the attack is set ablaze, taking one die of lethal damage each turn until they find a way to extinguish themselves. This damage ignores hardness.

#### Social Charms

**Seductive Shapechange** (8m; Simple; One scene; Eclipse; Essence 1): Once a neomah has read a character's intentions to determine their ideal sexual mate, it may use this Charm to sculpt its body into that form. Its demonic nature remains recognizable, but it may alter gender, height, build, facial features, and similar aesthetic traits. While this Charm is active, it adds +2 Appearance when making social influence rolls to seduce the character whose preferences it has tailored itself to, or that play on Intimacies of lust towards itself. This can raise the neomah's Appearance above 5, but is not compatible with other Appearance-enhancing effects.

#### Miscellaneous Charms

**Hurry Home** (10m, 1wp; Simple; Instant; Essence 1): The Neomah fades away and vanishes on its next turn, drawn instantly to either its nautilus-horn tower or to its summoner's side.

**Materialize** (35m, 1wp; Simple; Instant; Essence 1): The neomah weaves itself a physical form out of threads of burning flesh, which cool and resolve into a body.

**Measure the Wind** (5m; Simple; Instant; Essence 1): The neomah can measure the nature of any that comes to it seeking to trade flesh for pleasure.

#### ALVEUA, THE KEEPER OF THE FORGE OF NIGHT, DEMON OF THE SECOND CIRCLE

The hum of insects accompanies Alveua wherever she goes, for she hammered out many of Hell's arthropods on her forge, and her creations love her still. Indeed, there seems something insectile about her slender limbs, her glittering eyes, her dark glossy skin. But her delicate frame belies her strength. Indeed, the massive red-hot hammer she carries seems as light as a feather in her hands.

Mortals call upon Alveua for a singular service. Should she answer a summons, she brings the petitioner back with her across the endless Hell-girdling desert to her forge of night. In that lightless place, beyond even the Demon City's emerald sun and alien stars, she lays the mortal upon her anvil and reshapes him into a tool of gleaming black metal, of a shape—sword, flask, coin, ox-goad, or any other thing—that befits the petitioner's nature. She then returns the thing to Creation, there to find its way into hands that will, through roundabout means, fulfill the dreams and desires of the one from whom it was forged. Sorcerers may call upon her to work wonders of hellish power for their own uses, in exchange for mortals willing to be reborn on her anvil.

She expresses the philosophy of such workings, and her very existence, thusly: "If I had the shaping of all things, as I have for those I reforge, then the Yozis would not be imprisoned; the gods would not rebel against them; the mortals would not be so bold; and both harmony and happiness should fill the world. Sadly, as Erembour and the Ebon Dragon are held, so held am I; and I can fix only certain aspects of Creation."

**Essence: 6; Willpower: 7; Join Battle: 7 dice**

**Personal Motes:** 110

**Health Levels:** -0/-1x4/-2x6/-4x4/Incap.

#### Sample Intimacies

- Defining Principle: Her philosophy
- Major Tie: Erembour (Filial Devotion)
- Major Tie: Her work (Satisfaction)
- Minor Principle: "My time is precious."
- Minor Tie: Sunlight and moonlight (Loathing)

**Actions:** Demonic Lore: 9 dice; Feats of Strength: 9 dice (may attempt Strength 5 feats); Forging Hellish

Wonders: 12 dice; Read Intentions: 6 dice; Senses: 6 dice; Stealth: 6 dice; Social Influence: 9 dice  
Appearance 4, Resolve 5, Guile 3

### Combat

Attack (Ember of Perfection hammer) 12 dice (Damage 19, minimum 5)  
Combat Movement: 9 dice  
Evasion 4, Parry 6  
Soak/Hardness: 12/0

### Merits

**Cult 1:** The prayers of those who offer themselves unto Alveua's forge resound forevermore in the clangor of her hammer and anvil.

**Keeper of the Forge of Night:** Alveua is a master of the forge. As a Storyteller character, she does not track or gain crafting experience—she has sufficient experience when it serves the story, and is taking time to gather more when it doesn't. She has five major project slots and one superior project slot.

### Offensive Charms

**Forge-Born Fury** (7m; Reflexive; One scene; Dual; Essence 4): Alveua's hammer, Ember of Perfection, blazes red with heat, adding one success to all **withering** damage rolls and one die of raw damage to all **decisive** attacks.

**Hammer Beats Blade** (6m, 1wp; Supplemental; Decisive only; Instant; Essence 4): Alveua halves the difficulty and cost of a disarm gambit made with her hammer. With three extra successes on the Initiative roll, she may shatter a mundane weapon, or fling an artifact weapon out to medium range.

**Plague of Shining Insects** (10m, 1wp; Simple; Decisive only; Instant; Essence 4): A swarm of hellish insects descends, biting and stinging, upon one who has harmed Alveua. This Charm can be used to make an (Intelligence + Occult + Essence) attack roll of fifteen dice to enact a difficulty 3 gambit against an enemy out to medium range who has attacked Alveua this scene. Success covers the enemy in a swarm of metallic insects that are treated as an environmental hazard, with damage 2L/round and difficulty 4 to avoid. Each round that the victim fails his roll to resist, he takes a -2 penalty on all other dice rolls that turn. The victim and his allies may attempt to destroy the insects with their own attacks, which is treated as a difficulty 3 gambit. A successful gambit reduces the hazard's difficulty by one, and the swarm disperses once the difficulty is lowered to zero. Once per fight, unless reset by taking damage from a **decisive** attack.

### Defensive Charms

**Night-Black Carapace** (5m, 1wp; Simple; Decisive-only, Eclipse; One scene; Essence 4): Darkness swirls in from every corner to clothe Alveua in night-black armor with the traits of light artifact armor. If Alveua is hit with a **decisive** attack, she may let the armor shatter as a counter-attack, rolling ten dice plus her enemy's extra successes on the attack roll as a **decisive** attack against all characters within short range. Each character suffers a base damage equal to the extra successes Alveua's attack roll received against their Defense, and her Initiative is divided evenly among all characters to determine the total damage. This destroys her armor, which she cannot summon again that fight unless she establishes stealth in darkness and shadow.

### Miscellaneous Charms

**Hell-Forging Clangor** (30m, 1wp; Supplemental; Instant; Essence 6): Alveua doubles 7s on a crafting roll and may reroll all 1s until they fail to appear. She may complete basic or major projects in a handful of hours, while artifacts require only half their normal time investment before she may begin rolling to complete them if the first interval is supplemented with this Charm. If at least three dice turn up a 10 on a roll to work towards a superior or legendary project, then it is not counted towards the terminus of the project. This Charm cannot be used in sunlight or moonlight, nor while forging orichalcum, moon-silver, starmetal, jade, or soulsteel—the magical materials of Creation and the Underworld are inimical to her nature.

**Hurry Home** (10m, 1wp; Simple; Instant; Essence 1): Alveua fades away and vanishes on her next turn, drawn instantly to the forge of night or to her summoner's side.

**Materialize** (55m, 1wp; Simple; Instant; Essence 1): Alveua appears from somewhere in the shadows, arising from a shadowy mass of insects. She cannot materialize in the direct light of the sun or moon.

**Measure the Wind** (5m; Simple; Instant; Essence 1): Alveua may discern the nature of anyone who submits to be beaten out on her anvil, or who handles one of her creations in her presence.

**Willing Souls Tempered** (Permanent; Essence 6): When a mortal petitioner sacrifices at least one innocent life and succeeds on a prayer roll to Alveua, she may use this Charm to appear before him for an instant before dragging him back to her forge in Hell, hammering his soul out on her anvil. Though Alveua does not track crafting experience normally, in terms of the strength of the artifacts she may forge from a mortal, his sacrifice contributes the equivalent of either

ten silver craft experience points, five gold points, or one white point towards the completion of whatever project Alveua uses him for. A willing mortal who presents himself to her in person may also be put to this end. Characters may be convinced to make this sacrifice through social influence, but Psyche effects or similar mind control magic is invalid.

### MARA, THE SHADOW-LOVER, DEMON OF THE SECOND CIRCLE

Mara's appearance changes with each visit to Creation. Sometimes she wears heavy wools and furs, at other times gauzy silks—green in the summer, of ruddy hues in the fall, or white in winter. Her skin may be pale or dark, her hair of any hue, her form old or young. But her face is always lovely to look upon, her eyes are always bright as sapphires, and her long skirts always conceal the hooves of a deer.

Folk across the world tell tales of Mara. Some say she is a tree-spirit, for she favors Creation's woodlands. But she is a demon, a seductress, visiting folk in the night and sapping their strength with arts of love learned in the seraglios of Hell. Sometimes, at the height of passion, she draws forth a lover's soul with a kiss. It emerges as some small living thing—such as a sparrow, frog, snake, bat, butterfly, or even a swarm of insects—that she may bring back to her summoner for his pleasure.

Mortals with dark destinies attract Mara's attention. She takes such people as her lovers, but does not destroy them. Instead she feeds them stolen souls from her lips, strengthening them and giving them a fascination with cruelty and death.

**Essence:** 5; **Willpower:** 7; **Join Battle:** 6 dice

**Personal Motes:** 100

**Health Levels:** -0x2/-1x4/-2x6/-4/Icap.

### Sample Intimacies

- Defining Principle: "I take pleasure in death and suffering."
- Major Tie: Lovers with dark destinies (Eager Interest)
- Minor Principle: "I am a creature of woodlands and kin to deer."
- Minor Tie: Beautiful mortals (Loveless Attraction)

**Actions:** Demonic Lore: 10 dice; Disguise: 8 dice; Read Intentions: 6 dice; Senses: 6 dice; Shape Sorcery: 12 dice; Social Influence: 10 dice; Stealth: 9 dice  
Appearance 5, Resolve 4, Guile 4

### Merits

**Cult 2:** Mara's worship comes in part from infernalist cults in Creation and the lips of her paramours, but also from

misguided humans who pray to her as a peaceful spirit of the woodlands.

### Martial Arts

Mara is the creator of Black Claw Style, and knows all of its Charms (p. 453). Her nature as the icon of dark grace which the style emulates grants her the Mastery benefit of Charms with that keyword, although this is a true rarity even among martially powerful demons of her rank or higher.

### Sorcery

Mara is a skilled sorcerer of the Sapphire Circle. Her control spells are Silent Words of Dreams and Nightmares and Impenetrable Veil of Night. She knows all spells of the first two circles printed in this book (see Chapter Seven), save for those that summon elementals and demons, which she, as a spirit, is incapable of using. She has all the shaping rituals listed under "Bargain With Mara" (p. 467), although she takes souls using her own unique Charm, rather than with the method listed among the shaping rituals.

### Offensive Charms

**Siphon Soul** (10m, 4i; Simple; Instant; Decisive-only; Essence 5): Mara draws forth a mortal's soul with her kiss. She may steal the soul of a sleeping character or anyone who willingly kisses her, or as a **decisive** gambit against an enemy in a grapple she controls, expending all rounds of control and adding them as bonus dice to her Initiative roll against a difficulty equal to that character's Resolve. A siphoned soul emerges in the form of a tiny creature that Mara swallows and can bring forth intact, either to nourish another with it using her Soul Feeding Charm or to return it to its original body, which remains alive but inanimate until it dies of deprivation. She may also devour souls to gain sorcerous motes from them, as per her shaping rituals. Once per scene.

### Social Charms

**Devil Seraglio Ways** (15m, 1wp; Supplemental; Instant; Essence 5): Mara doubles 8s on a persuade roll to seduce a character or any influence roll that exploits a Tie of love or lust towards her, and treats her target as having Resolve 0 for determining how many bonus dice her Appearance adds.

**Handmaid of Dark Fates** (5m; Supplemental; Instant; Essence 4): Mara may add three bonus successes on a persuade roll to convince one of her lovers to take an action that will bring about death or suffering (whether directly or indirectly). Additionally, each time she has used Soul Feeding to benefit that character in the past imposes a -1 penalty on his Resolve against the roll.

*Miscellaneous Charms*

**Hundred-Faced Shadow** (5m; Simple; Instant; Essence 1): The Shadow-Lover can make significant changes to her humanoid form, altering her face, build, or apparent ethnicity, or shifting her age anywhere between 15 and 50. Her bright blue eyes and hooves always remain unchanged. If she uses this Charm to assist in disguising herself as another character, she cancels all penalties to do so. Alternatively, she may transform into a housecat (p. 560) or into a swirl of mist. While in mist form, she cannot attack or cast spells, but adds +3 Evasion against any attack not enhanced by magic.

**Hurry Home** (10m, 1wp; Simple; Instant; Essence 1): Mara fades away and vanishes on her next turn, drawn instantly to her summoner's side. This Charm is unavailable when she is unbound.

**Materialize** (50m, 1wp; Simple; Instant; Essence 1): Mara appears in a drift of seasonal leaves.

**Measure the Wind** (5m; Simple; Instant; Essence 1): Mara can determine the nature of anyone she kisses.

**Soul Feeding** (10m, 2wp; Simple; One month; Essence 5): Over a period of weeks, Mara nourishes a mortal with fragments of stolen souls. This grants the recipient improved traits as a training effect, depending on their existing level of competence. A peasant boy taken as a lover might gain dots of Attributes and Abilities; a mortal sorcerer who binds Mara for this service might learn new spells or gain dark powers as supernatural Merits. The recipient also gains a Major Principle of "I take pleasure in death and suffering." Gathering souls and feeding them to the recipient occupies her for approximately eight hours per day, and she may only use this Charm on one recipient at a time.

### OCTAVIAN, THE LIVING TOWER, THE QUARTER-PRINCE, DEMON OF THE SECOND CIRCLE

In a court of malachite and basalt, the odors of charring meat and the frantic prayers of manacled slaves fill the air. Octavian stands ten feet tall, but seems a giant even when seated on his alabaster throne, its whiteness long since stained indelibly black by the oil that oozes from his stone-hard skin. He is monstrous, muscular and elephant-tusked; he wears little more than a loincloth from which the skull of a slain Solar Exalt hangs on a strand of jade beads, a cracked hearthstone set in its forehead. The black oil that coats his skin—that drips down to blight the earth beneath his feet and to spoil his feasts—is also a potent venom that annihilates the senses. But his brutish figure belies a calculating intellect. Once a champion of the demon princes, he rose to become a general of their monstrous

armies, and from there he amassed his own empire. He commands a full quarter of a layer of Hell, an empire whose size staggers the imagination.

Over the centuries, Octavian has waged war against rival lords of Hell, fought single-handed against champions of the gods, torn dragons asunder, and ripped the wings from behemoths. Yet he remains unsatisfied. He loved, once, when the world was young, but no longer pursues conquests of the heart. All that remains to him is testing his strength against the world, and he has reached the limits to which he can do so in Hell. He grows weary upon his throne, lacking the temperament for governance. He seeks new nations to conquer and new worlds for his empire to encompass, making him an eager ally for sorcerers seeking a battle-champion or bodyguard. Even when bound to stand guard duty or murder some insignificant mortal, the Living Tower views each foray into Creation as a glimpse of what he will one day command.

**Essence:** 6; **Willpower:** 10; **Join Battle:** 10 dice

**Personal Motes:** 110

**Health Levels:** -0x5/-1x10/-2x10/-4x5/Icap.

### Sample Intimacies

- Defining Principle: "I will test my strength against the world."
- Major Principle: "Strategy and cunning are no match for brute force."
- Major Tie: His empire (Ambition)
- Minor Principle: "Love is unnecessary."

**Actions:** Administrating his Empire: 6 dice; Command: 8 dice; Feats of Strength: 14 dice (may attempt Strength 10 feats); Read Intentions: 6 dice; Resist Poison/Illness: 12 dice; Senses: 8 dice; Social Influence: 7 dice; Strategy: 7 dice Appearance 5 (Hideous), Resolve 5, Guile 2

### Combat

Attack (Equitable Resolution staff): 14 dice (Damage 19, minimum 4)

Attack (Unarmed): 14 dice (Damage 15 and poison when **decisive**, see Black Oil)

Attack (Grapple): 11 dice (12 dice to control)

Combat Movement: 8 dice (14 dice while mounted)

Evasion 3, Parry 7

Soak/Hardness: 17/10

### Merits

**Agata Mount:** Octavian rides an agata (pp. 523-525) named Damaskenos. When he is summoned or bound, so is she, and she dematerializes and materializes along with him.

The largest broodmother of her demonic line, she has three extra -1 and -2 health levels above the usual for agatae and has a diamond carapace that grants hardness 6.

**Bane of the Earth:** Octavian once loved the earth, but his passion was spurned. Now, it has no foe more bitter. Any attack made by Octavian becomes aggravated against earth elementals or other spirits of earth, and such creatures take a -2 Resolve penalty against his threaten actions.

**Black Oil:** Octavian's body is coated with a black oil that annuls the senses. When he strikes an enemy with an unarmed **decisive** attack, they suffer a dose of poison with damage 3i/round, duration 5 rounds, and a -2 penalty. Worse, the poison inflicts a permanent crippling if the enemy is Crashed while suffering from it. Depending on whether Octavian strikes his enemy's eyes, ears, or forehead, he may choose whether this crippling blinds them, deafens them, or obliterates their memories of the last day. The Exalted and other characters with Exalted healing may make a difficulty 5 (Stamina + Resistance) roll at each sunrise to recover from these debilities. The difficulty drops by 1 each day.

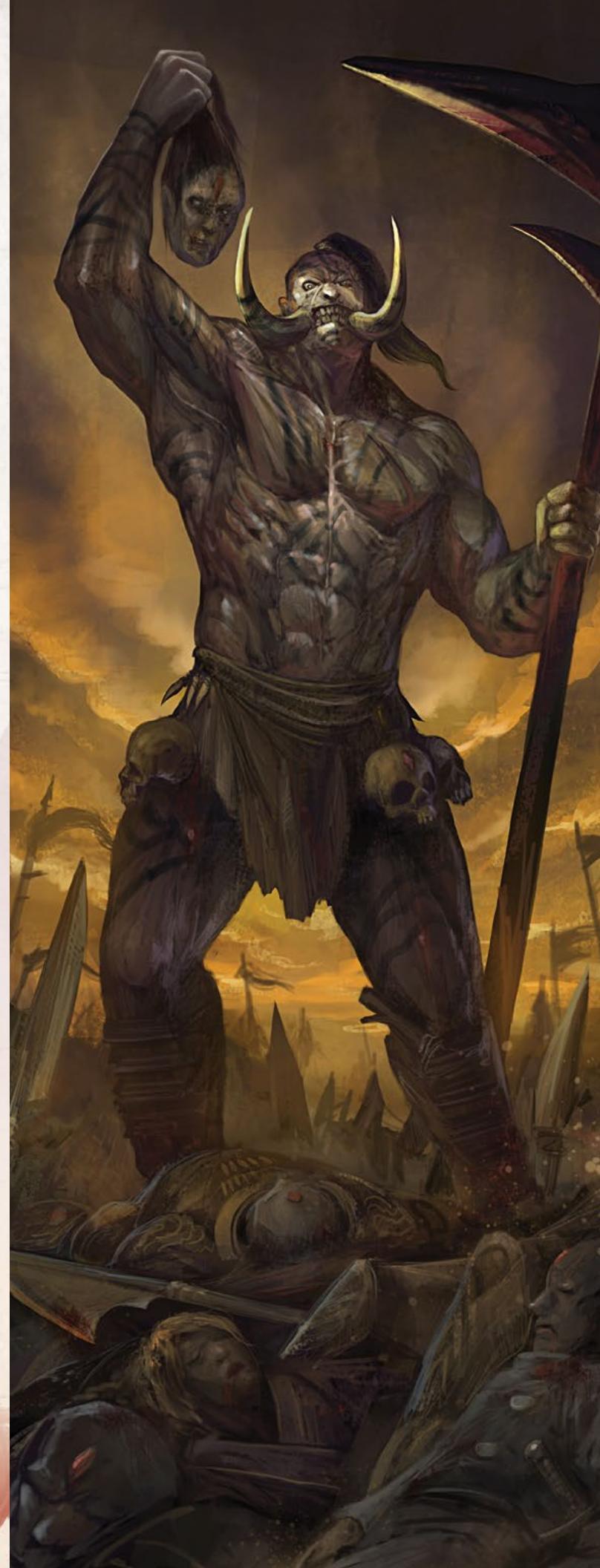
**Cult 2:** Octavian's empire contains enough mortal prayer-slaves to grant him a degree of worship beyond that most demons of his station enjoy, won through conquest and extortion.

**Earth-Beast Talisman:** Octavian wears an acorn talisman around his neck that lets him speak to and command all animals that live upon or burrow beneath the ground—wolves, deer, moles, snakes, beetles, and the like. They will obey to the best of their ability, but they gain no special intelligence or ability to apprehend complex instructions. Should the talisman be taken from him, it crumbles into dust, and a new one begins growing over the course of a season within his palace in Hell.

#### *Offensive Charms*

**Crimson Spray Blur** (10m, 4i; Simple; Instant; Decisive-only; Essence 6): With a stroke of his staff, Equitable Resolution, Octavian reduces the arms, wings, or heads of his enemies to nothing more than a bloody mist. Crimson Spray Blur doubles the total damage of a close range **decisive** attack unless its victim accepts a crippling injury (p. 201). She must accept an injury that cancels the most damage possible from the attack to avoid the doubled damage. This does not count against the once per story limitation on taking crippling injuries. Once per fight, unless reset by crashing an enemy.

**Falling Tower Rain** (7m, 1wp; Simple; Instant; Withering-only; Essence 6): Octavian batters an enemy with re-



peated blows from his staff or a rapid series of pummeling strikes. Count the extra successes on his **withering** attack roll. Instead of adding them to the raw damage of the attack, Octavian multiplies the final damage of the attack by the number of extra successes (or adds a point of damage, if he only received one extra success). The damage added by this Charm does not award points of Initiative to Octavian. Once per fight, unless reset by landing a **decisive** attack while at Initiative 12+ and then building up to Initiative 17+.

**Horizon-Hurled Stars** (15m, 1i; Reflexive; Instant; Decisive-only; Essence 6): When Octavian deals 3+ levels of damage to an enemy with a close range **decisive** attack or throws a grappled enemy to deal **decisive** damage, he may hurl them two range bands back from himself, or knock them into the air to fall at his feet. Either way, that character is knocked prone, and suffers damage as though she had fallen from medium range (p. 197). Octavian may also choose to hurl an enemy at a character within medium range, in which case the damage is split evenly between the two. The targeted enemy may avoid being hit by the hurtling body of her ally by applying an Evasion high enough to defend against Octavian's original roll for the attack.

**Infernal Might Unleashed** (2m+; Reflexive; Instant; Essence 4): Octavian may add up to three successes to any roll at a cost of two motes per success. If he is either upholding an Intimacy, spending Willpower to add a success to the roll, or paying for a Charm that enhances it, he may instead purchase up to five successes.

**Mountain-Breaking Roar** (15m, 1wp; Simple; Instant; Decisive-only; Essence 6): Octavian's roar blasts solid rock apart and bursts still-beating hearts inside the chests of those who hear it. Once an enemy has attacked Octavian, the demon may use this Charm to make a **decisive** attack against them from out to long range, rolling fifteen dice for the attack roll. The attack has a raw damage of (10 + extra success), adding an additional die for every range band between Octavian and the target. Making this attack does not reset Octavian to base Initiative. Once per fight, unless reset by being hit with a **decisive** attack made from medium range or further.

**Principle of Motion** (10m, 1wp; Reflexive; Instant; Essence 2): Octavian moves with blinding speed, taking a flurry without the usual restrictions—he may flurry two of the same action if desired, and it ignores the usual penalties to dice pools and Defense.

**Reigning Terror Majesty** (8m; Reflexive; Instant; Perilous; Essence 6): Upon successfully making a social influence roll to threaten a major enemy such as an Exalt in

combat, or lethally incapacitating a non-trivial enemy, Octavian may use this Charm to roll Join Battle. Once per fight, unless reset by recovering from Initiative Crash.

#### Defensive Charms

**Invincible Iron Bastion** (7m; Reflexive; Instant; Essence 6): When attacked, Octavian may roll his Initiative. For every success, he may pay a point of Initiative to add +1 Parry against the attack (to a maximum of +5 Parry). A mundane weapon that is blocked this way is destroyed; against an artifact weapon, Octavian may instead reflexively attempt a disarm gambit as a counterattack, adding all of the wielder's successes on the attack roll as bonus dice to his Initiative roll.

**Superior Strength Reversal** (10m, 2i; Reflexive; Instant; Clash, Perilous; Essence 6): Octavian may reflexively make a clash attack to grapple an enemy, grabbing her by her weapon or outstretched arm as she strikes at him. Succeeding on the clash roll adds all of Octavian's extra successes as bonus dice on the control roll and allows him to roll unopposed. Once per scene, unless reset by marking off his final -2 health level.

**The Tower Still Stands** (10m, 4i; Reflexive; Instant; Decisive-only, Perilous; Essence 6): Weathering attacks with unyielding resilience and growing rage, Octavian gains a point of Initiative for every level of damage dealt to him. In addition, if a single attack would deal enough damage to completely fill all his health levels of one type and then spill over to the next, then all excess damage is prevented—but he still gains Initiative from it.

#### Mobility Charms

**Earth-Smiting Stride** (9m; Supplemental; Instant; Essence 4): The earth trembles beneath Octavian's feet as he crosses it. Earth-Smiting Stride doubles 8s on a rush, and allows the total successes of the action to be applied as a reflexive feat of strength to destroy any obstacle between Octavian and his target. Stomping difficult terrain flat so that it can be traversed normally requires 5 successes as a general rule, but the Storyteller can adjust this upward or downward to account for specific types of difficult terrain.

#### Miscellaneous Charms

**Devil-Thews Exertion** (10m, 1wp; Supplemental; Instant; Essence 5): Octavian may convert all dice on a feat of strength to successes, reveling in the strength that is the proof of his superiority over all rivals.

**Hurry Home** (10m, 1wp; Simple; Instant; Essence 1): Octavian fades away and vanishes on his next turn, drawn

instantly to his summoner's side. This Charm is unavailable when Octavian is unbound.

**Materialize** (55m, 1wp; Simple; Instant; Essence 1): Octavian manifests from a crumbling pillar of shattered stone.

**Measure the Wind** (5m; Simple; Instant; Essence 1): Octavian is able to read the nature of anyone who raises weapon or fist against him in battle-readiness.

#### SIGERETH, THE PLAYER OF GAMES, DEMON OF THE SECOND CIRCLE

The demon Sigereth appears as nothing more than a small, elegantly enameled box. When the box opens, her voice—a warm throaty contralto—echoes from deep within. The box holds a seemingly endless supply of game pieces, from intricately painted boards and cards to gem-encrusted dice, pawns and stones. Some are warm and pliable as flesh, others slick and hard as bone. All throb in time with the demon's pulse, for they are a part of her.

A creature of games herself, Sigereth is among the finest gamesters of the demon realm. But as much as she loves games, she may well love gambling more, and she gladly stakes all manner of things—both mundane treasures and intangible qualities—on a throw of the dice. If a mortal wagers himself in a game and loses, they are sucked into the box that is Sigereth and transported to Hell. There the unlucky player becomes one of the demon's soulless servants, a process reversible only by winning the victim's freedom in another game.

**Essence:** 6; **Willpower:** 7

**Join Battle:** 10 dice

**Personal Motes:** 110

**Health Levels:** -0x10/Incap.

#### Sample Intimacies

- Defining Principle: "I enjoy seeing adversaries of great skill in competition."
- Defining Principle: "It is forbidden to win a game by cheating."
- Major Principle: "Intrigue and intricate stratagems trump brute force."
- Major Tie: Games and gambling (Genuine Enjoyment)
- Minor Tie: Her pawns (Expectation of Obedience)

**Actions:** Command: 9 dice; Gaming: 14 dice; Read Intentions: 10 dice; Senses: 8 dice; Social Influence: 9 dice; Strategy: 10 dice

Appearance 4, Resolve 4, Guile 6

#### Combat

Sigereth is incapable of attacking, defending herself,

or moving by default, unless carried by her steadfast servant. She may pay a point of Willpower to levitate for a scene, gaining a combat movement pool of 12 dice and Evasion 5.

Soak/Hardness: 10/5

#### Merits

**Cult 1:** Sigereth is an esoteric demon, little-known in Creation. Her cultists are mostly decadent gamesters and gamblers who have turned to infernalism.

**Incorruptible Arbiter:** Sigereth may treat any influence that opposes or would alter her Defining Principle of "It is forbidden to win a game by cheating" as unacceptable influence—even the commands of a sorcerer who has bound her.

**Steadfast Servant:** When summoned, Sigereth appears in the hands of a hairless, blank-eyed youth with neither breath nor heartbeat, whose wounds bleed a milk-white sap. This is one of her pawns. Despite its slight frame, it is a potent combatant equivalent to a walking statue (p. 500). The servant materializes or dematerializes along with Sigereth. If it is destroyed, she brings forth a new one at the next sunset.

#### Offensive Charms

**The Game is Real** (10m, 1wp; Simple; One scene; Essence 6): Sigereth imposes the rules of a board game upon a battlefield, causing all participants to assume the roles of various game pieces. Combatants use (Intelligence + War) for all combat actions instead of whatever (Attribute + Ability) combination would normally apply. Charms can still be used to make and enhance valid actions, but the limit on bonus dice that can be added by Excellencies or other magic is based on the character's War pool, not their standard dice pool. A character may pay one Initiative to use their normal dice pool for a single action, cheating the rules of the game.

**Pawn-Directing Order** (20m, 3i; Simple; Instant; Essence 6): Sigereth makes a command roll to issue an order to a battle group fighting under her, doubling 8s. She may also add a single bonus die for every point of Initiative a character has spent to violate the rules of The Game is Real since her last turn. If the battle group incapacitates a non-trivial enemy or deals enough damage to an enemy battle group to cause it to lose one or more points of Size, she may roll Join Battle.

**Penalize Transgression** (25m, 1wp; Simple; Instant; Decisive-only; Essence 5): Colors flare across Sigereth's surface and lash out in an arc of rainbow fire. She rolls

fifteen dice to make a **decisive** attack against an enemy who has spent Initiative to bypass the effects of The Game is Real since her last turn. All extra successes on the attack roll are added to the raw damage, and every success both inflicts a level of lethal damage and a point of Initiative damage. All Initiative reaped by this Charm is added to Sigereth's base Initiative when she resets. She may also use this Charm reflexively as a counterattack against any enemy who attacks her.

**Pieces on the Board** (5m, 5i, 1wp; Simple; Instant; Essence 6): A handful of Sigereth's game pieces expand into full-sized guardians. Treat this as a battle group of walking statues (p. 500) with elite Drill, Might 2, perfect morale, and Size of either 1 or that of the largest battle group arrayed against her, whichever is higher. If she is using The Game Is Real, the game pieces (as well as her steadfast servant) use a dice pool of eight dice for all actions. At the end of the scene, the guardians return to the box, game pieces once more. Once per fight, unless reset by the battle group incapacitating a significant enemy. A subsequent use refreshes the battle group to its maximum Size if it still exists, rather than creating a new one.

**Victory-Promoting Rule** (4m, 1i; Reflexive; Instant; Essence 6): Whenever a battle group created with Pieces on the Board incapacitates a non-trivial enemy or deals enough damage to an enemy battle group to cause it to lose one or more points of Size, Sigereth may use this Charm to promote one pawn from that battle group to a champion. It is rolled into battle as a separate character from the battle group, and adds one bonus success to all (Attribute + Ability) rolls it makes for the duration of the scene.

#### Social Charms

**Binding Rule Geasa** (5m, 1wp; Simple; Instant; Psyche; Essence 3): If the loser of a game reneges on whatever agreement was made as to the winner's reward, Sigereth may use this Charm to make a persuade roll against him, adding three bonus successes. Success forces that character to fulfill his obligations. He may only resist if fulfilling his obligations would bring him into conflict with a Major or Defining Intimacy, and he must pay three Willpower to do so.

#### Miscellaneous Charms

**Impose Stakes** (5m, 1wp; Simple; One game; Essence 6): This Charm allows willing participants in a game of skill or chance to wager intangibles on the outcome. Legitimate stakes include skills, memories, relationships, sensory acuity, fractions of one's lifespan, or any other transaction the Storyteller accepts. Mortals may wager their lives against Sigereth, being transformed into her pawns and drawn through

her box into Hell if they fail. These transferences are permanent and irreversible except through further wagers or other powerful magic. The effect fails if any participant is immune to the Charm or was drawn into the game through a Psyche effect or similar mental control. This can be used in concert with The Game is Real, if both sides agreed to the combat beforehand.

**Hurry Home** (10m, 1wp; Simple; Instant; Essence 1): Sigereth fades away and vanishes on her next turn, drawn instantly to her summoner's side. This Charm is unavailable when Sigereth is unbound.

**Materialize** (55m, 1wp; Simple; Instant; Essence 1): Sigereth snaps into view—where there was thin air before, there now rests Sigereth.

**Measure the Wind** (5m; Simple; Instant; Essence 1): Sigereth can take the measure of anyone seeking to game with her.

#### Creatures of the Wyld

##### FAIR FOLK CATAPHRACT

These militant Fair Folk are champions, warriors, predators, and terrors. Fear is their weapon and their banquet. Munificence, for them, is to sup on the cast-off fear of victors and survivors. But when they would drink deep, they cut every shred of courage from a victim's soul and feast on his terror.

Some play at honor. Others are cunning, ruthless, or cruel. All are inhumanly deadly, possessed of unnatural strength and skill, backed with panoplies forged from glamour and dreams. Cataphracts vary in appearance, though coteries and courts tend to share similar forms. They may be leonine desert riders with eyes of fire, queenly warriors astride winged nightmare-beasts, or owl-faced knights driving chariots pulled by naked mortals.

Cataphracts in Creation assume many roles—they may be hunters, tyrants, monsters, or even heroes. Among their own kind, most swear themselves to the service of raksha nobles. Some ride as captains and generals amid armies of lesser Fair Folk. Others are armymasters, bodyguards, or masters of the hunt.

**Essence: 2; Willpower: 7; Join Battle: 11 dice**

**Personal Motes: 20**

**Health Levels:** -0x4/-1x6/-2x6/-4/Icap.

**Actions:** Command Battle Groups: 12 dice; Feats of Strength: 12 dice (may attempt Strength 7 feats); Threaten: 12 dice; Resist Poison/Illness: 12 dice; Senses:

11 dice; Stealth: 6 dice; Strategy: 8 dice; Appearance 4, Resolve 4, Guile 2

### Combat

Attack (Horizon-cutter sword): 16 dice (Damage 16, minimum damage 2)  
 Attack (Curdling dream bow): 14 dice at short range (Damage 16)  
 Attack (Grapple): 10 dice (9 dice to control)  
 Combat Movement: 8 dice (12 dice while mounted)  
 Evasion 3, Parry 7  
 Soak/Hardness: 14/0

### Merits

**Cold Iron Bane:** Weapons made of iron deal aggravated damage to the raksha, but most armies in Creation use bronze or steel weaponry.

**Fae Nature:** As a raksha, the cataphract is ageless and need not eat or drink. Its body heals as one of the Exalted and cannot die from mundane disease, but does need to breathe and sleep as mortals do. In Creation, it slowly withers and calcifies to death, but can stave off this fate indefinitely by feeding on mortal souls. It is incapable of breaking the letter of a sworn promise.

### Offensive Charms

**Dreadful Fanged Maelstrom Approach** (6m, 1wp; Reflexive; Instant; Decisive-only; Essence 2): After successfully making a close range **decisive** attack with at least one extra success, the cataphract may use this Charm to splinter into a thousand dancing reflections, dividing the extra successes among any number of enemies within short range. The raksha makes one damage roll, applying it against the main target and any enemy whose Defense was overcome by the extra successes assigned to it. At the end, the raksha resets to base Initiative and may reform at any point within short range of where it began.

**Insidious Terror Mien** (3m, Supplemental; Instant; Dual; Essence 1): Corrosive nightmares bubble up from the raksha's weapon, forcing the victim to confront their worst nightmare in his stead. The enemy uses his Resolve (modified by applicable Intimacies) in place of his soak and hardness against the attack, if it is lower. Characters with a Major or Defining Intimacy representing courage, valor, or a similar resilience to fear may pay a point of Willpower to become immune to this Charm for a scene.

**Marching Fever Dream Nightmare** (10m; Simple; One scene; Essence 2): The cataphract weaves dreamstuff and the dregs of nightmares into a makeshift army, a legion of

faceless soldiers or a parade of monstrous grotesques. It makes a command roll, creating a battle group with the traits of battle-ready soldiers (pp. 496-497) and rolling it into battle. The battle group has one point of Size for every two successes on the roll (maximum 5), Average drill, and gains Might 1 if fighting in the Wyld. The marching fever dream is vulnerable to iron weaponry—an enemy armed with it treats the battle group as having Defense 0, and may move through its space without paying Initiative, carving a swathe through the illusionary forces. The battle group dissipates at the end of the scene. Once per fight.

### Defensive Charms

**Storm-Slaying Rebuke** (2m, 2i; Reflexive; Instant; Counterattack, Decisive-only; Essence 1): All onslaught penalties to the cataphract's Defense are cancelled against a single attack. At an onslaught penalty of -3 or greater, a successful defense allows the raksha to respond with a **decisive** counterattack.

**Writhing Ego Inversion** (7m; Reflexive; Instant, Essence 1): The cataphract adds its current temporary Willpower to its soak against a **withering** attack, or subtracts half that value from the raw damage of a **decisive** attack. Once per fight unless reset by paying Willpower to add a success to an attack or defense.

### FAIR FOLK LORELEI

Inhumanly beautiful, impossibly lovely, these faerie tempters wield desire as a weapon. They embrace mortals in order to feed on love and lust, infatuation and longing. But their affection is not kindness; their warmth is not pity. While a rare few loreleis learn to live with equanimity in mortal society, subsisting on a taste of passion here and there, their wild kin crave it all. To fall into such hands is to perish of pleasure—to have dreams and soul alike wrung out over weeks of exquisite torment, or devoured in an instant amid the throes of ecstasy.

Each direction has its own loreleis. Those of the West, draped in pearls and shells, sing sweetly to fisherfolk and sailors to lure them onto the rocks. Flower-decked Eastern loreleis, hypnotic and pitiless as serpents, draw their prey into the woods with their eyes alone. Bejeweled southern loreleis entice travelers to glamourous oases, offering kisses cool as water. The naked, supple bodies of northern loreleis are fiery and warm amid the snow.

Wild loreleis may ply their trade alone, or gather in coteries to coax whole caravans into the sands or to sing shipfuls of sailors to their deaths. Others serve as courtiers in the freeholds of the Fair Folk. There they dance and preen, carouse and gossip, scheme and intrigue, all in the service

of the raksha nobility. These serve as their masters' playthings, but the leash of addiction and the reins of desire can reverse this role, bending the master to the lorelei's will.

**Essence:** 2; **Willpower:** 7; **Join Battle:** 8 dice

**Personal Notes:** 20

**Health Levels:** -0/-1x2/-2x2/-4/Icap

**Actions:** Disguise: 12 dice; Inspire: 14 dice; Instill or Persuade: 13 dice; Read Intentions: 12 dice; Seduction: 16 dice; Senses: 12 dice; Stealth: 11 dice; Appearance 7, Resolve 5, Guile 7

### Combat

Attack (Glittering knives): 12 dice at close range (11)  
 Combat Movement: 7 dice  
 Evasion 5, Parry 3  
 Soak/Hardness: 6/0

### Merits

**Cold Iron Bane:** Weapons made of iron deal aggravated damage to the raksha, but most armies in Creation use bronze or steel weaponry.

**Fae Nature:** As a raksha, the lorelei is ageless and need not eat or drink. Its body heals as one of the Exalted and cannot die from mundane disease, but does need to breathe and sleep as mortals do. In Creation, it slowly withers and calcifies to death, but can stave off this fate indefinitely by feeding on mortal souls. It is incapable of breaking the letter of a sworn promise.

### Social Charms

**Beguiling Idyll** (5m, 1wp; Supplemental; Instant; Psyche; Essence 2): When the raksha inspires a character, it may also cloud his mind to obfuscate any dangers or perils that contradict the inspired mood. An infatuated sailor might be blinded to the danger of the sea that separates him from the object of his desire, while an enraged hero might fail to notice the lorelei's hobgoblin bodyguards. This alone will not force characters into dangerous courses of action, but it makes persuasion easier. Convincing a captain to wreck his ship against the rocks would normally be unacceptable no matter how alluring the lorelei is, but if he is made blind to their danger, it would only be an inconvenient task. Resisting the deceiving inspiration costs three Willpower. If another character points out the danger, the cost to resist is lowered by one point, and touching iron also lowers the cost by one.

**Heart-Eating Kiss** (1m, 1wp, Reflexive; Instant; Psyche; Essence 1): Whenever a character engages the raksha in a passionate kiss or intercourse, the lorelei may use this

Charm to force an opposed roll of (Essence + current temporary Willpower). A victim who loses becomes obsessed with the lorelei as a Major Derangement (p. 168). Characters with permanent Willpower lower than the raksha gain the Derangement at the Defining level instead.

**Thousand Tiny Hooks Technique** (4m; Supplemental; Instant; Essence 2): When the raksha receives bonus dice from its Appearance on an instill or persuade action, it may exchange bonus dice to increase the cost to resist, trading two bonus dice to add one Willpower to the cost to resist (maximum three Willpower).

**Untouchable Performer Technique** (5m; Supplemental; Instant; Essence 1): The lorelei may use its instill pool to roll Join Battle. In addition to determining starting Initiative, this builds a Tie of adoration in characters whose Resolve is overcome. Characters that do not resist this influence will not fight against the raksha, and will attempt to restrain or talk sense into allies who try to do so. They will not violently turn against their allies unless they have been instilled with a Defining Tie towards the raksha.

### HOBGOBLIN

These twisted creatures swarm like hounds in the vanguard of raksha hunting parties, or slink like jackals in their wake. Others, separated from their masters over the years, lurk alone or in packs throughout Creation's wilderness. Though the details of their appearance vary from place to place—furred and bestial in the North, scaly and jewel-bright amid the Eastern jungles and the Southern sands, finned and gilled in the West or by the Dreaming Sea—they typically appear as gnarled manlike things with twisted dexterous limbs and viciously sharp talons and teeth.

Though hobgoblins can sustain themselves on the radiant energies of chaos, they find the terror of humankind far more nourishing. In combat, they flurry attacks with threaten actions to enrich that banquet of fear, play cat-and-mouse games with their victims rather than effect a clean kill, and carry off prisoners whenever possible to torture at their leisure.

**Essence:** 1; **Willpower:** 4; **Join Battle:** 6 dice

**Health Levels:** -0/-1x2/-2x2/-4/Icap

**Actions:** Feats of Strength: 6 dice (may attempt Strength 3 feats); Resist Poison/Disease: 6 dice; Senses: 4 dice; Stealth: 4 dice; Threaten: 6 dice; Appearance 3 (Hideous), Resolve 2, Guile 1

### Combat

Attack (Bite): 7 dice (Damage 14)

Attack (Talons) 9 dice (Damage 12)

Attack (Grapple): 9 dice (8 dice to control)

Combat Movement: 6 dice  
 Evasion 5, Parry 3  
 Soak/Hardness: 5/0

#### Special Attacks

**Nightmare Ravages:** Fear is a banquet to the hobgoblins. When the hobgoblin makes a **decisive** attack against an enemy it has successfully threatened earlier in the fight or that has an applicable Tie of fear, it gains a point of Willpower upon resetting to base Initiative. Hobgoblin battle groups instead regain a point of Magnitude when they deal **decisive** damage to a frightened enemy in Initiative Crash (this cannot increase their Size).

**Sadistic Fervor:** Hobgoblins relish the pain of living things. When a hobgoblin pays Willpower to add a success to an attack or rush against an enemy capable of feeling pain, it may add that enemy's current wound penalty in bonus dice to the roll.

#### Merits

**Cold Iron Bane:** Weapons made of iron deal aggravated damage to hobgoblins.

#### SILVERWIGHT

Packs of silverwights hunt at the edges of the world, loping on limbs so slender as to seem malnourished. Shriveled, predatory things with reverse-jointed limbs and a vaguely canid skull, they come up to knee-height on grown men, making it easy for them to stalk their prey unseen. The argent gleam of fang and claw—every bone in their bodies, in fact—gives them their name. Though they hunt in packs, they are no animals. Each silverwight is of near-human intelligence in its own right, and they share a collective overmind they call the dreamweft, a nexus of sensation and emotion that unifies them all. The eerily silent coordination of a silverwight pack makes them favorite minions of some raksha warriors, who send them hunting after enemies in the shadows.

It is a common taboo among knowledgeable tribes to forbid pregnant woman from traveling the Wyld or Creation's uncanny, haunted reaches, for labor pangs draw the silverwights. The mother and her companions are almost inevitably devoured, but the infant child is brought back to the silverwights' glassy warrens with almost tender care. A baby's soft, undeveloped mind can be brought into the dreamweft. This does no harm to the child (who will usually be returned under cover of night to some borderland village or settlement) save for granting it transient flashes of alien emotion and abstract hallucinations. As the baby grows and leads a full human life, its experiences and passions nourish the dreamweft, feeding the silverwights as a whole.

**Essence: 1; Willpower: 3; Join Battle: 5 dice**

**Health Levels:** -0/-1/-2/-4/Icap.

**Actions:** Senses: 5 dice; Stealth: 6 dice (see Tiny Creature); Tracking: 4 dice (see Birthing Call); Appearance 2 (Hideous), Resolve 1, Guile 2

#### Combat

Attack (Bite): 5 dice (Damage 12)  
 Attack (Claws): 9 dice (Damage 8)  
 Combat Movement: 8 dice  
 Evasion 4, Parry 3 (see Tiny Creature)  
 Soak/Hardness: 3/0

#### Special Attacks

**Pack Hunting:** Silverwights add one success to attack rolls for every allied silverwight or other Wyld creature in close range to its victim, to a maximum of three successes. They may pay a point of Willpower to also add that many dice to the raw damage of a **decisive** attack, as flanking allies take opportunistic swipes at victims.

#### Merits

**Birthing Call:** Silverwights can sense a woman's labor pains from hundreds of miles away in the thin places of the world, and add three successes on rolls to track her down. While they will eagerly attack and devour anyone accompanying the mother, they will not harm her, and may even aid in difficult deliveries. Once the child has been born, the mother is fair game.

**Cold Iron Bane:** Weapons made of iron deal aggravated damage to the silverwight—and, curiously, to any children brought into the dreamweft.

**Dreamweft:** All silverwights partake in a shared higher consciousness, allowing them to communicate sensory experiences or emotional states to each other across distances of miles. Any roll that could benefit from this, such as a (Perception + Awareness) roll to notice a hidden enemy that another silverwight has spotted, benefits from double 8s. Silverwight battle groups have elite Drill because of the extraordinary coordination this entails.

**Tiny Creature:** Silverwights add +2 Evasion against any attack made by a larger foe. In addition, larger characters subtract two successes from any Awareness-based roll made to notice them.

#### BUCK-OGRE

These grotesque, two-headed brutes haunt the Northeastern woods and scrublands. Each is as large as a bull, its hirsute manlike torso supported by goatish legs, with a pair

of wild-eyed bucks' heads sprouting from its shoulders. A charge with its forward-pointing antlers can eviscerate a mammoth. But these are intelligent tool-using creatures, relying more often on massive weapons such as axes, hammers, clubs, and spears. Buck-ogres may raid human settlements for metal or sophisticated goods, or for food in times of deprivation, but generally avoid needless aggression—unless driven forward by the lash of a raksha master.

**Essence:** 1; **Willpower:** 5; **Join Battle:** 8 dice

**Health Levels:** -0x2/-1x4/-2x4/-4/Icap. Buck-ogres are fearless but not suicidal, and will attempt to escape after taking 6+ levels of damage.

**Actions:** Feats of Strength: 11 dice (may attempt Strength 7 feats); Senses: 8 dice (see Two-Headed); Threaten: 8 dice; Tracking: 9 dice  
Appearance 2 (Hideous), Guile 1, Resolve 4

### Combat

Attack (Great axe): 7 dice (Damage 18)

Attack (Shield bash): 8 dice (Damage 16)

Attack (Antlers): 8 dice (Damage 16)

Attack (Grapple): 6 dice (11 dice to control)

Combat Movement: 5 dice

Evasion 2, Parry 5 (see Two-Headed)

Soak/Hardness: 13/0 (Makeshift armor)

### Special Attacks

**Dual Strikes:** A buck-ogre may pay a point of Willpower to make a flurry of two different attacks. Each attack must

have a different target and be made using a different weapon. A buck-ogre wielding a shield may instead flurry an attack with a full defense action.

**Gore:** The buck-ogre's **decisive** antler attacks add extra successes to damage against enemies with lower Initiative, as long as it has not taken any other actions (including reflexive movement actions) that turn.

### Merits

**Mighty Thews:** A buck-ogre can wield a two-handed weapon in one hand, and never suffers off-hand penalties. Some use this to wield a shield along with a heavy weapon, while others dual-wield massive weapons.

**Two-Headed:** A buck-ogre doubles 9s on any Perception-based roll where having two heads would be of use, such as spotting an enemy trying to hide behind it. It also halves any onslaught penalties.

### MANTICORE

Southern nomads know a scorpion's sting threatens more than those it slays. They dispose of such bodies as quickly and thoroughly as possible, whether by cremation, dismemberment or feeding the remains to wolves and jackals. When the hero Ghufran lay dying in the deep desert, he commanded his escort to consume his flesh for their own safety. For if a lion devours a scorpion-slain corpse, sometimes the powers of the Wyld transform the beast into that most terrible of creatures—a manticore.



The manticore has a lion's body, the head of the devoured mortal, and a scorpion's tail. It hunts alone, springing on prey from ambush to bite and sting. Manticores have no fear of mortals or any other creature. Their venom is far deadlier than any mundane scorpion, capable of taking down a bull elephant in seconds, and only supernatural stamina or healing magic can save a victim. When cornered by a manticore, a mortal's one slim hope is clever repartee, for the beast is as intelligent and capable of conversation as the scorpion-stung mortal it once devoured.

**Essence:** 1; **Willpower:** 5; **Join Battle:** 10 dice

**Health Levels:** -0x2/-1x4/-2x4/-4x2/Icap.

**Actions:** Consumed Knowledge: 5 dice; Feats of Strength: 10 dice (may attempt Strength 5 feats); Senses: 6 dice; Social Influence: 8 dice; Stealth: 7 dice; Tracking: 6 dice; Appearance 4 (Hideous), Resolve 5, Guile 3

### Combat

Attack (Bite): 9 dice (Damage 16)

Attack (Claw): 13 dice (Damage 12)

Attack (Sting): 8 dice (Damage 11 and poison  
when **decisive**, damage 3i/round, duration 5 rounds, -2  
penalty)

Attack (Grapple): 9 dice (10 dice to control).

Manticores cannot throw or slam grappled enemies.

Combat Movement: 8 dice

Evasion 5, Parry 4

Soak/Hardness: 9/0

### Special Attacks

**Leaping Pounce:** If a manticore moves into close range with an enemy of the same size or smaller and deals 5+ damage to it with a **withering** attack on the same turn, it may pay a point of Willpower to reflexively make a clinch attack against its prey.

**Scorpion Lash:** When the manticore savages a grappled enemy with a **decisive** sting attack, that character does not receive a roll to resist its poison.

### The Exalted

A sworn brotherhood of monster-slayers, armed with century-old weapons of jade and wreathed in auras of elemental fury. A monstrous hunter that stalks the night, ripping throats with bare fangs and calling nightmares to fight by his side. A harmless-seeming drunkard whose straw hat's brim hides starry eyes that have seen a future

that must be stopped. From the returned Lawgivers of the Unconquered Sun to the countless Dragon-Blooded soldiers of the Realm, the most dangerous foe that any Exalt can face is another of her own kind. There are no weak Exalted, though not all of them focus their strength in raw battle-prowess. Each of the Chosen is a sort of demigod, a human hero raised up and made mighty by some force divine or unholy. An Exalted enemy is a deadly threat to face—they fight with the strength of a god and the ferocity of a demon, use social influence to subvert the alliances and plans of their enemies while consolidating power for themselves, and can scheme with cunning and savvy to shame the Fair Folk. At the same time, not all Exalted need be enemies, even to the returned Solars—some might appear as willing companions, wary observers, patrons with ulterior motives, or unlikely allies who share a common goal. The power, versatility, and humanity of the Exalted makes them excellent candidates for a role as recurring Storyteller characters in a game, and can be embellished and fleshed-out more than the usual quick character would be—at the bare minimum, every Exalt should have a name and a desire.

While the quick characters below approximate the capabilities and strengths of the various Chosen, each possesses a full set of Charms comparable to that of the Solar Exalted in scope, if not in power. More details will appear in later books dedicated to specific Exalted, such as the forthcoming **Dragon-Blooded—What Fire Has Wrought**.

### ESSENCE CHEAT SHEET

Here's a quick reference for how many motes a given Exalt will have at a particular Essence rating. More specific details are given in each section.

SOLAR AND ABYSSAL EXALTED		
Essence	Personal	Peripheral
1	13	33
2	16	40
3	19	47
4	22	54
5	25	61

**DRAGON-BLOODED**

Essence	Personal	Peripheral
1	12	27
2	13	31
3	14	35
4	15	39
5	16	43

**SIDEREAL EXALTED**

Essence	Personal	Peripheral
1	11	31
2	13	37
3	15	43
4	17	49
5	19	55

**LIMAL EXALTED**

Essence	Personal	Peripheral
1	13	27
2	16	31
3	19	35
4	22	39
5	25	43

**LUNAR EXALTED**

Essence	Personal	Peripheral
1	16	38
2	17	42
3	18	46
4	19	50
5	20	54

**THE DRAGON-BLOODED**

The Chosen of the Dragons are the most numerous Exalted found in Creation. They command the legions of the Realm and Lookshy; they lead the dreaded Wyld Hunt in pursuit of Anathema; they vie for power amid the intrigues of empires and reign as Princes of the Earth. They are among the most common Exalted antagonists that many Solars will face. While they are individually weaker than the Celestial Exalted, the advantage of numbers, experience, and worldly power makes them a force not to be underestimated.

**ESSENCE**

Dragon-Blooded have a personal mote pool equal to (Essence + 11), and a peripheral pool equal to ([Essence x 4] + 23).

**EXCELLENCIES**

The Dragon-Blooded can use their Essence to fortify their mortal skills much as the Solar Exalted can (p. 255). While the heights of prowess they can attain are not as high, they can seize triumph from the jaws of defeat with great exertion of will. The maximum number of dice they can add to a roll is equal to the Ability used, +1 if they have an applicable specialty. After making a roll, the Dragon-Blood may

pay a point of Willpower to reroll up to (Essence) dice that came up failures, paying one mote for each re-rolled die. Thus, an Essence 2 Dragon-Blooded with Dexterity 5, Melee 5 (Specialty: Swords) could raise his melee dice pools by up to +6 dice. After rolling, he could spend one point of Willpower and up to two motes to re-roll two failed dice.

**DRAGON-BLOODED QC DICE LIMITS**

Dice Pool	Excellency Limit
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1-2	+0
3-6	+2
7-10	+4
11-14	+6

When enhancing a static value, a Terrestrial Exalt can raise it by up to a maximum of (Ability used, +1 if they possess an applicable specialty) / 2, round down. Thus, a Dragon-Blooded with Dexterity 5, Dodge 5 (Specialty: Avoiding Arrows) dodging an Archery attack could raise his Evasion by up to 3 points.

**DRAGON-BLOODED QC STATIC VALUE LIMITS**

Static Value	Excellency Limit
0-1	+0
2-3	+1
4-5	+2
6-7	+3

**ANIMA FLUX**

The animas of the Dragon-Blooded manifest as roiling auras of elemental power, capable of laying waste to the scenery around them and posing a potent danger to those who'd fight them. This destructive force is known as anima flux. While the Dragon-Blood's anima is flaring at the bonfire/iconic level, she rolls one die on each turn to inflict **withering** damage on all non-Dragon-Blooded within close range. This die instead inflicts lethal damage to enemies in Initiative Crash and trivial opponents. Anyone with at least hardness 1 ignores anima flux.

**YOUNG DYNAST**

This quick character can represent a young Dragon-Blood of the Realm, fresh out of secondary school and trained in combat, warfare, and social intrigues, but still relatively weak in supernatural might.

**Essence:** 1; **Willpower:** 5; **Join Battle:** 6 dice (+2 for 2m)

**Personal Motes:** 12; **Peripheral Motes:** 27

**Health Levels:** -0/-1x2/-2x2/-4/Icap.

**Actions:** Commanding Soldiers: 9 dice (+4 for 4m); Feats of Strength: 7 dice (+4 for 4m, may attempt Strength 3 feats); Read Intentions: 6 dice (+2 for 2m); Senses: 5 dice (+2 for 2m); Social Influence: 7 dice (+4 for 4m)

Appearance 3, Resolve 3 (+1 for 2m)

Guile 4 (+2 for 4m)

**Combat**

Attack (Jade daiklave): 9 dice (+4 for 4m; damage 15, minimum 5)

Combat Movement: 5 dice (+2 for 2m; 10 dice while mounted on a warhorse, +4 for 4m)

Evasion 1, Parry 4 (+2 for 4m)

Soak/Hardness: 11/7 (Jade lamellar)

**Offensive Charms**

**Raging Firestorm Blade** (6m, 3a; Supplemental; Instant; Dual): While anima is at bonfire, discharge it to convert all post-soak damage dice of a **withering** attack to successes, or one die on a **decisive** damage roll to a success. Resets anima to dim.

**Stoking Bonfire Style** (2m; Supplemental; Instant; Dual):

A burst of flames add four dice to the raw damage of a **withering** attack, or one die to a **decisive** attack. At Initiative 11+, add two dice to **decisive** damage instead.

**Social Charms**

**Loyalty-Reading Meditation** (3m; Supplemental; Instant): When reading a character's intentions to determine where her loyalties lie, any applicable Intimacies modify her Guile as though it were her Resolve.

**Overwhelming Presence Approach** (2m; Supplemental; Instant): Add one to the Resolve penalty from a social influence target's Ties to the Dragon-Blood, or Intimacies that relate to a strong passion against an influence roll.

**SHIKARI OF THE WYLD HUNT**

The following quick characters can represent monks of the Immaculate Order, trained in the deadly Elemental Dragon styles. A Wyld Hunt led by one of these shikari can threaten even a skilled warrior of the Solar Exalted. A group of them working together present a peril that might overwhelm even a full circle of young Solars.

**IMMACULATE OF AIR**

**Essence:** 2; **Willpower:** 6; **Join Battle:** 6 dice (+2 for 2m)

**Personal Motes:** 13; **Peripheral Motes:** 31

**Health Levels:** -0/-1x3/-2x3/-4/Icap.

**Actions:** Feats of Strength: 6 dice (+2 for 2m, may attempt Strength 3 feats); Senses: 6 dice (+2 for 2m); Stealth: 8 dice (+4 for 4m)

Appearance 2, Resolve 3 (+1 for 2m), Guile 1

**Combat**

Attack (Unarmed): 14 dice (+6 for 6m; damage 10)

Attack (Jade chakram): 14 dice at short range (+6 for 6m; damage 13, minimum 3)

Attack (Grapple): 10 dice (+4 for 4m; 8 dice to control, +4 for 4m)

Combat Movement: 7 dice (+4 for 4m)

Evasion 5 (+2 for 4m), Parry 5 (+2 for 4m)

Soak/Hardness: 7/4 (Jade chain shirt)

**Offensive Charms**

**Air Dragon Form** (9m; Simple; One scene): The Immaculate's unarmed attacks add +2 **withering** damage and extend to short range through pulses of air or cutting winds. Chakram attacks convert aim dice to successes. She adds +1 Evasion and one success on movement actions.

**Avenging Wind Strike** (3m, 1wp; Supplemental; Instant; Uniform): Double 8s on damage against a close range enemy and knock them back two range bands to fall prone. At short range, double 9s and knock back one range band.

**Breath-Seizing Technique** (3m; Supplemental; Instant; Stackable, Withering-only): A **withering** attack that deals more damage than its target's Stamina inflicts a cumulative -1 penalty on physical actions for the rest of the scene. If the penalty rises over a character's Stamina, they begin to suffocate (p. 232), but only pass out for the rest of the scene, rather than dying, if they run out of air. Each time the target gains 5+ Initiative from a **withering** attack, this penalty decreases by one.

**Wrathful Winds Maneuver** (6m, 3i; Simple; Instant): Shouting or slamming hands together creates a sonic environmental hazard applied against all enemies in medium range. Hazard is difficulty 3 to resist, damage 3B. Once per fight, unless reset by making a successful **decisive** attack and building up to Initiative 13+.

#### Defensive Charms

**Air Dragon's Sight** (3m; Reflexive; Instant): The Immaculate may ignore up to -3 in penalties to her Evasion. Penalties imposed by unexpected attacks are canceled without counting towards the maximum.

**Wind Dragon's Speed** (4m; Supplemental; Instant): Double 9s on movement action; waive Initiative cost of successful disengage action if all opposing characters have lower Initiative.

#### IMMACULATE OF EARTH

**Essence:** 2; **Willpower:** 7; **Join Battle:** 6 dice (+2 for 2m)

**Personal Motes:** 13; **Peripheral Motes:** 31

**Health Levels:** -0/-1x4/-2x4/-4/Icap.

**Actions:** Command Immaculate Monks: 10 dice (+4 for 4m); Feats of Strength: 8 dice (+4 for 4m, may attempt Strength 3 feats); Preaching the Immaculate Faith: 9 dice (+4 for 4m); Resist Poison/Illness: 7 dice (+4 for 4m); Senses: 7 dice (+4 for 4m)

Appearance 1, Resolve 4 (+2 for 4m), Guile 1

#### Combat

Attack (Unarmed): 12 dice (+6 for 6m; damage 11)

Attack (Jade tetsubo): 12 dice (+6 for 6m; damage 18, minimum 5)

Attack (Grapple): 8 dice (+4 for 4m; 9 dice to control, +4 for 4m)

Combat Movement: 4 dice (+2 for 2m)

Evasion 0, Parry 6 (+3 for 6m)  
Soak/Hardness: 16/10 (Jade articulated plate)

#### Offensive Charms

**Earth Dragon Form** (8m; Simple; One scene): Add +2 dice to smashing attack rolls and attacks against prone enemies. Add +4 soak, and gain soak 2 against **decisive** attacks made by enemies with lower Initiative. May reflexively protect allies in close range against attacks made by lower-Initiative enemies as per a Defend Other action.

**Earthshaker Attack** (5m, 1wp; Simple; Instant; Decisive-only): Create a seismic tremor forcing all enemies in short range to make a (Dexterity + Athletics) roll at difficulty 4 or fall prone, losing two points of Initiative to the martial artist. Then, focus the tremor into a **decisive** attack against one enemy. Once per fight, unless reset by gaining 10+ Initiative in a single round.

**Force of the Mountain** (4m; Supplemental; Instant; Dual): Add two dice to the post-soak damage of a **withering** attack, or double up to two 9s or 10s on a **decisive** damage roll. Against prone enemies, this increases to four.

**Shattering Strike** (2m, 1wp; Supplemental; Instant; Withering-only): Subtract -8 from the armored soak of an enemy. On a feat of strength to destroy something, allows the Immaculate to attempt feats one category higher than their Strength rating and adds one non-Charm success.

**Stillness of Stone Atemi** (6m; Supplemental; Instant; Withering-only): Double 9s on a **withering** damage roll. The Immaculate gains no Initiative, but inflicts a -1 mobility penalty for every 4 points of damage that lasts until the end of the enemy's next turn, or for the duration of Initiative Crash if caused by the attack.

#### Defensive Charms

**Stone Dragon's Skin** (5m; Reflexive; Until next turn; Perilous): Add +4 soak and +2 hardness until next turn. This explicitly stacks with existing hardness.

**Unmoving Mountain Stance** (3m; Reflexive; Instant; Perilous): Deny an attacker up to 2 points of Initiative they would normally gain from a successful **withering** attack. Also negates being knocked prone or back by an attack unless it dealt 5+ damage.

#### IMMACULATE OF FIRE

**Essence:** 2; **Willpower:** 5; **Join Battle:** 7 dice (+4 for 4m)



**Personal Motes:** 13; **Peripheral Motes:** 31

**Health Levels:** -0/-1x2/-2x3/-4/Incap.

**Actions:** Feats of Strength: 6 dice (+2 for 2m, may attempt Strength 3 feats); Intimidation: 8 dice (+4 for 4m); Senses: 4 dice (+2 for 2m)

Appearance 3, Resolve 4 (+2 for 4m), Guile 4 (+2 for 4m)

### Combat

Attack (Unarmed): 14 dice (+6 for 6m; damage 11)  
Attack (Short daiklaves): 14 dice (+6 for 6m; damage 14, minimum 3)

Attack (Grapple): 10 dice (+4 for 4m; 9 dice to control, +4 for 4m)

Combat Movement: 9 dice (+4 for 4m)

Evasion 3 (+1 for 2m), Parry 6 (+3 for 6m)

Soak/Hardness: 10/7 (Jade reinforced buff jacket)

### Offensive Charms

**Essence-Igniting Strike** (5m; Supplemental; Instant; Decisive-only): Add enemy's Essence to the raw damage of a **decisive** attack; double the bonus against an enemy with a full personal Essence pool. Once per fight, unless reset by parrying an attack enhanced with 10+ motes worth of magic.

**Fiery Blade Attack** (3m, 1wp; Simple; Instant; One scene): Ignite a bonfire (p. 230) around an enemy upon successfully landing a **decisive** attack. She must disengage to move out of the fire even if no opponents are in close range (difficulty of Dragon-Blooded's Essence) and subtracts two successes from her roll. The fires burn until the enemy moves out of them.

**Fire Dragon Form** (9m; Simple; One scene): Enemies with an Initiative three points or more below the Immaculate's own take a -2 onslaught penalty to Defense against him, while the Martial Artist gains +1 Parry against their attacks.

**Flash-Fire Technique** (4m; Reflexive; Instant): Roll the Immaculate's Initiative at the start of a round. Each success raises his turn by one tick in round order, and he doubles 10s on **decisive** damage rolls against enemies with lower Initiative. He gains 2 Initiative if he acts before all enemies. Must wait three rounds to use again, unless reset by making a **decisive** attack.

**Perfect Blazing Blow** (1m per die doubled; Reflexive; Instant; Uniform): After an attack roll, the Immaculate can pay one mote to double a 9. Against enemies with lower Initiative, he can double an additional 9 for every two points he has over their Initiative, paying one mote per 9 doubled. He can double 8s against enemies in Initiative Crash.

## TERRESTRIAL ANIMAS

The elemental auras of the Dragon-Blooded seem much more rough-hewn than the spiritual mantles of other Exalted, and are visually distinct from those of the Solar Exalted. Air Aspect animas are light blue, and often whirl about as though stirred by mighty winds. Earth Aspect animas are white, varying from the fine-grained texture of sand to the blocky shifting of a landslide. Fire Aspect animas are red and orange, and dance and leap like flames. Water Aspect animas are black to blue-black, and swirl like ocean currents. Wood Aspect animas are lively shades of green, and dance and sway like branches in the wind.

**Searing Edge Attack** (2m; Supplemental; Instant; Withering-only): Add two points to the Initiative damage of a **withering** attack. The Immaculate does not receive Initiative from this bonus damage.

### Defensive Charms

**Flame-Flicker Stance** (2m, 1i; Reflexive; Instant): Add +1 Parry and cancel onslaught penalties against an attack. Each previous use since the Immaculate's last turn increases the Parry bonus by one.

**Overwhelming Fire Majesty Stance** (6m; Reflexive; Until next turn): Enemies take a -3 penalty on attack rolls against the Immaculate, and take one die of lethal damage if they hit him. Enemies may pay a point of Willpower to immunizes themselves to the penalty (but not the damage) for the rest of the scene.

### EXPERIENCED DRAGON-BLOOD

This is a Dragon-Blood who has been Exalted for over a century and has grown into formidable elemental power, the battlefield prowess of a fire-proven general, and the social savvy needed to stay afoot in the intrigues of the Realm.

**Essence: 3; Willpower: 7; Join Battle:** 8 dice (+4 for 4m)

**Personal Motes: 14; Peripheral Motes:** 35

**Health Levels:** -0/-1x7/-2x7/-4/Icap.

**Actions:** Command Soldiers: 9 dice (+4 for 4m); Feats of Strength: 6 dice (+2 for 2m, may attempt Strength 3 feats); Read Intentions: 6 dice (+2 for 2m); Resist Poison/Disease: 9 dice (+4 for 4m); Senses: 7 dice (+4 for 4m); Social Influence: 8 dice (+4 for 4m); Strategy: 8 dice (+4 for 4m)

Appearance 3, Resolve 4 (+2 for 4m), Guile 4 (+2 for 4m)

### Combat

Attack (Jade goremaul): 11 dice (+6 for 6m; damage 18, minimum 5)

Combat Movement: 5 dice (+2 for 2m)

Evasion 0, Parry 5 (+2 for 4m)

Soak/Hardness: 16/10 (Jade reinforced breastplate)

### Offensive Charms

**Ringing Anvil Onslaught** (6m; Reflexive; Instant; Perilous, Withering-only): After a successful **withering** attack, make another attack against that enemy with a pool of (5 dice + 1 die per extra success), up to a maximum of (Essence x 2) extra dice, which cannot have dice added to it by any other magic. The Dragon-Blood may continue attacking until he misses or crashes his enemy. If he crashes his target he may pay a point of Willpower to make a normal **decisive** attack against them. Once per scene.

**Thousand-Ton Hammer Smash** (3m; Supplemental; Instant; Dual): Double 10s on **decisive** damage, or double 9s on all damage against a prone enemy. Can make smashing attacks with no Defense or Initiative penalty.

### Defensive Charms

**Impervious Skin of Stone** (4m; Reflexive; Instant): Add +6 soak against a **withering** attack, or convert up to five lethal **decisive** damage to bashing.

**Indestructible Battle Mantle** (5m, 1wp; Reflexive; Instant): Reduce the raw damage of a **decisive** attack by 5 (half the Dragon-Blood's armor hardness).

### Battle Group Charms

**Deadly Wildfire Legion** (3m; Supplemental; Instant): Successfully using a command action to order a battle group to attack an enemy lets the Dragon-Blood activate Ringing Anvil Onslaught or Thousand-Ton Hammer Smash to enhance that attack.

### Social Charms

**Grinding Millstone Argument** (4m; Supplemental; Instant): Add +1 Willpower to the cost to resist an instill or persuade action against characters with a Resolve lower than the Dragon-Blood's (temporary Willpower/2, round down). Once per scene.

**Undaunted Dragon Hero** (2i; Reflexive; Instant): The Dragon-Blooded resists the blandishments and temptation of his foes on the battlefield. Add +1 Resolve against influence that does not align with an Intimacy, or +1

Resolve against influence that opposes a Major or Defining Intimacy. These bonuses stack.

### THE LUNAR EXALTED

The Lunar Exalted are the dread warlords of howling barbarian armies, skinwalkers who dance through forms of man and beast alike, and mystics versed in the secret lore of night. Some wage all-out war against the Realm and its hidden Sidereal patrons, while others strive to achieve more personal or worldly ambitions. In the Lunar Exalted, young Solars might find potential allies eager but wary to rejoin their fallen mates, or enemies driven to destroy something a Solar seeks to use or protect.

### ESSENCE

The Lunar Exalted have a personal mote pool equal to (Essence + 15), and a peripheral pool equal to ([Essence x 4] + 34).

### EXCELLENCIES

The Lunar Exalted tap into the raw potential of their Attributes to bolster their heroic feats, and can add up to (Attribute) dice to any action. However, with a stunt, they may add a second Attribute to the limit as long as the action is described in a way that fits the combination. For example, a Full Moon rolling (Dexterity + Brawl) to smash a Dragon-Blooded shikari would normally have a dice limit of (Dexterity), but could increase this to (Dexterity + Strength) if he described the attack in a way that evoked his raw brawn and mighty thews. Since QCs don't track their precise Attribute values, simply abstract this to an additional +2, +3, or +5, depending on how skilled the Lunar is.

### LUNAR QC DICE LIMITS

Dice Pool	Excellency Limit
1-2	+1
3-6	+2 (+4 with a stunt)
7-10	+4 (+7 with a stunt)
11-14	+5 (+10 with a stunt)

When raising static values, Lunars can add up to (Attribute)/2, round down to the static value. With a stunt, they can draw upon a second Excellency, allowing them to add up to (Attribute + Second Attribute)/2, round down. Thus, a Dexterity 5, Dodge 5, and Intelligence 5 Lunar who attempts to evade an attack and describes how his keen mind discerns the rhythm of his opponent's blows, helping him to avoid them, could raise his Evasion by up to 5.

### LUNAR QC STATIC VALUE LIMITS

#### Static Value      Excellency Limit

0-1	+0 (+1 with a stunt)
2-3	+1 (+2 with a stunt)
4-5	+2 (+4 with a stunt)
6-7	+2 (+5 with a stunt)

### SHAPESHIFTING

The Lunar Exalted may take the heart's blood of humans and animals, stealing forms to wear at their pleasure. A Lunar may pay four motes to assume any form it has taken. This transformation lasts indefinitely, until the Lunar reverts to his true human form (which is free and reflexive) or shifts into a different shape. Shapeshifting can be flurried, but not with an attack.

Animal forms grant the Lunar access to all physical dice pools, as well as the animal's special attacks and Merits. Latent or magical abilities are not granted by shapeshifting, but can be unlocked with training or Charms. Animals with Legendary Size are beyond the skill of most young Lunar shapeshifters, though this limitation can be overcome.

Spotting a shapeshifted Lunar for something other than what it appears to be is treated as a roll to recognize a disguised character (p. 224), with a flat difficulty of 7. This can't be attempted unless the observer is already aware of a unique tell or physical give-away that the Lunar possesses in his true human form, which subtly translates in some way into his other shapes.

### BARBARIAN WARLORD

These traits are suitable for a Lunar who is worshipped as a living god by barbarian tribes and leads them howling into battle—against the Realm, kingdoms ripe for conquest, or whomever his enemies may be.

**Essence:** 2; **Willpower:** 5; **Join Battle:** 8 dice (+4 for 4m, +7 for 7m)

**Personal:** 17; **Peripheral:** 42

**Health Levels:** -0/-1x2/-2x4/-4x7/Incap.

**Actions:** Command Barbarian Hordes: 7 dice (+4 for 4m, +7 for 7m); Feats of Strength: 9 dice (+4 for 4m, +7 for 7m; may attempt Strength 5 feats); Intimidation: 7 dice (+4 for 4m, +7 for 7m); Resist Poison/Disease: 6 dice (+2 for 2m, +4 for 4m); Senses: 6 dice (+2 for 2m, +4 for 4m); Strategy: 5 dice (+2 for 2m, +4 for 4m); Appearance 3, Resolve 3 (+1 for 2m, +2 for 4m), Guile 1 (+1 for 2m with a stunt)

## THE MARK OF LUNA

Lunars are at once both remarkably subtle and very distinct. The Lunar Exalted solidify the power of their Castes with mystical tattoos of moonsilver. When their anima flares, these tattoos glow with an unearthly radiance. The Lunar anima itself is much like a Solar anima display, complete with burning caste mark and an iconic manifestation. In addition to these features, each Lunar's human form carries the mark of Luna—some mystical or bestial marking depicting their patron's favor. This might take the form of a distinctive musk, golden eyes like a wolf, sharp fangs, clawed hands, a predatory gait, a shock of silver hair, an animalistic shadow, or a multitude of other divine signifiers. And yet, when they wish to walk in another shape, or simply walk abroad in their own skin, the Lunar Exalted are adept at hiding all signs of their true nature. Only some tiny hint of Luna's mark tends to remain.

### Combat

Attack (Battle axe): 7 dice (+4 for 4m, +7 for 7m; damage 14)  
 Attack (Unarmed): 12 dice (+5 for 5m, +10 for 10m; damage 12)  
 Attack (Grapple): 8 dice (+4 for 4m, +7 for 7m; 10 dice to control, +4 for 4m, +7 for 7m)  
 Combat Movement: 6 dice (+2 for 2m, +4 for 4m)  
 Evasion 2 (+1 for 2m, +2 for 4m), Parry 4  
 (+2 for 4m, +4 for 8m)  
 Soak/Hardness: 11/7 (Moonsilver reinforced buff jacket)

### Powers

**Shapeshifting:** The warlord's main animal form for combat is a grizzly bear. He also has an eagle form or similar indigenous bird of prey for aerial scouting and combat, and any number of small to medium local predators for combat and indigenous fauna to blend into the wilderness. He has human forms taken from enemy commanders or heroes he's slain, which he might use to infiltrate a satrapy or kingdom under the guise of its own protector.

### Offensive Charms

**Deadly Beastman Transformation** (5m, 1wp; Simple; Indefinite): The Lunar may shapeshift into a ferocious battle form that is half-man, half-bear. He adds +4 to the raw damage of all **withering** attacks he makes, his combat movement pool, and his soak. He adds +2 to his Strength for feats of strength, both for the dice pool and determining what feats he may attempt. Wound penalties are halved on attacks and movement rolls, and he heals a single level

of lethal or bashing damage whenever he resets to base Initiative after making a **decisive** attack with 11+ Initiative or recovers from being crashed.

**Spine-Breaking Technique** (3m, 1wp; Simple; Instant): The Lunar may make a **decisive** savaging attack against a grappled enemy without resetting to base Initiative once per fight.

**Terrifying Bestial Visage** (4m; Reflexive; Instant): The first time the Lunar transforms into a predatory animal shape or his beastman form in a fight, he may use Terrifying Bestial Visage to roll seven dice. Successes are applied as an intimidation roll against the Resolve of enemies who witness the transformation, frightening weak-willed foes into fleeing, and as a command roll to either command or rally a battle group the Lunar commands.

### Defensive Charms

**Impenetrable Beast Armor** (5m; Reflexive; Instant; Perilous): Impenetrable Beast-Armor halves the post-soak damage of a **withering** attack against the Lunar, or subtracts three dice from the raw damage of a **decisive** attack.

### Mobility Charms

**Predator Grace Method** (3m; Supplemental; Instant): The Lunar doubles 9s on a rush, and doubles 8s as well if his enemy has a wound penalty of -2 or more. He may move across surfaces that could not normally bear his weight for the duration of the rush.

### SHAPESHIFTING TRICKSTER

These traits can be used for a Lunar who focuses on shapeshifting as a weapon of social intrigue, stealing the forms of others to gain access to positions of power or secrecy and telling lies with a moonsilver tongue.

**Essence: 1; Willpower: 6; Join Battle: 5 dice**  
 (+2 for 2m, +4 for 4m)

**Personal Motes: 16; Peripheral Motes: 38**

**Health Levels:** -0/-1x2/-2x/-4/Icap.

**Actions:** Convincing Liar: 9 dice (+4 for 4m, +7 for 7m); Read Intentions: 7 dice (+4 for 4m, +7 for 7m); Senses: 6 dice (+2 for 2m, +4 for 4m); Stealth: 5 dice (+2 for 2m, +4 for 4m); Appearance 3, Resolve 3 (+1 for 2m, +2 for 4m); Guile 4 (+2 for 4m, +4 for 8m)

### Combat

Attack (Moonsilver dagger): 9 dice (+4 for 4m, +7 for 7m; damage 12, minimum 3)  
 Combat Movement: 5 dice (+2 for 2m, +4 for 4m)  
 Evasion 4 (+2 for 4m, +4 for 8m),



Parry 3 (+1 for 2m, +2 for 4m)  
Soak/Hardness: 2/0

#### Powers

**Shapeshifting:** The Lunar uses the form of a cat to slink beneath the notice of others and conduct subtle surveillance. He may wear other subtle forms, such as a poisonous snake or a songbird, and likely has one predator form such as wolf or tiger that he relies on in combat. He also has numerous human forms that grant him access to power and influence, such as a satrap's trusted advisor, a Guild merchant prince, or the mastermind of an underground crime syndicate. In addition to taking forms by drinking the heart's blood, he has learned to temporarily steal a person's form through seduction or as repayment for a service or favor done.

#### Social Charms

**False Burrow Pursuit** (1m, 1wp; Supplemental; Instant): When the Lunar persuades a character to take an action with an outright lie or cleverly-worded deception, that character takes a -1 penalty to Resolve. If the Lunar's lie is awarded a stunt, then the stunt's rating is subtracted from Resolve as well.

**Moonlight Curtain Drawn** (2m; Reflexive; Instant; Mute): Add +1 Guile against a read intentions roll, or +3 if the roll

would reveal something contradictory to the Lunar's current shape or identity.

**New Friend Aroma** (6m; Simple; One scene; Mute): Any character whose Resolve is less than or equal to the Lunar's Appearance becomes enthralled by his pleasant, pheromone-laden scent, and will seek to approach him to either befriend or seduce him. Characters who already know the Lunar (or the current identity he is assuming) instead take -1 Resolve and Guile against him. Characters may resist for one Willpower.

**Tale-Spinning Mastery** (7m; Supplemental; Instant; Mute): The Lunar weaves an especially convincing lie, duping even the most skeptical listeners. Double 9s on an instill roll to convince people to believe in a lie, and add a point of Willpower to the cost of resisting. Once per scene.

### THE SIDEREAL EXALTED

Guardians of destiny and agents of Heaven, the Sidereal Exalted are living mysteries, seers of the future and masters of martial arts.

#### ESSENCE

The Sidereal Exalted have a personal mote pool equal to ([Essence x 2] + 9), and a peripheral pool equal to ([Essence x 6] + 25).

**EXCELLENCIES**

The Sidereal Exalted can only add (Essence) dice to a roll with their Excellencies, honing their Essence through spiritual cultivation. However, though they usually cannot match the sheer might of other Celestial Exalted, they have fate on their side. In addition to adding dice, a Sidereal can reduce the target number of an action (the number that a die must come up to count as a success) at a cost of one mote per point of reduction. The lowest a target number can be brought is 4. Thus, an Essence 1 Sidereal might spend one mote to add a single die and three motes to reduce the target number to 4, letting him count every die that comes up 4 or higher as a success.

When modifying static values, the Sidereal Exalted can raise these values by up to their Essence rating. Thus, an Essence 3 Sidereal attempting to block a sword blow could raise his Parry by up to 3, for 6 motes.

**ARCANE FATE**

The Sidereal Exalted fade from the memories of those who meet them soon after they leave, fleeing the mind like the vestiges of a half-remembered dream. Some use powerful astrological magic to clothe themselves in destinies spun from archetype and imagination, appearing in Creation as stock figures such as “The friendly town drunk” or “That handsome soldier,” revealing their true nature only when they must.

**BRONZE FACTION ASSASSIN**

This is a dangerous Sidereal assassin who might be sent to execute an important personage whose time is up, hunt down a dangerous demon or otherwordly monster, or to lead a Wyld Hunt against an especially dangerous Anathema.

**Essence:** 3; **Willpower:** 7; **Join Battle:** 9 dice

**Personal Motes:** 15; **Peripheral Motes:** 43

**Health Levels:** -0/-1x5/-2x2/-4/Icap.

**Actions:** Read Intentions: 5 dice; Resist Poison/Disease: 5 dice; Senses: 9 dice; Stealth: 10 dice; Tracking: 8 dice  
Appearance 2, Resolve 4, Guile 2

**Combat**

Attack (Starmetal powerbow): 14 dice at short range

(Damage 14, minimum 4)

Combat Movement: 10 dice

Evasion 6, Parry 0

Soak/Hardness: 2/0

*Offensive Charms*

**Any Direction Arrow** (3m, 2i; Supplemental; Instant; Dual): Sight along the lines of fate to convert any dice from Aiming to successes. **Withering** attacks also add these



successes to their damage roll. Heavy cover is reduced to light; light cover is negated entirely.

**Five Seasons Approach** (4m, 1wp; Simple; Instant; Decisive-only): Make a **decisive** attack, adding up to 3 extra successes on the attack roll as dice of raw damage. The target number of the damage roll is lowered by one. Lower the target number another point at Initiative 12+, and another against a crashed enemy.

**Generalized Ammunition Technique** (1m; Supplemental; Instant; Uniform): Fire any small object—a handful of dust, a flame, a rat—as an arrow. If the attack is awarded a stunt, add its level in bonus dice to the attack's damage, or as successes on the Initiative roll of a gambit. May have other effects at the Storyteller's discretion.

#### *Defensive Charms*

**Avoidance Kata** (2m; Simple; Instant; Psyche): Roll 8 dice against a difficulty of (3 + turns already taken in the scene). Successes causes the Sidereal to vanish, reappearing somewhere else she might have plausibly gone today instead. Witnesses remember the Sidereal being present, but also remember that she was never present at all, and find this contradiction unremarkable. Once per scene.

**Opportune Shot** (2m, 2i, 1wp; Reflexive; Instant; Clash, Perilous, Withering-only): Make a reflexive clash with a **withering** attack against any attack made from short or medium (but not close) range. Crashing an enemy with Opportune Shot allows the Sidereal to reflexively Aim for another attack against them.

**Optimistic Security Practice** (5m; Reflexive; Until next turn; Perilous, Withering-only): Gain +3 soak and a defensive pool of 5 Initiative for one round. Any **withering** damage steals these temporary points before spilling over to damage the Sidereal's own Initiative. They are not added to **decisive** attacks nor can they be used for any other purpose besides taking **withering** damage.

**Unwavering Well-Being Meditation** (3m, 1wp; Reflexive; Instant; Decisive-only): Subtract the Sidereal's current temporary Willpower from the raw damage of a **decisive** attack roll against him. The target number of the damage roll is raised by one.

#### *Miscellaneous Charms*

**Blinding the Boar** (5m, 1wp; Simple; One scene; Mute): Become indistinct and blurry, raising the target number of any (Perception + Awareness) roll opposing stealth by 1, and lower penalties on Stealth rolls by 2. Enemies with

#### SIDEREAL ANIMAS

The spiritual mantle of a Sidereal is far more subtle than their Solar counterparts. Their caste marks only shine through coverings at the burning level or higher, making scarves, turbans, hoods, and headbands popular among the Maidens' Chosen. They have no iconic displays—at the strongest level of manifestation, a Sidereal anima is a hazy envelope of light. Chosen of Journeys sport solid yellow animas. Chosen of Serenity have peaceful sapphire animas. Chosen of Battles display crimson animas. Chosen of Secrets have deep green anima banners. Chosen of Endings display violet animas. The pupils of the Sidereal Exalted are faintly flecked with the same color as their anima—upon close examination, their eyes seem to glint with a field of stars.

an Initiative 5+ points lower than the Sidereal also suffer an increased target number on attacks against her.

**Inexorable Advance** (5m, 2i; Supplemental; Instant): Negate all wound or mobility penalties on a rush roll, and complete the movement instantly on a success, instead of waiting for the target to move. If the Sidereal attacks a character on the same turn she rushes them with Inexorable Advance, they take -1 Defense.

#### THE ABYSSAL EXALTED

The dread Abyssal Exalted are fearsome but beguiling enemies, capable of matching the Solar Exalted in power. Some serve the Deathlords, who reign over dark empires in the Underworld, while others rove Creation as unbound agents of death and disaster.

#### ESSENCE

The Abyssal Exalted have a personal mote pool equal to their ([Essence x 3] + 10), and a peripheral pool equal to ([Essence x 7] + 26).

#### EXCELLENCIES

The Excellencies of the Abyssal Exalted are just as formidable as those of the Solars, with a maximum dice limit of (Attribute + Ability).

#### Abyssal QC Dice Limits

Dice Pool	Excellency Limit
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1-2	+2
3-6	+5
7-10	+7
11-14	+10

## THE TRAPPINGS OF DEATH

The Abyssals appear as dark mirrors of the Solar Exalted. Their caste marks mirror their Solar counterparts, though they manifest as black brands rather than shining beacons. Abyssal animas are swirling spiritual nullities, so dark that the world around them seems faintly luminous by contrast. Finally, the Abyssal Exalted are uncomfortable in the sun-lit world of the living—they take a -3 penalty to all daytime actions outside of shadowlands and the Underworld, unless they surround themselves with the morbid trappings of death or master dark magic to allow them to travel incognito. Thus, most Abyssals met wandering abroad are found wearing funeral colors, cerecloth windings, or clad in armor decorated with bones, spiders, or other similarly morbid motifs.

Abyssals likewise enhance their static values in the same fashion as Solars.

### ABYSSAL QC STATIC VALUE LIMITS

Static Value	Excellency Limit
0-1	+0
2-3	+1
4-5	+3
6-7	+5

### WANDERING DEATHKNIGHT

These traits are for a deadly Abyssal errant wandering the lands of the living, either at the orders of a Deathlord or as part of a personal quest.

**Essence:** 2; **Willpower:** 6; **Join Battle:** 9 dice (+7 for 7m)

**Personal Motes:** 16; **Peripheral Motes:** 40

**Health Levels:** -0/-1x3/-2x4/-4/Icap.

**Actions:** Feats of Strength: 7 dice (+7 for 7m, may attempt Strength 3 feats); Poetry: 9 dice (+7 for 7m); Senses: 7 dice (+7 for 7m)

Appearance 2, Resolve 4 (+3 for 6m), Guile 1

### Combat

Attack (Soulsteel direlance): 12 dice (+10 for 10m; damage 17, minimum 5)

Attack (Longbow): 9 dice at short range (+7 for 7m; Damage 12)

Combat Movement: 6 dice (+5 for 5m; 13 dice mounted on skeletal warhorse)

Evasion 2 (+1 for 2m), Parry 6 (+5 for 10m)

Soak/Hardness: 15/10 (Soulsteel reinforced breastplate)

## Offensive Charms

**Artful Maiming Onslaught** (2m, 2i; Supplemental; Instant; Decisive-only, Stackable): If successful, the attack leaves a painful scarring wound that inflicts a cumulative -1 penalty for the rest of the scene. Scars left on players' characters look cool rather than disfiguring, unless the player desires otherwise.

**Savage Shade Style** (2m; Supplemental; Instant; Dual): Double extra successes on a **withering** attack against a crashed opponent or double 10s on a **decisive** damage roll.

## Defensive Charms

**Elegant Flowing Deflection** (2m; Reflexive; Instant): Negate all penalties to Parry against a single attack. Successful defense strips a point of Initiative from the attacker.

**Hundred Razor Circle** (5m; Simple; Until next turn; Counterattack, Decisive-only): Make a **decisive** counter-attack in response to any incoming attack until the Abyssal's next turn. A successful attack does not reset his Initiative until his next turn.

## Animals

The animal life of Creation ranges from scurrying rats to rare megafauna and gargantuan saurian beasts. They are pets, beasts of burden, trained combatants, and roaming terrors.

Some animal traits list latent abilities. While an animal might be physically capable of performing these, it has no instinctive drive to do so, and thus requires training to use them. Training an animal to unlock its latent abilities requires a minimum of Survival 3 and a specialty in animal husbandry. The trainer makes an extended roll with an interval of one month and a goal of 10, with a difficulty determined by the animal's attitude - docile and tamed beasts would be difficulty 1, a wild wolf would be difficulty 2, while a tyrant lizard would be difficulty 5. Training a familiars provides a number of bonus dice equal to the trainer's Intimacy to the animal. The trainer must spend the entire month interacting with the beast, teaching it words, signals, commands, and running it through exercises daily. Any significant amount of time the trainer spends away from the beast during this time

saps successes away at a rate of one success for every two or three days. Success at the extended roll means that the animal learns to use the technique and can be used to do so on command.

In addition, the Charms of the Exalted can unlock magical powers in some animals that take their innate potential and capabilities to new heights of supernal might.

#### SAMPLE LATENT ABILITIES

The latent abilities listed in animal traits generally represent those that are unique to the animal in question. The following latent abilities are appropriate for multiple different animals. In addition to these, some of the special attacks or Merits that animals possess might be taught to others as latent abilities—for example, training a serpentine benthic knifetooth to use a giant constrictor's crushing coils attack, or a horse to use the trample attack.

**Alighting Hunter's Ascent:** Flying animals small enough to perch on their master's shoulder or gloved hand can be trained to add one successes to Join Battle when they begin combat with him, and reflexively ascend to medium range from the ground as part of the Join Battle roll.

**Crushing Embrace:** Large predators that rely on clinching can be trained to make a **decisive** savaging attack upon grappling an enemy, with raw damage equal to the extra successes on control roll. This attack ignores hardness and does not reset the animal to base Initiative. Once per scene.

**Fling Aside:** Common among large predators that rely on grappling, such as bears, this attack allows the animal to make smashing attacks (p. 586) with claws or similar natural weapons, and to throw grappled enemies out to short range.

**Gambits:** Animals can be trained to make tactical use of the disarm, distract, and unhorse gambits, assuming they are physically capable given relative size and anatomy. Each gambit requires separate training to unlock. Once per scene, the trained animal may pay a point of Willpower to double 10s on the Initiative roll for the gambit and waive its Initiative cost if successful.

**Peck Out the Eyes:** Birds of prey or large ground birds can be trained to forgo one level of damage on a **decisive** peck attack to blind the victim for the duration of the scene, savaging his eyes with their beak. Trivial opponents are permanently blinded by this attack.

**Predator's Menace:** Animals with an intimidate pool can be trained with this attack, causing an intimidated enemy

#### SPEED BONUSES

Animals which can be used as mounts have a trait called Speed Bonus. Using an animal as a mount adds the listed bonus to all (Dexterity + Ride) rolls to take or oppose rush, disengage, and withdraw actions.

to lose Initiative equal to the extra successes over his Resolve, even if he pays Willpower to resist. Once per scene.

**Tighten Clutches:** Animals that rely on clinches can be trained to pay a point of Willpower to maintain their grip, preventing them from losing rounds of control from being attacked (p. 200) for one round. Damage still causes it to lose rounds of control as usual.

**Wing-Rushing Strike:** Flying predators may be trained to add any extra successes on a rush roll that brings them into close range with an enemy to the raw damage of their first **withering** attack against that opponent following the rush.

#### SAMPLE MAGICAL ABILITIES

In addition to the unique magical abilities listed with specific animals, the following represent powers that are common among the familiars of the Exalted.

**Devouring Leviathan Maw** (10m): Gargantuan megafauna and massive apex predators with a deadly bite can receive this power, letting their master pay 10 motes to render a **decisive** bite attack unblockable and double 10s on damage. If the attack's raw damage exceeds the victim's (Stamina + Resistance + number of health levels), the victim must accept a crippling injury on top of the rolled damage, or else be swallowed whole, killing them instantly barring magic or stunts that would let them survive.

**Earth-Shaking Behemoth** (4m): Animals with stomp attacks or similar natural weapons can gain this power, allowing their master to pay four motes when they make a **decisive** attack to create a shockwave, forcing all characters in medium range to roll (Dexterity + Athletics) opposing the attack roll or fall prone.

**Invincible God-Beast Hide** (12m): Common to beasts with great endurance or powerfully armored bodies, this power lets the animal's master pay 12 motes to reduce a **decisive** attack's raw damage by its soak rating. An attack that fails to deal any damage grants the beast three points of Initiative.

**Legendary Titan Prana** (7m): Huge, powerful animals can gain this power, adding +3 to their effective Strength

for attempting a feat to smash through a wall, natural scenery, or other obstruction and doubling 8s on the roll for a cost of seven motes.

**Primeval Vitality Lifeblood:** Extraordinarily resilient and hardy animals can gain this power, granting them the benefits of the Solar Charm Immunity to Everything Technique (p. 379), but not the ability to resist incurable diseases.

**Midnight Claw Prana** (3m): Stealthy hunters can gain this power, allowing their master to pay three motes to double 10s on the damage roll of a **decisive** surprise attack and to transfer up to (Essence) points of his own Initiative to the animal before it makes the attack.

**Raging Devil-Beast Empowerment** (5m): Strong and powerful predators can gain this power, which allows their master to pay five motes to grant them incredible strength for one scene. They gain double 9s on feats of strength and rolls to establish control of a grapple, and can grapple enemies of legendary size like tyrant lizards and siaka.

**Throat-Ripping Execution** (3m): Predators that rely on clinches can gain this power, allowing their master to pay three motes to add the number of rounds of control the animal has over a grapple to the raw damage of a **decisive** savaging attack against that enemy, and allow that attack to ignore hardness. Once per scene unless reset by crashing a grappled enemy.

**Unerring God-Hound Scent** (5m): Animals with the Keen Nose Merit can gain this power, letting their master pay five motes to magnify their senses a thousandfold for a Perception-based roll. Each 10 rolled grants three successes, and 1s are rerolled until they no longer appear. This can oppose even perfect track-covering magic.

#### ANGLER-LIZARD

Its great serpentine neck makes up over half of this twenty-foot lizard's body. Angler-lizards lounge on Eastern riverbanks and Western shorelines, plunging their long, toothy snouts into the water to snare fish and other aquatic creatures. Muscular rear legs and corpulent rumps help steady them, the meat from which is a delicacy served at the tables of Serpoletic merchants and Vanehan princes. Those unfamiliar with the animal may fear its predatory appearance, but it is far more meek than it appears, sometimes domesticated by island or riverside peoples to help in hunting fish.

**Essence:** 1; **Willpower:** 3; **Join Battle:** 3 dice

**Health Levels:** -0/-1x2/-2x2/-4/Icap. Angler-lizards

will flee upon taking any damage, often shedding their tails to distract potential predators.

**Actions:** Find Water: 6 dice; Senses: 4 dice (see Aquatic Vision); Stealth: 7 dice; Swim: 4 dice  
Resolve 1, Guile 1

#### Combat

Attack (Bite): 6 dice (Damage 14)

Attack (Grapple): 6 dice (5 dice to control). Angler-lizards are too weak to grapple enemies of larger size effectively, but will clinch aquatic prey and drag them onto land before devouring them.

Combat Movement: 4 dice

Evasion 3, Parry 2

Soak/Hardness: 3/0

#### Special Attacks

**Lunging Bite:** An angler-lizard's neck is around ten feet long, allowing it to make both bite attacks and grapple gambits against enemies at short range. Enemies grappled at range are automatically dragged to close range.

**Tail Decoy:** An angler-lizard can shed its tail to distract predators. When it takes a withdraw action, it may accept a level of bashing damage as it drops its tail, contributing one success towards the goal number of the action and lowering the Initiative cost to one point per round. Shed tails usually regrow after a season, allowing this ability to be used again, but can also be restored by any magic that heals crippling effects.

#### Merits

**Aquatic Vision:** The eyes of the angler-lizard are adapted to spot prey swimming near the shore, adding three dice on any roll they make to spot a character underwater while they are on dry land. They can be trained to keep a lookout for underwater assailants or predators as a latent ability, warning their master with agitated screeching when a threat is spotted.

#### ARMORED TERROR

The armored terror is dreaded throughout the West and even as far as the Blessed Isle, a massive fish that can grow more than thirty feet long and four tons in weight, and that hunts smaller fish in coastal waters, bringing it into more than occasional contact with fishing vessels and even shoreline populations. Its scales are thicker than steel or bronze armor, and it has a bony, beak-like pair of fangs that sever limbs easily.

**Essence:** 1; **Willpower:** 5; **Join Battle:** 6 dice

**Health Levels:** -0/-1x8/-2x8/-4/Icap. Armored terrors are

ferocious predators, and are willing to fight without fleeing against smaller enemies, retreating only when wounded by large aquatic predators such as a siaka or giant squid.

**Actions:** Feats of Strength: 11 dice (may attempt Strength 7 feats); Senses: 4 dice; Swim: 6 dice

Resolve 3, Guile 1

### Combat

Attack (Bite): 10 dice (Damage 17, minimum 5)

Attack (Grapple): 10 dice (11 dice to control). The armored terror makes unopposed control rolls against smaller opponents, unless its victims use magic that allows them to clinch larger enemies, such as Dragon Coil Technique.

Combat Movement: 6 dice

Evasion 1, Parry 3

Soak/Hardness: 17/10

### Special Attacks

**Crushing Bite:** The hard, bony jaws of the armored terror can rip through hardened shells and steel armor alike. Any **withering** bite attack it makes ignores four points of armored soak, plus an additional point of armored soak for each extra success on the attack roll.

**Whirlpool Maw:** Snapping its mouth open with superhuman speed, the armored terror creates a sudden influx of water that draws its prey towards it. It may spend a point of Willpower to attempt to make a bite attack against an enemy at short range that is immersed in water. That character must succeed on a reflexive (Strength + Athletics) roll opposed by the attack roll, or else be drawn into close range of the armored terror, losing three points of Initiative in the process (which are not granted to the terror).

**Hull-Crushing Chomp (Latent):** An armored terror that has been trained to attack ships can tear through even the armored hull of a Realm battleship. The armored terror receives the benefits of the Charm Sledgehammer Fist Attack (p. 277) when attempting to bite through the hull of a seafaring vessel.

**Essence-Piercing Bite Prana (Magical, 5m):** The armored terror's master may pay five motes when the beast makes a **decisive** attack against an enemy who is benefitting from an ongoing Charm, Evocation, spell, or similar attack that improves his soak or ability to withstand damage, such as the Charm Diamond-Body Prana or the spell Invulnerable Skin of Bronze. As long as the attack deals more levels of damage than the Essence rating of the character who used the effect, it is canceled. Permanent effects are immune to negation with this attack.

### Merits

**Impenetrable Armor:** The minimum damage of any **withering** attack made against the armored terror is reduced by one die, to a minimum of zero.

**Legendary Size:** The armored terror's size makes it extraordinarily difficult for human-scale enemies to engage it in combat. It does not take onslaught penalties from any attack made by a smaller opponent, although magically-inflicted onslaught penalties still apply against it. **Withering** attacks made by smaller enemies cannot drop it below 1 Initiative unless they have a post-soak damage of 10 dice (although attackers can still gain the full amount of Initiative damage dealt). **Decisive** attacks made by smaller enemies cannot deal more than (3 + attacker's Strength) levels of damage to the terror with a single attack, not counting any levels of damage added by Charms or other magic.

**Sea-Devil Armor Saga (Magical, 4m):** As its master pays four motes, the armored terror's bony shell is etched with the strength of the myths told of its invulnerability, granting it hardness equal to its current Initiative. Invoking this power resets the armored terror to base Initiative.

### BEAR

Creation's bears can be found across the map, from the ferocious grizzlies that hunt in Eastern forests to the massive white bears that roam the Northern tundra and the islands of the northwest. Even the wilds of the Blessed Isle are home to bears, though generally of the smaller species, and some Dynasts hunt the beasts for sport, for it is a worthy threat even for the Chosen. A threatened bear will attempt to crush an aggressor in a grapple, breaking their bones with its powerful limbs and savaging them with its deadly fangs.

**Essence: 1; Willpower: 6; Join Battle: 5 dice**

**Health Levels:** -0/-1x2/-2x5/-4x2/Incap. Bears will flee after taking six levels of damage, unless protecting their young.

**Actions:** Feats of Strength: 7 dice (may attempt Strength 5 feats); Intimidate: 7 dice; Resist Poison/Disease: 6 dice; Senses: 4 dice (see Keen Nose); Tracking: 4 dice (see Keen Nose)  
Resolve 3, Guile 1

### Combat

Attack (Bite): 8 dice (Damage 15)

Attack (Claw): 12 dice (Damage 11)

Attack (Grapple): 8 dice (9 dice to control)

Combat Movement: 6 dice

Evasion 2, Parry 3  
Soak/Hardness: 10/2

#### Special Attack

**Crushing Bear Hug:** When a bear deals 5+ damage with a **withering** claw attack, it may choose to forgo receiving any Initiative it would normally receive from the attack and instead make a reflexive grapple gambit against that enemy, with no need of an Initiative roll or cost to lock in the clinch. Each point of Initiative it would have gained instead adds one die to the control roll.

**Mauling Bite:** When the bear makes a **decisive** savaging bite attack against a clinched enemy, it adds +4 to the raw damage of this attack. It can receive this bonus only once per grapple, unless reset by crashing the clinched enemy.

**Devour the Weak** (Latent): The bear may apply the damage bonus of its mauling bite to any **decisive** attack against any enemy in Initiative Crash even if it is not grappled, making it an invaluable ally in combat. Once it has successfully used this attack, it cannot do so again for the remainder of that enemy's Initiative Crash.

#### Merits

**Berserker:** Wound penalties that would apply to the bear's attack rolls are instead converted to bonus dice.

**Ferocious Cub Guardian:** When the bear is protecting its young with a Defend Other action, it adds +1 to its Parry rating and ignores any penalties to Defense from flurrying. The bear can be trained to receive the benefits of this Merit when protecting its master as a latent ability.

**Keen Nose:** Bears apply the double 9s rule on Perception-based rolls made using scent.

#### BENTHIC KNIFETOOTH

These serpentine sharks are true terrors of the deep. Feeding on squid, large fish, and even other sharks, they earn their name and their kills with their unique teeth, each one sporting countless recurved hooks that snag the flesh of prey to deny them any escape. They are nocturnal hunters, and the sight of a twenty foot long serpent swimming alongside a ship, its head frilled with large, distinctive gills, is enough to drive seafarers to madness and superstition. While these deadly, majestic creatures dwell mainly in the deeper reaches of Creation's oceans, competition from other aquatic predators, the curses of ocean gods, or even simple curiosity sometimes send them upwards to attack sailing vessels.

**Essence:** 1; **Willpower:** 6; **Join Battle:** 5 dice  
**Health Levels:** -0x2/-1x8/-2x8/-4x2/Icap. A benthic knifetooth will flee after taking 10+ levels of damage  
**Actions:** Feats of Strength: 5 dice (may attempt Strength 3 feats); Senses: 6 dice (see Night Vision); Stealth: 4 dice, Swim: 5 dice  
Resolve 2, Guile 1

#### Combat

Attack (Bite): 8 dice (Damage 15)  
Attack (Grapple): 8 dice (8 dice to control)  
Combat Movement: 5 dice  
Evasion 3, Parry 2  
Soak/Hardness: 8/0

#### Special Attacks

**Needle-Tooth Bite:** The benthic knifetooth's jaws have sharp, recurved fangs that snag the flesh of wounded prey. When a knifetooth deals 5+ damage with a **withering** bite attack, it may choose to forgo receiving any Initiative it would normally receive from the attack and instead make a reflexive grapple gambit against that enemy, with no need of an Initiative roll or cost to lock in the clinch. Each point of Initiative it would have gained instead adds one die to the control roll.

**Shadow Fang Ambush:** The benthic knifetooth swims with its mouth open, its fangs camouflaged against the inner flesh of its maw to fool stronger prey into attacking it first. The first time an enemy makes an attack against the knifetooth in a fight, it may clash with a **decisive** bite attack. This attack can be reset by spending three successive rounds in stealth without making an attack.

#### Merits

**Depth Lurker:** Any character attempting to notice the knifetooth while it is deep below them subtracts three success from any Perception-based rolls they make to do so. In combat, this applies as long as the knifetooth is at long range under the water relative to the character, or if it is moving up from long range while already hidden. It may also rush enemies from long range beneath them underwater, as long as the horizontal distance between the two is no more than one range band.

**Night Vision:** Knifetooths can see in dim conditions as though they were in broad daylight, and reduce the difficulty of Perception-based checks made in deeper darkness by one.

**Shark Sleep:** Knifetooths do not every truly sleep, remaining constantly active. Instead, they may enter a resting phase, during which they remain conscious and can still

move, but cannot attack or take other involved physical actions without disrupting their rest. Eight hours spent in this resting phase is equivalent to a night's sleep for the knifetooth.

#### **BOAR-TUSK CROCODILE**

The boar-tusk crocodile is similar in appearance to its aquatic cousins, but is a strictly terrestrial predator, roaming the arid plains of the South and Southeast. As apex predators, boar-tusk crocodiles attack and eat any animal they can reach, including fellow predators like lions and claw striders. The three elongated fangs that give it its name are capable of biting through the thickest hide or scales. Their ungainly forms—twenty feet long and weighing well over a ton—are deceptive, for they can put on sudden bursts of speed capable of catching otherwise-faster creatures unprepared, ramming them with their bony snout.

**Essence:** 1; **Willpower:** 5; **Join Battle:** 7 dice

**Health Levels:** -0x2/-1x4/-2x4/-4x4/Icap. Boar-tusk crocodiles are ferocious predators, and will not back down until they have suffered 10+ levels of damage.

**Actions:** Feats of Strength: 10 dice (may attempt Strength 5 feats); Intimidate: 6 dice; Senses: 5 dice (see Sharp Sight); Tracking: 5 dice (see Sharp Sight)

Resolve 3, Guile 1

#### **Combat**

Attack (Bite): 8 dice (Damage 16)

Attack (Slam): 10 dice (Damage 14). The bony growths that cover the boar-tusk crocodile's snout can be used to make smashing attacks.

Attack (Grapple): 8 dice (10 dice to control)

Combat Movement: 6 dice

Evasion 1, Parry 5

Soak/Hardness: 13/0

#### *Special Attacks*

**Crushing Bite:** The three elongated fangs that give the boar-tusk crocodile its name have formidable biting pressure. Any **withering** bite attack it makes ignores up to four points of soak, plus an additional point of soak for each extra success on the attack roll. This cannot reduce an enemy's soak below his (Stamina).

**Killing Strike:** The boar-tusk crocodile takes down prey by ramming them to the ground, then biting at their exposed vitals. Any **decisive** bite attack it makes against a prone enemy adds +5 raw damage.

**Ramming Blow:** On the turn that a boar-tusk crocodile moves into close range with an enemy, it may make a

smashing attack with its bony snout without taking the usual Defense penalty for doing so.

**Crushing Bulk** (Latent): While boar-tusk crocodiles instinctively go for the kill on any prey they knock prone, they can be trained to immobilize them instead. Whenever it knocks an enemy prone with a smashing attack, it may pay a point of Willpower to make a reflexive grapple gambit that can't be blocked. If successful, it can only restrain the crushed enemy and cannot move without ending the clinch, but the enemy takes a single die of bashing damage that ignores hardness for each round that it is held.

#### *Merits*

**Sharp Sight:** The boar-tusk crocodile applies the double 9s rule on all Perception-based rolls made using sight.

**Sundering Bite:** The boar-tusk crocodile applies double 8s on all feats of strength to destroy something with its bite.

#### **BUNYIP**

The bunyip is a gigantic marsupial found in island chains of the West and the grasslands of the East. It's built like a rhinoceros, with a bear-like snout full of grinding teeth, used to eat foliage or dig up roots. The largest specimens are ten feet long and six feet high, weighing three tons. Bunyips typically travel in family groups with a single larger bull male. Lesser males live alone. Hunters use projectiles to slay the beasts to stay out of reach of their powerful, thick skulls, and wear the teeth as talismans of victory.

**Essence:** 1; **Willpower:** 3; **Join Battle:** 4 dice

**Health Levels:** -0/-1x5/-2x5/-4x5/Icap. Bunyips are large enough to fight off dangerous predators, and will not back down until they have taken at least 8+ levels of damage. Females will generally retreat at the first sign of danger if carrying their young in their pouches, but are otherwise just as ferocious as males.

**Speed Bonus:** +1

**Actions:** Feats of Strength: 6 dice (may attempt Strength 3 feats); Resist Poison/Disease: 9 dice; Senses: 5 dice (see Keen Scent)

Resolve 2, Guile 1

#### **Combat**

Attack (Claw): 7 dice (Damage 11)

Attack (Headbutt): 5 dice (Damage 15)

Attack (Grapple): 5 dice (6 dice to control)

Combat Movement: 6 dice

Evasion 3, Parry 2

Soak/Hardness: 6/0

**Special Attacks**

**Head Bash:** When the bunyip deals 3+ levels of damage to an enemy with a **decisive** headbutt attack, that character is knocked back to short range and falls prone. If the enemy's turn comes after the bunyip's, then it is delayed by a number of ticks equal to (levels of damage dealt - Stamina), with the enemy losing his turn if this reduces him to a tick of zero or less. If the bunyip moved into close range with an enemy as part of a successful rush on the same turn it made the attack, double the effective damage dealt for determining how many ticks are lost.

**Merits**

**Keen Nose:** Bunyips apply the double 9s rule on Perception-based rolls made using scent.

**Marsupial:** Female bunyips use a pouch to carry their offspring, which are about the size of a large dog. Its young receive the benefits of being protected with a Defend Other action in their mother's pouch, with an effective Parry of 5. Characters of a similar size could potentially gain this benefit if allowed into the bunyip's pouch. They may be trained to accept animals other than their own young as a latent ability. A human child could fit into a bunyip's pouch, as could a small, unencumbered adult.

**Sturdy as Stone:** A bunyip cannot be knocked back or prone except by magical effects and by creatures of extraordinary size, such as tyrant lizards. Similarly, a grappled bunyip cannot be thrown or slammed unless magic such as Dragon Coil Technique is used, or if the grappling creature is extremely large.

**CAT**

From bobcats that prowl the Northern mountain ranges to jagarundi that stalk through tropical forests, Creation's fiercest predators are sometimes its smallest. These traits cover small predatory cats as well as domesticated house-cats, a common sight in any farming community where rodents threaten the harvest as well as in the palaces of nobles.

**Essence:** 1; **Willpower:** 4; **Join Battle:** 4 dice

**Health Levels:** -0/-1/-2/-4/Incap. Domesticated cats will flee after taking any damage, while wild cats will flee after taking three levels of damage.

**Actions:** Climbing and Jumping: 7 dice; Senses: 7 dice (see Night Vision); Stealth: 8 dice (see Tiny Creature); Wriggle Through Small Spaces: 7 dice  
Resolve 2, Guile 2

**Combat**

Attack (Bite): 4 dice (4). Damage increases to 12 against enemies of the cat's size or smaller.

Attack (Claw): 6 dice (2). Damage increases to 8 against enemies of the cat's size or smaller.

Attack (Grapple): 4 dice (5 dice to control). Cats can only grapple enemies of their size or smaller. They cannot throw/slam grappled enemies.

Combat Movement: 7 dice

Evasion 1, Parry 1 (see Tiny Creature)

Soak/Hardness: 2/0

**Special Attacks**

**Ambush Hunter:** The cat adds three dice on all attack rolls made from stealth.

**Batting Paws:** Whenever the cat makes a **decisive** savaging attack against a clinched enemy, it uses its rear paws to bat at it and snap its neck, adding +5 to the raw damage of the attack.

**Leaping Pounce:** If a cat moves into close range with an enemy of the same size or smaller and deals 5+ damage to it with a **withering** attack on the same turn, it may pay a point of Willpower to reflexively make a clinch attack against its prey.

**Stalking Shadow Hunter** (Latent): When the cat makes a **withering** attack from stealth against a larger enemy, it uses the higher of the two damage ratings for its attacks. This does not allow it to grapple larger characters.

**Underfoot Menace** (Latent): The cat treats any attack it makes against a larger enemy as being made from stealth for the purposes of its Ambush Hunter and Stalking Shadow Hunter special attacks.

**Merits**

**Keen Hearing:** Cats double 9s on hearing-based Perception rolls.

**Lands on its Feet:** Cats apply the double 8s rule on all balance checks. When a cat suffers falling damage, it ignores all dice of damage associated with the fall, and converts automatic levels of damage from the fall to dice that must be rolled.

**Night Vision:** Cats can see in dim conditions as though they were in broad daylight, and reduce the difficulty of Perception-based checks made in deeper darkness by one.

**Tiny Creature:** Cats add +2 Evasion against any attack made by a larger foe. In addition, larger characters subtract two successes from any Awareness-based roll made to notice it.

#### CLAW STRIDER

These reptilian predators are pack hunters of the open plains and savannas, each one as tall as a man and with foot-claws that can gouge out the throat of a horse or camel in a single slash. Packs hunt by running down their prey until exhaustion leaves them weakened, or lying in wait around an oasis to pounce upon a thirsty beast. Elephants, yeddim, and even the rare tyrant lizard have all been felled by coordinated packs of claw striders. The same intelligence that gives rise to these group tactics also makes them tameable, with some desert tribes using them as deadly, but ill-tempered, mounts.

**Essence:** 1; **Willpower:** 5; **Join Battle:** 4 dice

**Health Levels:** -0/-1x3/-2x3/-4/Icap. Claw striders will flee after taking four levels of damage.

**Speed Bonus:** +1

**Actions:** Feats of Strength: 5 dice (may attempt Strength 3 feats); Senses: 5 dice (see Sharp Sight); Stealth: 6 dice

Resolve 2, Guile 1

#### Combat

Attack (Bite): 8 dice (Damage 15)

Attack (Claw): 12 dice (Damage 11)

Attack (Grapple): 8 dice (7 dice to control)

Combat Movement: 8 dice (see Darting Leap)

Evasion 4, Parry 3

Soak/Hardness: 7/4

#### Special Attacks

**Ambush Hunter:** The claw strider adds three dice on all attack rolls made from stealth.

**Distract:** The claw strider can make distract gambits to assist its packmates. If it makes a successful gambit from stealth, the bonus it provides increases by two dice. With training, it can also use this special attack to benefit its master as a latent ability.

**Pack Hunting:** When the claw strider attacks an enemy, it adds one automatic success to the attack roll for each allied claw strider in close range to that enemy, to a maximum of three successes. On a **decisive** attack, it may also pay a point of Willpower to add that many dice to the raw damage of the attack, representing its packmates

joining in the attack. A claw strider can be trained to use this special attack in conjunction with human allies as a latent ability.

**Swift Advance:** Whenever a claw strider moves to keep pace with an enemy it has successfully rushed, it may pay a point of Willpower to reflexively make a **decisive** attack against that enemy.

#### Merits

**Darting Leap:** When closing with their prey, claw striders move with terrifying speed, leaping and bounding across even rough terrain. They receive double 9s on all rushes.

**Sharp Sight:** The claw strider applies the double 9s rule on all Perception-based rolls made using sight.

#### DEATH MOA

The death moa is a terrifying carnivorous land bird of the Western islands, towering over men and horses. One lunge of its beak shears through flesh and shatters bone, ensuring its status as apex predator on almost every isle where it's found. Death moa predatory tactics are brutally simple—chase down prey and savage it until only carrion is left.

**Essence:** 1; **Willpower:** 5; **Join Battle:** 5 dice

**Health Levels:** -0/-1x4/-2x4/-4/Icap. Death moas are ferocious, and will only flee after taking 7+ levels of damage. If they have already incapacitated an enemy, they may fight on longer to defend their kill.

**Actions:** Feats of Strength: 7 dice (may attempt Strength 3 feats); Intimidate: 5 dice; Senses: 6 dice (see Sharp Sight); Tracking: 6 dice (see Sharp Sight)

Resolve 2, Guile 1

#### Combat

Attack (Peck): 8 dice (Damage 15)

Attack (Grapple): 8 dice (8 dice to control)

Combat Movement: 6 dice

Evasion 2, Parry 3

Soak/Hardness: 9/0

#### Special Attacks

**Blade-Beak Frenzy:** Whenever the death moa makes a **decisive** peck attack, it may convert one extra success to a die of raw damage for every two points of Initiative it has over the target. Against enemies in Initiative Crash, it adds all extra successes to damage and applies double 10s to the damage roll.

**Furious Rampage:** Whenever the death moa attacks or rushes an enemy who is in Initiative Crash, it adds two automatic successes on the roll.

**Lunging Beak:** A death moa may make both peck and clinch attacks against enemies at short range. Enemies grappled at range are automatically dragged to close range.

**Unstoppable Doom-Bird Might** (Magical, 10m): Whenever the death moa receives an Initiative Break, its master may pay ten motes to use Unstoppable Doom-Bird Might. For the next five rounds, it treats all enemies as being in Initiative Crash for its Blade-Beak Frenzy and Furious Rampage attacks.

#### Merits

**Sharp Sight:** The death moa applies the double 9s rule on all Perception-based rolls made using sight.

#### DOG/WOLF

Canines are among the most common animals found in Creation, from the wolves that hunt the wilds to the loyal hounds that serve as hunting beasts, war animals, guards, and pets. These traits are appropriate for a dog bred for hunting or warfare, or for a wild wolf or similar canine predator.

**Essence:** 1; **Willpower:** 4; **Join Battle:** 4 dice

**Health Levels:** -0/-1x2/-2x2/-4/Icap. Dogs will usually flee after taking two levels of damage, unless fighting to protect their master or at his command. Wolves generally flee after taking four levels of damage.  
**Actions:** Intimidate: 3 dice; Senses: 6 dice (see Keen Nose); Stealth: 3 dice; Tracking: 7 dice (see Keen Nose)  
 Resolve 2, Guile 1

#### Combat

Attack (Bite): 9 dice (Damage 9)

Attack (Grapple): 6 dice (5 dice to control)

Combat Movement: 8 dice

Evasion 4, Parry 3

Soak/Hardness: 4/0

#### Special Attacks

**Harry:** Biting at the heels of its prey, the canine denies it the chance to flee. On the turn that a hound or wolf moves into close range of an enemy, if it deals 5+ damage to them with a **withering** attack, that enemy cannot disengage or withdraw on their next turn.

**Pack Hunting:** When the hound or wolf attacks an enemy, it adds one automatic success to the attack roll for each allied

pack member in close range to that enemy, to a maximum of three successes. On a **decisive** attack, it may also pay a point of Willpower to add that many dice to the raw damage of the attack, representing its packmates joining in the attack. Ordinarily, this special attack can only be used with other canine allies. Using it in conjunction with human allies is a latent ability that can be developed through training.

**Hold at Bay** (Latent): After successfully impeding a foe's movement with its harry attack, the canine may pay a point of Willpower to reflexively attempt to grapple them, converting extra successes on the attack roll to bonus dice on the control roll. The hound can only restrain or savage an enemy clinched this way—it cannot throw, slam, or drag them.

**Snarling Guardian Attack** (Latent): Whenever an enemy attacks the dog or wolf's master while it is protecting him with a defend other action, the animal may respond with a **decisive** counterattack. It may use this counterattack to make a disarm or distract gambit.

**Foe-Maiming Guardian's Fangs** (Magical, 1m): Whenever the canine makes a **decisive** bite attack against an enemy who has attacked or threatened its master, the Exalt may pay one mote to apply the double 10s rule to the damage roll. If he is currently suffering any wound penalties due to a confrontation involving that enemy, then his wound penalties are added as bonus dice to the hound's attack roll.

#### Merits

**Keen Nose:** Dogs and wolves apply the double 9s rule on Perception-based rolls made using scent.

**Discerning Scent** (Latent): The dog or wolf has been trained to pick up on a specific type of scent—human scents picked up from clothes, poisons, drugs, undead flesh, fire-dust, or so forth. Its Keen Nose allows it to apply the double 8s rule when smelling out the chosen scent, rather than double 9s. Additionally, if the canine has been trained in Wary Watchdog Vigilance, its effects also apply to such rolls. A dog can be trained in this Merit multiple times to pick up multiple distinct scents.

**Loyal Guardian** (Latent): The dog or wolf may flurry a defend other action with any other action without suffering the usual penalties of a flurry.

**Wary Watchdog Vigilance** (Latent): The dog or wolf adds one automatic success on any roll to notice a hidden character. Upon doing so, it barks loudly enough to wake its master and his allies from sleep, if needed.

**Heroic Guardian-Beast Resilience** (Magical): Throwing itself between its master and an attack, the hound's loyalty diverts a fatal blow. If an enemy overcomes the canine's Defense while it is protecting its master with a defend other action, he must choose to attack the beast, rather than its master. Additionally, such an attack cannot reduce the hound to its Incapacitated health level—any levels of damage that would go beyond its -4 health level are prevented. Once this protection has been invoked the first time in a scene, the hound is vulnerable to being incapacitated until it has healed at least one health level naturally.

#### EAGLE

Eagles soar across much of Creation. Diving downward from the sky, they seize their prey, ranging from rats to rabbits to small dogs, and either kill it outright with their talons or let a long fall do the work for them. Tales of them attacking children or horses are common throughout the Western isles and the forested Northeast, though discounted elsewhere. Eagles are a common sight on the Blessed Isle, the West, and the North. They are found in the East as well, but competition with the mospid and the strix makes their predation less prevalent.

**Essence:** 1; **Willpower:** 4; **Join Battle:** 5

**Health Levels:** -0/-1/-2x2/-4/Icap. Eagles will usually flee if struck for more than two health levels of damage, unless cornered or defending their young.

**Actions:** Fly: 10 dice; Stealth: 5 dice; Tracking: 5 dice (see Eagle Eye); Senses: 6 dice (see Eagle Eye)

Resolve 2, Guile 1

#### Combat

Attack (Talons): 10 dice (Damage 11)

Attack (Grapple): 4 dice (4 dice to control). An eagle can carry seized enemies the size of a housecat, rodent, small monkey, or similar prey indefinitely. They can grapple enemies up to the size of a dog or small gazelle, but only for an instant, relinquishing the grapple at the end of their turn (which may cause falling damage if the eagle ascends). Eagles cannot slam or throw clinched enemies.

Combat Movement: 8 dice

Evasion 4, Parry 1

Soak/Hardness: 2/0

#### Special Attacks

**Death Dive:** As long as the eagle is able to soar up to long range from the ground, it may dive down at an enemy with devastating force. The first time it moves down into close range with an enemy while airborne and makes a **decisive** attack, it may add four dice to the attack roll and apply the double 10s rule on the damage roll. Once

it has used this special attack, it must regain altitude, returning back to vertical long range before it can do so again.

**Swooping Descent:** An eagle that flies downward to make a **decisive** surprise attack or ambush against an enemy adds two automatic successes to the attack roll. Note that an eagle soaring high in the sky is generally beyond the range of sensory detection for characters who lack superhuman sight, ensuring an ambush on first strike and providing the possibility of reestablishing stealth in combat by simply flying higher than enemies can see.

**Iron Wings Carry** (Magical, 3m): The eagle's master may strengthen it by spending three motes. The eagle adds (its master's Essence) to all rolls to establish control of a clinch, and can grapple enemies of human size normally. In addition, it may carry even heavy weapons such as daiklavens in its talons, which is useful in conjunction with its disarm ability. Dropping a weapon (or other large object) from a great height is imprecise, but potentially devastating. The eagle receives only four dice for such attack rolls, but the damage is equivalent to suffering a fall from the height of the dropped object (although the Storyteller may reduce or waive damage outright for particularly small objects). The empowerment of Iron Wings Carry lasts for a number of rounds equal to the master's (Essence x 2).

#### Merits

**Eagle Eye:** While soaring high in the air, the eagle receives five bonus dice on any visual Perception-based rolls made to notice things, and can make out the fine details of far-off objects even when it is flying potentially miles above them. It also automatically succeeds on any roll to track a character while airborne, unless that character is employing perfect track-covering magic.

**Eagle Wing Rush:** An eagle may rush enemies from long range above them, as long as the horizontal distance between them is still at short range.

#### EMPEROR SLOTH

While the tree sloths that slowly amble among the branches of Creation's forests are ridiculed for their preposterous slowness and lazy behavior, their gigantic cousins the emperor sloths are feared. Rivaling elephants for size, they rise up on their hind legs to forage among the leaves of trees that their smaller kin climb, and scavenge on the carrion left behind by Eastern predators to supplement their diet with meat. When given the opportunity, they may turn carnivore, using their immense strength and deadly claws to fell hapless prey such as deer, cattle, or humans.

**Essence:** 1; **Willpower:** 3; **Join Battle:** 2 dice

**Health Levels:** -0/-1x5/-2x5/-4x5/Incap. Emperor sloths are dangerous but not particularly ferocious, and will retreat after taking 3+ levels of damage. If they are attempting to prey on another animal (or human), they may persist until they have taken 6+ levels of damage.

**Speed Bonus:** +0

**Actions:** Feats of Strength: 9 dice (may attempt Strength 7 feats); Scare Away Predators: 6 dice; Senses: 4 dice (see Keen Scent and Night Vision); Tracking: 6 dice (see Keen Scent)

Resolve 3, Guile 1

### Combat

Attack (Claw): 9 dice (Damage 15, minimum 3)

Attack (Slam): 7 dice (Damage 17, minimum 4)

Attack (Grapple): 5 dice (10 dice to control). The emperor sloth makes unopposed control rolls against smaller enemies, unless its victims use magic that allows them to clinch larger enemies, such as Dragon Coil Technique.

Combat Movement: 4 dice

Evasion 1, Parry 4

Soak/Hardness: 12/3

### Special Attacks

**Sloth's Rage:** Emperor sloths are not known for their quick reflexes or killing speed, but they are dangerous enemies nonetheless. At the end of each turn, the sloth loses a point of Initiative (to a minimum of Initiative 1). However, each point of Initiative lost this way adds +1 to the raw damage of all **decisive** attacks the sloth makes that fight, to a maximum bonus of +5. If the emperor sloth loses Join Battle against all enemies, this damage bonus begins at +3 for the duration of the fight, and can be increased up to a maximum of +8.

**Rampaging Death-Sloth Frenzy** (Latent, Magical, 10m): The first time the emperor sloth falls into Initiative Crash in a fight, its master may pay ten motes to avert the crash, resetting the sloth to its base Initiative and rolling Join Battle for it with his (Charisma + Survival). The rampaging death-sloth frenzy stops the Initiative drain of sloth's rage, but maintains any damage bonuses from it. If the emperor sloth crashes the enemy who crashed it at any point in the next three rounds, its combat action is reset as though it had Initiative Shifted (but it does not roll Join Battle again).

### Merits

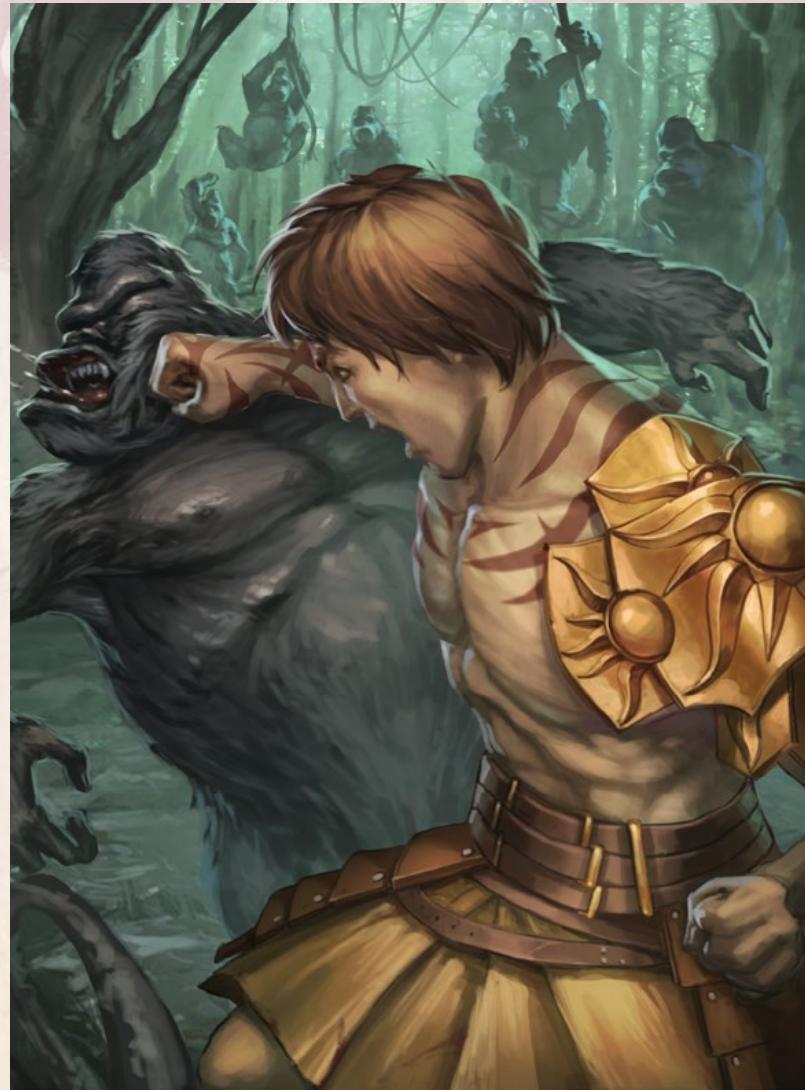
**Keen Nose:** Emperor sloths apply the double 9s rule on Perception-based rolls made using scent.

**Legendary Size:** The emperor sloth's size makes it extraordinarily difficult for human-scale enemies to engage it in combat. It does not take onslaught penalties from any attack made by a smaller opponent, although magically-inflicted onslaught penalties still apply against it. **Withering** attacks made by smaller enemies cannot drop it below 1 Initiative unless they have a post-soak damage of 10 dice (although attackers can still gain the full amount of Initiative damage dealt). **Decisive** attacks made by smaller enemies cannot deal more than (3 + attacker's Strength) levels of damage to the sloth with a single attack, not counting any levels of damage added by Charms or other magic.

**Night Vision:** Emperor sloths can see in dim conditions as though they were in broad daylight, and reduce the difficulty of Perception-based checks made in deeper darkness by one.

### GORILLA

Gorillas range from the mountains of the Northeast to the lowlands of the Eastern threshold and the Blessed Isle, greatest of the great apes in strength in size. A group of gorillas is generally led by its oldest male, the silver-back. While usually herbivorous and peaceful, a silver-



back will respond to a perceived threat with an intimidating display of savage howls and chest-beating, and will seize on any perceived weakness to savagely attack an intruder. Humans who wander into gorilla territory have met gruesome deaths for the mistake of trying to flee from a raging silverback, but those wise enough to stand resolute against this display can force the ape to back down, and find the troop to be peaceful, almost accepting after that. Legends of children raised by gorillas are a testament to the gentle, intelligent nature of these beasts.

**Essence:** 1; **Willpower:** 4; **Join Battle:** 6 dice

**Health Levels:** -0/-1x3/-2x3/-4x2/Icap. When a troop of gorillas comes under attack, the oldest male will fight to the death to defend the rest as they retreat.

**Actions:** Climbing: 4 dice; Feats of Strength: 10 dice (may attempt Strength 5 feats); Intimidation: 5 dice; Senses: 6 dice (see Keen Nose); Stealth: 4 dice  
Resolve 3, Guile 1

### Combat

Attack (Bite): 8 dice (Damage 16)

Attack (Fists): 10 dice (Damage 13)

Attack (Grapple): 10 dice (10 dice to control)

Combat Movement: 6 dice

Evasion 3, Parry 4

Soak/Hardness: 6/0

### Special Attacks

**Furious Rampage:** Gorillas relentlessly pursue any enemy who displays weakness, adding three successes on attacks and rushes against crashed enemies.

**Howling Aggression:** A gorilla may Join Battle with its intimidation dice pool, attempting to frighten enemies into fleeing by shaking large tree branches, beating its chest, or baring fangs. It may take its turn on the first round before that of any enemy whose Resolve was overcome by the roll, regardless of its actual Initiative rating.

**Mauling Bite:** When the gorilla makes a **decisive** bite attack against a clinched enemy, it adds +4 to the raw damage of this attack. It can receive this bonus only once per clinch, unless reset by crashing the clinched enemy.

**Savaging Strength** (Latent): A gorilla that has been trained for combat can put its strength to use in denying enemies escape. It may pay a point of Willpower to convert up to five dice on the control roll of a clinch to automatic successes.

**Ape-Hand Mastery** (Latent): A gorilla can be trained to wield medium or heavy weapons that require minimal

finesse, such as clubs or tiger claws, with an attack pool of (4 + weapon accuracy) for attacks made with them. Each training regimen teaches it how to use a single weapon.

### Merits

**Keen Nose:** Gorillas apply the double 9s rule on Perception-based rolls made using scent.

### GREAT CAT

Sabertooths tigers in the North, jaguars and panthers that prowl the treetops of dense Eastern forests, lions and cheetahs roaming the Southern savannas—all these and more make up the great cats of Creation, deadly ambush predators that generally keep to the wilderness, wandering into human settlements only when forced by hunger or divine curses. The traits below are appropriate for a generic great cat, but the Storyteller may customize them to reflect a specific breed, such as giving a cheetah the swift advance attack, or a panther the agile climber Merit.

**Essence:** 1; **Willpower:** 5; **Join Battle:** 6 dice (see Stalking Cat Advantage)

**Health Levels:** -0/-1x4/-2x4/-4/Icap. Great cats will typically flee after taking six levels of damage.

**Actions:** Feats of Strength: 7 dice (may attempt Strength 5 feats); Intimidating Growl: 5 dice; Senses: 6 dice (see Keen Scent and Night Vision); Stealth: 7 dice (see Camouflage); Tracking: 6 dice (see Keen Scent)  
Resolve 3, Guile 2

### Combat

Attack (Bite): 9 dice (Damage 16)

Attack (Claw): 13 dice (Damage 12)

Attack (Grapple): 9 dice (10 dice to control). Great cats cannot throw or slam grappled enemies.

Combat Movement: 10 dice

Evasion 4, Parry 4

Soak/Hardness: 6/0

### Special Attacks

**Ambush Hunter:** The great cat adds three dice on all attack rolls made from stealth.

**Leaping Pounce:** If a great cat moves into close range with an enemy of the same size or smaller and deals 5+ damage to it with a **withering** attack on the same turn, it may pay a point of Willpower to reflexively make a grapple gambit against its prey.

**Mauling Bite:** When the great cat makes a savaging **decisive** attack against a clinched enemy, it adds +4

to the raw damage of this attack. It can receive this bonus only once per clinch, unless reset by crashing the clinched enemy.

**Pouncing Shadow:** Great cats may pay a point of Willpower when they roll Stealth to ignore the usual -3 penalty for moving while concealed. In addition, each turn it spends in stealth, it stocks a single die, up to a maximum of three dice. On the turn that it breaks stealth, it adds these dice both to any movement actions it makes and to the raw damage of any grappling or **decisive** attacks it makes.

#### Merits

**Camouflage:** The patterning of a great cat's fur allows it to blend into the scenery. Whenever it is in its native territory—a tiger in a jungle, a lion on the savannah, a sabertooth in the plains or tundra—it applies double 9s on Stealth rolls. A great cat can be trained to stalk through unfamiliar environments as a latent ability, allowing it to apply double 9s to any Stealth roll it makes while hiding under cover, and double 8s while in its native territory.

**Keen Nose and Hearing:** Great cats apply the double 9s rule on Perception-based rolls made using scent or hearing.

**Night Vision:** Great cats can see in dim conditions as though they were in broad daylight, and reduce the difficulty of Perception-based checks made in deeper darkness by one.

**Stalking Cat Advantage:** Great cats adds one automatic success to any Join Battle roll made while in stealth.

**Battle Cat** (Latent): Great cats in the wild rely on ambush tactics to take down weaker prey, and generally avoid animals capable of fighting back against them. With training, they can be taught to defend against the tactics of trained combatants, adding +1 Evasion against any attack made by an enemy with lower Initiative and +1 Evasion against any attack made from medium range or further. These bonuses stack.

#### HELLBOAR

Hellboars are one of the most feared beasts of the East and Blessed Isle, extreme omnivores that can crack human bones between their tusks just as easily as they gruffle up roots and tubers. Hellboars will cripple their prey with a bite that crunches through ligaments and bone, then stomp them to death before eating the remains. Hunters are not foolish enough to try to take down these beasts—save perhaps for Dynasts with more foolhardy

pride than good sense—but sometimes follow behind them, waiting until the boar has eaten its fill before scavenging carrion or root vegetables upturned by its wandering snout.

**Essence:** 1; **Willpower:** 5; **Join Battle:** 5 dice

**Health Levels:** -0/-1x5/-2x5/-4/Icap. Hellboars will wander away from any prey that seems like too much trouble to subdue, generally fleeing after taking 5+ levels of damage in hopes of finding carrion or foliage to devour instead.

**Speed Bonus:** +1

**Actions:** Feats of Strength: 13 dice (may attempt Strength 5 feats); Hide Food For Later: 5 dice; Intimidating Grunt: 6 dice; Resist Poison/Disease: 5 dice; Senses: 4 dice (see Keen Nose)

Resolve 2, Guile 1

#### Combat

Attack (Bite): 8 dice (Damage 14, minimum 5).

Attack (Stomp): 6 dice (Damage 11)

Combat Movement: 8 dice

Evasion 3, Parry 2

Soak/Hardness: 12/5

#### Special Attacks

**Bone-Crunching Bite:** The hellboar's heavy incisors and powerful molars can easily shatter bone with a bite, crippling its prey before the beast finishes it off. An enemy damaged by a **decisive** bite attack is inflicted with a Crippling penalty to all Strength and Dexterity-based actions equal to the extra successes on the attack for the rest of the scene. This penalty can stack up to a maximum of -5.

**Death Stomp:** The hellboar's **decisive** stomp attacks deal +5 damage against prone enemies.

**Trample:** When the hellboar closes in on a rushed enemy and makes a stomp attack on the same turn, a successful hit knocks that enemy prone. The penalties for being prone are applied to that character's Defenses retroactively when calculating extra successes on the attack.

**Femur-Smashing Crunch** (Latent): When the hellboar delivers an attack that raises an enemy's crippling penalty from Bone-Crunching Bite to -5, it may pay a point of Willpower to fracture their legs or spinal cord, knocking them prone and leaving them unable to take any movement actions for the rest of the scene. A character may recover from this crippling paralysis with a miscellaneous (Stamina + Resistance) roll action at difficulty 4.

*Merits*

**Berserker:** Wound penalties that would apply to the boar's attack rolls are instead converted to bonus dice.

**Iron Stomach:** Hellboars can eat anything from bones to offal to poisonous foliage, and come off little the worse for it. They apply the double 8s rule on all rolls to forage for food or to resist an ingested poison.

**Keen Nose:** Hellboars apply the double 9s rule on Perception-based rolls made using scent.

**Predator's Hunger:** Whenever a hellboar rolls Join Battle against an enemy it could conceivably eat, if it has not eaten within the last day or more, it may reroll any 1s until they fail to appear. A hellboar's master can train it to apply this Merit to all Join Battle rolls as a latent ability by conditioning it to equate successful battle with a feast of carrion.

**HORSE**

Renowned for grace and speed, horses are high-strung creatures; strong smells, fire, or other stresses can madden them unless calmed. They can gallop at top speed for a couple of miles at most; pressing them further without rest can result in permanent harm or death. Horses are intelligent and curious, with senses keener than a mortal's.

Domesticated horses are trained from birth to accept people, wear tack, and perform various tasks. Fully grown, they serve many purposes: steeds, beasts of burden, plowbeasts, and sources of meat, milk, hair, and leather. Dozens of distinct breeds range from nimble, hot-blooded riding horses—typically five feet tall and weighing more than half a ton—to patient, physically powerful draft animals and war mounts that measure up to six feet and over a ton. Hooves are shod with leather, bronze, or iron shoes to protect against damage. They require daily grooming and exercise.

Feral horses, wild horses, and other equines (such as the quagga and zebra) move in small family groups or large herds across plains and savannah. These beasts are smaller and more lightly built than domesticated horses. Breaking them to the saddle is quite difficult, but within the capabilities of a master trainer.

**Essence:** 1; **Willpower:** 4; **Join Battle:** 4 dice

**Health Levels:** -0/-1x3/-2x3/-4x2/Icap. Wild horses will generally flee after taking 2+ levels of damage.

**Speed Bonus:** +4

**Actions:** Feats of Strength: 6 dice (may attempt Strength 3 feats); Senses: 5 dice  
Resolve 1, Guile 1

**Combat:**

Attack (Kick): 6 dice (Damage 14)

Combat Movement: 12 dice (see Swift-Hooved)

Evasion 3, Parry 1

Soak/Hardness: 3/0

*Special Attacks*

**Brutal Kick:** Enemies smaller than human size that take 5+ damage from the horse's **withering** stomps are knocked back one range band and fall prone.

*Merits*

**Swift-Hooved:** Horses apply the double 9s rule on all rolls to disengage or withdraw. When trained, they may apply this Merit to rush rolls as well as a latent ability.

**OX-DRAGON**

Ox-dragons shake the mighty cedars of the forests with their passage, clearing a wide swathe through any underbrush and scattering both man and beast alike. These massive saurian quadrupeds grow up to over a dozen tons in weight and thirty feet long from beak to tail. Two long horns and a distinctive bony frill jut out from their skull, while a smaller, third horn tips the front of their snout. Their formidable strength and natural weapons makes them more than a match for almost any predator. The ox-dragon itself is foul-tempered and easily provoked—though it usually feeds by knocking down young trees and large plants before stripping them bare using its powerful beak, like the boar it's an opportunistic omnivore, and will devour carrion or attack smaller, vulnerable animals.

**Essence:** 1; **Willpower:** 4; **Join Battle:** 5 dice

**Health Levels:** -0x2/-1x8/-2x8/-4x6/Icap. Ox-dragons will generally flee after taking 10+ levels of damage, unless protecting their young.

**Speed Bonus:** +3. Ox-dragons have the potential to make mounts of extraordinary quality, but are all but untameable.

**Actions:** Feats of Strength: 10 dice (may attempt Strength 5 feats); Senses: 7 dice  
Resolve 3, Guile 1

**Combat**

Attack (Horns): 7 dice (Damage 19, minimum 6)

Attack (Stomp): 9 dice (Damage 17, minimum 4)

Attack (Grapple): 6 dice (6 dice to control): The ox-dragon makes unopposed control rolls, unless its victims use magic that allows them to clinch larger enemies, such as Dragon Coil Technique.



Combat Movement: 12 dice

Evasion 4, Parry 3

Soak/Hardness: 13/7

#### *Special Attacks*

**Deadly Charge:** Every range band that the ox-dragon moves towards an enemy in a straight line grants it two points of Initiative. This Initiative continues to build until it closes to close range with that enemy and makes a **decisive** attack. If the ox-dragon takes a movement action that does not bring it directly closer towards the charged enemy, makes a **withering** attack, or attacks a different enemy, it loses all Initiative built up with this attack.

**Gore:** The ox-dragon's **decisive** horn attacks add extra successes to damage against enemies with lower Initiative, as long as it has not taken any other actions (including reflexive movement actions) that turn.

**Trample:** When the ox-dragon closes in on a rushed enemy and makes a stomp attack on the same turn, a successful

hit knocks that enemy prone. The penalties for being prone are applied to that character's Defenses retroactively when calculating extra successes on the attack.

**Horn Toss** (Latent): After dealing 3+ levels of damage to an enemy with a **decisive** horn attack, the ox-dragon may reflexively grapple and immediately slam him for additional damage, catching him in its horns and tossing him aside. The ox-dragon makes a control roll, and may then throw the enemy out to short range. Once per fight.

#### *Merits*

**Legendary Size:** The ox-dragon's size makes it extraordinarily difficult for human-scale enemies to engage it in combat. It does not take onslaught penalties from any attack made by a smaller opponent, although magically-inflicted onslaught penalties still apply against it. **Withering** attacks made by smaller enemies cannot drop it below 1 Initiative unless they have a post-soak damage of 10 dice (although attackers can still gain the full amount of Initiative damage dealt). **Decisive** attacks made by smaller enemies cannot

deal more than (3 + attacker's Strength) levels of damage to the ox-dragon with a single attack, not counting any levels of damage added by Charms or other magic.

#### PESTLETAIL

These herbivores, found largely in the Northeast and the Eastern forests, inhabit any terrain capable of sustaining their enormous appetites. An adult pestletail is ten feet long and weighs two tons. Its round, inch-thick bony shell is shaped like a turtle's, covered in bony plates like an armadillo's. Similar plating caps both head and tail.

Pestletails are largely inoffensive herbivores, consuming grasses, foliage, roots, shrubs, or even small trees. Most predators leave them alone, both because of their shells and because they fight back with short, powerful clawed limbs and beaked snouts, but human hunters find pestletail shells valuable, hollowing them out for use as weatherproof shelter.

**Essence:** 1; **Willpower:** 4; **Join Battle:** 3 dice

**Health Levels:** -0x4/-1x4/-2x4/-4/Incap. Pestletails are gentle-natured, and will attempt to retreat from any enemy strong enough to pierce its powerful natural defenses after taking 6+ levels of damage.

**Speed Bonus:** +0

**Actions:** Feats of Strength: 14 dice (may attempt Strength 5 feats); Resist Poison/Disease: 7 dice  
Senses: 4 dice  
Resolve 3, Guile 1

#### Combat

Attack (Claws): 6 dice (Damage 12)

Attack (Tail slam): 5 dice (Damage 17, minimum 4). A pestletail's bony tail can be used to make smashing attacks (p. 586).

Combat Movement: 3 dice

Evasion 2, Parry 1

Soak/Hardness: 17/10

#### Special Attacks

**Claw Stomp** (Latent): A pestletail that has been trained for combat adds two automatic successes to the attack roll and two dice to the raw damage of any claw attack it makes against a prone enemy.

**Smashing Tail Hammer** (Latent): The pestletail may pay a point of Willpower before making a **decisive** tail slam attack to grant the attack the benefits of the Solar Charm Heaven Thunder Hammer if it hits. Using Smashing Tail Hammer counts as making a smashing attack, and incurs the additional Defense penalty for such.

#### Merits

**Bony Shell:** Withdrawing into its heavy shell affords a pestletail extraordinary defense. It may take Full Defense actions without losing any Initiative. In addition, Full Defense actions add four to the pestletail's soak and hardness as well as increasing its Defense.

**Impenetrable Armor:** The minimum damage of any **withering** attack made against the pestletail is reduced by one die, to a minimum of zero.

**Sturdy as Stone:** A pestletail cannot be knocked back or prone except by magical effects and by creatures of extraordinary size, such as tyrant lizards. Similarly, a grappled pestletail cannot be thrown or slammed unless magic such as Dragon Coil Technique is used, or if the grappling creature is gigantic.

**Hardened Shell Superiority** (Latent): Whenever a **withering** attack against the pestletail fails to deal any damage, the attacker loses a point of Initiative which is granted to the beast. Whenever a **decisive** attack fails to damage it, the pestletail gains an Initiative Break of 5 points.

#### QUOLL-LION

Vaguely feline in appearance, the quoll-lion's stocky frame is more like that of a bear. Though typically little larger than a jaguar, it's deadlier than other natural predators of its size. Its jaws are as powerful as a lion's, and it can stand upright on its hind legs and tail to lash out with massive forelimbs tipped with huge retractable claws.

These nocturnal hunters stalk the deep forests of the East, their striped fur blending into the foliage. Others haunt wooded Western islands and the jungles of the Caul. Much of their lives take place above ground as they leap upon prey from above, then drag carcasses into the lower branches.

**Essence:** 1; **Willpower:** 5; **Join Battle:** 6 dice (see Stalking Cat Advantage)

**Health Levels:** -0/-1x4/-2x4/-4/Incap. Quoll-lions will typically flee after taking six levels of damage.

**Actions:** Climbing: 8 dice (see Agile Climber); Feats of Strength: 7 dice (may attempt Strength 3 feats); Hiding Carcasses in Trees: 6 dice; Senses: 5 dice (see Keen Scent and Night Vision); Stealth: 7 dice (see Drop Predator); Tracking: 7 dice (see Keen Scent)

Resolve 2, Guile 2

#### Combat

Attack (Bite): 7 dice (Damage 14)

Attack (Claw): 11 dice (Damage 10)

Attack (Grapple): 7 dice (5 dice to control). Quoll-lions cannot throw or slam grappled prey.  
 Combat Movement: 8 dice  
 Evasion 4, Parry 3  
 Soak/Hardness: 5/0

#### *Special Attacks*

**Ambush Hunter:** The quoll-lion adds three on all attack rolls made from stealth.

**Falling Fang Strike:** A quoll-lion may jump down to attack characters from short or medium range with a single movement action, and takes no falling damage from doing so. Each range band crossed adds one automatic success to the damage roll of the attack. If the quoll-lion ambushes an enemy in this way, the target instead take damage equivalent to the falling damage for the distance of the descent. All characters who witness the attack are stunned by this sudden attack if they were not aware of the quoll-lion, losing three points of Initiative. Falling Fang Strike can only be used once per scene unless reset by spending three consecutive rounds at medium range above all enemies.

#### *Merits*

**Agile Climber:** Quoll-lions apply double 8s on all rolls to climb through trees and other foliage.

**Drop Predator:** In environments where the quoll-lion can climb into trees above its prey, it hides over them, imposing a -4 penalty on any rolls made to notice it. Characters native to the quoll-lion's habitat, or who have a native guide, may reduce this penalty to -2 if they are careful to look out above them, though this halves the speed at which they can move. Characters with superhuman hearing, scent, or applicable exotic senses ignore this penalty entirely.

**Keen Nose:** Quoll-lions applies the double 9s rule on Perception-based rolls made using scent. If the roll is made to pick up the scent of prey, apply the double 8s rule instead.

**Night Vision:** Quoll-lions can see in dim conditions as though they were in broad daylight, and reduce the difficulty of Perception-based checks made in deeper darkness by one.

**Marsupial:** Female quoll-lions carry their young in a pouch. Quoll-kits gain the benefits of being protected with a Defend Other action in their mother's pouch, with an effective Parry of 5. Other creatures the size of a house-cat or smaller could potentially gain this benefit if



allowed into the quoll-lion's pouch. They may be trained to accept animals other than their own young as a latent ability.

**Stalking Shadow Advantage:** Quoll-lions adds one automatic success to any Join Battle roll made while in stealth.

#### **RAITON**

These small, black-feathered reptiles have clawed wings and a beak full of small, sharp teeth. Omnivores, they hunt rodents and other small ground creatures, gather fruits and seeds, and scavenge dead meat. Flocks circle battlefields and slaughterhouses alike, driving off other carrion-eaters from the feasts of carcasses below. This gives the raiton an ill-omened reputation—across Creation, raitons are taken as portents of future death or strife.

**Essence:** 1; **Willpower:** 3; **Join Battle:** 4 dice

**Health Levels:** -0/-1/-2/-4/Icap. Raitons scatter when attacked, even if they are not actually harmed.

**Actions:** Fly: 8 dice; Senses: 5 dice (see Carrion Hunter); Stealth: 4 dice (see Tiny Creature); Tracking: 6 dice (see Carrion Hunter)

Resolve 1, Guile 1

### Combat

Attack (Peck): 6 dice (Damage 3). Against creatures of its own size or smaller, the raiton's peck deals 9 damage.

Combat Movement: 8 dice

Evasion 1, Parry 1 (see Tiny Creature)

Soak/Hardness: 1/0

### Merits

**Carrion Hunter:** Raitons add three automatic successes on any Perception-based roll to detect, locate, or track the scent of dead flesh, making them a common sight at battlefields. This bonus also applies on rolls to identify diseased carrion.

**Tiny Creature:** Raitons add +2 Evasion against any attack made by a larger foe. In addition, larger characters subtract two successes from any Awareness-based roll made to notice them.

### RIVER DRAGON

The river dragon is a ferocious predator of river mouths and freshwater bays in the East and Southwest, more than thirty feet long with jaws lined with hundreds of spiky teeth. Large fish, seals, and the occasional whale that becomes trapped in fresh water are their predominant prey, but they will also lurk out of sight by the shore, waiting for an animal to come near before lunging out to seize it. Once the river dragon has caught a victim in its jaws, it will twist until limbs are torn from sockets or spines shatter, exerting tremendous killing force. Humans keep a wide berth from waters rumored to harbor river dragons, but this still does not save the occasional fishing vessel that's attacked and capsized.

**Essence:** 1; **Willpower:** 5

**Join Battle:** 5 dice

**Health Levels:** -0x4/-1x6/-2x6/-4x5/Icap. River dragons will flee if dealt 10+ levels of damage, but refuse to release their hold on any prey they have grappled, dragging it back into the water with them to drown it if necessary.

**Actions:** Feats of Strength: 10 dice (may attempt Strength 5 feats); Intimidate: 5 dice; Resist Poison/Disease: 8 dice; Senses: 5 dice (see Keen Nose and Night Vision); Stealth: 5 dice (see Undertow Menace); Tracking: 6 dice (see Keen Nose)

Resolve 3, Guile 1

### Combat

Attack (Bite): 9 dice (Damage 19, minimum 5)

Attack (Grapple): 9 dice (11 dice to control). The river dragon makes unopposed control rolls against smaller opponents, unless its victims use magic that allows them to clinch larger enemies, such as Dragon Coil Technique.

Combat Movement: 6 dice

Evasion 0, Parry 4

Soak/Hardness: 16/10

### Special Attacks

**Clamp Down:** A river dragon that deals 3+ levels of damage to a victim with a **decisive** bite attack may pay a point of Willpower to begin grappling them, making the opposed roll to establish control over the clinch. A successful clinch adds +1 to the base Initiative it resets to for every round of control it gains. Once per fight.

**Death Roll:** A river dragon that has grappled an enemy and built up to Initiative 11+ may use the terrifying death roll, a **decisive** savaging attack that benefits from double 7s as the dragon twists to forcibly rip off chunks of flesh. The death roll inflicts a crippling injury (p. 201) on its victim, but with the river dragon's player choosing how severe an injury to inflict and forgoing the appropriate amount of damage. Once per fight.

**Lunge From the Depths:** While the river dragon is underwater, it may rush enemies on land from out to medium range, moving one range band towards its victim on each of that character's turns in addition to its normal movement. If it is concealed from its victim, it adds two successes on the rush roll.

### Merits

**Bottomless Lungs:** A river dragon can hold its breath underwater for fifteen minutes before it needs to surface. In a scene of combat or intense physical exertion, it may hold its breath for the entire scene, but must then surface at the end of the scene.

**Keen Nose:** River dragons apply the double 9s rule on Perception-based rolls made using scent.

**Legendary Size:** The river dragon's size makes it extraordinarily difficult for human-scale enemies to engage it in combat. It does not take onslaught penalties from any attack made by a smaller opponent, although magically-inflicted onslaught penalties still apply against it. **Withering** attacks made by smaller enemies cannot drop it

below 1 Initiative unless they have a post-soak damage of 10 dice (although attackers can still gain the full amount of Initiative damage dealt). **Decisive** attacks made by smaller enemies cannot deal more than (3 + attacker's Strength) levels of damage to the river dragon with a single attack, not counting any levels of damage added by Charms or other magic.

**Night Vision:** River dragons can see in dim conditions as though they were in broad daylight, and reduce the difficulty of Perception-based checks made in deeper darkness by one.

**Undertow Menace:** The river dragon gains double 8s whenever it attempts to establish Stealth while underwater.

#### SIEGE LIZARD

Siege lizards are great reptiles that can be found in scattered regions from the forests of the East to the Cinder Isles. While they are herbivores, their powerfully-muscled tails are tipped with three-foot long spikes, and a ridge of armored bone plates interlock over the beast's spine in a distinctive kite shape. Siege lizards are rare, generally living in small herds, grazing on ferns and low-growing vegetation. While there are few creatures large or powerful enough to prey on the siege lizard, humans who encounter the great beasts are often awed by them. Remote tribes worship them as totem-beasts or carry out ritualized hunts in a foolhardy attempt to consume the siege lizard's strength. The beasts are stupid, stubborn, and ferociously independent, making their domestication extremely unlikely. Those foolish enough to think to lead these lizards into battle most often die trampled underfoot by their own would-be engines of war.

**Essence:** 1; **Willpower:** 4; **Join Battle:** 5 dice

**Health Levels:** -0x1/-1x5/-2x5/-4x5/Icap. A siege lizard will flee combat after taking 8+ levels of damage, even if it is fighting to protect its young.

**Actions:** Feats of Strength: 9 dice (may attempt Strength 5 feats); Intimidate: 5 dice; Resist Poison/Disease: 10 dice; Senses: 6 dice (see Keen Scent) Resolve 4, Guile 1

#### Combat

Attack (Stomp): 6 dice (Damage 16, minimum damage 6)  
 Attack (Tail Slam): 7 dice (Damage 19, minimum 5). The siege lizard's tail can be used to make smashing attacks.  
 Attack (Grapple): 6 dice (10 dice to control): The siege lizard makes unopposed control rolls, unless its victims use magic that allows them to clinch larger enemies, such as Dragon Coil Technique.

Combat Movement: 4 dice  
 Evasion 1, Parry 5  
 Soak/Hardness: 20/10

#### Special Attacks

**Death Stomp:** The siege lizard's **decisive** stomp attacks deal +5 damage against prone enemies.

**Spiked Plate Fortress:** After taking a full defense action, a siege lizard may use its spiked plates to fend off an attacker, making a reflexive **decisive** counterattack in response to a single attack from close range. Against enemies who are airborne, jumping, or climbing on the siege lizard, double the damage of the attack. Once the siege lizard counterattacks, it loses the full defense bonus until it next acts.

**Spiked Tail Slam:** When the siege lizard makes a smashing **decisive** tail slam attack while at Initiative 12+, that attack gains the benefits of Heaven Thunder Hammer (see p. 274).

**Trample:** When the siege lizard closes in on a rushed enemy and makes a stomp attack on the same turn, a successful hit knocks that enemy prone. The penalties for being prone are applied to that character's Defenses retroactively when calculating extra successes on the attack.

#### Merits

**Impenetrable Armor:** The minimum damage of any **withering** attack made against the siege lizard is reduced by one die, to a minimum of zero.

**Keen Nose:** Siege lizards apply the double 9s rule on Perception-based rolls made using scent. They double 8s instead on rolls to detect the smells of edible plants.

**Legendary Size:** The siege lizard is extraordinarily difficult for human-scale enemies to engage in combat. It does not take onslaught penalties from any attack made by a smaller opponent, although magically-inflicted onslaught penalties still apply against it. **Withering** attacks made by smaller enemies cannot drop it below 1 Initiative unless they have a post-soak damage of 10 dice (although attackers can still gain the full amount of Initiative damage dealt). **Decisive** attacks made by smaller enemies cannot deal more than (3 + attacker's Strength) levels of damage to a siege lizard with a single attack, not counting any levels of damage added by Charms or other magic.

**Sturdy as Stone:** A siege lizard cannot be knocked back or prone except by magical effects and by creatures of equal or greater size.

**TYRANT LIZARD**

From the jungles to the lower grasslands where they roam, there is no creature more legendary or more feared than the rare tyrant lizard. The rumor of a tyrant is enough to panic villages and caravans, who flee following huge flocks of birds or stampeding packs of beasts retreating from the lizard's approach. Enormous, swift-moving, and ravenous, the tyrant lizard is too dumb to fear anything but fire, and so mighty as to have little need to fear anything else. They run on their two larger, rear limbs, while using their clawed forelimbs, bludgeoning tails, and enormous mouths to hunt. Solitary predators, these beasts will pursue and attack anything if hungry enough—the stomachs of tyrant lizards that succumb to old age or are slain by great heroes have been found to contain river dragons, elephants, and even daiklaves.

**Essence:** 1; **Willpower:** 7; **Join Battle:** 10 dice (base Initiative 5)

**Health Levels:** -0x5/-1x5/-2x7/-4x7/Icap. Tyrant lizards will attempt to flee upon suffering 15+ levels of damage, unless cornered or protecting their young.

**Speed Bonus:** +2. Actually training a tyrant lizard to accept a rider is nigh-impossible without legendary skill, divine blessings, or the prowess of the Chosen.

**Actions:** Feats of Strength: 12 dice (may attempt Strength 7 feats, see Incredible Might); Hide in Dense Forest or Swamps: 8 dice; Intimidation: 10 dice; Resist Poison/Disease: 10 dice; Senses: 5 dice (see Relentless Pursuit); Tracking: 8 dice (see Relentless Pursuit) Resolve 3, Guile 1

**Combat**

Attack (Bite): 11 dice (Damage 16, minimum 5). A tyrant lizard's bite can easily puncture armor, allowing it to make piercing attacks (p. 586).

Attack (Slam): 12 dice (Damage 14, minimum 4). The tyrant lizard uses its head or tail to bash an enemy, and can make a smashing attack (p. 586).

Attack (Talon rake): 13 dice (Damage 12, minimum 3)

Attack (Grapple): 8 dice (10 dice to control). The tyrant lizard makes unopposed control rolls against enemies of smaller size, unless its victims use magic that allows them to clinch larger enemies, such as Dragon Coil Technique.

Combat Movement: 7 dice

Evasion 4, Parry 6

Soak/Hardness: 15/5

**Special Attacks**

**Brutal Stomp:** Whenever the tyrant lizard knocks an enemy prone with a smashing attack, it may pay a point of Willpower to reflexively make a grapple attack that

cannot be parried. The tyrant lizard can only restrain the stomped enemy and cannot move without ending the clinch, but the stomped enemy takes six dice of lethal damage that ignore hardness for each round the tyrant lizard holds it. This special attack is not compatible with deadly thrash.

**Deadly Thrash:** The tyrant lizard may shake a clinched enemy back and forth, shredding it with razor-sharp teeth before flinging it to the ground. The tyrant lizard may savage its clinched victim with a **decisive** bite attack before flinging it with a **decisive** throw or slam action. The tyrant lizard's Initiative does not reset until it has completed both attacks, and it gains an additional point of Initiative for each round of control forfeited after the reset.

**Ferocious Bite:** When the tyrant lizard makes a **decisive** bite attack against an enemy with a lower Initiative rating, it adds +10 to the raw damage of the attack. This bonus does not apply to attacks made as part of a deadly thrash. Once per fight, unless reset by rebuilding from base Initiative to Initiative 15+.

**Furious Rampage:** Whenever the tyrant lizard attacks or rushes an enemy who is in Initiative Crash, it adds three automatic successes on the roll.

**Iron Jaws:** The tyrant lizard does not take Defense penalties from grappling smaller enemies, and can reflexively take a drag action to move them whenever it moves, carrying them in its mouth (this does not apply to clinches initiated with brutal stomp). Additionally, being attacked only causes it to lose rounds of control over a clinch if that attack successfully damages the tyrant lizard.

**Terrifying Dragon Roar** (Latent): The tyrant lizard unleashes a roar that can be heard for miles, rolling its intimidation pool against all enemies and adding a number of dice equal to its Initiative. Mortal bystanders and natural enemies automatically flee from the roar, as does any enemy whose Resolve is overcome unless they pay a point of Willpower to resist. Even if they do, they lose one point of Initiative for every success by which the tyrant lizard's roll beat their Resolve. After using this attack, the tyrant lizard is reset to base Initiative.

**Legion-Devouring Maw** (Latent): Swallowing up soldiers in between its jaws, the tyrant lizard decimates the ranks. When the tyrant lizard makes a **decisive** bite attack against a battle group, it automatically forces a rout check at a base difficulty of 3. If the attack depleted the group's Magnitude, instead add +3 to the difficulty of the resulting rout check.



### Merits

**Apex Predator:** The tyrant lizard regains a point of Willpower every time it crashes or incapacitates a non-trivial opponent. This cannot raise its current Willpower above the amount it had at the beginning of the fight. It is also immune to any non-magical influence roll meant to intimidate, provoke fear, or play upon fear.

**Incredible Might:** The tyrant lizard applies double 8s on any feat of strength to lift, carry, or crush something between its jaws.

**Legendary Size:** The tyrant lizard's immense size makes it extraordinarily difficult for human-scale enemies to engage it in combat. It does not take onslaught penalties from any attack made by a smaller opponent, although magically-inflicted onslaught penalties still apply against it. **Withering** attacks made by smaller enemies cannot drop the tyrant lizard below 1 Initiative unless they have a post-soak damage of 10 dice (although attackers can still gain the full amount of Initiative damage dealt). **Decisive** attacks made by smaller enemies

cannot deal more than  $(3 + \text{attacker's Strength})$  levels of damage to the tyrant lizard with a single attack, not counting any levels of damage added by Charms or other magic.

**Relentless Pursuit:** The tyrant lizard applies the double 8s rule on any scent-based Awareness roll or on any roll to track by scent. It adds five automatic successes on any roll made to oppose an enemy's (Dexterity + Stealth) roll using scent.

**Thick Scales:** The sheer size of the tyrant lizard makes it difficult to strike at its vitals, no matter how wounded the beast is. The tyrant lizard does not subtract wound penalties from its Defense. In addition, attacks made from short range or further reduce their minimum damage against the tyrant lizard by one unless they benefit from an Aim action.

### VENOMOUS SNAKE

Creation teems with thousands of species of poisonous snake—the asps and cobras of the Southern desert, the rattlesnakes and deadly coral snakes of the East, sea snakes that

swim in Western waters and adders that lurk in the mountains of the near North. These snakes almost universally prey on smaller animals, but if startled or provoked by an unwary traveler, will lash out with a deadly bite.

**Essence:** 1; **Willpower:** 3; **Join Battle:** 4 dice

**Health Levels:** -0/-1/-2/-4/Icap. Most species of venomous snake will flee after taking any damage.

**Actions:** Senses: 5 dice (see Keen Nose); Stealth: 7 dice (see Camouflage and Tiny Creature)

Resolve 2, Guile 2

**Combat**

Attack (Bite): 7 dice (Damage 3 and poison when **decisive**, damage 2i/round, duration 3 rounds, -2 penalty). Damage increases to 9 against enemies the snake's size or smaller.

Combat Movement: 7 dice

Evasion 1 (see Tiny Creature), Parry 1

Soak/Hardness: 5/0

*Merits*

**Camouflage:** While in their native environment, venomous snakes double 9s on Stealth rolls.

**Keen Nose:** Snakes double 9s on scent-based Perception rolls.

**Tiny Creature:** Snakes adds +2 Evasion against any attack made by any foe larger than a housecat. In addition, characters of that size subtract two successes from any Awareness-based roll made to notice it.

**YEDDIM**

Huge, shaggy, and amiably stupid, the yeddim is domesticated throughout the world as a beast of burden. Standing eighteen feet tall at the shoulders and weighing fifteen tons, they have vast endurance and need very little feed or water, making them ideal for hauling caravans or carrying hundreds of pounds of goods or gear. Wild yeddim are generally found grazing in savannas, with the same even temper and stoic nature as their domesticated cousins—the only difference being a rank odor long since bred out of the tame yeddim.

**Combat**

Attack (Bite): 4 dice (Damage 16)

Attack (Stomp): 8 dice (Damage 12)

Attack (Grapple): 4 dice (5 dice to control).

The yeddim makes unopposed control rolls against smaller opponents, unless its victims use magic that allows them to clinch larger enemies, such as Dragon Coil Technique.

**Essence:** 1; **Willpower:** 4; **Join Battle:** 4 dice

Combat Movement: 8 dice

Evasion: 1, Parry: 1

Soak/Hardness: 16/10

**Health Levels:** -0x2/-1x6/-2x6/-4x4/Icap. Yeddim will generally attempt to flee upon suffering 3+ levels of damage, unless their young are threatened or they fail to notice the source of the harm.

**Speed Bonus:** +1

**Actions:** Feats of Strength: 14 dice (may attempt Strength 7 feats, see Beast of Burden); Senses: 3 dice; Resist Poison/Disease: 7 dice (see Epic Vigor)  
Resolve 2, Guile 1

*Merits*

**Beast of Burden:** Yeddim apply double 8s on any feat of strength to haul or carry a heavy burden.

**Epic Vigor:** Yeddim are huge and hardy, capable of going without feed for a week before suffering penalties, and for eight weeks before starving to death. Likewise, they can last a full week without water before dying of dehydration. They also apply the double 9s rule on all rolls to resist poison or disease.

**Immense Guardian:** While a yeddim is generally too dumb and clumsy for its Defend Other actions to significantly increase the Defense of its wards, they have an additional benefit when used to protect its young, allowing the ward to substitute the yeddim's soak and hardness for its own when resisting the damage of the attack. The yeddim can be trained to receive the benefits of this Merit when protecting its master as a latent ability.

**Legendary Size:** The yeddim's size makes it extraordinarily difficult for human-scale enemies to engage it in combat. It does not take onslaught penalties from any attack made by a smaller opponent, although magically-inflicted onslaught penalties still apply against it. **Withering** attacks made by smaller enemies cannot drop it below 1 Initiative unless they have a post-soak damage of 10 dice (although attackers can still gain the full amount of Initiative damage dealt). **Decisive** attacks made by smaller enemies cannot deal more than (3 + attacker's Strength) levels of damage to the yeddim with a single attack, not counting any levels of damage added by Charms or other magic.

# C

Chejop Kejak stood on a precipice, feeling all his years. He had lived so long and so many lives that he often wondered if he hadn't lost himself somewhere along the way.

*A thousand lives and a thousand faces,  
breathing in the Essence of the morning  
and the knowledge of the stars;  
days and lives and secrets  
all flowing in my mind like blood.*

Sometimes the Chosen of Secrets felt as if he were no more than fate's creature. The "creature" that gazed down across the slopes of the Imperial Mountain was old indeed. So ancient, so burdened with memories. Thousands of years had passed before its eyes. Five thousand years? He tried not to mark the time—eventually he had concluded it was tedious and he was certain of his feelings, having examined them countless thousands of times.

Kejak faced toward the rising sun. He stood on the geomantic line that arose between it and the axis mundi, and he bathed in the glory of the return of life to Creation after the darkness of night. Yes, I suppose that is your special trick, he whispered within his own mind. The sun rose, and the vast power of that conjunction flowed through him, bathing his soul in Essence.

The East was where he let his eye rest. He weighed its threats against one-another, weighed the turns fate might take. He had an insider's view of the workings of history, and he abused his position gravely as a matter of course.

Lunars—the most numerous; one of the most dangerous as well. He was keenly aware of the Full Moons out there doing who-knows-what, maneuvering for some plan hidden even from Kejak's eyes. They were hidden in the West, too, there on the Caul. The Caul had held so much promise in the wake of the Usurpation, but all those halcyon dreams had come to ash and blood along with

the rest of the age, and now they were at the brink of a war that would send even more cracks through the fabric of his Creation.

His eyes sought out all of the flaws forming in the weft of his great working. In the East, he saw the antique military kingdoms stirring from slumber, the Dragon-Blooded playing with fire, the angry ghost of Larquen Quen riding a corpse the size of a mountain, Guild mercantile interests, misbehaving gods with a hand on the Loom of Fate, and other powerful influencers. Absent from his eye, somewhere out there: Rakan Thulio and his tainted followers. The sheer mad amount of it made him wonder. One thing he learned managing history was that it had a lot of improbable events in it, but these last few years had seen fantastically crazy turns. The aggressive self-assertion of the Solars had been a real surprise—the biggest since the Contagion.

He let observations come and go without judgment. The purpose of this exercise wasn't planning, it was meditation. For five thousand years, Chejop Kejak's pleasantly late middle aged face had gazed out on the world, seeing these interplays of power. He had humbled the grandest kingdom that would ever be. He had watched the world die. He had sculpted a new future for that world after the horrors of the Great Contagion. He managed the stars and destiny on a level more fundamental than even his superiors, the Five Maidens, would be comfortable admitting. This was his place in the natural order, and he greeted the new day with an assessment of his plans for it in its totality, as was his purpose in existence.

Kejak looked over it all and sighed. So beautiful. Then he used his sorcery to transport himself away, while the geomantic power of the line could still be used to fuel his magic. He was gone, and the sun had passed the horizon, and the line of power winked out.

Kejak was sorry he cut his audience with the morning short, but he had tomorrow to plan and a strict deadline.



## Chapter Nine

# The Grand Panoply

Regardless of whether someone is an impoverished mortal or a wealthy and powerful Exalt, proper tools and equipment are always essential. Transporting an army across an ocean requires boats to carry them in; musicians need instruments to play. The finest warrior requires weapons and armor, and outfitting an army requires an abundance of both.

### The Resources System

Real prices are tremendously variable based upon supply, demand, politics, and haggling. As such, each item is assigned a Resources value. The number given indicates the rating necessary for a character to view a purchase as a significant but not ruinous expense—higher-rating characters can often absorb lower-rated Resources expenditure with ease.

Things usually purchased immediately or which must be repurchased frequently (animal fodder, drugs, fancy clothing) count against monthly income, while infrequent purchases are compared to expected income for a year (military field commands, large caravans, slaves) or even a decade (ships, villas, palaces, jewelry), as folks often take loans or mortgages to afford large buys. As such, a purchase's Resource value is not a hard cap on affordability—use the actual prices and discretion to determine what's affordable.

In the world of **Exalted**, loans, credit, and debt are standard, from bar tabs, to tax loans from landlords, to Guild factors backing merchants, to military commissions paid for by wealthy relatives. Characters who frequently make purchases at their level of Resources are almost

always in debt. Debt doesn't necessarily reduce Resources, but it does create plot complications—consider handling it as a custom Flaw (p. 167).

The Resources Merit needn't pay for all a starting character's mundane equipment—a destitute former soldier may retain her arms and armor, while a pair of smugglers might have won their ship in a bet. Characters begin play with whatever possessions are appropriate for their concepts, within reason.

### COST OF LIVING

Most people spend their money maintaining their lives. An urban laborer gambles to stay in favor with a local gang. A merchant pays tariffs and bribes, while a businesswoman dines with partners and pays the wages of assistants and employees. The upper classes decorate their mansions, feed and clothe their slaves and servants, pay guards and thugs, throw galas, patronize the arts, indulge in vices, and finance the business excursions and expenses of younger family members and other hangers-on.

As a general rule, any character who spends less than half her income on the cost of living is in danger of being judged by her peers as eccentric, stingy, or unworthy of her station. This may lead to social snubs, disintegrating business deals, or attempts on her fortune, livelihood, or even life from contemporaries who begin to view her as an outsider.

### EVERYDAY WONDERS

Mortal miracle-workers practice alchemy, geomancy, astrology, warding, weatherworking and other crafts, and they've also found ways to create drugs and charms that contain some degree of power.



### **Age-Staving Cordial (Resources ••••)**

Created from the sap of a vine from the jungles of the Far East and the poison of a species of clam from the Southwest coasts, this drug is sold as small packets of dark red powder. When mixed with water or wine, it creates a brew that slows aging. Anyone taking weekly doses of age-staving cordial will live 25 percent longer than someone who doesn't have regular access to the drug. Other anagathics are similarly expensive and difficult to procure.

### **Ghost Flower Tea (Resources ••)**

This rare and unusual drug consists of the ground dried petals of the luminous, palm-sized ghost flower, which grows only in shadowlands in the temperate portions of the East. Users steep ghost flowers with water, creating a faintly luminous tea that they drink just before sleep. The first few times it's used, ghost flower tea produces vivid dreams in which the user can see and communicate with any ghosts nearby. Continued use (more doses than the user's [Stamina + Resistance] in a single season) means that the user builds up enough resistance to the drug that she can remain awake under its influence and see and communicate with ghosts while awake. Taking more than ([Stamina + Resistance] x 3) doses in a single season allows the user to touch and be touched by ghosts. She can fight duels with ghostly opponents, or even take ghostly lovers. Frequent users appear pale and sickly, and their lips glow faintly in dim light. Ghosts can also take ghost flower tea and use it to communicate with the living in a similar way. Anyone who dies while taking ghost flower tea becomes a ghost herself.

### **Maiden Tea (Resources •• to ••••)**

A common name for a wide variety of drugs used to render a woman infertile for roughly a month or a man infertile for periods varying from a day to a week depending on the specific brew, maiden tea is a favorite of concubines, courtesans, soldiers, travelers, adolescents and men and women who wish to avoid conception as a result of affairs. Taking three or more doses at once makes the user mildly ill (one level of bashing damage, and subtract one from all rolls until this heals). This level of dosage also induces miscarriage. Large overdoses (six or more doses) make the user violently ill (two levels of bashing damage, and increase the difficulty of all rolls by one until this heals) and renders the user permanently sterile. Cheaper versions of maiden tea are widely available and easy to prepare, but of varying efficacy. The most expensive and effective form of maiden tea requires extracts from venomous clam beds only found in the West, and is a lucrative import everywhere else in Creation.

### Talismans (Resources • to ••••)

Some occur naturally, and many are fakes, but gifted thaumaturgists can create talismans that provide minor but useful benefits to any who carry them. Talismans against disease provide the user with an additional die to all rolls to resist disease and infection. Good luck charms protect the wearer from one botch per story, and charms designed to ward the wearer against the Fair Folk, spirits, elementals, demons or the walking dead cause beings of the appropriate type to suffer a -1 penalty to all their dice pools when attempting to affect the wearer, up to (talisman's Resources value) times per scene. Each warding charms can only affect one type of creature. Talismans that provide greater bonuses also exist but are rare and extremely difficult to create.

### Mortal Weapons

Mortal weapons can be made by anyone skilled at crafting the appropriate materials. They're purchased with Resources and lack the special properties of artifact weapons and armor. In addition to the obvious categories of melee weapons and missile weapons, all mortal weapons are divided into three broad damage categories—light, medium, and heavy—depending on their size and power. All weapons in the same category have the same basic combat traits.

Individual weapons are distinguished by tags, which denote special qualities possessed by that particular item. Every weapon has several tags listed after its description. See the list of tags immediately after the weapon descriptions for explanations. Weapon descriptions always include a tag denoting whether the weapon does bashing or lethal damage, as well as a separate note of the weapon's cost in Resource dots.

#### MORTAL MELEE WEAPONS

Category	Accuracy	Damage	Defense	Overwhelming
Light	+4	+7	+0	1
Medium	+2	+9	+1	1
Heavy	+0	+11	-1	1

**Accuracy:** Add this many dice to the (Dexterity + Ability) dice pool when making withering attacks with this weapon.

**Damage:** Add this many dice to damage rolls when making withering attacks with this weapon.

**Defense:** Add or subtract this number to or from the wielder's Parry.

**Overwhelming:** The minimum damage of **withering** attacks made with the weapon, after soak has been applied. Soak can't reduce a weapon's **withering** damage pool to below its Overwhelming value.

### Exceptional Weapons and Equipment

The finest armorers create weapons and suits of armor superior to anything lesser craftsmen can make. Exceptional armor and weapons provide no bonuses, but are exquisitely made, often elaborately decorated or sufficiently durable they require only minimal care.

Other forms of exceptional equipment also exist. A burglar might have exceptional lockpicks created by the finest master thief in Nexus, and a musician might have a flute or lyre made by a brilliant crafter who also makes musical instruments for the best performers in the Realm. **All exceptional equipment other than weapons and armor provides a +1 bonus to all rolls to use it.** All exceptional equipment costs one dot more than ordinary equipment. All artifacts are by definition exceptional, so artifact traits already take any bonuses from exceptional construction into account.

#### MELEE WEAPONS

These are weapons used in close-quarter combat. Most use the Melee Ability, but a few use Brawl or Martial Arts.

##### LIGHT MELEE WEAPONS

###### Cestus

The cestus is an arrangement of leather straps that fits around the hand like a fingerless glove. These straps are covered in brass or iron studs, serving to enhance the wearer's punches. The metal gauntlets that are part of most forms of heavy armor can also be designed to work as cestuses. They're usually used in pairs. **Cost:** •

Tags: Bashing, Brawl, Smashing, Worn

###### Club/Cudgel/Baton

A club may be a simple billet of wood, or it may be wrapped in metal bands with a leather grip. Clubs are popular among barbaric tribes, peasants in revolt and relatively poor outlaws. A club may be balanced as a thrown weapon (using the Thrown Ability). Small improvised weapons like chair legs are treated as clubs, but gain the Improvised tag. **Cost:** –

Tags: Bashing, Melee, Smashing; sometimes Thrown (Short), Improvised

### **Khatar**

The khatar, also known as the punch dagger, is a single-bladed knife with a hilt assembly perpendicular to the blade. Held in a closed fist, the blade juts from the front of the character's fist so that the character's punches deliver deadly stabs. **Cost:** ••

*Tags:* Lethal, Brawl, Piercing



### **Knife**

A knife is a weapon with a chopping and stabbing blade about a foot long, which can have a single or double edge. Most adults in the world of **Exalted** carry a knife, for



utility as well as personal defense. Knives are used as tableware and to cut and pry, as well as for combat. Knives can also be used as thrown weapons. **Cost:** —

*Tags:* Lethal, Melee, Thrown (Short)

### **Sai**

Sai are three-pronged, fork-shaped weapons as long as large daggers. They are specially designed to twist weapons out of an opponent's grasp by catching the blade between the prongs. **Cost:** ••

*Tags:* Lethal, Melee, Disarming

### **Short Sword**

Short swords are weapons with blades about two feet long. Some are single-edged, while others have cutting edges on both sides. They are typically carried as weapons

by soldiers and as tools by barbarians. Soldiers use short swords because they make excellent formation-fighting weapons—longer weapons are difficult to manage in close quarters. Barbarians use them as tools because they're small enough for skinning, butchering and brush-clearing and large enough to fight with in a pinch. Short swords are also favored as backup weapons by spearmen and archers. **Cost:** •

*Tags:* Lethal, Melee, Balanced

### **Tiger Claws**

Tiger claws consist of a glove or gauntlet with three or four curved talons extending from the back. Tiger claws are most common in cultures that live close to big cats, but their intimidating appearance and the terrifying wounds they leave have spread them throughout Creation. **Cost:** •

*Tags:* Lethal, Brawl, Worn



**Unarmed**

The most basic of all weapons, this “weapon” models strikes and kicks made with the character’s fists and feet.

*Tags:* Bashing, Brawl, Grappling, Natural

**Whip**

A whip is a handle with a coil of leather thongs or tightly woven cord, primarily used by drovers to control beasts. Whips inflict more pain than damage, but a skilled user can entangle foes or wrench weapons from their grip. Most whips are between two and five yards long. **Cost:** •

*Tags:* Bashing, Melee, Disarming, Flexible, Grappling, Reaching

**Wind and Fire Wheel/War Fan**

This weapon can be as simple as an undecorated steel ring, but it typically has handles built into it and sharpened protrusions jutting from the top, bottom and front. These weapons are often wielded paired; they deliver crushing or slashing blows and can block or catch enemy weapons.

**Cost:** ••

*Tags:* Lethal, Martial Arts, Disarming

**MEDIUM MELEE WEAPONS****Axe/Hatchet**

A broad-bladed weapon balanced for use in one hand, an axe is easy to manufacture and of great utility as a tool as well as a weapon. Axes can also be thrown. **Cost:** •

*Tags:* Lethal, Melee, Thrown (Short), Chopping

**Chopping Sword**

This weapon is a sword with a chopping blade about three feet long. Some versions have a square or angled tip, while others sport a curve with a wicked back clip. Unlike the slashing sword, chopping swords are designed not for fencing and agility, but for delivering solid blows that hack through armor and bone. **Cost:** ••

*Tags:* Lethal, Melee, Chopping

**Fighting Chain**

Fighting chains are slender, sturdy chains with small weights on either end. Most fighting chains are between three and five yards long. In addition to making ordinary attacks, fighting chains can be used to perform clinches and stunts involving grabbing, pulling, and swinging from objects. **Cost:** •

*Tags:* Bashing, Martial Arts, Disarming, Flexible, Grappling, Reaching

**Hook Sword**

The hook sword is similar in appearance to a straight sword, except it ends in a J-shaped hook that curves back along the inside of the blade. They're usually wielded paired. **Cost:** ••• (for a pair)

Tags: Lethal, Martial Arts, Disarming

**Javelin**

The javelin is a small, light spear designed for throwing. It can also be used in close combat if necessary. **Cost:** • (for a brace)

Tags: Lethal, Melee, Thrown (Medium)

**Mace/Hammer**

A mace is nothing more than a heavy weight on the end of a handle. Hammers are better balanced but lighter. Both weapons deliver crushing, stunning blows to targets. In the world of **Exalted**, the heads of maces and hammers are often elaborately decorated. Some are sculpted into the shape of animal heads, while others have been cut so that, whatever angle they're viewed from, they depict a symbol important to the wielder. Large or bulky improvised weapons like tables or chairs are treated as a mace or hammer, but with the improvised tag. **Cost:** •

Tags: Bashing, Melee, Smashing; sometimes Improvised

**Seven-Section Staff**

This weapon, which can actually have from three to 12 sections, is made up of a number of metal or wood segments connected by very short lengths of chain. It's wielded as a combination of staff and flail and is difficult to master.

**Cost:** ..

Tags: Bashing, Martial Arts, Disarming, Flexible

**Shield**

A relatively flat weapon of metal or wood that the wielder holds or straps to her arm and used to deflect attacks and bash foes. **Cost:** •

Tags: Bashing, Melee, Shield

**Short Spear**

A short-hafted weapon used primarily for stabbing, the short spear often has a long head so that it can be used for slashing and chopping in a pinch. Short spears are versatile weapons and much-favored by warrior cultures and elite troops. **Cost:** •

Tags: Lethal, Melee, Thrown (Short), Piercing

**Slashing Sword**

A slashing sword has a single-edged blade about three feet long. These swords are quick and used primarily for arcing cuts. The slashing sword is favored by cavalry, as its shape and length make it suited for use from horseback.

**Cost:** ..



Tags: Lethal, Melee, Balanced

### Spear

One of the most versatile and simple weapons ever produced, the spear is a foot-long head attached to the end of a five- to six-foot-long pole. The head of the spear typically has extensions built into the sides to prevent it from going too deep into a target. Spears are inexpensive and effective and, as a result, are one of the most common armaments of soldiers everywhere. **Cost:** •

Tags: Lethal, Melee, Piercing, Reaching



### Straight Sword

A straight sword has a double-edged blade about three-feet long, usually with a narrow blade or one that tapers slightly toward the tip. The tip is either pointed or chisel-shaped. Straight swords are well-balanced, accurate weapons, capable of deadly thrusts as well as slashing attacks. **Cost:** ••

Tags: Lethal, Melee, Balanced



### Staff

A staff is a length of sturdy wood, sometimes wrapped in metal bands or leather. Many staves are clearly weapons, but more than one thug has been thrashed by a traveler's well-worn walking stick. Staves are also excellent defensive weapons. **Cost:** —

Tags: Bashing, Melee, Reaching

### HEAVY MELEE WEAPONS

Wielding a heavy weapon requires at least Strength •••.

### Great Axe/Scythe

These fearsome long-hafted weapons are typically used for striking downward or for wide, sweeping blows. The great axe is a narrow-bladed axe designed for use in both hands, and it is a favorite weapon of the Realm's heavy infantry, which uses them during sieges and assaults. Scythes are thick, curved blades attached to a long handle, used by farmers for cutting swathes of grain—and occasionally employed on the battlefield to do the same to troops. **Cost:** •

Tags: Lethal, Melee, Chopping, Reaching, Two-Handed

### Great Sword

A great sword is a two-handed weapon used for hacking blows. These massive swords can be either single- or double-edged. Although these weapons are slow and



unsuited to fencing, a strong blow from a great sword can cut a man in half. **Cost:** ••

**Tags:** Lethal, Melee, Balanced, Reaching, Two-Handed

#### Lance

The lance is a strong-shafted spear designed to be used from horseback. Lances are typically not used against other cavalry, but to ride down infantry. Using a lance effectively when on foot requires two hands. Cost: •

**Tags:** Lethal, Melee, Piercing, Reaching; Two-Handed when on foot

#### Poleaxe/Halberd

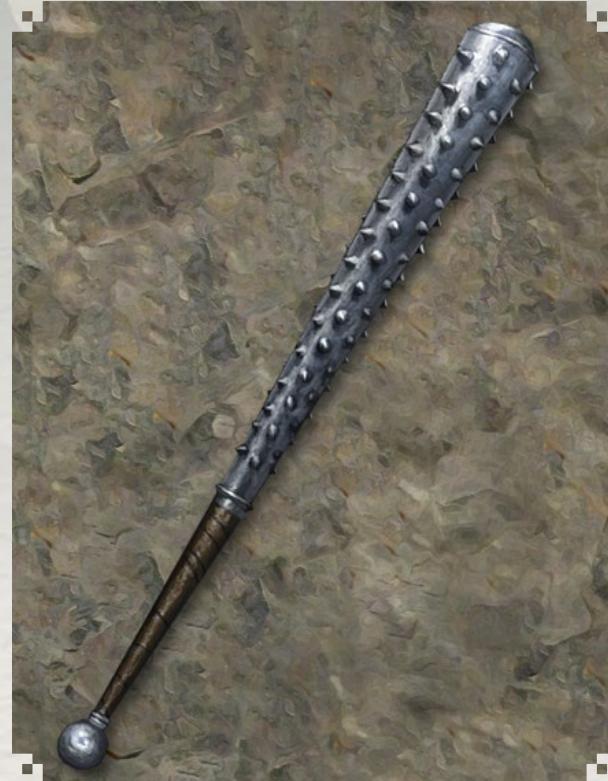


Similar to the great axe but equipped with a longer haft and a heavier blade. While less deadly than the great sword, the poleaxe is considerably cheaper. As a result, it's a popular armament for heavy infantry. **Cost:** ••

**Tags:** Lethal, Melee, Chopping, Reaching, Two-Handed

#### Sledge/Tetsubo

The sledge is a two-handed mace or hammer whose powerful strikes are slow and unwieldy. Like maces, many sledges are elaborately decorated. Their huge heads are often carved with battle scenes or fabulous beasts. The



tetsubo, favored by pragmatists for its simpler construction, is a massive war-club studded with iron knobs. Cost: ••

**Tags:** Bashing, Melee, Reaching, Smashing, Two-Handed

#### TAGS

The following tags are available for melee weapons.

**Balanced:** The power and leverage provided by this weapon give it an Overwhelming one point higher than normal. For example, a Balanced mundane medium weapon would have an Overwhelming value of 2. This tag is normally found on swords.

**Bashing:** This weapon normally does bashing damage when used to deliver a **decisive** attack.

**Brawl:** Attacks with this weapon normally use Brawl.

**Chopping:** This weapon is capable of making chopping attacks. A chopping attack costs one point of Defense until

the attacker's next turn, as well as one point of Initiative, but raises a **withering** attack's raw damage by 3, or allows a **decisive** attack to treat Hardness as two points lower than its true value. This tag is primarily found on weapons with heavy blades, such as axes and chopping swords.

**Disarming:** This weapon reduces the difficulty and cost of disarm gambits by 1.

**Flexible:** This weapon ignores the Defense bonus granted by full defense actions.

**Improvised:** Useable with both Brawl and Melee, these simple weapons can be created out of anything sturdy, heavy and roughly well balanced. Because they are not designed for use as weapons, improvised weapons cost 1 Initiative to use in an attack.

**Grappling:** This weapon can be used to make grappling gambits.

**Lethal:** This weapon normally does lethal damage when used to deliver a **decisive** attack. Lethal close combat weapons can deliver bashing damage with an appropriate stunt, by e.g. attacking with the pommel or with the flat of the blade.

**Martial Arts:** Attacks with this weapon don't use Melee or Brawl. Wielding it requires an applicable Martial Arts Ability. For example, the hook sword requires facility with a style like Martial Arts (Snake Style) or Martial Arts (Crane Style); Martial Arts (Tiger Style) wouldn't do.

**Melee:** Attacks with this weapon normally use Melee.

**Natural:** This weapon is part of the user's body. It cannot be disarmed, and never requires a draw/ready weapon action to prepare for use.

**Piercing:** This weapon specializes in defeating armor, either by punching through it or slipping through its weak points. A piercing attack lowers the attacker's Defense by one until his next turn, and costs one Initiative to attempt. The resulting **withering** attack ignores 4 points of soak from armor.

**Reaching:** This long weapon negates the advantages of mounted combatants (p. 202).

**Shield:** A weapon with this tag allows the character to place the "full defense" action in a flurry, although this flurry can't also contain an attack action. This is normally

used to flurry full defense and rush actions together. The damage of shield-tagged weapons is 2 lower than their class would otherwise indicate (thus a medium shield-tagged weapon would have damage 7 rather than 9).

**Smashing:** This weapon can make smash attacks. Smash attacks sacrifice one Defense until the character's next turn, and cost two Initiative to attempt. If successful, they knock the opponent back one range band, or knock them prone. Targets may be knocked back into dangerous or deadly threats, like lava pits or steep cliffs.

**Thrown:** This weapon can be used to make ranged attacks using the Thrown ability. All Thrown weapons also have their maximum range listed in parenthesis, such as Thrown (Medium). When throwing a weapon, the wielder doesn't benefit from the weapon's normal Accuracy bonus; see Thrown Weapons, below.

**Two-Handed:** This weapon requires the user wield it with both hands, preventing them from holding a shield or another weapon at the same time. Two-handed weapons grant a +2 bonus to Clash attacks.

**Worn:** Wearable weapons can be removed, but while worn they count as natural weapons. Equipping or removing a weapon with the worn tag takes an action.

## DUAL WIELDING

Characters can wield one weapon in each hand as long as both weapons lack the two-handed tag. Even with a weapon in each hand, characters can still only make a single attack on each turn. However, if the character is wielding a different weapon in each hand, she is free to choose between the weapons and their associated tags each time she attacks or parries, and may stunt her attacks and defenses however she wants, as with a Crane stylist defending with her hook sword's Parry value while describing her blocks as performed with her war fan. Characters who dual-wield two identical weapons gain a +2 bonus to Clash attacks. "Unarmed" is considered a single weapon.

## THROWN WEAPONS

Thrown weapons use the Thrown Ability and include everything from javelins to staff slings. Thrown weapons don't use the usual Accuracy bonus for their weapon class, and cannot be used to parry attacks unless they also carry the Brawl, Martial Arts, or Melee keyword. Instead, the accuracy of Thrown weapons is based on the range table below.

**MORTAL THROWN WEAPONS**

<b>Category</b>	<b>Damage</b>	<b>Overwhelming</b>
Light	+7	1
Medium	+9	1
Heavy	+11	1

**MORTAL THROWN WEAPON RANGES**

<b>Close</b>	<b>Short</b>	<b>Medium</b>	<b>Long</b>	<b>Extreme*</b>
+4	+3	+2	-1	-3

\* Mortal thrown weapons cannot be used to make attacks at extreme range without using Charms or similar abilities.

**LIGHT THROWN WEAPONS****CHAKRAM**

A chakram is a small disc or ring of steel with razor sharp outer edges. **Cost:** •

Tags: Lethal, Thrown (Medium), Cutting, Mounted

**Dart**

Essentially a shorter, lighter javelin, typically around one foot long. **Cost:** •

Tags: Lethal, Thrown (Medium), Concealable, Mounted, Poisonable

**Needle**

Needles are the ultimate in subtle assassination instruments. These tiny spikes are as long as a small finger and as wide as a housecat's fang. They can be thrown with the flick of a finger or even held in the mouth and spat at a target. While they inflict very little damage, most assassins will equip their needles with poison. Using a



blowgun to propel needles extends their range to Thrown (Medium). **Cost:** •

Tags: Subtle, Thrown (Short), Concealable, Poisonable

**Shuriken**

Shuriken are small star-shaped blades that can be thrown easily. **Cost:** •

Tags: Lethal, Thrown (Short), Concealable, Mounted, Poisonable

**Sling**

Slings are small pouches with thongs attached to either side. A stone or metal sling "bullet" is placed in the pouch, and the sling is swung in a circle at high speed, hurling its projectile at great velocity. Slings are inexpensive and can use any rock of approximately the correct size as ammunition, but they are less accurate than bows. By taking an additional aim action before firing, this weapon's range can be extended to long for one attack. This aim action provides no benefit beyond enabling long-range attacks. **Cost:** •

Tags: Bashing, Thrown (Medium), Concealable, Special

**MEDIUM THROWN WEAPONS****Staff Sling**

This weapon is essentially a sling on a shaft between three and five feet long. When the wielder swings the shaft, the sling releases its stone with greater force than a normal sling. By taking an additional aim action before firing, this weapon's range can be extended to long for one attack. This aim action provides no benefit beyond enabling long-range attacks. **Cost:** •

**Tags:** Bashing, Thrown (Medium), Special

### War Boomerang



These weapons are curved, flat pieces of sharpened metal or specially hardened ironwood that spin through the air with deadly force. While not normally designed to return, highly skilled characters can perform this impressive feat. Players of characters who have three or more dots in Thrown may make a second, reflexive (Dexterity + Thrown) roll if the boomerang misses its target. If this second roll succeeds, the boomerang curves around and lands within close range of the thrower. If the thrower's player rolls three or more successes, then the boomerang actually returns to the thrower's hands. **Cost:** •

**Tags:** Lethal, Thrown (Medium), Cutting, Mounted, Special

#### TAGS

**Bashing:** This weapon normally does bashing damage when used to deliver a **decisive** attack.

**Concealable:** The weapon can be easily hidden on the user's person (difficulty 1 to do so with a Larceny roll).

**Cutting:** This weapon has a large blade that can cut ropes, sails and similar objects the user throws it at.

**Lethal:** This weapon normally does lethal damage when used to deliver a **decisive** attack. Lethal thrown weapons can be used to make bashing attacks with an appropriate stunt, e.g. by throwing a knife so it hits pommel-first or using a chakram to cut a rope holding a heavy object over an opponent's head.

**Mounted:** The wielder can use this weapon while mounted on a horse or other steed.

**Poisonable:** This weapon is designed so that it can be poisoned. See the poisoned weapon rules on page 232 for further information.

**Special:** The weapon has some unusual property explained in the description.

**Subtle:** Ignore any damage this weapon would inflict; it can only make attacks in order to poison its target.

**Thrown:** This weapon can be used to make ranged attacks using the Thrown ability. All Thrown weapons also have their maximum range listed in parenthesis, such as Thrown (Medium).

### ARCHERY WEAPONS

All archery weapons require the Archery skill. Archery weapons don't use the listed Accuracy bonus for their weight class, and cannot be used to parry attacks. Instead, the accuracy of archery weapons is based on the range table below. Bows are by far the most common archery weapons and are available all across Creation. Flame pieces and firewands can be found across much of the South, but are rare elsewhere.

#### MORTAL ARCHERY WEAPONS

Category	Damage	Overwhelming
Light	+7	1
Medium	+9	1
Heavy	+11	1

#### MORTAL ARCHERY WEAPON RANGES

Close	Short	Medium	Long	Extreme*
-2	+4	+2	+0	-2

\* Mortal archery weapons cannot be used to make attacks at extreme range without using Charms or similar abilities.

#### LIGHT ARCHERY WEAPONS

##### Hand Crossbow

Most hand crossbows are small pistol-shaped crossbows that can be used in one hand. A few specially made and more expensive hand crossbows are designed to strap to

the user's forearm and can be concealed in a loose sleeve. These concealable crossbows are most often used by assassins. **Cost:** •• (••• for concealable hand crossbows)

**Tags:** Lethal, Archery (Medium), Crossbow, Mounted, One-Handed, Piercing, Slow; sometimes Concealable

### Self Bow

A stout length of spring wood about three feet long, the self bow is bent along the wood's natural shape. Of simple construction, it's not very powerful. **Cost:** •

**Tags:** Lethal, Archery (Long), Mounted

## MEDIUM ARCHERY WEAPONS

### Composite Bow



Composite bows are made of layers of different woods, often reinforced with layers of horn. This reinforced construction gives them more power in a smaller size—like the self bow, they're about three feet long. The only weakness of a composite bow, other than its expense, is that it's held together with glue. If it becomes wet, the glue weakens, and the bow can come to pieces. As a result, most composite bows are bound in waterproof leather covers, and very few cultures native to humid climes make common use of them. **Cost:** •••

**Tags:** Lethal, Archery (Long), Mounted

### Crossbow

Crossbows are large, mechanically-powered weapons that require both hands to load and fire. **Cost:** •••

**Tags:** Lethal, Archery (Long), Crossbow, Piercing, Powerful, Slow



### Flame Piece

A flame piece is a small firewand, made for one-handed use. Most are wielded by elite Southern cavalry. Like larger firewands, this weapon uses firedust or specialized alchemical reagents as ammunition. See the entry for firewands for further information. **Cost:** ••

**Tags:** Lethal, Archery (Short), Flame, Mounted, One-Handed, Slow

### Long Bow



Longer than a self bow, the long bow is harder to pull and offers considerably more power. **Cost:** ••

**Tags:** Lethal, Archery (Long)

## HEAVY ARCHERY WEAPONS

### Firewand

Firewands are one-shot flamethrowers powered by firedust, a substance found naturally occurring deep in the Southern deserts or synthesized from a variety of exotic reagents found elsewhere in that Direction. Made from finely turned brass with wooden or metal stocks,



firehands are prized by any soldier lucky enough to own one. Firedust must be loaded down the front of the barrel, and the weapon can hold only a single shot. While readily available in the South, firedust can be expensive and difficult to find elsewhere (Resources • in the South, •• or higher elsewhere). Many soldiers fit bayonets on the ends of their firehands and use them as spears once the weapon has been fired (treat as a short spear).

**Cost:** •••

**Tags:** Lethal, Archery (Short), Flame, Slow

### Fowling Arrows and Bolts

Arrows and crossbow bolts normally do lethal damage, but blunt arrows and bolts also exist and are used for catching birds or by skilled archers who do not wish to kill their targets. Both fowling arrows and fowling bolts inflict bashing damage. Fowling bolts lack the piercing tag that ordinary crossbow bolts possess.

#### TAGS

**Archery:** This weapon can be used to make ranged attacks using the Archery ability. All Archery weapons also have their maximum range listed in parenthesis, such as Archery (Medium).

**Bashing:** This weapon normally does bashing damage when used to deliver a **decisive** attack.

**Concealable:** The weapon can be easily hidden on the user's person (difficulty 1 to do so with a Larceny roll).

**Crossbow:** Crossbow weapons do not add Strength to the wielder's damage roll. Instead, add +4 to the weapon's damage to calculate the raw damage of **withering** attacks with a weapon that has the crossbow tag.

**Flame:** This weapon shoots a narrow blast of fire, which

can ignite flammable objects, but is extremely limited in range. Charms that increase weapon range cannot increase the range of any weapon with the flame tag unless the Charm specifically says it can. Flame weapons do not add Strength to the wielder's damage roll. Instead, add +4 to the weapon's damage to calculate the raw damage of **withering** attacks with a weapon that has the flame tag. Also, mundane flame weapons have an Accuracy of +0 at Close range (rather than -2), while artifact flame weapons have a Close Accuracy modifier of +1.

**Lethal:** This weapon normally does lethal damage when used to deliver a **decisive** attack, but fowling arrows and bolts allow bows and crossbows to inflict bashing damage.

**Mounted:** The wielder can use this weapon while mounted on a horse or other steed.

**One-Handed:** Most archery weapons require wielders to use both hands to fire. However, this weapon can be wielded in one hand, leaving the wielder's other hand free.

**Piercing:** Piercing weapons specialize in defeating armor, either by punching through it or slipping through its weak points. A piercing attack costs 1 Initiative to attempt, and ignores 4 points of soak from armor.

**Powerful:** At close range, a powerful weapon inflicts damage like a heavy weapon.

**Slow:** This weapon takes extra time to reload. The character must spend an action reloading this weapon. Reloading can be part of a flurry, including a flurry with an attack. Charms which allow multiple attacks in a single turn are inapplicable with slow weapons unless specified otherwise.

**Special:** The weapon has some unusual property explained in the description.

### Special Materials

Various unusual materials can be found all across Creation. Armaments made from these usually cost one dot of resources more than normal, and this cost can increase to two dots in regions far from where they're normally found.

### Chiaroscuro Glass

In portions of the South, especially near the city of Chiaroscuro, armorers make weapons and armor from crimson shards of the city's almost indestructible First Age glass. Unlike metal armaments, which rust, chip and

require regular polishing and oiling, weapons and armor made from Chiaroscuro glass require almost no care because the glass is so durable.

### Feathersteel

In portions of the far North, especially in the Haslanti League, miners find veins of feathersteel in the ice-covered mountains. Feathersteel is a light metal that also has the virtue of not rusting. Feathersteel armaments never rust and are somewhat lighter than normal. All armor made from feathersteel gains the silent tag (p. 593).

### Ironwood

In portions of the forests of the East, especially near the regions ruled by the Republic of Halta, woodworkers know the secret of making wood as hard as steel. Ironwood arms and armor require as much care as similar metal equipment, but are made from wood. Ironwood armor gains the buoyant tag (p. 593). Unlike other special materials, in the region where they're made, ironwood armaments cost no more than normal. Elsewhere, they costs one resource dot more.

### MUNDANE ARMOR

Armor protects the wearer from harm. The heavier and more durable the armor, the better protection it provides. However, heavier armor is also more cumbersome. Armor is also tiring to wear and impossible to sleep in restfully.

#### MORTAL ARMOR

Category	Soak	Mobility Penalty	Hardness
Light	+3	0	0
Medium	+5	-1	0
Heavy	+7	-2	0

**Soak:** This is how much the armor adds to the wearer's soak value.

**Mobility Penalty:** This is the number of dice heavier armor subtracts from all nimbleness-based Athletics rolls, as well as from any rolls involving chases, running, and dodging. Most armor is noisy and this same number is subtracted from Stealth rolls involving attempts to move silently. Finally, this value is subtracted directly from the wearer's Evasion score.

**Hardness:** Hardness offers protection from **decisive** attacks; it has no use against **withering** attacks. If a

decisive attack's damage dice pool is equal to or lower than the target's Hardness, the **decisive** attack can't inflict damage. A **decisive** attack that strikes but fails to penetrate the target's Hardness is still considered a successful attack, and causes Initiative to reset to 3 as normal. If a **decisive** attack's damage pool exceeds the target's Hardness, then damage is rolled as normal; Hardness is not subtracted from the damage pool.

### Donning & Removing Armor

Armor is inherently complex. It takes ([armor's mobility penalty] +1) minutes to put a suit of armor on. Characters who rush can don armor in half that time, but any botch the player later rolls almost certainly indicates that something has gone wrong—a poorly fastened strap may have come undone, or an inadequately tightened greave may have turned around. At the Storyteller's discretion, this botch can deprive a character of the armor's benefits or cause her significant penalties, like adding -1 or -2 to the armor's mobility penalty as it hangs awkwardly on her body.

Removing armor takes half as long as donning it, which may be important if the character is busy trying to get out of her armor in a hurry to e.g. avoid drowning or hide it from the guards outside in the corridor. Rushing armor removal halves the time required but doubles the time needed to don it again.

#### LIGHT ARMOR

##### Breastplate

Nothing more than a pair of fitted metal plates that cover the character's chest and back, this armor provides excellent protection for the character's vitals. Breastplates are common among military officers and scouts, both of whom need more protection than a chain shirt offers but still need a full range of motion. **Cost:** ••

**Tags:** None

##### Buff Jacket

One of the most common types of armor in the world of **Exalted**, the buff jacket is a knee-length leather garment typically made from the hide of a mammoth or yeddim. The front of the coat overlaps completely—the inner and outer layer both fasten at the opposite shoulder. This setup doubles the jacket's protection across the wearer's vitals, as well as making it impossible to slip a blade through the seam where the jacket fastens. Most buff jackets have high, overlapping collars as well, to protect the wearer's neck. **Cost:** •



Tags: None

### Chain Shirt

A chain shirt is a pullover shirt made from links of extremely fine mail. This garment protects the wearer's chest, abdomen, shoulders and back. The armor's sleeves reach only halfway down the upper arm. Because they are unobtrusive and can be worn beneath most clothing, chain shirts are common among those who have reason to fear assassins. **Cost:** ••

Tags: Concealable

### MEDIUM ARMOR

#### Hauberk



A long-sleeved chain shirt, covering the character's arms, chest, abdomen and upper legs, the hauberk also typically includes greaves, to protect the character's lower legs. Hauberks are not worn directly against the skin—they typically include a layer of padding underneath to spread blow impacts. **Cost:** •••

Tags: None

### Lamellar



Lamellar armor is a breastplate composed of a series of interlocking horizontal bands. Lamellar is lighter and more flexible than a standard breastplate and allows better air circulation. Lamellar armor is assumed to include greaves to protect the wearer's lower legs, a skirt to protect his upper legs and bracers to protect his wrists and arms. **Cost:** •••

Tags: None

### Reinforced Breastplate

A breastplate with attached shoulder guards, this armor also includes a skirt that protects the character's crotch and upper thighs, a pair of greaves to protect the lower legs and a pair of long bracer's to protect the character's forearms. The reinforced breastplate offers excellent protection to the areas it covers, but this protection is balanced by the fact that significant portions of the character are totally unarmored. The reinforced breastplate is the standard armor of the Realm's heavy infantry. **Cost:** •••

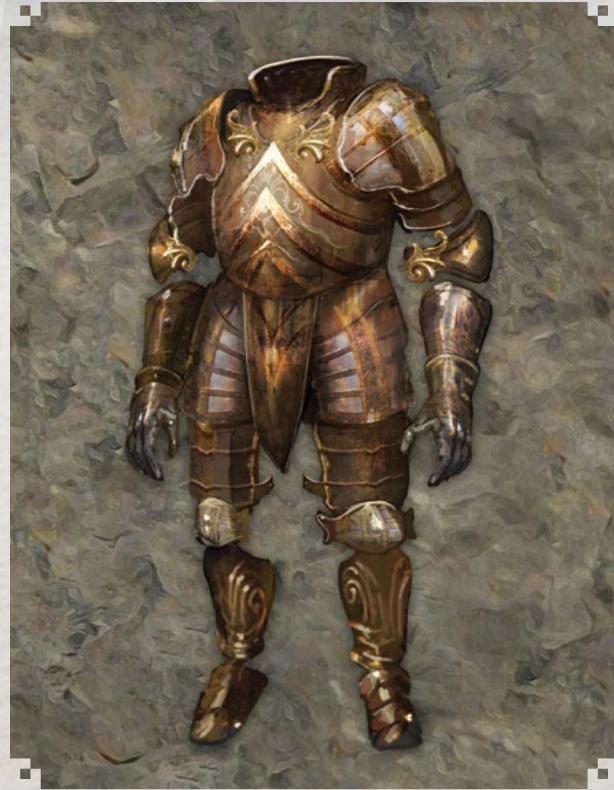
Tags: None

**Reinforced Buff Jacket**

A heavier version of the buff jacket, the reinforced buff jacket is a common armor among light cavalry, post-riders in dangerous territory, heavy scouts, brigands and mercenary infantry. It is also the standard armor of the Realm's light infantry.

The reinforced buff jacket is cut along the same pattern as the standard buff jacket, but the shoulders, neck and vitals are armored with swatches of chain or small metal plates. The overall effect is a heavier, more protective armor that isn't much more fatiguing than the standard buff jacket. Cost: ••

Tags: Silent

**HEAVY ARMOR****Articulated Plate**

Articulated plate covers the wearer in interlocking metal plates held together by hinges and pins. Chain is only used to cover areas such as the armpits, groin and the back of the knees, where there's no way for plate armor to mimic the human range of motion. Articulated plate provides superior protection and maneuverability to plate-and-chain and is less fatiguing to wear, but requires much greater skill and time to forge. It's commonly available

only in the Realm and in great cities such as Nexus and Lookshy. Cost: •••••

Tags: None

**Plate-and-Chain**

Plate-and-chain is similar to a reinforced breastplate, except that chain and padding is added to the armor to cover the areas that would otherwise be exposed. Plate-and-chain is the strongest commonly available armor and is the standard of heavy cavalry outside the Realm. Cost: ••••

Tags: None

**TAGS**

Like weapons, different types of armor are distinguished by tags.

**Buoyant:** Most armor is made from metal, which means it's heavy and dense, and its mobility penalty applies to swimming. Armor with the buoyant tag is much lighter and does not inhibit swimming at all.

**Concealable:** Most armor is obviously armor. It can be decorated, but not disguised. Armor with the concealable tag can be worn under clothing so as not to reveal that the character is wearing armor.

**Silent:** All armor can be camouflaged with paint, grease or even dirt, but most armor is noisy. Armor with the silent tag causes no penalties to silent movement.

**Artifacts**

These powerful items were never common, even in the First Age. Today, they are rare indeed. Most surviving wonders are war gear because such items were built to survive the rigors of divine battlefields and the passing of the ages. Many others artifacts were lost or destroyed long ago. Yet many powerful figures and states in the Age of Sorrows, from scavenger lords and other Threshold heroes to the Dragon-Blooded scions of the Realm, still make use of artifacts to impose their will on Creation, and many other artifacts lie undiscovered in caches across the world. And even in the Age of Sorrows, the greatest of craftsmen among Exalts and gods still possess the wherewithal to forge items of power equal to the lesser artifacts of old.

**ARTIFACT WEAPONS**

All of the artifact weapons listed here are, at minimum,

**ARTIFACT MELEE WEAPONS**

Category	Accuracy	Damage	Defense	Overwhelming	Attunement
Light	+5	+10	+0	3	5
Medium	+3	+12	+1	4	5
Heavy	+1	+14	+0	5	5

3-dot Artifacts. Like mortal weapons, artifacts weapons are divided into light, medium and heavy, but are considerably more effective than their mundane counterparts. Artifacts weapons also have tags much like those found on mundane weapons. Most artifact weapons are capable of producing Evocations, which are explained in further detail on page 611.

**Accuracy:** Add this many dice to the (Dexterity + Ability) dice pool when making **withering** attacks with this weapon.

**Damage:** Add this many dice to damage rolls when making **withering** attacks with this weapon.

**Overwhelming:** The minimum damage of **withering** attacks made with the weapon, after soak has been applied. Soak can't reduce a weapon's **withering** damage pool to below its Overwhelming value.

**Defense:** Add or subtract this number from the weapon wielder's Parry.

**Attunement:** To use this weapon, the wearer must commit five motes to make it respond to her desires more easily. Without this commitment, subtract -5 from the weapon's Accuracy and its Defense, and lose two Initiative per attempted attack or defense. These penalties can only be negated by attunement.

**ATTUNEMENT**

In mortal hands, a daiklave is an unwieldy, oversized sword which weighs far too much to wield with any sort of ease or finesse, while artifact armor is nigh-impossible to move in. The secret of such items is in their attunement—a few motes fed into the artifact establish a spiritual link between weapon or armor and Exalted user, making 40 pounds of golden sword feel light as a dagger and swift as a breeze. Attunement can be established in a matter of a few heartbeats, and persists until the Exalt drops her commitment or is separated from the artifact for a full day.

**ARTIFACT MELEE WEAPONS**

All of these weapons are much larger and swifter than their comparable mortal equivalents, in addition to being nigh-indestructible; daiklavas are designed to strike against the armor of demon princes without dulling their edges and to pierce the hearts of volcano gods without melting. For explanation of the tags, see the list of tags for mundane melee weapons, page 585.

**LIGHT MELEE WEAPONS****Direlash**

This braided cord of rare leathers and hair-fine wires of the magical materials can slash through flesh and steel. Immaculately responsive to its wielder's motions, these artifact whips can disarm, entangle, and injure with equal ease.

*Tags:* Lethal, Melee, Disarming, Grappling, Flexible, Reaching

**Razor Claws**

This pair of deadly weapons is a set of razor-sharp tiger claws that strap onto the wearer's hands. Razor claws always come in pairs and consist of fingerless leather gloves fitted with three slightly curved blades extending three or more inches beyond the wearer's knuckles. In addition to causing horrific rending wounds, these claws also add two dice to all climbing rolls made by the wearer. Wearers can retract the claws, transforming this weapon into a pair of heavy fingerless gloves.

*Tags:* Lethal, Brawl, Concealable, Worn

**Short Daiklave**

The short daiklave, often called a cunning serpent knife or a flickering silver razor, has a blade about three feet long. Their best-known users, Fire Aspect Immaculate monks, generally wield short daiklavas as a pair. Purchasing this artifact gives the owner a pair of these weapons.

*Tags:* Lethal, Melee, Balanced

**Slayer Khatar**

Made from an alloy of one or more magical materials, the blade of this punch dagger is between two and three feet long. This swift and brutal weapon is designed to punch through armor and deliver terrible stab wounds to the target. Some slayer khatars are incorporated into bracers, leaving the wielder's hand free.

Tags: Lethal, Brawl, Piercing, sometimes Worn

**Smashfist**

These fighting gauntlets are composed of articulated plates of alloyed magical material. They're always used as a pair.

Tags: Bashing, Brawl, Grappling, Smashing, Worn

**MEDIUM MELEE WEAPONS****Daiklave**

Daiklavés are elaborately decorated swords with blades between four and six feet long and often up to six inches wide. They are forged from magical material alloyed with the finest of mundane steel, bronze, or other metal—or more exotic substances. They are large and clumsy unless attuned to the user's Essence, but once attuned they become swift and deadly.

Tags: Lethal, Melee, Balanced

**Dire Chain**

The dire chain is a fighting chain composed of an alloy of one of the five magical materials. The chain is relatively thick and would be much heavier were it not buoyed by the wielder's Essence.

Tags: Bashing, Martial Arts, Disarming, Flexible, Grappling, Reaching

**Goremaul**

These artifact hammers and maces dwarf their mundane counterparts and inflict deadly blows, crumpling most armor. Their heads are forged from blocks of magical materials that are often carved in the form of the heads of rams or other animals or decorated with images of deadly wild beasts.

Tags: Bashing, Melee, Smashing

**Grimcleaver**

A grimcleaver is a thick-bladed axe forged of an alloy of one of the five magical materials. Like its mundane counterpart, the grimcleaver can be a useful tool as well



as a deadly weapon. Unlike the common axe, the grimcleaver is too large to be used as a thrown weapon.

*Tags:* Lethal, Melee, Chopping

### Longfang

A longfang is a sharp and deadly one-handed spear forged with an alloy of magical material. It can be thrown, but unlike most artifact thrown weapons, it does not return to the user.

*Tags:* Lethal, Melee, Thrown (Short), Piercing

### Reaper Daiklave



These long, narrow daiklavves have curved blades with a single edge. These elegant weapons appeal to wielders who prefer finesse and flashy displays of consummate skill over raw power.

*Tags:* Lethal, Melee, Balanced

### Reaver Daiklave



Some Exalted are disinterested in fast and nimble blades, preferring instead raw killing power. The weapons favored by these Exalted are cleaver-like single-edged blades, four-feet long and, in some cases, a foot wide, with square or

angled tips. Slow and clumsy compared to normal daiklavves, these weapons are brutally powerful.

*Tags:* Lethal, Melee, Chopping

### Serpent-Sting Staff

These seven-section staves are usually made completely of metal rods composed of an alloy of magical materials held together by short segments of chain.

*Tags:* Bashing, Martial Arts, Disarming, Flexible, Reaching

### Wrackstaff

These staves are often taller than their wielder and are forged or created from exquisitely carved blocks of magical material alloys. Most are both works of art and comfortable walking sticks in addition to being deadly weapons.

*Tags:* Bashing, Melee, Reaching

### Heavy Melee Weapons

#### Direlance



A direlance is a massive spear forged with an alloy of one of the magical materials. Its sturdy construction allows it to be used to make mounted charges like a lance or be wielded as a long spear in melee. If used like a lance, the direlance may be used single-handed during a mounted charge. If used as a spear, a direlance requires two hands to wield.

*Tags:* Lethal, Melee, Piercing, Reaching; Two-Handed when on foot

**Grand Daiklave**

Sometimes called a battleblade or foecutter, the grand daiklave is the ultimate expression of the philosophy behind the daiklave—one needs no defense against a dead opponent. Two-handed weapons with blades six feet long and over a foot wide, it is only the lightening effects of Essence that allow these weapons to be wielded at all.

*Tags:* Lethal, Melee, Balanced, Reaching, Two-Handed

**Grand Goremaul**

These huge sledges deliver horrifying crushing blows, designed to crumple armor and drive back even the most powerful foes. Even most Exalts cannot lift these weapons without attuning to them.

*Tags:* Bashing, Melee, Reaching, Smashing, Two-Handed

**Grand Grimcleaver**

These enormous two-handed axes have blades a yard across and can be used to fell both huge trees and most foes in a single blow. Their blades are typically engraved with scenes of battle and conquest.

*Tags:* Lethal, Melee, Chopping, Reaching, Two-Handed

**Grimsythe**

These huge and terrible scythes have wickedly pointed blades that can be up to five feet long. The weapon's point

is capable of tearing through the toughest armor with ease and its blade can bisect unarmored foes.

*Tags:* Lethal, Melee, Piercing, Reaching, Two-Handed

**ARTIFACT THROWN WEAPONS**

Because a unique weapon that the wielder throws and then must recover before she can use again is not particularly useful, most of these artifacts are designed to return to the user. Thrown weapons don't use the listed Accuracy value for their weight class, and cannot be used to parry attacks unless they also carry the Brawl, Martial Arts, or Melee keyword. Instead, the accuracy of thrown weapons is based on the range table below. For explanation of the tags, see the list of tags for mundane thrown weapons on page 588.

**ARTIFACT THROWN WEAPONS**

Category	Damage	Overwhelming	Attunement
Light	+10	3	5
Medium	+12	4	5
Heavy	+14	5	5

**ARTIFACT THROWN WEAPON RANGES**

Close	Short	Medium	Long	Extreme*
+5	+4	+3	+0	-2

\* Artifact thrown weapons cannot be used to make attacks at extreme range without using Charms, Evocations, or similar abilities.

**LIGHT THROWN WEAPONS****Infinite Chakram**

This weapon is similar in appearance to a normal chakram, except that it is larger, made from the magical materials, and often of baroque design. As soon as it either

misses or strikes its target, it ricochets its way back to the thrower's hand.

*Tags:* Lethal, Thrown (Medium), Cutting, Special

### Sling of Distant Surprise

This magical material sling hides itself from view when not in use. It gives the user a +3 bonus to Larceny rolls to conceal it.

*Tags:* Lethal, Thrown (Long), Concealable, Special

### MEDIUM THROWN WEAPONS

#### Glorious Staff Sling

This staff sling is made of white jade, carved so that it perfectly fits its user's hands. It also functions as a beautifully made walking stick.

*Tags:* Lethal, Thrown (Long)

### Skycutter



Virtually unknown outside of the East, each skycutter is fashioned from a single two-foot piece of metal alloyed with one of the five magical materials, hammered or carved according to precise geomantic angles that focus Essence along its cutting edge. Unlike conventional boomerangs, a thrown skycutter almost always returns to its master's hand—only if the wielder botches her attack roll does the weapon need retrieving.

*Tags:* Lethal, Thrown (Long), Cutting, Special

### ARTIFACT ARCHERY WEAPONS

All of the following weapons use the Archery Ability.

Archery weapons don't use the listed Accuracy value for their weight class, and cannot be used to parry attacks. Instead, the accuracy of all archery weapons is based on the range table below. For explanation of the tags, see the list of tags for mundane archery weapons, page 588.

### ARTIFACT ARCHERY WEAPONS

Category	Damage	Overwhelming	Attunement
Light	+10	3	5
Medium	+12	4	5
Heavy	+14	5	5

### ARTIFACT ARCHERY WEAPON RANGES

Close	Short	Medium	Long	Extreme*
-1	+5	+3	+1	-1

\* Artifact archery weapons cannot be used to make attacks at extreme range without using Charms, Evocations, or similar abilities.

### LIGHT ARCHERY WEAPONS

#### Short Powerbow



Although it is as large as any other weapon made for Exalts, this powerbow is just small enough for use while mounted.

*Tags:* Lethal, Archery (Long), Mounted

### MEDIUM ARCHERY WEAPONS

#### Powerbow

Standing at least as tall as the archer, this bow is a masterwork of Exalted craft. The design of the bow directs Essence into the arrow, hurling it with deadly force.



Tags: Lethal, Archery (Long)

### Siege Crossbow

The stock of this large crossbow is often carved in the likeness of a leaping predator, while the short thick bow is a single piece of one of the five magical materials.

Tags: Lethal, Archery (Long), Crossbow, Piercing, Powerful, Slow

### HEAVY ARCHERY WEAPONS

#### Dragon Sigh Wand

Designed to use either firedust or special alchemical reagents, this long and exceptionally deadly firewand is often sculpted to resemble a serpentine dragon, its body



coiled around the weapon's barrel and its mouth yawning open to form the muzzle.

Tags: Lethal, Archery (Short), Flame, Slow

### ARTIFACT ARMOR

Like mundane armor, artifact armor is divided into light, medium and heavy armor and differentiated by tags. See the list of tags on mundane armor (p. 593) for explanations. All artifact armor listed here are 3-dot artifacts at minimum. All of these types of armor closely resemble their mundane counterparts, except they are considerably more elaborate and far more durable. Artifact armor can also offer Evocations, though their Evocations are rarely as extensive or elaborate as those found on artifact weaponry (p. 611).

### ARTIFACT ARMOR

Category	Soak	Hardness	Mobility Penalty	Attunement
Light	+5	4	-0	4
Medium	+8	7	-1	5
Heavy	+11	10	-2	6

**Soak, Hardness, and Mobility Penalty:** These work the same as with mundane armor.

**Attunement:** To use this armor, the wearer must commit the listed number of motes to allow the armor to respond to the wearer. Without this commitment, artifact armor is bulky, rigid and immobile and imposes a -5 penalty to Defense and to all actions, which cannot be negated by any means save attunement.

### ARTIFACT LIGHT ARMOR

#### Breastplate

A pair of solid and extremely sturdy plates made from various magical materials and alloys that cover the character's chest and back.

Tags: None

#### Chain Shirt

These shirts of exceptionally fine chain are as light and as flexible as heavy silk.

Tags: Concealable

**Silken Armor**

Woven using secret, long-lost First Age techniques, silken armor is woven of a material with the weight and texture of silk, but the resilience of tempered steel. Silken armor is usually beautifully tailored and decorated, well-suited for formal occasions. It doesn't count as armor for the purpose of martial arts styles which cannot be practiced in armor, and consequently is always at least Artifact ••••.

*Tags:* Silent, Special

**ARTIFACT MEDIUM ARMOR****Lamellar Armor**

Made of small plates or bands connected by wire, all made from the magical materials, this armor looks striking and is highly effective.

*Tags:* None

**Reinforced Buff Jacket**

Made with leather from some vast and powerful creature and reinforced with plates and rivets made from one

or more magical materials, this armor is both tough and flexible.

*Tags:* Silent

**ARTIFACT HEAVY ARMOR****Reinforced Breastplate**

This exceptionally durable and elaborately decorated magical material breastplate also includes attached shoulder guards as well as a skirt that protects the character's crotch and upper thighs, a pair of greaves to protect the lower legs and a pair of long bracer's to protect the character's forearms.

*Tags:* None

**Articulated Plate**

This suit of armor consists of dozens exquisitely crafted interlocking plates of one or more magical materials. Only the finest Exalted crafters can create these precisely made wonders. Most are decorated with scenes of their wearer's triumphs or images of their divine patron.

**Tags:** None

### Additional Artifacts

Not all artifacts are designed for combat. Exalts and gods create artifacts for a wide variety of purposes. Here are only a few examples. Unless otherwise specified, any bonuses granted by the following artifacts count as dice added by a Charm. These artifacts range in power from minor two dot artifacts to unique and incredibly powerful five dot wonders.

#### ARTIFACT ••

These minor wonders are the most commonly found artifacts—although no artifacts in the Age of Sorrows can be truly described as “common”—but also by far the least powerful.

#### **Collar of Dawn’s Cleansing Light**

This artifact comes in a variety of forms including studded bands, chokers, torcs, collars or delicate necklaces. Although no artifacts are common, these collars are sufficiently simple that the Realm’s Dragon-Blooded artisans can create them without vast amounts of difficulty. Wealthy Dynasts own and wear them when possible, not just for their useful properties, but also as displays of fortune and opulence.

The purpose of this collar is to keep its wearer clean in every respect. She could spend weeks living beneath a rubbish heap and emerge at the end as though she had just spent hours preparing for a grand ball. The artifact negates all penalties to Social rolls that would be applied due to the character being dirty or unkempt. Attuning to the collar extends its powers beyond the Exalt’s clothing to her physical body. The artifact’s cleansing light adds two dice to (Stamina + Resistance) rolls made against disease or poison. The wearer must commit one mote to use this artifact.

#### **Hearthstone Amulet (Tiara, Bracer, etc.)**

A wide variety of decorative artifacts exist whose sole purpose is to provide a socket into which an attuned hearthstone may be placed. The most common form of these artifacts are amulets wrought of the five magical materials, though hearthstone bracers are nearly as

popular, and some Chosen—particularly Sidereals—prefer circlets or tiaras which fix the hearthstone in the center of their forehead, directly over their Caste Mark. All such items cost a single mote to attune.

If a character wears magical armor of the same material as a worn hearthstone amulet (tiara, bracer, etc.), then the amulet’s socket is considered to be part of that armor for the purpose of dependent hearthstones (see p. 604).

#### **Traveler’s Staff**

This gnarled staff is an enchanted branch from an ancient tree found in a Greater Wood Manse located on the Blessed Isle. It can be used as a mundane quarterstaff in combat, but this is not its intended purpose, which is to provide food, firewood and shelter. At sunset, the user may plant the staff into the earth and commit three motes. The branch then grows into a fruit tree—usually apple—and sprouts enough wondrous fruit to feed the owner and several others for the evening. If she needs firewood, the owner can use the tree’s branches to provide it—wood gathered this way burns readily. Come morning, she can cut off a large branch to replace the original staff. The tree then dies and rapidly rots away. By sunset, no sign of its presence remains.

#### **Yasal Crystal**

This extraordinarily valuable yellow gemstone can trap minor spirits and newly made ghosts. To imprison a spirit, the user must touch the spirit and spend a point of Willpower, then make a contested Willpower roll against the spirit; success imprisons the spirit in the crystal. The spirit cannot typically have an Essence greater than 2. Each stone can hold only a single spirit at a time, and anyone holding the stone can free the spirit at will.

Once imprisoned in yasal crystal, spirits can communicate with anyone who touches the stone, but they cannot escape on their own or use any of their Charms. Instead, whoever touches the stone can use a captive spirit’s powers as if they were his own, if the holder of the stone has the spirit’s permission. To obtain this permission, the holder must usually bargain with the spirit, typically requesting the free use of its powers for a set number of times. After exhausting all the uses, or after a set time period (rarely more than a month), the holder agrees to free the spirit. While the holder is under no obligation to keep this promise, those who break it end up with uncooperative spirits inside useless rocks. Also, spirits who break free from such an oathbreaker will undoubtedly attempt to take dire vengeance on him and might have the help of friends and allies.

On rare occasions, yasal crystals of exceptional purity may be found in powerful demesnes, particularly in the South. These crystals are capable of capturing more powerful spirits, and carry higher Artifact ratings accordingly. Yasal crystals do not need to be attuned.

#### **ARTIFACT •••**

These artifacts are roughly as powerful as artifact weapons and are similarly rare.

#### **Belt of Shadow Walking**

Night-black belts made from leather from the wings of giant bats, trimmed with black jade and soulsteel, these artifacts can control shadows and cause them to conceal the wearer. Whenever she wishes, the wearer can add three dice to all stealth rolls. However, this is the least of the belt's powers. When the wearer expends ten motes, she can transform into a living shadow for one scene. In this form, she can slip under the space beneath a door or slide through the thinnest crack. In well-lit regions, observers notice the existence of an unusual shadow if they make a (Perception + Awareness) roll at difficulty 3, unless the wearer conceals himself in a larger shadow.

When the character is a shadow, she is dematerialized and can only affect or be affected by other dematerialized creatures or by Charms and weapons capable of attacking dematerialized foes. If the wearer uses such a Charm or weapon while dematerialized, she can use it to affect a materialized foe. Otherwise, she is immune to all materialized threats, although she can be trapped in a room that is sealed tightly enough. The character can wear any armor and take any object she can carry into the shadows with her. However, she cannot transform other living things into shadow. Once the scene ends, the character must remain in solid form for at least ten minutes before transforming back into a shadow. The wearer must commit five motes to use this artifact.

#### **Bracers of Universal Crafting**

These bracers are carved from green and white jade and are each a quarter inch thick, and two inches wide. Once activated, they create temporarily projections of Essence that can act as both tools and extra hands. This item allows the character to add four dice to all rolls involving fine manipulation. Such rolls include picking locks and surgery, as well as many craft rolls, including any rolls involving calligraphy, cooking, embroidery, making jewelry, repairing complex devices, or any other careful task where precision matters more than strength. The tools and other manipulators created by these bracers vanish the instant they are not needed and the character wearing these



bracers can control them as easily as she can manipulate her own fingers. In addition to being compatible with all Craft Charms, these bracers negate the need for any additional tools and eliminate all penalties for performing an action without proper tools. Attuning to this artifact costs five motes, but once attuned activating it can be done at will.

### **Essence Glider**

This fragile-looking construct of magical material, feathersteel, and Essence has a wingspan of 20 feet. It appears to be an exceptionally slender and delicate glider frame that lacks a cloth covering. It weighs less than half as much as a conventional folding glider, and folds small enough that the user can wear it underneath a cloak. When the user spends one mote of Essence, the glider automatically unfolds and the framework is covered with a faintly glowing fabric of solidified Essence. The glider remains active for one full scene, and the user can easily extend this duration by spending one additional mote per scene.

Because the glider is so responsive, it adds four dice to the (Dexterity + Athletics) roll necessary to control it. It can soar on thermals and also multiplies the distance the user can jump horizontally by five (if the user has room to unfold its wings – this bonus is added to other bonuses gained from Charms or Anima powers) – this usually amounts to a gliding distance of four range bands, at a rate of one band per round, though launching from great heights can dramatically expand this range. For long distance travel, an Essence glider has a speed of 50 mph. The user must commit two motes to use this artifact.

### **ARTIFACT ••••**

Mortal princes have mobilized for war over the ownership of wonders at this artifact rating.

### **Folding Ship**

This ocean-going vessel has a hull of strong, gold-tinged wood and brilliant white sails. It requires no crew: the ship handles its own sail, bilge and maintenance. It needs only a captain. From the helm, the captain can verbally command the rest of the ship using her Sail skill.

At its owner's command, this ship can fold itself up in a visual spectacle, completing the one-minute process as a 1' x 6" x 6" box that weighs 20 pounds. It takes just as long for the boat to unfold. The ship has the traits of a standard, nonmagical vessel decided at the time of its creation or purchase—several models of folding ships were created

in the long-ago days when the Exalted made such wonders, from fast couriers to war triremes. The vessel repairs all damage if it spends one full day as a box. The captain must commit seven motes to use this artifact.

### **ARTIFACT •••••**

These earth-shaking prodigies are the stuff of legend, rare as an honest Guildsman, and may shift the course of nations.

### **The Wondrous Globe of Precious Stability**

Only a handful of these rare and precious artifacts survived the First Age. They are all jade spheres the size of small human head, covered in dozens of complex occult symbols inlaid with orichalcum, moonsilver, starmetal and soulsteel, with socket for a hearthstone on top and mounting brackets that can unfold from the bottom. Activating this artifact requires either placing a standard hearthstone in the socket or for one of the Exalted to commit ten motes to attune it. A hearthstone used in this fashion provides no other benefits.

Once activated, the sphere begins to glow and rotate. Then, either the Exalt who committed Essence to it can command it to orbit around her or someone can mount it on a vehicle or building. If orbiting around an Exalt, it protects everyone and everything within Short range from the effects of the Wyld. In addition, every creature or object inside this radius gains five dice to resist any Charms used by one of the Fair Folk and none of the Fair Folk can enter the protected area or affect the artifact in any fashion.

If attached to a vehicle or building, it protects the entire structure and everyone inside it in the same manner. This artifact can be used to protect any vehicle, including the largest First Age ship. Alternately, it can be attached to any single building that is no larger than the Imperial Palace or one of the sealed towers of the city of Rathess. However, it cannot be used to protect an entire city or even a large town.

### **Evocations**

Legends tell of Exalts who have formed a strong enough bond with their weapon or armor that they could draw magical power through this link. This is, however, nothing more than another way of expressing their normal charms.

"Evocations," as the term is used in Exalted 3e, do not properly exist. They are an unnecessary complication in the already complicated system and lore of Exalted.

# The Magical Materials

The five magical materials are the most mystically potent substances known to the craftsmen and savants of Creation, and they almost universally form the basis for artifact creation. The dominant magical material used in an artifact has an enormous impact not only on its character, but on who most strongly covets the item - all Exalted have powerful affinities for a particular magical material, and limited aptitude in establishing a bond with artifacts not of that substance. This has no mechanical impact, but Solars will often feel uncomfortable atuning to Soulsteel artifacts, and Dragon Blooded nervous and overawed by a connection to orichalcum. Some powerful artifacts incorporate multiple magical materials into different parts of its substance.

## Jade

Jade is the most common of the magical materials, found in quarries and deposits all across Creation. It resonates with the Dragon-Blooded, and is used not only to forge their artifacts, but as the true currency of the Realm. Jade is the most diverse magical material, appearing in five varieties - while all Dragon-Blooded are equally adept with any variety of jade, most prefer to adorn themselves with jade matching their inborn Aspect. Jade is by far the most common magical material used in composite artifacts.

## Moonsilver

Moonsilver is a silvery metal, harder than steel in its unworked state, with a liquid, quicksilver sheen when viewed in dim light. It resonates with the Lunar Exalted, and in the past, Luna's Chosen felt that for any non-Lunar to carry moonsilver arms and armor burdened them with proving themselves worthy of the substance - it was common for Lunars to challenge the bearers of moonsilver to contests and competitions. In the modern day, the Lunars are prone to simply stealing or seizing any moonsilver artifacts they become aware of, making such wonders dangerous to own.

## Orichalcum

Orichalcum is a super-hard, bright, golden metal to which the Solar Exalted feel a natural affinity.

The Solars much valued orichalcum, for it resonated with their own Charms far more strongly than any other substance. Orichalcum can sometimes be found in naturally-occurring veins, often on mountains, plateaus, and other elevated locales. In the First Age, a process was known that could refine gold into orichalcum by using lava and mystical mirrors to concentrate the light of the sun, but those refineries were destroyed or abandoned during the Usurpation and the centuries of collapse that followed.

## Starmetal

Starmetal, once refined and worked, is the least ostentatious of the magical materials - it looks like top-quality steel, with an unusually reflective and polished surface. When light strikes starmetal just so, it gleams in the prismatic colors of the Five Maidens. Starmetal is the rarest magical material, refined from the ore found in fallen stars. The Sidereal Exalted find starmetal alone resonates with their Essence, and use their astrology and sorcery to predict and chart the course of falling stars, then venture out into Creation to recover the meteoric ore. Due to its extreme rarity, most starmetal artifacts sport delicate and minimalist designs, and when starmetal appears in composite artifacts, it is usually in the form of wire filigree or etched designs rather than amalgamated alloy.

## Soulsteel

Soulsteel is a gruesome magical material, appearing at first glance like black steel. When light strikes it, however, tortured faces can sometimes be glimpsed deep in the metal, and under extended scrutiny, they can be seen (and in the heat of battle, occasionally heard) to writhe and scream. Alone among the magical materials, soulsteel cannot be found in naturally-occurring deposits in Creation, but is instead made in the soul-forges of the Deathlords, pounded together from rare Underworld ores and the souls of those who have angered the lords of the realm of tears and dust. The Abyssal Exalted find that soulsteel resonates with their nature, and are rarely seen in Creation without it. Soulsteel artifacts dating back to the First Age are exceedingly rare, but not unknown.

# T

The farming village was nestled at the end of a fertile valley, water-fed and cradled by two mighty mountains. It had been 768 years since the Scarlet Empress threw back the Wyld hosts, and now they had returned, marching their unreal armies through the mountains and scouring the valleys one by one. The Realm had withdrawn from the region the year before, first recalling its soldiers, and then the Immaculate missionaries; when the taxman failed to appear to demand the dragon's share of their harvest, the farmers knew for certain they'd been abandoned. The village lay open and defenseless, ripe for the taking.

Janest paused for a moment at the top of the great high hill above the town, peering back down the way she'd come. The sun had set an hour ago, and she could see a vast and sprawling constellation of unearthly lights spread across the valley, rivaling the stars above in number and majesty—the camps of the Fair Folk. They would be upon the village with the dawn.

The field-maiden set her back on the sight, regarded the shrine ahead of her. It was a simple thing, built of deeply-polished wood, framed beneath a red-painted torii. One of the High Reavers had come and drawn her away from her preparations that afternoon, where she drilled with her field-sisters. Like the rest of the field-maidens, Janest had been taken as an infant in a raid on a settlement in a neighboring valley, and raised by the High Reavers—priests, augurs, and judges who watched the weather, proclaimed the first day of planting and the first day to reap, and spoke the will of the harvest god. She had grown up in the town, tilling the soil and working the fields, and training also to defend them. They were simple farm-folk, and so trained with the weapons of their trade: threshing-flails, pitchforks, winnowing-fans... Janest herself favored the scythe.

Ten Sheaves demanded her presence, she had been told.

"I can't go," Janest had said, glancing back to her sisters. "I have to make ready to defend the town."

"The god says that your presence is necessary if we are to be saved," the High Reaver had replied. And so the field-maiden had made the long climb up to the shrine.

Janest stepped forward, placing a hand upon the ancient wood of the torii. It tingled beneath her fingertips. The

harvest god had lived up on the hill for as long as anyone could remember, and they had always honored him according to the calendar demanded by the Immaculates—and given him extra worship as well in the lean years, hiding their prayers and libations from traveling monks. But Janest had never seen the god with her own eyes, and couldn't think of why he might want to see a simple field-maiden on the eve of the town's annihilation.

She stepped through the torii with the sensation of crossing some subtle boundary, like passing through a shaft of sunlight or a stream of water. Golden wheat surrounded her now, stretching on and on in rambling rows. The sky overhead was a pure and perfect black, scattered with bright, unfamiliar stars that gleamed like winter ice. She looked back, and saw no torii, no hill: the rows wound away in every direction.

A voice spoke from her right, deep, crackling like breaking stalks: "Janest. Walk with me."

Janest glanced toward the voice by reflex and caught a glimpse of a silhouette in another row, a figure with hair like straw and hemp-woven sleeves—she quickly pulled her gaze away. The High Reaver had instructed her to keep her eyes averted unless the god bid her otherwise, and so she did. Ten Sheaves began to walk, and Janest fell into step alongside—the god in his row, the field-maiden in hers.

The rich smell of growing things surrounded them as they walked; from time to time a cold wind would blow through the rows, a reaping-wind, and Janest would shiver. Presently, Ten Sheaves began to speak: He spoke of a long life overlooking the fertile valley and the farms beneath, watching the ages unfold in extravagance and poverty, describing times and people Janest could scarcely imagine; he spoke of the Games of Divinity and how the sky of Heaven turned by their listings, and though Janest knew not of these games, she could hear the wonder and longing in the god's voice; he spoke of the Exigence, a divine fire, a miracle even to the gods, handed down from On High that the gods might raise champions and protectors; he spoke of what it meant to be a god and to believe in justice in an age of the unjust. "Long ago," Ten Sheaves said, "there were great champions, men and women of profound might, who carried the fire through the pitch. But when they left they took the light of the world with them."





Janest cleared her throat, spoke for the first timesince she had arrived. "What happened to them, these champions?"

"They were struck down," the god said, "butchered, bound away. The world was eroded in their absence—even the fires of the Exigence guttered. Now they have returned; they walk the world again but they have come too late, too late for me. Look." She felt more than saw a hand pointing to the horizon. Janest looked.

The field-maiden realized she could see something dreaming upon the limits of the horizon—a great gleaming edifice of lights. She had the impression of towers and heartbreaking beauty. "That is the Celestial City of Yu-Shan, which men and gods alike know as Heaven," the little god said. "I have never walked its streets, and now I never will; perhaps you might, one day. For now, we can stand here, and look upon its lights.

"Unschooled in how to properly address divinity, Janest hesitated, then asked: "God of the harvest, why have you called for me?"

Ten Sheaves gave back a question of his own: "Have you any relatives of blood in the valley?"

"No," Janest said. She realized the god was farther away, had slipped back to a more distant row at some point, though he sounded as close as ever.

"Yet it is not yourself you fear for."

Janest's jaw worked. She wasn't normally a woman of words, and seldom explained herself. "The people of the village... they're still my family; it doesn't take blood. I want to protect them."

"A field-maiden's duty?" the god asked.

It was, but... Janest shook her head. "The people and the land together are my kin; separate, they're not themselves. They're precious to me. Without them, I am lost."

Ten Sheaves seemed satisfied. "Field-maiden Janest. I have prayed to the Most High, and he has approved my petition. You are to become Exalted—my champion, my Chosen—and the salvation of your people. If you live, perhaps the salvation of much more."

Janest stared ahead, eyes wide and focused on the row ahead as she spoke into the wind the way a blind woman might. She felt blind. It was a new terror, the fear of not knowing the way. "Ten Sheaves—I'm—I'm not the best fighter among the field-maidens. Amalon with her threshing-flail—"

"You fight well enough. Strength of arm is common in this age," Ten Sheaves said, "and not the strength I desire." A pause. "I am a god, Janest, but I am small among the ranks of immortals. When I call upon the divine flame, its price will be my consumption." The night-sounds of the spirit field faded away—the crickets, the sigh of the wind—and it became very quiet. "There's no other way. Come the dawn, the Fair Folk will erase this place if not stopped. This is my final day either way."

Janest got the sense that the god was looking again at the distant lights of Heaven—at the streets he would never walk and the towers he would never climb. "I'm sorry," she said, and though she had only today met the god on the hill, she meant it.

"It's a strange thing," Ten Sheaves said, "to die. It's a strange thing for immortality to end, and to go into the darkness." Janest could no longer see the god when she looked into the rows, he was receding. "I will not come again, but is the wheat truly gone when it spills its kernel upon the ground? This is a wicked age; as my final act, I would sow it with hope. Turn toward the lights of Heaven, Janest, and walk. The Unconquered Sun stands prominent in the Games of Divinity; let his fire guide you."

The field-maiden lingered a moment, searching for any sign of Ten Sheaves, but the god was gone. She turned and advanced into the rows as he bid. There was darkness for a time, and she felt fear, but she could see the sun rising through the stalks. It was the sign of a god whose name she had never heard until now—but hadn't she known him all along, toiling under his gaze and thanking him for the life that sprang from the fields? In the sense that the light was familiar; she felt neither blind nor alone. Then she remembered—the valley, the village. I must go back. They need me—and the fear of not knowing her course melted away like dew under sunlight. She pushed onward.

At last the rows parted and Janest stepped into a clearing where the stalks had been beaten flat. In its center

stood a strange lady scarecrow, born up by a brace of beams and spreading her arms as if to bear up the sky on her back. Her hair was dark like Janest's, and what she had taken for straw was actually skin. She looked past these features, partly out of fear, partly out of consumption. She reached out to it, and in turn its arms came together between them, bearing up an offering, a final gift. Ten Sheaves's voice was in her head, impelling her to take it—and take hold of her destiny. She reached out and grasped the perfect obsidian hilt, and the lady of straw met her gaze, her hat falling away. Janest saw that she was looking at herself.

Almost immediately she saw and felt it—the pulse of eternity, a spark leaping, lightning unfurling in jagged tongues between Heaven and earth, connecting them. The essence of Ten Sheaves exploded from her like fire: amber-gold changing into a ghostfire of blue-white. For a moment, Ten Sheaves was in her senses, crackling through her cells, changing everything he touched. Blood rushed in her veins, and it was not just blood but the mountain streams that tumbled down into the valley and fed the fields. She flexed her fingers and they were full, ripe stalks of wheat nodding beneath a passing breeze, the crops she had tended all her life. She felt also the seeds sleeping in the earth, felt the pregnant promise of the soil beneath her feet, and the call of rains drawn up from the oceans—and that too faded away as the last of Ten Sheaves fled down into the recesses of her soul, sending up a bonfire to mark his passing. The amber-gold light was all around her now, spilling out from her. As she stood under the rising light of the Unconquered Sun, she sensed the kinship between the small god that had Exalted her and the source of the fire that had empowered her and ended him. She knew that to be even the least among gods was still a wondrous thing, now ended, now passed to her, now kindling anew.

She took the gift to hand, and the world faded into the purity of the dawn.

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Shortly after midnight, the spring that flowed from the top of the harvest god's hill dried up, first slowing to a trickle, and then ceasing altogether. The creak-and-thump of the waterwheel slowed and finally groaned to a halt, its uncharacteristic silence awakening those few

in the village who had managed to sleep. The wind that spun the prayer wheels outside the High Reavers' hall hesitated and then died; the wheels ticked to a stop. The village was silent and still for hours after these grim omens, waiting without hope for the coming dawn.

An hour before the sun came up, the doors of Ten Sheaves's shrine opened, and a young woman stepped out, walking with purpose.

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The armies of the Fair Folk came on with the rising of the sun. They sang as they marched, knowing that the day promised a banquet of pain and fear—such was the meat and drink of the hobgoblins and silver-wights and lesser panjandrums that made up the majority of the horde. The nobles leading the expedition hoped for more refined sport—the souls of mothers, torn raw and agonized by the deaths of their babes, perhaps; or the vengeful flailing of young boys burning to avenge atrocities. Either would make for appropriate amusement.

They marched under war-banners woven of flame and dreams of glory, and set up a great strange riot of drums and flutes played by wizened, hideous musicians dredged from the Lands Beyond Creation, capable of creating beauty only in their music; all else they did was crude and cynical and base. As the army reached the edge of the fields before the town, the jeweled and beautiful noble that led the war-band raised one elegant hand, signaling a halt. Slavering, fanged skirmishers beat the ground around him with their bone clubs and barbed blades, eager for slaughter.

A lone girl stood at the edge of the glebe, body toned and hardened by a life in the fields. Her amber-gold eyes flashed in the light of the rising sun, and her chestnut hair waved in the rising breeze. She carried a great and terrible scythe, a god-weapon, its haft shot through with veins of green jade, its long and wicked blade gleaming with a ruddy inner light. Its grips displayed the unmistakable hollows of empty hearthstone sockets. The weapon was taller than a man, yet she hefted it as though it weighed nothing at all.

The lords of chaos signaled the advance. Strawmaiden Janest crossed the field to meet them.







## -INTIMACIES-

CHARMS

## INVENTORY