

DRAGON-BLOODED

WHAT FIRE HAS WROUGHT



KICKSTARTER

MANUSCRIPT PREVIEW #5

Cynis Cogen hiked up a scarred Northern mountainside, following a stream in the morning sunlight. Stumps of clearcut forest gave way to a copse untouched by axes, ringed by curtains of red-blooming vines that twitched coyly away from the old man's fingers. Cogen followed the stream further uphill, and found it running beneath a pavilion of latticed tree branches, surrounded by moldering barley and charred elkmeat. He'd found the heretics' shrine.

Cogen stepped over the offerings and entered, pulling his hat low against the wind whistling through the shrine. He knelt under rustling vines and waited. Gods moved in their own time, and Cogen wasn't hurried yet. The ever-changing song of running water kept him focused. When the sun was overhead, Cogen drew an apple from his satchel. He savored it to its core as the sun fled west.

In late afternoon, the god sought his attention. A dust devil arose, drawing in petals and vines to become a country skirt and ruffled sleeves. The god Almgava took on flesh as firm and healthy as a sapling, and hair of golden wheat. They gave a bow of welcome, and said in a voice like laughter, "You please me, old man. I sense you've sown much in your years, in many fruitful fields. Seek you a blessing to renew youth's vigor?"

Cogen laughed and removed his roughly made grass hat, to show the god his shaven pate. "To the dismay of many, as of late I no longer sow. And I hear your blessings are costly." He smiled gently. "I come as one person of the world to another, asking only that you do the duty the Dragons gave you."

Almgava raised their chin and arched their brow. "Lecture me not, venerable meddler. I sought no truck with mortals; I was sufficient before their gifts, their prayers. If they beg me to bless this crop or that belly, shall I leave them barren? If I can soothe them, shall I leave them desolate?" The god held their palms out toward Cogen. "I am health, bounty, beauty. Why shouldn't mortals crave my touch? Why wouldn't you?"

Cogen meant to argue, or to rise to his feet, but did neither. Almgava moved toward him and laid a hand like a summer breeze on Cogen's cheek. A joyous, lustful flame flared to life in Cogen's heart and belly, and his head forgot reason. But his hand sought the stream flowing beside, and from its icy touch Cogen drew clarity. He remembered his oaths, his purpose, and his training.

Cogen surged upward, striking the god's chest thrice to soften the flesh Almgava wore, then once more to reverse the flow of sustaining Essence beneath. Almgava reeled back, choking, eyes wide with horror. They hadn't truly known breath in all their ageless years until now, when they knew breathlessness.

"Bounteous harvests should arise from honest work, not Almgava's whims," said Cogen, diverting his upward momentum into assuming a fluid, adaptive stance. "Nearby villages feud over your favor, and forget their fields. What they — what we crave isn't what we need."

The god clawed the air, and vines snaked downward to bind Cogen. He breathed in and out like the tide, and his body was as the sea: flowing around every obstacle, impossible

to grasp, and ever returning to the shore. With each dodge, Cogen landed another body-blow, and added another principle to his lecture.

“Shun interference; mortals have their own duties and troubles! Shun idleness; care for Creation is the gods’ way! Shun greed; the Immaculate Order provides your worship!”

“I yield!” croaked Almgava. Vines hung limply throughout the shrine. The god cowered and heaved, struggling to calm the churning Essence within.

“Good, good,” said Cogen, standing over Almgava, calm and kind as the ocean’s surface. “But will you obey?”

Chapter Eight

Martial Arts and Sorcery

Immaculate Martial Arts

After the last bloody days of the Usurpation, the victorious Dragon-Blooded set out to claim dominion over Creation, bearing the sanction of the nascent Immaculate teachings. But they lacked the Lawgivers’ all-conquering might, and the small gods of the world defied them, whether out of loyalty to the fallen Solars or their own selfish opportunism. To tame the unruly world, the greatest Terrestrial martial artists and their Sidereal sifus created the Five Immaculate Dragon styles, martial arts that perfectly exemplify the elemental Essence of the Dragon-Blooded. Immaculate monks who master one of these styles transcend the limitations of Dragon-Blooded martial arts prowess, and are feared by demons, ghosts, and wayward gods alike.

The Immaculate styles differ from other martial arts in the following ways:

- Like Dragon-Blooded Charms, the Charms of each Immaculate style have an elemental aspect, and can benefit from Elemental Aura (p. XX). These don’t allow non-Dragon-Blooded to enter Elemental Auras.
- The Immaculate styles are intensely demanding. While anyone can learn the fundamentals of the styles, their Charms can only be learned by the Dragon-Blooded and by other martial artists that aren’t restricted by the Terrestrial keyword, such as Solars and Sidereals.
- Because of their perfect harmony with Dragon-Blooded Essence, the Immaculate styles lack both the Terrestrial and Mastery keywords.
- Once a Dragon-Blood has learned the Form Charm of an Immaculate Dragon style, she may harmonize that style’s elemental Essence with her martial arts. As long as she’s in *any* Martial Arts Form, she may expend the Aura of the mastered style’s element to ignore the restrictions of the Terrestrial keyword (**Exalted**, p. 427) on *all* her Martial Arts Charms for one tick.

Where Do I Learn Them?

The vast majority of Immaculate stylists train in the Cloister of Wisdom (p. XX), but it’s not the only source of tutelage. Immaculate monks occasionally mentor lay Dragon-Blooded who hold the Order’s favor.

Beyond the Realm, Lookshy's Immaculate Faith and Prasad's Pure Way provide instruction in the styles, as do the Sidereal Exalted. Renegade ex-Immaculates teach in heretical dojos, while lost scrolls and training manuals of the Shogunate offer instruction to whoever finds them.

Air Dragon Style

To practice Air Dragon style is to be the wind: elusive, intangible, omnipresent, and devastating in its fury. Its students train in acrobatics to cultivate an intuitive awareness of their body's own movements, and master breath control to lighten the body and walk silently. Unlike the other Immaculate styles, Air Dragon stylists strike from afar, throwing chakrams to claim their foes' heads.

Air Dragon Weapons: Air Dragon unarmed attacks are chops and spinning kicks. They also use the chakram, which can either be thrown as a ranged weapon or wielded at close range as a light weapon. Unarmed attacks enhanced by Air Dragon Charms can be stunted to deal lethal damage.

Armor: This style is compatible with light armor.

Complementary Abilities: Occult is used for battling spirits, while Dodge and Stealth are used to evade and outmaneuver foes.

Air Dragon's Sight

Cost: 1m, 1i; **Mins:** Martial Arts 2, Essence 1

Type: Reflexive

Keywords: Air, Perilous

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: None

Reading her foe's movements through the slight disturbances they create in the air, the Immaculate could dodge his attacks blindfolded. She ignores (Perception/2, rounded up) total points of onslaught penalties or environmental penalties to her Evasion.

Additionally, surprise attacks (**Exalted**, p. 203) inflict no penalty to her Evasion, though she can't dodge ambushes.

In Air Aura, the Immaculate ignores (Perception) points of penalties instead.

Cloud-Treading Method

Cost: 5m; **Mins:** Martial Arts 3, Essence 1

Type: Supplemental

Keywords: Air, Mute

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: None

Following in Mela's footsteps, the Immaculate walks paths closed to her earthbound brethren. She ignores (higher of Essence or 3) total points of penalties from moving through difficult terrain, moving in concealment, or any other environmental penalties on

a movement action. She can traverse surfaces that couldn't normally bear her weight, such as tree branches or rice paper, although she must end her movement on stable footing.

In Air Aura, the Immaculate may walk over liquid or any vapor other than thin air, such as the smoke from a campfire. She must still end her movement on solid ground.

Wind Dragon Speed

Cost: 5m; **Mins:** Martial Arts 3, Essence 2

Type: Reflexive

Keywords: Air

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Cloud-Treading Method

The Immaculate moves with wind-rivalling grace, striking and instantly regaining her balance and composure. She may flurry a disengage with an attack, ignoring the usual flurry penalties. If she successfully disengages and ends her movement at short range or further from all enemies, not counting crashed foes or trivial characters, she doesn't lose Initiative for disengaging.

In Air Aura, the Immaculate may flurry a disengage with an aim action. This allows her to move and aim on the same turn, but only benefits Air Dragon attacks.

Breath-Seizing Technique

Cost: 3m, 2i, 1wp; **Mins:** Martial Arts 4, Essence 2

Type: Simple

Keywords: Air, Decisive-only, Stackable

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Air Dragon's Sight

The Immaculate forces the air from her enemy's lungs, denying him Mela's precious gift. To use this Charm, the Immaculate must have Initiative 12+. She makes a **decisive** attack against an enemy. Before rolling damage, she rolls (attack roll threshold successes – target's soak, minimum [lower of Overwhelming or total threshold successes]) dice of **withering** damage against him. If her threshold successes exceed her attack's Overwhelming, the damage can't be reduced below Overwhelming. She doesn't gain Initiative from this damage roll; if she crashes her enemy, the Initiative Break is added before she rolls **decisive** damage and resets to base. Extra successes converted to damage are unavailable to effects such as Lightning Strike Style — the Immaculate must choose how she wishes to divide her extra successes between the effects.

If an enemy that takes **withering** damage from this attack is holding his breath (**Exalted**, p. 232), the total number of rounds he may do so for is reduced by one. Multiple uses of this Charm stack this effect.

Essence is the breath of spirits, rendering them especially vulnerable to this technique. They lose motes equal to the **withering** damage they suffer, maximum (Essence x2). Beings that don't need to breathe, such as zombies and automatons, are unaffected.

Air Dragon Form

Cost: 8m; **Mins:** Martial Arts 4, Essence 2

Type: Simple

Keywords: Air, Form, Mute

Duration: One scene

Prerequisite Charms: Breath-Seizing Technique, Wind Dragon Speed

The Immaculate's hands cut through the air as she executes a rapid kata and draws a deep cleansing breath, respiring the Essence of the Air Dragon. Her **withering** chakram attacks are treated as made from close range to determine their Accuracy bonus, regardless of the actual distance. She gains +1 Evasion, and adds an automatic success on disengage rolls and Stealth rolls.

Special activation rules: When the Immaculate deals enough **withering** damage to lower a foe's Initiative from a rating higher than her own to a lower rating, she may reflexively enter this Form.

Shroud of Unseen Winds

Cost: 4m; **Mins:** Martial Arts 4, Essence 2

Type: Supplemental

Keywords: Air, Mute, Perilous

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Air Dragon Form

Silent and light on her feet, the Immaculate moves unseen. She adds (Essence) dice on a Stealth roll, or (Essence) successes at Initiative 12+. With an appropriate stunt, such as throwing a flash bomb or handful of blinding powder, she may roll Stealth even if there's no place to hide.

In Air Aura, the Immaculate adds successes instead of dice as long as she isn't crashed, and needs no stunt to enter concealment, vanishing into thin air.

Avenging Wind Strike

Cost: 3m, 1wp; **Mins:** Martial Arts 4, Essence 3

Type: Supplemental

Keywords: Air, Decisive-only

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Air Dragon Form

The Immaculate's strike is Mela's exhalation, driving her foes back with the force of fivefold winds. She doubles 10s on a **decisive** damage roll. If she deals damage, she may

knock her enemy prone and hurl him one range band away from her. With 3+ levels of damage, she may hurl him two range bands instead. He cannot be flung further than long range from the Immaculate.

In Air Aura, any damage is enough to knock an enemy back two range bands. With 5+ levels, the Immaculate may knock an enemy back three range bands.

Lightning Strike Style

Cost: 8m, 1wp; **Mins:** Martial Arts 5, Essence 3

Type: Supplemental

Keywords: Air, Decisive-only

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Avenging Winds Strike

Blue-white flickers of electricity arc across the Immaculate's weapon or limbs, lancing out in a brilliant stroke of lightning as she strikes. She extends the range of her **decisive** attack by one range band (maximum long) and adds (Essence + Strength) attack roll extra successes as dice of damage. Her attack ignores Hardness from metal armor, including those made from the five magical materials.

In Air Aura, the Immaculate's attack also ignores cover (**Exalted**, p. 199) from metallic objects or structures, passing through them in a flash of lightning. Even enemies in full cover from such structures can be attacked if the Immaculate can see them, but receive +3 Defense.

Thunderclap Kata

Cost: 7m, 5i; **Mins:** Martial Arts 5, Essence 3

Type: Simple

Keywords: Air, Perilous

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Avenging Winds Strike

Slamming her hands together, the Immaculate creates a deafening thunderclap. All other characters in medium range, including allies, must roll (Stamina + Resistance) against it as an environmental hazard with difficulty (Essence + 1), Damage (Strength/2, rounded up)B. The shockwave strikes dematerialized characters as well as materialized ones, and has (Strength)B Damage against spirits. This technique can be heard for miles around, but doesn't affect characters beyond medium range.

Special activation rules: If the Immaculate enters Air Dragon Form with Initiative 20+, she may reflexively use Thunderclap Kata.

Tornado Offense Technique

Cost: 10m, 1wp; **Mins:** Martial Arts 5, Essence 4

Type: Simple

Keywords: Air, Decisive-only

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Lightning Strike Style

The Immaculate is a deadly whirlwind, scything down foes with a spinning strike. The Immaculate chooses a range band within her weapon's range and rolls a single **decisive** attack against all enemies at that range from her — she might deliver a spinning kick to all enemies in close range, or send a chakram flying to strike all enemies at medium range. If she wishes to attack at medium range or further, she must first spend a round aiming, as usual.

The player rolls (Initiative/3, rounded up) dice of damage against each hit enemy, plus (Perception) dice against each enemy against whom the attack was unexpected. Trivial opponents suffer the Immaculate's (full Initiative) damage.

In Air Aura, if the attack hits every enemy in the range band, the Immaculate adds the number of non-trivial enemies hit to her base Initiative upon resetting, maximum +(Essence).

Wrathful Winds Kiai

Cost: 15m, 1wp; **Mins:** Martial Arts 5, Essence 4

Type: Simple

Keywords: Air, Withering-only

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Thunderclap Kata

Echoing the awful roar with which Mela rules Creation's storms, the Immaculate gives a ferocious shout that strikes like a gale-force blast. She rolls (Stamina + Martial Arts) as a special unblockable **withering** attack against all characters in a ninety-degree arc out to medium range, including allies. The attack doesn't use a weapon; it has no Accuracy bonus, and has raw damage (Strength + Initiative + threshold successes) against each hit enemy, minimum (Strength). Damaged enemies are knocked back one range band and fall prone; enemies crashed by the attack can't take a move action on their next turn.

The Immaculate doesn't gain any Initiative from this **withering** damage. Each 10 on a damage roll against an enemy rolls a die of **decisive** bashing damage against him, ignoring Hardness. Spirits instead suffer dice of **decisive** damage equal to the total **withering** damage dealt to them, and can be struck even if dematerialized.

This Charm can only be used once per scene, unless reset by incapacitating a non-trivial foe.

Hurricane Combat Method

Cost: —(+6m, 1wp); **Mins:** Martial Arts 5, Essence 5

Type: Permanent

Keywords: Air

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisite Charms: Shroud of Unseen Winds, Tornado Offense Technique, Wrathful Winds Kiai

Honing her speed and reflexes beyond their utmost, the Immaculate unleashes the hurricane. Upon entering Air Dragon Form, she may pay six motes and one Willpower to enhance it. Its Evasion bonus increases to +2, and she doubles 9s on Stealth and movement rolls. Once per round, she may pay five Initiative to reflexively make a **withering** or **decisive** attack that doesn't count as her attack for the round, and can be used to clash attacks against her.

Earth Dragon Style

Earth Dragon style tempers overwhelming force with meticulous deliberation, moving slowly and surely with every technique. Students undergo training regimens that strengthen the body, hardening fists through hours spent striking barrels of gravel and learning to ignore their pain by sleeping on beds of nails. This training tempers them into nigh-invincible warriors who can stand toe to toe with unruly gods and Anathema, withstanding deadly blows and answering in kind with their mighty tetsubos.

Earth Dragon Weapons: Earth Dragon unarmed attacks are solid, powerful strikes delivered with the elbows, knees, or two-handed hammer blows. It also uses the tetsubo. Unarmed attacks enhanced by Earth Dragon Charms can be stunted to deal lethal damage.

Armor: This style is compatible with all armor.

Complementary Abilities: Occult is used to battle spirits, while Athletics is employed in feats of strength.

Stone Dragon's Skin

Cost: 5m, 1i; **Mins:** Martial Arts 2, Essence 1

Type: Reflexive

Keywords: Dual, Earth, Perilous

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: None

Unbowed by pain, the Immaculate withstands blow after blow. She ignores (Stamina/2, rounded up) points of wound penalties to her Parry. Against **withering** attacks, she adds (higher of Essence or 3) natural soak; against **decisive** attacks, she adds +1 to her Hardness from armor or other magic.

This Charm costs one mote less in medium armor, and two motes less in light armor. While unarmored, it costs two motes less and the Initiative cost is waived.

Force of the Mountain

Cost: 3m; **Mins:** Martial Arts 3, Essence 1

Type: Supplemental

Keywords: Dual, Earth

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: None

The Immaculate draws strength from her firm stance. She adds (lower of Essence or Strength) dice of raw **withering** damage, or doubles 10s on a **decisive** damage roll.

In Earth Aura, she adds (higher of Essence or Strength) raw **withering** damage.

Stillness-of-Stone Atemi

Cost: 2m (+1i per point of penalty); **Mins:** Martial Arts 3, Essence 2

Type: Supplemental

Keywords: Earth, Withering-only

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Force of the Mountain

The staggering force of the Immaculate's blow teaches her enemies what it is to bear the world's weight. Her **withering** attack gains +1 Overwhelming. For each 10 on the damage roll, the Immaculate may pay one Initiative to raise her foe's mobility penalty (**Exalted**, p. 591) by one until the end of his next turn, maximum (Essence). An enemy crashed by the attack suffers this penalty until he recovers from crash, if that's longer.

In Earth Aura, the Immaculate may also pay Initiative for 9s on her damage roll to inflict penalties.

Unmoving Mountain Stance

Cost: 6m; **Mins:** Martial Arts 4, Essence 2

Type: Reflexive

Keywords: Dual, Earth, Perilous

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Stone Dragon's Skin

Motionless as a statue, the Immaculate stubbornly refuses to yield ground to her enemies. After being hit by an attack, but before damage is rolled, she may use this Charm. The Initiative her attacker would gain from **withering** damage is reduced by (her Stamina/2, rounded up), although this doesn't negate the Initiative he gains for hitting her or the Initiative Break for crashing her.

Smash attacks (**Exalted**, p. 586) or other attacks that forcibly move the Immaculate fail to do so unless they deal at least (Stamina + Resistance) **withering** damage or (Stamina) **decisive** damage.

In Earth Aura, the Immaculate denies her attacker (Stamina) Initiative, and adds (Essence) to the minimum damage that must be dealt to knock her back.

Earth Dragon Form

Cost: 9m; **Mins:** Martial Arts 4, Essence 2

Type: Simple

Keywords: Earth, Form

Duration: One scene

Prerequisite Charms: Stillness-of-Stone Atemi, Unmoving Mountain Stance

The Immaculate moves through slow and deliberate katas as though the air were stone carved by her movements, crafting a perfect stance. She adds (Strength/2, rounded up) bonus dice on attack rolls of smash attacks or attacks against prone enemies. She adds (Strength) natural soak.

Special activation rules: When an enemy whose Initiative is lower than the Immaculate's hits her with an attack, she may reflexively enter this Form, gaining its soak bonus against **withering** attacks.

Ghost-Grounding Blow

Cost: 5m, 5i, 1wp; **Mins:** Martial Arts 4, Essence 2

Type: Reflexive

Keywords: Earth, Perilous, Withering-only

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Earth Dragon Form

Corrupt gods and truculent spirits must bow their faces into the earth until they have learned humility. After crashing a spirit with a **withering** attack, the Immaculate may use this Charm. The spirit instantly materializes at no cost if dematerialized, and cannot dematerialize or use the Hurry Home Charm until (Immaculate's Strength) rounds have passed after it recovers from crash.

Earthshaker Attack

Cost: 10m, 5i, 1wp; **Mins:** Martial Arts 5, Essence 3

Type: Simple

Keywords: Decisive-only, Earth

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Earth Dragon Form

The ground trembles beneath the Immaculate's blow as she drives her tetsubo or stomping foot into the ground. To use this Charm, the Immaculate must have Initiative 15+. She makes a single **decisive** attack roll against all other characters in short range, including allies. This attack is unblockable, undodgeable, and can't be clashed. Instead, each character in range must make a (Dexterity + Athletics) opposed roll against the Immaculate's attack to maintain his balance. A character who fails is knocked prone and suffers (Strength) dice of bashing damage, ignoring Hardness. This doesn't include the Immaculate's Initiative or reset her to base. Battle groups with Might 0 fail the roll automatically. Enemies that take 3+ levels of damage are knocked back one range band with immense force, suffering damage as per a short-range fall (**Exalted**, p. 232).

In Earth Aura, after paying this Charm's cost, the Immaculate may divide her total Initiative evenly among each hit enemy, rounded up, adding it on top of this Charm's base damage of (Strength).. Doing so resets her to base Initiative as long as at least one enemy is hit.

This Charm can only be used once per scene, unless reset by crashing a non-trivial foe while he's prone.

Shattering Fist Strike

Cost: 3m, 1wp; **Mins:** Martial Arts 5, Essence 3

Type: Supplemental

Keywords: Decisive-only, Earth

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Earth Dragon Form

The Immaculate's raw power is all the mightier for her precision, striking a weapon's weakest point to shatter it. Her disarm gambit destroys a mundane weapon on a success. Alternatively, she may supplement a feat of demolition (**Exalted**, p. 229), doubling 9s and completing in a miscellaneous action what would normally take longer, such as punching through a brick wall.

The Immaculate may expend her Earth Aura to target an artifact weapon with a supplemented disarm gambit, adding its rating to the gambit's difficulty. Success fractures the weapon, breaking its wielder's attunement and rendering the artifact unusable until repaired (**Exalted**, p. 242). Such repair projects only require a single successful roll, rather than an extended action.

Weapon-Breaking Defense Technique

Cost: 10m, 1wp; **Mins:** Martial Arts 5, Essence 3

Type: Reflexive

Keywords: Clash, Decisive-only, Earth

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Shattering Fist Strike

The fool who proclaims he'll slay the mountain can only blame himself when he returns home with a broken sword. The Immaculate reflexively clashes an attack from close range with a disarm gambit that benefits from Shattering Fist Strike. This doesn't count as her combat action for the round. Winning the clash adds her attack roll threshold successes to the gambit's Initiative roll. This Charm can't clash unarmed attacks or other attacks that have the Natural tag.

In Earth Aura, the Immaculate may clash to fracture artifact weapons without expending her Aura.

This Charm may only be used once per scene, unless reset by dealing 7+ levels of damage to a non-trivial enemy with a **decisive** attack.

Avalanche Method

Cost: 20m, 1wp; **Mins:** Martial Arts 5, Essence 4

Type: Simple

Keywords: Decisive-only, Earth

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Weapon-Breaking Defense Technique

Striking blow after hammering blow, the Immaculate forces even the haughtiest heretics to kneel. To use this Charm, the Immaculate must have Initiative 12+ and her target must have a mobility penalty of at least -1. She makes **decisive** attacks against a single enemy until she's made a total equal to his mobility penalty, or until she misses. A successful attack doesn't reset her to base Initiative — instead, she loses Initiative equal to the successes on her damage roll, to a minimum of her base Initiative. Once she's completed all attacks, she resets as usual.

If the Immaculate successfully lands a smash attack against an enemy, he isn't knocked back until she's completed all attacks made with this Charm. Landing multiple smash attacks lets her fling him back multiple range bands, to a maximum of long range. He crashes to earth with incredible force, suffering damage as per a short-range fall if he's knocked to medium range, or per a medium-range fall if knocked to long range (**Exalted**, p. 232). An enemy trapped with Hungry Earth Strike isn't dislodged from his earthen prison, but still suffers falling damage as he's ground against his prison's stone walls with bone-breaking force.

In Earth Aura, missing doesn't prevent the Immaculate from launching further attacks.

Hungry Earth Strike

Cost: 10m, 6i, 1wp; **Mins:** Martial Arts 5, Essence 4

Type: Supplemental

Keywords: Earth, Perilous, Withering-only

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Earthshaker Attack, Ghost-Grounding Blow

The jaws of Pasiap yawn wide in jagged fissures to consume those the Immaculate condemns. She makes a **withering** attack that must either be a smash attack or directed against a prone enemy, doubling 8s on the damage roll. If she crashes an enemy who's standing on soil, stone, or a similar earthen substance (or is knocked onto such terrain by a smash attack), the ground beneath his feet swallows him to the waist. While swallowed in earth, that enemy cannot take movement actions and suffers the penalties for being prone (**Exalted**, p. 202). On each of his turns, he suffers one die of bashing damage from grinding stone, ignoring Hardness. Spirits suffer the effects of Ghost-Grounding Blow while trapped. If an enemy is incapacitated while buried, he dies, his body entombed in the depths of the earth.

A buried enemy may attempt to break free from the earth as an extended (Strength + Athletics) action, with difficulty (Immaculate's Strength) and a goal number of

(Immaculate's Essence + Strength). That character's allies may also attempt to pry him free with their own (Strength + Athletics) rolls, adding their threshold successes towards his total. This roll is a miscellaneous action that can't be flurried.

In Earth Aura, the Immaculate may bury an enemy without crashing him if her attack reduces his Initiative from being higher than hers to lower.

This Charm may only be used once per scene, unless reset by incapacitating a non-trivial foe with a **decisive** attack from 20+ Initiative.

Perfection of Earth Body

Cost: —(+6m, 6i, 1wp); **Mins:** Martial Arts 5, Essence 5

Type: Permanent

Keywords: Earth, Perilous

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisite Charms: Avalanche Method, Hungry Earth Strike

The Immaculate concludes the katas of Earth Dragon Form by dropping to her hands and knees, humbling herself before Pasiap. As she rises, her body twists and shifts as Earth Essence suffuses it, her skin becoming rough and craggy as her body hardens into living stone. Upon entering Earth Dragon Form, she may pay six motes, six Initiative, and one Willpower to enhance it. When she attacks a prone enemy or makes a smash attack, she adds (Stamina) raw **withering** damage or **decisive** damage. She's immune to all wound penalties, as well as crippling penalties inflicted by effects such as Joint-Wounding Attack or Crippling Pressure-Point Strike.

If the Immaculate is unarmored, the soak bonus from Earth Dragon Form rises to (Willpower + Strength), and she gains Hardness (Strength + Stamina).

Fire Dragon Style

Fire Dragon style demands both the capacity for unpredictable violence and immense self-discipline. Its students train in the rhythm of combat, sparring and performing weapon drills in time to music. Walkers on the path of Hesiesh fight with incredible speed and a dancer's grace, knowing when to withhold their force and when to unleash it without restraint.

Fire Dragon Weapons: Fire Dragon unarmed attacks are rapid barrages of punches and chops, as well as powerful kicks. The style also uses short swords, traditionally wielded paired. Unarmed attacks enhanced by Fire Dragon Charms can be stunted to deal lethal damage.

Armor: This style is compatible with light and medium armor.

Complementary Abilities: Occult is vital to subduing unruly gods.

Flash-Fire Technique

Cost: 5m, 1wp; **Mins:** Martial Arts 3, Essence 1

Type: Supplemental

Keywords: Decisive-only, Fire

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: None

Her sense for violence honed by training and tempered by self-discipline, the Immaculate draws her blades without needing to think. She rolls Join Battle twice, taking the higher of the two results. Any Charms she uses must be paid separately for each roll. If she wins Join Battle and makes a **decisive** attack on her first turn, she adds (Dexterity) attack roll extra successes as dice of damage.

Searing Edge Attack

Cost: 3m; **Mins:** Martial Arts 3, Essence 1

Type: Supplemental

Keywords: Fire, Withering-only

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: None

The Immaculate's killing intent radiates from her strike as overwhelmingly painful heat. As long as her **withering** damage roll receives at least one success, her target loses (Essence) additional Initiative, which she doesn't gain.

Flame-Flicker Stance

Cost: 3m; **Mins:** Martial Arts 3, Essence 2

Type: Reflexive

Keywords: Fire, Perilous

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Flash-Fire Technique

Moving like the shifting flame of a candle, the Immaculate fends off blows in a dance of whirling blades. (Essence) 1s on an attack roll against her grant +1 Parry each. If she successfully blocks an attack made by an enemy with lower Initiative, it doesn't inflict an onslaught penalty.

In Fire Aura, there's no limit on how many of her attacker's 1s the Immaculate can benefit from.

Perfect Blazing Blow

Cost: 3m, 1wp; **Mins:** Martial Arts 4, Essence 2

Type: Supplemental

Keywords: Decisive-only, Fire

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Searing Edge Attack

Striking with overwhelming intensity, the Immaculate burns through her foe's defense. She doubles (Essence) 9s on a **decisive** attack roll against an enemy with lower Initiative. She doubles 8s against crashed foes, though still up to a total of (Essence) doubled successes.

In Fire Aura, each success doubled by this Charm also adds one die of damage.

Fire Dragon Form

Cost: 7m; **Mins:** Martial Arts 4, Essence 2

Type: Simple

Keywords: Fire, Form

Duration: One scene

Prerequisite Charms: Flame-Flicker Stance, Perfect Blazing Blow

Flames seem to glow in the Immaculate's eyes as she dances through a rapid kata, assuming a graceful, deadly battle stance. Against enemies with a lower Initiative, her attacks inflict onslaught penalties before the roll is made, penalizing the enemy's Defense against them. When she parries a **decisive** attack, the Initiative her attacker loses (**Exalted**, p. 191) is doubled.

Special activation rules: When the Immaculate wins Join Battle, she may reflexively enter this Form.

God-Immolating Strike

Cost: 5m; **Mins:** Martial Arts 4, Essence 2

Type: Supplemental

Keywords: Decisive-only, Fire

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Fire Dragon Form

Wayward divinities and unrighteous spirits are tinder for the flames of righteousness. The Immaculate's **decisive** attacks deal aggravated damage to spirits, and she treats her Initiative as (Essence) higher for the purposes of this style's Charms or similar effects that gain benefits against lower-Initiative foes.

If she deals damage, she ignites the spirit's Essence, rolling (Essence) dice of aggravated damage on its next turn, ignoring Hardness. Dematerialized spirits are more easily consumed, suffering (Essence + 2) dice instead.

Essence-Igniting Nerve Strike

Cost: 4m, 1wp; **Mins:** Martial Arts 4, Essence 3

Type: Simple

Keywords: Fire, Withering-only

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: God-Immolating Strike

Her blades rippling with invisible flame, the Immaculate agitates her foe's Essence with a precision strike, burning him from within. She makes a **withering** attack against an enemy with a lower Initiative. The Initiative she gains from the damage roll is halved, but the enemy loses one mote for every 9 on the damage roll, and two for every 10. The Immaculate chooses whether personal or peripheral motes are lost first. If this crashes that enemy, his lost motes ignite as an inward flame, rolling one die of lethal damage for every two motes lost (rounded up), maximum (Essence), ignoring Hardness.

The Immaculate may expend her Fire Aura to gain the full amount of Initiative from the damage roll.

Overwhelming Fire Majesty Stance

Cost: 6m, 3i; **Mins:** Martial Arts 4, Essence 3

Type: Reflexive

Keywords: Fire, Perilous

Duration: Until next turn

Prerequisite Charms: Fire Dragon Form

The power and majesty of a raging conflagration cows even the bravest hearts. Flames wreath the martial artist, imposing a penalty of (lower of Essence or Charisma) on attacks against her. Enemies that hit her from close range suffer one die of lethal damage, ignoring Hardness. A foe may pay one Willpower to become immune to this Charm's penalty for the scene, but not its damage.

In Fire Aura, this Charm's Initiative cost is waived and it loses the Perilous keyword.

Fiery Blade Attack

Cost: 5m, 4i; **Mins:** Martial Arts 5, Essence 3

Type: Simple

Keywords: Decisive-only, Fire

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Fire Dragon Form

The Immaculate delivers a rapid flurry of finishing blows, setting the air ablaze with her speed. She makes a **decisive** attack. As long as it deals any damage, it ignites a bonfire (Damage 4L/round, Difficulty 5) engulfing her victim, which burns without fuel for as long as he remains within it. Escaping the blaze requires him to disengage even if no combatants are in close range of him, in which case he rolls at difficulty 2.

Breath of the Fire Dragon

Cost: 15m, 1wp; **Mins:** Martial Arts 5, Essence 4

Type: Simple

Keywords: Decisive-only, Fire

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Overwhelming Fire Majesty Stance

The Immaculate ignites the air within her lungs, expelling it as a mighty gout of flame. She rolls an unblockable **decisive** attack with (Stamina + Martial Arts) against all characters, including allies, in a ninety-degree arc out to close range, plus an additional range band for every 10 Initiative she has, to a maximum of medium range with 20+ Initiative. This attack strikes both dematerialized and materialized characters with (Initiative/3, rounded up) lethal damage, ignoring Hardness. Trivial opponents and battle groups suffer (Initiative) damage instead. As long as one enemy is hit by the attack, the Immaculate resets to base Initiative.

Enemies that take 3+ levels of damage catch fire, suffering (Essence) dice of lethal damage each turn, ignoring Hardness, until extinguished. Dematerialized spirits suffer aggravated damage and are made visible to all by the flame as long as it burns, and cannot extinguish it unless they first materialize. Flammable scenery caught in the blast catches fire, burning as a bonfire (Damage 4L/round, Difficulty 5) for the rest of the scene.

This Charm can only be used once per scene, unless reset by gaining 15+ Initiative on a single tick.

Smoldering Wound Attack

Cost: 5m, 1wp; **Mins:** Martial Arts 5, Essence 4

Type: Reflexive

Keywords: Decisive-only, Fire

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Essence-Igniting Nerve Strike, Fiery Blade Attack

This Charm may only be used after landing a **decisive** attack, but before rolling damage. For every 10 on the damage roll, the Immaculate rolls one die of unsoakable **withering** damage, which adds to her base Initiative upon resetting. She can't gain more than (Essence) Initiative this way. Against a crashed enemy, she rolls **decisive** damage instead, but still gains Initiative equal to the damage dealt.

In Fire Aura, this Charm may be used after damage has been rolled.

Consuming Might of the Fire Dragon

Cost: —(+5m, 1wp); **Mins:** Martial Arts 5, Essence 5

Type: Permanent

Keywords: Dual, Fire

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisite Charms: Breath of the Fire Dragon, Smoldering Wound Attack

A swirling flame erupts from the Immaculate's crown chakra, engulfing her in a deadly blaze. Upon entering Fire Dragon Form, she may pay five motes and one Willpower to enhance it. She treats her Initiative as (Wits) points higher to determine when she acts each round, and for the purposes of Charms of this style or similar effects that offer

benefits against lower-Initiative foes. **Withering** attacks gain (Strength/2, rounded up) Overwhelming, while **decisive** attacks add one die of damage. An enemy that hits her from close range suffers one die of lethal damage, ignoring Hardness.

The Immaculate's blazing aura grows stronger as she defeats her foes. Each non-trivial enemy she incapacitates adds one to the Initiative bonus, Overwhelming bonus, **decisive** damage bonus, and damage dealt to enemies that hit her.

Water Dragon Style

Water Dragon teaches that all things are flow — the rhythm of a fight, the blood of a living body, the Essence of Creation. Practitioners of this style train in techniques that block, redirect, or impede these flows, subtly manipulating the conditions of battle to seize victory. Its defense emphasizes fluid motions and outmaneuvering enemies with footwork, while its offense relies on repeated strikes, exploiting the lightest wound to unleash a cascading torrent of death.

Water Dragon Weapons: Water Dragon unarmed attacks emphasize swift sequences of punches, kicks, and claw strikes. It also uses tiger claws. Unarmed attacks enhanced by Water Dragon Charms can be stunted to deal lethal damage.

Armor: This style is compatible with light and medium armor.

Complementary Abilities: Occult is needed to battle spirits.

Flowing Water Defense

Cost: 4m; **Mins:** Martial Arts 3, Essence 1

Type: Reflexive

Keywords: Perilous, Water

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: None

The Immaculate flows between offense and defense, lunging forward to strike before returning to a defensive posture. She can flurry a full defense with an attack, ignoring the Defense penalty for flurrying.

In Water Aura, if the Immaculate's attack succeeds, the Initiative cost of her full defense is refunded.

Rippling Water Strike

Cost: 5m; **Mins:** Martial Arts 3, Essence 1

Type: Supplemental

Keywords: Water, Withering-only

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: None

The Immaculate's strike breaks her foe's guard like a pebble dropped into still water, spreading outward to throw enemies off-balance. Her **withering** attack gains +2

Overwhelming, and she may use Dexterity in place of Strength to determine its raw damage. If she crashes a non-trivial foe with the attack, all other enemies within close range suffer a –1 onslaught penalty.

In Water Aura, the Immaculate adds her Dexterity to raw damage in addition to her Strength.

Drowning-in-Blood Technique

Cost: 3m; **Mins:** Martial Arts 3, Essence 2

Type: Supplemental

Keywords: Decisive-only, Water

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: None

Striking her foe's chest with a rapid barrage, the Immaculate redirects the flow of his blood so that it pours into his lungs. Her **decisive** attack doubles 10s on its damage roll. If she deals 3+ levels of damage, her foe begins choking on his own blood, raising his wound penalty by one until the scene ends or he crashes the Immaculate.

Essence is the life's blood of spirits, and this attack turns its flow against them. Multiple uses stack the wound penalty increase against spirits, maximum (Essence).

In Water Aura, the Immaculate adds (her foe's wound penalty/2, rounded up) bonus dice of damage.

Shrugging Water-Dragon Escape

Cost: 4m; **Mins:** Martial Arts 4, Essence 2

Type: Supplemental

Keywords: Water

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Flowing Water Defense

The Immaculate's fluid posture and footwork defies all restraint. She doubles 9s on a (Strength + Martial Arts) roll to resist a grapple, a disengage roll, a roll opposing an enemy's rush, or any roll to escape from restraints such as manacles.

In Water Aura, success on the roll grants one Initiative.

Water Dragon Form

Cost: 10m; **Mins:** Martial Arts 4, Essence 2

Type: Simple

Keywords: Form, Water

Duration: One scene

Prerequisite Charms: Drowning-in-Blood Technique, Shrugging Water Dragon Escape

The Immaculate drops into a fighting stance in which offense and defense are a single fluid motion. She adds bonus dice on attack rolls equal to her target's wound penalty, wearing down foes in an endless tide. Her Stamina is doubled when calculating her natural soak.

Special activation rules: When the Immaculate deals enough **decisive** damage to a non-trivial enemy to raise his wound penalty, she may reflexively enter this Form.

Theft-of-Essence Method

Cost: 4i; **Mins:** Martial Arts 4, Essence 2

Type: Reflexive

Keywords: Perilous, Water

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Water Dragon Form

Landing a telling blow, the martial artist redirects the flow of a foe's Essence. Upon crashing an enemy, the stylist steals (Essence + his wound penalty) of his motes, adding them to her own pool. She may choose whether to drain personal or peripheral motes, adding them to the same pool she steals from.

Bottomless Depths Defense

Cost: 5m, 1ahl; **Mins:** Martial Arts 5, Essence 3

Type: Reflexive

Keywords: Perilous, Water

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Water Dragon Form

The martial artist's body ripples and deforms around a blow, dispersing its force into the bottomless abyss of her vitality. After being hit by an attack, she rolls (Essence + Stamina), unmodified by other effects. Each success cancels one level of damage. Even if she rolls no successes, she still cancels one level of damage.

The Immaculate may expend her Water Aura to negate all damage from the attack.

This Charm can only be used once per day, unless reset by being hit by three **decisive** attacks from non-trivial foes without taking a single level of damage.

Essence-Dousing Wave Attack

Cost: 5m, 1wp; **Mins:** Martial Arts 5, Essence 3

Type: Supplemental

Keywords: Decisive-only, Water

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Theft-of-Essence Method

Striking with the dark, smothering Essence of a crashing wave, the martial artist quenches the flame of her foe's battle prowess. If her **decisive** attack against a crashed enemy deals at least (his Essence) damage, she chooses one of his ongoing Charms to deactivate, which must belong to a combat Ability or be a combat-based physical Attribute Charm. The Storyteller should inform her player what applicable Charms her victim has active before she chooses.

The martial artist may expend her Water Aura to use this Charm against an enemy who isn't crashed.

Flow Reversal Strike

Cost: 7m, 1wp; **Mins:** Martial Arts 5, Essence 3

Type: Simple

Keywords: Decisive-only, Water

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Theft-of-Essence Method

The Immaculate channels a surge of Essence through her strike, causing every moving fluid in her foe's body to reverse its course. She makes a **decisive** attack. On a hit, her victim rolls (Stamina + Resistance) against a difficulty equal to her attack roll threshold successes. If he fails, each success he failed by adds one die of **decisive** damage, and after taking the **decisive** damage he suffers **withering** damage equal to his current wound penalty, which is added to the Immaculate's base Initiative.

This attack twists and disrupts the Essence of spirits, causing their wound penalty to subtract successes rather than dice from their (Stamina + Resistance) roll.

This Charm can only be used once per scene, unless reset by crashing an enemy whose Initiative was higher than the Immaculate's.

Crashing Wave Style

Cost: 5m, 5i, 1wp; **Mins:** Martial Arts 5, Essence 4

Type: Simple

Keywords: Perilous, Water, Withering-only

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Flow Reversal Strike

The Immaculate strikes blow after furious blow, like waves pounding the shore. She makes **withering** attacks against a single enemy until she misses, crashes him, or has made a total of (1 + his wound penalty) attacks. Against battle groups, she attacks until she misses or depletes the group's Magnitude.

In Water Aura, crashing an enemy deals dice of lethal damage to him equal to his current onslaught penalty (including the point inflicted by this attack), ignoring Hardness.

This Charm can only be used once per scene, unless reset by landing a **decisive** attack against a crashed enemy and then building up to Initiative 12+.

Ghost-Restraining Whirlpool

Cost: 6m, 2i, 1wp; **Mins:** Martial Arts 5, Essence 4

Type: Simple

Keywords: Perilous, Water

Duration: One scene

Prerequisite Charms: Essence-Dousing Wave Attack

Moving through a winding kata, the Immaculate stirs the seas of Essence that surround her, creating a maelstrom that inexorably draws in spirits. Spirits within medium range can't move away from her without disengaging, nor can they use the Hurry Home Charm. The Immaculate gains all Initiative lost by spirits disengaging away from her. Additionally, at the end of each spirit's turn, if it didn't either move towards the Immaculate or end in close range to her, she steals two Initiative from it.

Dematerialized spirits are even more susceptible to the whirlpool, treating its entire range as difficult terrain (**Exalted**, p. 199). If she steals Initiative from them, they also suffer one die of bashing damage, ignoring Hardness.

In Water Aura, this Charm's range extends to long.

Special activation rules: The Immaculate may use this Charm reflexively when she enters Water Dragon Form.

Tsunami-Force Shout

Cost: 10m, 10i, 1wp; **Mins:** Martial Arts 5, Essence 5

Type: Simple

Keywords: Decisive-only, Water

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Bottomless Depths Defense, Crashing Wave Style, Ghost-Restraining Whirlpool

Breathing deep, the Immaculate fills her lungs with liquid Essence. With a mighty, bellowing kiai, she expels a rumbling torrent of spiritual pressure. To use this Charm, she must have Initiative 20+. She rolls an unblockable **decisive** attack with (Stamina + Martial Arts) against all enemies in ninety-degree arc out to medium range. If she's using Ghost-Restraining Whirlpool, its currents bear the force of her attack to strike all spirits within its range, materialized or dematerialized. This attack deals bashing damage to each struck enemy equal to ([Attack roll threshold successes x his wound penalty] + 1), ignoring Hardness. Battle groups are treated as having a -4 wound penalty to determine damage. This doesn't include the Immaculate's Initiative or reset her to base.

Each enemy damaged by the attack is flung one range band away from the Immaculate and falls prone. Spirits cannot be forced outside the range of a Ghost-Restraining Whirlpool, and instead suffer damage as per a short-range fall (**Exalted**, p. 232) if driven to the whirlpool's edge. An enemy that takes 3+ levels of damage is knocked back two

range bands and suffers damage as per a short-range fall (or medium range, for spirits forced against a Ghost-Restraining Whirlpool's edge).

Tsunami-Force Shout can only be used once per scene, unless reset by landing a **decisive** attack that resets the Immaculate's Initiative and building back to Initiative 20+.

Wood Dragon Style

The most esoteric of the Immaculate Dragon styles, Wood Dragon oversees the cycles of life and death. Its students undergo grueling regimens that bring them to the edge of death, fasting to their bodies' limits while consuming copious quantities of hallucinogenic and entheogenic drugs. When they return to the world of the living, they bring mysterious insight with them. In battle, these mystics draw on an extensive knowledge of pressure points and Essence flows to both subdue foes and heal allies. Masters of the style are rumored to possess a technique that can bring instant death, destroying the soul itself.

Wood Dragon Weapons: Wood Dragon unarmed attacks are precise finger jabs targeting pressure points and nerve clusters. The style also uses the staff. Wood Dragon stylists train in wielding the long bow as a close-range weapon, using the traits of a staff. Wood Dragon style can't be used through ranged attacks made with a bow, but the Immaculate doesn't need a ready weapon action to change between using a bow as a ranged weapon and wielding it as a staff.

Armor: This style is compatible with light armor.

Complementary Abilities: Occult is necessary to battle spirits, while Performance is used to distract and misdirect.

Wood Dragon Vitality

Cost: 5m; **Mins:** Martial Arts 2, Essence 1

Type: Reflexive

Keywords: Dual, Wood

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: None

At one with the font of all life in Creation, the Immaculate suffuses her body with unyielding vitality. She adds (Martial Arts) natural soak against a **withering** attack, or subtracts one die from the damage of a **decisive** attack.

In Wood Aura, the Immaculate adds (Essence + Martial Arts) soak, or subtracts (Essence/2, rounded up) dice of **decisive** damage.

Eyes of the Wood Dragon

Cost: 4m; **Mins:** Martial Arts 3, Essence 1

Type: Supplemental

Keywords: Withering-only, Wood

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: None

Perceiving the path of living Essence through chakras and meridians, the Immaculate lands a precise strike to disrupt her foe's vital energies. She adds (Perception) raw **withering** damage and can make piercing attacks (**Exalted**, p. 586) with Wood Dragon attacks.

In Wood Aura, the Immaculate doesn't suffer a Defense penalty for making a piercing attack.

Mind-Over-Body Meditation

Cost: 5m, 1wp; **Mins:** Martial Arts 3, Essence 2

Type: Simple

Keywords: Perilous, Wood

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Wood Dragon Vitality

The Immaculate is keenly aware of the rhythm and circulation of her body's vital forces, sensing bruises and cuts as disturbances in its course. Closing her eyes in a moment of intense focus, she rights the flow of her living Essence and seals her wounds. She rolls (lower of Essence or Stamina), healing a level of non-aggravated damage for each success, minimum one.

This Charm can only be used once per scene, and only while in combat.

Soul-Marking Style

Cost: 3m, 2i; **Mins:** Martial Arts 4, Essence 2

Type: Supplemental

Keywords: Decisive-only, Wood

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Eyes of the Wood Dragon

Striking through her enemy's flesh to reach at his spirit, the Immaculate drives a thorn of deadly Essence into his soul. As long as her **decisive** attack deals damage, further Wood Dragon attacks are guided by her awareness of the soul mark, granting the benefits of aiming (**Exalted**, p. 196) against that foe for the scene. Spirits suffer a -1 crippling penalty on all actions for the scene.

Wood Dragon Form

Cost: 10m; **Mins:** Martial Arts 4, Essence 2

Type: Simple

Keywords: Form, Wood

Duration: One scene

Prerequisite Charms: Mind-Over-Body Meditation, Soul-Marking Style

The Immaculate strikes her own pressure points and chakras with a series of quick, precise blows, bringing her Essence into perfect alignment. She gains (lower of Essence or Stamina) temporary –1 health levels the first time she enters this form in the scene. She keeps these health levels even if she leaves this form. At the end of the scene, these temporary health levels fade, and all damage contained in them returns to her normal health track.

Additionally, when the Immaculate lands a **decisive** attack from 12+ Initiative that incapacitates a non-trivial enemy, she resets Mind-Over-Body Meditation.

Special activation rules: When the Immaculate heals enough damage from Mind-Over-Body Meditation or similar effects to reduce her wound penalty, she may reflexively enter this Form.

Spirit-Wracking Method

Cost: 7m; **Mins:** Martial Arts 4, Essence 2

Type: Supplemental

Keywords: Withering-only, Wood

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Wood Dragon Form

The Immaculate chastises unruly spirits with strikes that carry the seeds of her vital Essence, to blossom within the spirit's anima. Her **withering** attack against a spirit doubles 8s on the damage roll, but doesn't grant her any Initiative. She rolls a die of lethal **decisive** damage for every 10 on the **withering** damage roll, ignoring Hardness.

A spirit crashed by her attack suffers agonizing pain, doubling its wound penalties and the crippling penalty from Soul-Marking Style until it recovers from crash.

Death-Pattern-Sensing Attitude

Cost: 5m, 2i (+1wp); **Mins:** Martial Arts 4, Essence 3

Type: Reflexive

Keywords: Perilous, Wood

Duration: Until next turn

Prerequisite Charms: Wood Dragon Form

Her senses fully attuned to the web of living Essence that surrounds her, the Immaculate foretells the approach of impending death. She gains the benefits of a full defense (**Exalted**, p. 196) to block attacks from enemies marked with her Soul-Marking Style, and ignores the Defense penalty from their surprise attacks.

If the Immaculate is ambushed by a marked foe, she may pay one Willpower to block it. Her Parry is limited to (her Essence/2, rounded up), and cannot be raised higher or benefit from other Charms.

Spirit-Rending Technique

Cost: 8m, 1wp; **Mins:** Martial Arts 4, Essence 3

Type: Supplemental

Keywords: Decisive-only, Wood

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Spirit-Wracking Method

Having placed her mark on a truculent god, the Immaculate rends its Essence apart from within. She adds (Willpower) dice to a **decisive** damage roll against a spirit marked by her Soul-Marking Style, and deals aggravated damage. If this incapacitates a spirit, the Immaculate gains (its Essence) motes.

Unbreakable Fascination Kata

Cost: 5m, 1wp; **Mins:** Martial Arts 5, Essence 3

Type: Simple

Keywords: Wood

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Wood Dragon Form

Moving in a sinuous, vine-like kata, the Immaculate entrances her foes. She makes an inspire roll with (Appearance + Performance) against one or more enemies that can see her to fill them with fascination. Each enemy whose Resolve is beaten cannot attack on his next turn, and cannot move away from the Immaculate without disengaging that turn.

Once an enemy has resisted this influence with Willpower, he's immune to losing his attack for the rest of the scene, but must still disengage to move away from the stylist. An enemy who carries the Immaculate's soul mark must pay Willpower to resist twice before gaining this immunity.

Enthralling Blow Attack

Cost: 10m, 5i; **Mins:** Martial Arts 5, Essence 4

Type: Reflexive

Keywords: Perilous, Withering-only, Wood

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Unbreakable Fascination Kata

The Immaculate transitions through the undulating motions of her Unbreakable Fascination Kata into a sweeping blow that sends foes reeling. Upon using this Charm's prerequisite, the Immaculate reflexively rolls a single **withering** attack against each enemy in close range whose Resolve she beat, even if they resisted with Willpower. She rolls damage separately against each hit enemy, but only gains Initiative from the highest damage roll. Damaged enemies cannot take any move actions on their next turn.

An enemy crashed by Enthralling Blow Attack suffers the full effects of the Immaculate's Unbreakable Fascination Kata until he recovers from crash, even if he's already paid Willpower to resist.

In Wood Aura, in addition to gaining Initiative from the highest damage roll, the Immaculate gains up to (Essence/2, rounded up) Initiative from each additional damage roll.

Wood Dragon Succor

Cost: 15m, 1wp; **Mins:** Martial Arts 5, Essence 4

Type: Simple

Keywords: Wood

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Death-Pattern-Sensing Meditation, Spirit-Rending Technique

The Wood Dragon lives so that all may live. To use this Charm, the Immaculate must have Initiative 12+. She lays hands on another character, activating pressure points with gentle touches as verdant Essence flows from her hands to suffuse his body and heal his wounds. She rolls (Initiative), healing her ally one level of non-aggravated damage for each success, to a maximum of (his Stamina + Resistance) levels. She suffers an unpreventable level of bashing damage for every two health levels she heals this way, rounded down.

Using this Charm resets the Immaculate to base Initiative. If she expends her Wood Aura, she only loses Initiative equal to the total levels of damage healed, to a minimum of her base Initiative. A character can only benefit from this Charm once per day.

Soul Mastery

Cost: 5m, 1wp, 1ahl; **Mins:** Martial Arts 5, Essence 5

Type: Simple

Keywords: Decisive-only, Wood

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Enthralling Blow Attack, Wood Dragon Succor

Standing at the center of life and death, the Immaculate unleashes the legendary secret technique of Wood Dragon style. A swirling black-green aura wreathes her weapon as she strikes at her opponent's very soul. This Charm can only be used against an enemy suffering from the Immaculate's Soul-Marking Style. She rolls a gambit against him, with a difficulty of (his Essence + Willpower – wound penalty), minimum 6. Success destroys him utterly. Spirits are permanently destroyed, the undead crumble into dust, and the living die as their souls are struck into Lethe, ensuring that they'll reincarnate rather than lingering as ghosts. Constructs and similar beings neither living or dead are unaffected.

Soul Mastery can only be used once per scene.

Other Styles

Golden Janissary Style

This ancient art has been passed down by generations of devil-fighting sages who pledged their lives to defend Creation from darkness. Its training regimens combine weapon katas, dance-like footwork, and meditation on light and shadow. It's studied by holy ascetics, warriors who guard the borders of shadowlands, and barbarian tribes dwelling in devil-haunted wilderness, as well as Dragon-Blooded shikari.

Golden Janissary Weapons: Stylists use sweeping unarmed attacks, as well as the spear and staff. Unarmed attacks enhanced by Golden Janissary Charms can be stunted to deal lethal damage.

Armor: This style is compatible with light armor.

Complementary Abilities: Occult is useful to practitioners of this style, while Athletics is key to its mobility.

Where-Is-Doom Inquisition

Cost: 6m; **Mins:** Martial Arts 2, Essence 1

Type: Supplemental

Keywords: Dual, Mastery

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: None

Those who hide in the darkness reveal their own wickedness. The martial artist adds (Occult) bonus dice on an Awareness roll to Join Battle or detect a hidden threat in combat. If any creatures of darkness oppose her roll, (Essence) total 1s on their rolls add non-Charm dice to her roll. She cannot pinpoint which of her enemies are creatures of darkness with this Charm, but can sense she's in the presence of unholy forces.

Mastery: If the martial artist wins Join Battle against a creature of darkness and uses her first turn to attack one, she may reflexively move one range band towards it before attacking in addition to her normal movement action, and adds (Occult) dice of post-soak **withering** damage or one success on a **decisive** damage roll.

Creatures of Darkness

Creatures of darkness are foes of Creation who stalk through the night or dwell in the dark places of the world. This includes demons and undead by default, but the Storyteller is free to include or exclude beings from this category at her discretion. A benign ancestor ghost might not be a creature of darkness, while a subterranean monstrosity empowered by forbidden gods could be.

Rotten Leaf Arrested

Cost: 4m; **Mins:** Martial Arts 3, Essence 1

Type: Supplemental

Keywords: Withering-only

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: None

Let no unclean thing set foot over Creation's threshold. The stylist's **withering** attack gains +1 Overwhelming and knocks her enemy prone if it deals damage. An enemy crashed by this attack cannot take a movement action on his next turn.

Against creatures of darkness, the Overwhelming bonus rises to (Occult/2, rounded up), minimum +1, and she adds one automatic success to her **withering** damage roll. A crashed creature of darkness cannot move or attack on its next turn.

Cleansing Flame Strike

Cost: 3m; **Mins:** Martial Arts 3, Essence 1

Type: Supplemental

Keywords: Decisive-only

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Rotten Leaf Arrested, Where-Is-Doom Inquisition

Answer the abomination with flame. Aureate fire streaks along the stylist's **decisive** attack, adding one die of damage and ignoring two points of Hardness. Against creatures of darkness, she deals aggravated damage and doubles 10s on the damage roll.

Golden Janissary Form

Cost: 8m; **Mins:** Martial Arts 4, Essence 1

Type: Simple

Keywords: Form

Duration: One scene

Prerequisite Charms: Cleansing Flame Strike

Stand proud in defense of Creation, and you will never fall. The martial artist adds (Strength/2, rounded up) to her natural soak and as bonus dice on rushes, and gains one Initiative on a successful rush. She gains +1 Parry and +(Occult) natural soak against creatures of darkness, and +1 base Initiative when she resets after landing a **decisive** attack against one.

Special activation rules: Whenever the stylist lands a **decisive** attack against a creature of darkness, she may reflexively enter this Form, granting her its Initiative bonus.

Devil-Slaying Spear Dance

Cost: 5m, 1wp; **Mins:** Martial Arts 4, Essence 2

Type: Reflexive

Keywords: Decisive-only

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Golden Janissary Form

Be as a spreading blaze, always advancing towards the fuel of your enemies. Upon incapacitating a nontrivial foe, the stylist may reflexively rush another enemy, doubling 9s. This doesn't count as her movement action for the round. When rushing a creature of darkness, every 1 on his opposed roll grants the stylist one Initiative.

Mastery: On a successful rush, the stylist may instantly move into close range with her target in place of the normal effects of a rush and reflexively make a **decisive** attack against him, which doesn't count as her attack for the round. If she incapacitates that foe, she may trigger this Charm again to make another rush.

Paralyzing Combustion Imbuement

Cost: 5m, 1wp; **Mins:** Martial Arts 5, Essence 2

Type: Simple

Keywords: Decisive-only, Mastery, Terrestrial

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Devil-Slaying Spear Dance

The deepest darkness yields before the smallest flame. The stylist makes a **decisive** attack. Damaging her foe causes bursts of fiery, golden light to erupt from within his body with the sound of ringing bells. This penalizes his Stealth as a glowing anima banner (p. XX) and increases his wound penalty by -1. If this raises his wound penalty above his Stamina, he cannot disengage from close range with the martial artist for as long as he remains illumined. Creatures of darkness are burned by this light, suffering (Essence) dice of aggravated damage each turn, ignoring Hardness. This light shines until the scene ends, or until the victim crashes or incapacitates the stylist.

Mastery: An enemy whose wound penalty is raised above his Stamina must disengage to move away from the martial artist regardless of the distance between them.

Terrestrial: An illumined enemy may free himself of the effect by landing a **decisive** attack against the stylist.

Light-on-Dark Shield

Cost: 5m, 3i; **Mins:** Martial Arts 5, Essence 2

Type: Reflexive

Keywords: Clash, Perilous, Terrestrial, Withering-only

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Golden Janissary Form

No shadow intrudes upon the light. Spinning her weapon to build momentum, the stylist clashes an attack with her own **withering** attack. Her attack cannot deal more damage than (her Overwhelming), which she doesn't gain. Against creatures of darkness, a successful clash also rolls one die of aggravated damage, ignoring Hardness.

Terrestrial: This counts as the stylist's attack for the round, and can't be used if she's already attacked in this round.

Lone Spark Lights the Conflagration

Cost: 10m, 1wp; **Mins:** Martial Arts 5, Essence 3

Type: Simple

Keywords: Decisive-only, Mastery, Terrestrial

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Light-on-Dark Defense, Paralyzing Combustion Imbuement

Purify the world with flame; let each slain devil be a spark. The stylist makes a **decisive** attack against an enemy suffering from her Paralyzing Combustion Imbuement. Her weapon shines with brilliant light, leaving a white-hot afterimage seared on the eyes of those who witness it. She adds (Essence) attack roll extra successes as dice of damage, or (Essence + Occult) successes against a creature of darkness.

If she damages a non-trivial creature of darkness with this attack, the light emanating from within it flares out to strike each other creature of darkness within medium range, wreathing them in ghostly bonfires. Each one suffers one die of aggravated damage, plus an additional die for every 10 on the first damage roll, ignoring Hardness. Damaged enemies begin to shine, suffering the effect of Paralyzing Combustion Imbuement.

Mastery: After incapacitating a non-trivial creature of darkness and resetting to base Initiative, the stylist may use Devil-Slaying Spear Dance to roll a rush against all enemies caught in this Charm's bonfires. She moves in a blur of blinding motion, coming into close range of each rushed enemy and making a **decisive** attack against him before moving on to the next. Her Initiative doesn't reset to base until she's completed all attacks.

Terrestrial: This Charm can only be used once per scene, unless reset by crashing an enemy suffering from the stylist's Paralyzing Combustion Imbuement.

Mantis Style

Mantis style emphasizes a combination of grappling and rapid strikes. It draws no distinction between offense and defense, employing painful joint holds that leave enemies unable to fight back or deflecting the force of a blow so that the attacker's guard is left wide open. It's commonly studied by Immaculate monks for its ability to subdue foes without killing, but is also widespread throughout Eastern and Southern dojos.

Mantis Weapons: Practitioners deliver unarmed attacks with mantis hook strikes — using one to three fingers to strike weak points, grab foes, and block attacks — as well as knee and elbow strikes. Mantis style also uses batons, kamas, nunchaku, seven-section staffs, and war fans. Unarmed attacks enhanced by Mantis Charms can be stunted to deal lethal damage.

Armor: Mantis style is incompatible with armor.

New Weapon: Kama/Sickle

Light (Accuracy +4, Damage +7, Defense +0, Overwhelming 1)

Tags: Lethal, Melee, Disarming, Piercing

New Weapon: Nunchaku

Light (Accuracy +4, Damage +7, Defense +0, Overwhelming 1)

Tags: Bashing, Martial Arts, Disarming, Flexible

Iron-Arm Block

Cost: 4m; **Mins:** Martial Arts 2, Essence 1

Type: Reflexive

Keywords: Uniform

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: None

Using her defense to divert her attacker's weapon or limbs, the Mantis stylist creates an opening in his guard. She gains +1 Parry, and inflicts a -1 onslaught penalty on her attacker if she successfully blocks. If she's grappling, successfully blocking an attack also prevents it from reducing her rounds of control.

Mastery: The stylist doesn't suffer an onslaught penalty from an attack she successfully blocks.

Crushing Claw Technique

Cost: 3m; **Mins:** Martial Arts 3, Essence 1

Type: Supplemental

Keywords: Decisive-only

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: None

The mantis catches its prey with deadly speed. The martial artist adds one automatic success on the attack roll of a grapple gambit or a **decisive** attack. If she lands a grapple, she rolls ([Strength or Dexterity] + Martial Arts) with (higher of Essence or 3) bonus dice to establish control over it. If she lands a **decisive** attack, (Essence) 10s on her attack roll add dice of damage.

Mantis Form

Cost: 7m; **Mins:** Martial Arts 4, Essence 1

Type: Simple

Keywords: Form

Duration: One scene

Prerequisite Charms: Crushing Claw Technique, Iron-Arm Block

The stylist adopts the signature stance of the mantis, shifting her weight onto her rear leg as she extends her front leg forward, her hands outstretched to block and strike. She gains +1 Parry. If she attempts to block an attack but is hit by it, she adds (Parry) natural soak against **withering** damage or gains Hardness (Parry/2, rounded up) against **decisive**

damage. Against enemies with lower Initiative or that she's grappling, she doubles 10s on **decisive** damage rolls.

Special activation rules: When the stylist wins control of a clinch against a non-trivial enemy, she may reflexively enter Mantis Form.

Leaping Mantis Technique

Cost: 6m, 1wp; **Mins:** Martial Arts 4, Essence 2

Type: Simple

Keywords: Decisive-only, Mastery

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Mantis Form

The martial artist's rapid footwork brings her within striking range before her foe can react. She rushes an enemy with (Strength) bonus dice. If the rushed foe provokes her reflexive movement, she may move two range bands toward him instead of one. If this brings her into close range, she may reflexively make a **decisive** attack or grapple gambit against him, adding half the threshold successes, rounded up, on her rush roll as bonus dice on the attack roll.

If the rushed enemy does not provoke her reflexive motion, then on her next turn, she may make an unblockable **decisive** attack or grappling gambit against him (assuming he's within her attack's range), adding all extra successes from the rush as bonus dice on the attack roll.

Mastery: If the martial artist succeeds on the rush and lands an attack against her enemy, she gains one Willpower.

Joint-Locking Technique

Cost: 5m; **Mins:** Martial Arts 4, Essence 2

Type: Simple

Keywords: Mastery

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Mantis Form

Catching her foe's limb, the stylist forces it into a painful lock. While grappling an opponent, she restrains him (**Exalted**, p. 201) and rolls (Strength) dice of unsoakable **withering** damage. If she's grappling a crashed foe, restraining him doesn't cost any rounds of control.

Mastery: The martial artist may exchange the Initiative she receives from Joint-Locking Technique to gain more rounds of control over the grapple, gaining one round for every two Initiative she forgoes.

Grasping Claw Method

Cost: 3m, 1i, 1wp; **Mins:** Martial Arts 5, Essence 2

Type: Supplemental

Keywords: Decisive-only, Mastery

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Mantis Form

With a deft twist of her foe's wrist, the stylist strips him of his weapon and establishes a hold in a single motion. Upon winning control of a grapple, she may disarm her enemy, flinging his weapon to short range.

Mastery: The martial artist adds her attack roll threshold successes as bonus dice to her control roll.

Grasping Mantis Defense

Cost: 5m; **Mins:** Martial Arts 5, Essence 3

Type: Reflexive

Keywords: Clash, Decisive-only, Terrestrial

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Grasping Claw Method

Deflecting an attack with one hand, the martial artist uses the turning force of her attacker's blow to grab him with the other. She clashes an attack from close range with a grapple gambit. Winning the clash adds (higher of Strength or 3) non-Charms dice on the clinch's control roll.

Terrestrial: This counts as the stylist's attack for the round, and can't be used if she's already attacked in this round.

Joint-Breaking Attack

Cost: 8m, 1wp; **Mins:** Martial Arts 5, Essence 3

Type: Simple

Keywords: Decisive-only, Terrestrial

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Joint-Locking Technique

Once the mantis catches its prey, there is no escape. While grappling a foe, the stylist savages him with a difficulty 6 gambit that requires no attack roll. Success inflicts a single level of lethal damage, ignoring Hardness, and breaks one of the character's limbs as a crippling injury — the martial artist bends the bone of an arm or leg until it snaps. A broken arm is useless and imposes a –3 penalty on all actions that require two hands to perform, while a broken leg causes a character to treat all ground as difficult terrain. Additionally, the pain of this injury raises that foe's wound penalty by –2 for the rest of the scene. If not treated with applicable healing magic, the broken bone heals in (7 – victim's Stamina) months, assuming he receives adequate medical treatment.

If the martial artist crashes a grappled enemy with Joint-Locking Technique, she may reflexively activate this Charm to attack with the crippling gambit.

Terrestrial: This Charm can only be used once per scene, unless reset by expending three rounds of control over a grapple for this purpose.

Unfolding Retribution Strike

Cost: 15m, 1wp; **Mins:** Martial Arts 5, Essence 3

Type: Simple

Keywords: Decisive-only, Mastery, Terrestrial

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Grasping Mantis Defense, Joint-Breaking Attack, Leaping Mantis Technique

The signature finishing move of Mantis style is a deadly barrage of hundreds of blows in a matter of seconds. To use this Charm, the stylist must have Initiative 15+ while controlling a grapple. She releases the clinch, then rolls a single unblockable, undodgeable **decisive** attack to represent the flurry of blows. Each round of control she gave up by releasing the grapple adds + 3 dice of **decisive** damage and increases its onslaught penalty by -1.

This Charm can only be used once per scene, unless reset by crashing a grappled foe whose Initiative was higher than the stylist's.

Mastery: If the stylist incapacitates her victim, she adds (rounds of control expended / 2, rounded up) to her base Initiative upon resetting.

Terrestrial: The martial artist cannot benefit from more than (Essence) rounds of released control.

White Veil Style

There is no White Veil Society. It's not a loose-knit association of martial artists, spies, and assassins spread throughout the Realm and beyond. Its members don't practice a deadly martial art, nor has this style ever spread to students willing to pay vast sums for secret instruction or to rival martial artists who haven't uncovered records of its secret techniques. It never sees use at dinners, salons, and galas. People don't die from it, occasionally silently and occasionally screaming, days or weeks after not encountering it.

White Veil Weapons: If it existed, White Veil would use swift, precise unarmed attacks to strike pressure points, as well as garrotes and hand-needles.

Armor: This style would be incompatible with armor if it were real.

Complementary Abilities: Socialize and Stealth are essential to the modus operandi that isn't employed by masters of this nonexistent style.

New Weapon: Garrote

Light (Accuracy +4, Damage +7, Defense +0, Overwhelming 1)

Tags: Bashing (rope garrotes)/Lethal (razor wire), Brawl, Concealable, Flexible, Grappling, Two-Handed, Special

Special: Garrotes have the Improvised tag, except when used to grapple.

New Weapon: Hand Needle/Kakute

Light (Accuracy +4, Damage +7, Defense +0, Overwhelming 1)

Tags: Lethal, Martial Arts, Concealable, Grappling, Worn

Birdsong Over Blades

Cost: 4m; **Mins:** Martial Arts 2, Essence 1

Type: Reflexive

Keywords: Decisive-only, Mute

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: None

Concealing her hostile intentions behind common, everyday movements, the stylist can strike without striking. After successfully landing a **decisive** attack, she forgoes making a damage roll and resetting to base Initiative. Even though the attack doesn't deal any damage, it still conveys poisons applied to her weapon (**Exalted**, p. 232) and the deleterious effects of Charms, as long as they don't directly enhance the damage roll.

Noticing the attack requires a (Perception + Awareness roll) from all onlookers, including the victim, against a difficulty of (her Essence + Manipulation). If she attacked from concealment, it doesn't break stealth, and she substitutes her total Stealth successes for the difficulty of the Awareness roll if they're higher.

Mastery: An enemy struck by the attack takes a penalty of (the stylist's Manipulation) on rolls to resist poison or other harmful effects conveyed through it.

Poison Outside of Combat

If a character is exposed to poison that deals Initiative damage outside of combat, the Storyteller should call for him to make a Join Battle roll. This doesn't represent him suddenly becoming aware of hidden poisoners, but supplies him with a buffer of Initiative for the poison's damage to wear down before he's crashed and begins suffering **decisive** damage from it. If combat begins, perhaps as a result of the victim or his allies finding the hidden assassin, he carries over the result of his initial roll rather than making another Join Battle roll.

Owl Clutches at the Night

Cost: 2m, 1wp; **Mins:** Martial Arts 3, Essence 1

Type: Reflexive

Keywords: Mastery, Uniform

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Birdsong Over Blades

When the silent-winged owl dives into the field and rises with empty talons, it vanishes back into the night. After missing with an attack, the stylist conceals her attempt, requiring her victim and other onlookers to roll (Perception + Awareness) against (her Essence + Manipulation) to realize she attacked. If the failed attack was made from concealment, her stealth isn't broken as long as no enemies or bystanders succeed on their Awareness roll.

Mastery: As long as no character succeeds on the Awareness roll, the stylist gains one Willpower.

Alehouse Memory Stance

Cost: 3m, 2i; **Mins:** Martial Arts 3, Essence 1

Type: Supplemental

Keywords: Mute, Perilous

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: None

Appearing relaxed and comfortable, the stylist's demeanor gives every indication that she wants nothing more than to sit back and gossip. She adds her base Guile in bonus dice to a Stealth roll. As long as no character present has witnessed her make an attack this scene, she ignores the penalty for attempting Stealth in combat.

White Veil Form

Cost: 7m; **Mins:** Martial Arts 4, Essence 1

Type: Simple

Keywords: Form, Mute

Duration: One scene

Prerequisite Charms: Alehouse Memory Stance, Owl Clutches at the Night

The White Veil stylist puts herself completely at ease, her palpable nonchalance drawing onlookers' attention from whatever she's doing with her hands to focus on her pleasant smile and witty repartee. She gains +1 Evasion and +1 Guile, and takes no penalty for flurrying if she includes at least one Socialize-based action. She may substitute Manipulation for Dexterity when calculating her Evasion or when rolling to enter concealment, disengage, or withdraw. Any enemy that rolls Join Battle in response to her actions rolls must roll with (Perception + [lower of Awareness or Socialize]).

Special activation rules: When the stylist successfully lands a surprise attack against a non-trivial enemy, she may reflexively enter this Form.

Blithe Unruffled Plumage

Cost: 4m; **Mins:** Martial Arts 4, Essence 2

Type: Supplemental

Keywords: Dual, Mastery, Mute, Perilous

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: White Veil Form

The martial artist responds to attacks with speech and posture more suited to a friendly altercation or test bouts than a life-or-death struggle. She adds (Guile + 1) to her natural soak against a **withering** attack and reduces its Overwhelming value by one, or gains (Guile) Hardness against a **decisive** attack. This includes bonuses to her Guile from White Veil Form or other effects. If an attack fails to damage her (including if it misses), she may conceal it from onlookers' notice as per Owl Clutches at the Night.

Mastery: When the stylist successfully conceals an attack against her from all onlookers, she may steal (Manipulation) Initiative from her attacker.

Blinded by Laughter

Cost: 5m, 1wp; **Mins:** Martial Arts 5, Essence 2

Type: Simple

Keywords: Mastery, Mute

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Blithe Unruffled Plumage

A toast to old friends, a tempting appetizer, a well-timed joke — these provide all the opportunity the stylist needs. She may attempt an ambush (**Exalted**, p. 203) even in plain view of her target, seeming as though she's simply carousing or engaging in conversation up until she plunges a needle into his throat. Instead of rolling Stealth, she rolls (Manipulation + Socialize), doubling 9s, against her target's Resolve. If she succeeds, she uses the result of her roll in place of her Join Battle roll. As usual, if this is a higher Initiative than her victim rolls, her attack is an ambush; otherwise, it's merely an unexpected attack.

This Charm can only be used once per scene, unless reset by successfully landing a **decisive** attack against the same target without being noticed by him or any other onlooker. It cannot be used to make an ambush attack against the same character more than once per scene, even if reset.

Mastery: If the stylist successfully launches an ambush, she doubles the threshold successes of a **withering** attack roll or adds up to (Guile) threshold successes on a **decisive** attack roll as dice of damage. This includes bonuses to her Guile from White Veil Form or other effects.

Tickling the Dragon's Throat

Cost: 3m, 2i; **Mins:** Martial Arts 4, Essence 2

Type: Supplemental

Keywords: Decisive-only, Mastery

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: White Veil Form

Jabbing a needle into a pressure point or twisting her garrote to cut off a foe's breath, the martial artist sends even the hardiest of carousers in search of fresh air. Every two threshold successes on her **decisive** attack roll impose a –1 penalty on her victim's actions and Defense, maximum (Essence), until the onslaught penalty inflicted by the attack has worn off.

Mastery: If the attack inflicts the maximum penalty, remaining extra successes prevent the onslaught penalty inflicted by it from wearing off for an additional turn per two successes.

The Dragon Dies in Bed

Cost: 5m, 4i, 1wp; **Mins:** Martial Arts 5, Essence 2

Type: Simple

Keywords: Decisive-only, Mute

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Blinded by Laughter, Tickling the Dragon's Throat

For some, a quiet, unassuming death is a kindness. For others, it's a shame. Either way, the White Veil stylist allows them to experience it. She makes a **decisive** attack that exposes her victim to a supernatural disease if it hits. The cost of Birdsong Over Blades is waived when used with this attack.

This disease, called the Subtle Mercy by White Veil masters, has virulence (Manipulation + 1), morbidity 5, and an interval of one day. In addition to the usual effects of disease (**Exalted**, p. 234), it has the following magical effects based on its intensity:

Minor: The victim feels weary and lethargic, suffering a –1 fatigue penalty on all rolls unless he receives twelve hours of sleep each day. Rolls to diagnose the disease are made at +4 difficulty.

Major: The victim's fatigue penalty stacks by one each day he goes without twelve hours of sleep, maximum –5. In addition, he can no longer heal damage naturally (**Exalted**, p. 173) if he remains fully active during convalescence. Rolls to diagnose the disease are made at +3 difficulty.

Defining: The victim now requires twenty hours of sleep to avoid suffering a fatigue penalty, as well to recover Willpower from a night's sleep. Rolls to diagnose the disease are made at +2 difficulty.

The Dragon Dies Screaming

Cost: 6m, 6i, 1wp; **Mins:** Martial Arts 5, Essence 3

Type: Simple

Keywords: Decisive-only, Mastery, Mute

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: The Dragon Dies in Bed

The martial artist's subtle touch is laced with deadly venom, Essence suffusing her strike with toxic potency. She makes a **decisive** attack that exposes her victim to this poison if it hits. The poison has Damage 4i/round (Aggravated in crash), duration (Essence + Manipulation) rounds, and a -(Manipulation) penalty. The cost of Birdsong Over Blades is waived when used with this attack.

Rolls to diagnose this poison are made at +3 difficulty. The stylist may choose to delay the poison's onset by anywhere from an hour to (Essence) weeks; the difficulty to diagnose it while delayed is increased by +5 instead.

This Charm can only be used once per scene, unless reset by successfully incapacitating a non-trivial enemy without any other character realizing the martial artist is responsible.

Mastery: No matter how many successes the target rolls to resist, the poison's duration cannot be reduced below one round.

The Dragon Succumbs

Cost: 10m, 7i, 1wp; **Mins:** Martial Arts 5, Essence 3

Type: Simple

Keywords: Decisive-only, Mastery, Mute, Terrestrial

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: The Dragon Dies in Bed, The Dragon Dies Screaming

It's rude to keep death waiting, and the White Veil master's manners are beyond reproach. She makes a **decisive** attack against an enemy that suffers from poison or disease (or both). The cost of Birdsong Over Blades is waived when used with this attack.

If the attack hits, the victim makes a single (Stamina + Resistance) roll against the morbidity of each disease he suffers from. If he fails to beat a disease's morbidity, it rises by one step. If a disease is already at the Defining level, it doesn't immediately progress to death, but instead inflicts a level of unpreventable aggravated damage.

Additionally, on a hit, the victim immediately suffers the damage of a single interval of one poison in his system, plus an additional interval for each attack roll threshold success, maximum (Essence + 1). If he suffers from multiple venoms, the martial artist chooses which one applies its damage. This damage doesn't reduce the duration of the poisons themselves, but the stylist cannot apply a poison's damage more times than it has intervals remaining.

Mastery: If the martial artist's victim fails his roll against the morbidity of a disease at the Defining level, he'll die of it after (his Stamina) turns, unless a character who has diagnosed the disease succeeds on an (Intelligence + Medicine) roll against (its morbidity + 5) as a miscellaneous action that can't be flurried.

Terrestrial: The martial artist must be able to make an ambush against her target to use this Charm.

Sorcery

Shaping Rituals

Student of the Heptagram

Graduates of the Heptagram initiate into sorcery through many different paths. The following is only the most common initiation.

Shaping Rituals

- Once per story, the sorcerer may research arcane texts and roll (Intelligence + Lore), gaining sorcerous motes equal to the successes that last until the story ends. Access to a sorcerous library or mentor adds one bonus die, or two for an especially comprehensive library or skilled mentor.
- The sorcerer channels Essence through esoteric formulae and rigorously-practiced mudras. Once per scene, when she stunts the first shape sorcery roll of a spell with invocations or mudras, she gains (stunt rating + 2) sorcerous motes towards completing the spell. Enhancing her control spell doesn't count against this once-per-scene limit.
- The sorcerer channels Essence through elemental geomancy, gaining one additional sorcerous mote each turn she spends shaping a spell in an elementally aspected demesne or manse. Once per story, she may tap an elementally aspected hearthstone to which she's attuned to gain five sorcerous motes (ten from a greater hearthstone) until the end of the scene. Doing so renders that hearthstone defunct until the story ends.

Other Benefits

Geomantic Prodigy (Merit ••): Well-versed in sacred geometry and esoteric principles of architecture, the sorcerer may add (Occult) bonus dice on a Craft (Architecture or Geomancy) roll once per week.

Spirit Speaker (Merit •): The sorcerer has been schooled in consorting with spirits and other magical beings. When she rolls a social action against such beings or asserts Resolve or Guile against them, she benefits from any Occult specialties in that type of being as though she had them in the relevant social Ability.

Words of Binding (Merit ••): The sorcerer doubles 9s on rolls to bind summoned demons or elementals.

Wanasaan Exorcist

The Wanasaan exorcists (p. XX) awaken their sorcerous potential through ceremonial drowning in the Silent Isle's frozen spring, seeing the truth of the world on the threshold of life and death.

Shaping Rituals

- The sorcerer draws empowerment from offerings of paper effigies and other grave goods made to her ghost while she yet lives. The sorcerer may draw (the offering's Resources rating) sorcerous motes from such sacrifices once per day. These motes vanish at sunrise.
- Suspending herself in a basin or body of salt water, the sorcerer draws power from the moment she stood on the verge of death. After an hour of submerged meditation, she rolls (Wits + Occult), gaining sorcerous motes equal to the successes.

These last until she performs this ritual again, or until the end of the story. She cannot perform this ritual more than once per day.

- By compelling a ghost to abandon its unnatural existence and return to the cycle of reincarnation, the sorcerer may breathe in the remnants of its Essence. After incapacitating a ghost or similar shade or using social influence to convince it to pass on (a life-defining task, **Exalted** p. 216), she rolls (Stamina + Occult) with (the ghost's Essence) bonus dice, gaining sorcerous motes equal to the successes. These motes last until the story's end, although she cannot stock more than ([Essence + Willpower] x4) sorcerous motes with this ritual at a time.

Other Benefits

Eyes in Both Worlds (Merit ••): The sorcerer lingered a little longer than most at the edge of death's marches during her initiation. She can perceive dematerialized ghosts as though they were material.

Breath Without Air (Merit ••): Having drowned once, the sorcerer is proof against it a second time. She may breathe normally in water. Water Aspects ignore a single point of wound penalty while submersed, shedding the weakness of the living.

Terrestrial Circle Spells

Beckoning That Which Stirs the Sky

Cost: Ritual, 2wp

Keywords: None

Duration: (1 + threshold successes) hours

As the sorcerer recites ancient prayers to deities long forgotten beneath the open sky, huge chitinous limbs emerge from above, weaving the wind and clouds to her will. Shaping the weather is an (Intelligence + Occult) roll that takes a few minutes to complete, with a difficulty based both on how drastic the change the sorcerer wishes to make is and how typical the desired weather is for her current climate and season.

Creating a light rain in a temperate climate might only be difficulty 1, while strengthening a heavy rain to a thunderstorm or halting it completely might be difficulty 2-3. Summoning a tempest from blue skies, or utterly stifling a hurricane, would be difficulty 7+. Likewise, any attempt to create rain might incur increased difficulty if attempted in a desert, as would calling a blizzard outside of the winter season.

If the sorcerer succeeds, That Which Stirs the Sky weaves the desired weather in an area out to (Essence + threshold successes) miles from the point cast the spell. It lasts for (1 + threshold successes) hours before reverting to normal. Subsequent castings by any sorcerer cannot alter the weather within the spell's range until its duration elapses. Characters within the weather can identify its unnatural origin with a (Perception + [Occult or Survival]) roll of difficulty 1-5, with subtler alterations being more difficult to detect.

A sorcerer with this as her control spell may create sorcerous weather that follows her as she moves; this costs half her threshold successes, rounded up.

Distortion (Goal Number: 10): Distorting this spell reverses the alteration to the weather. It doesn't merely revert back to its previous conditions, but is changed in the other direction — if the original sorcerer had calmed a thunderstorm, distortion would result in an even greater storm; if she'd summoned rain, distortion could result in intensely arid heat.

Floral Ferry

Cost: 20sm, 1wp

Keywords: None

Duration: Until journey is completed

Tossing a leaf, petal, or fruit into a body of water, the sorcerer beckons it with mudras of the turning seasons to grow into a small, seaworthy craft. This is a ship with the following traits (**Exalted**, p. 244):

Speed: Magically impelled +2; current +1; oars +1; empty cargo hold +1

Maneuverability: +3; **Hull:** -1/-2/-4/Incapacitated

Cargo: One ton. The ship can comfortably carry a half-dozen passengers.

Upon casting this spell, the sorcerer names the destination she intends to sail to. If she has even approximate knowledge of its location, the Flory Ferry will sail itself towards that destination, using the sorcerer's (Essence + Occult) for sailing rolls. However, it lacks the sapience to engage in pursuit or naval combat. Other characters can attempt to sail it, although the Speed bonus from its magically impelled travel becomes a -1 penalty if they attempt to travel anywhere but the named destination. Once it's reached its destination and its crew has disembarked, the ferry shrinks back into the foliage from which it was summoned.

Sorcerers with an Essence pool may use the following powers while this spell is active:

Barque of Durant Heartwood (10m, 1wp; Simple; One day): The ship's hull hardens to thick bark, gaining (Essence/2, rounded up) -0 Hull levels. Once they fade away, damage marked in them rolls over into regular Hull levels.

Hay-Fever Seabloom (5m; Supplemental; Instant; Pilot): Thick, sticky pollen trails in the Floral Ferry's wake. Success on an interval of a naval pursuit while fleeing a ship imposes a penalty of (sorcerer's Intelligence) on the pursuing captains' next interval.

Whirling Maple-Seed Swiftness (10m, 1wp; Simple; One day; Pilot): As long as the sorcerer helms the Floral Ferry, its total Speed is doubled.

A sorcerer with this as her control spell may awaken Evocations from the Floral Ferry.

Distortion (Goal Number: 5): Distorting the Floral Ferry allows the opposing sorcerer to name a new destination that it will sail itself towards.

Impervious Sphere of Water

Cost: 15sm, 1wp

Keywords: None

Duration: One scene

Water streams from the sorcerer's outstretched palms, twisting and coiling like flowing serpents into a dome that encompasses her and her allies. The dome extends out to short range from the sorcerer, although those within find that they can breathe the water as easily as air. While the dome is translucent, its surface provides full cover (**Exalted**, p. 199) to those within it against attacks from without, and vice versa. Moving into or out of the dome requires a (Strength + Athletics) roll at a difficulty of (sorcerer's Intelligence). If the sorcerer takes any non-reflexive actions, this spell immediately ends. Once the spell ends, the sphere collapses, and can be collected to drink.

A sorcerer with this as her control spell can take move actions without ending this spell. The sphere moves with her, although it doesn't drag those within its area along with it, flowing around them without friction.

Distortion (Goal Number: 12): Distorting this spell strips the water of its breathability, causing those within the dome to begin drowning (**Exalted**, p. 232). It ceases to provide cover to those within (but not without) the dome, and characters may enter (but not exit) the dome without a roll. The dome remains intact even if the sorcerer takes an action that would end the spell.

Keel Cleaves the Clouds

Cost: 25sm, 2wp

Keywords: None

Duration: One day

As fog or clouds touch the seas, the sorcerer speaks honeyed lies to a ship, convincing it that it may sail forward upon them. The enchanted ship may sail over mist, fog, or other vapors as though they were water, and can ascend vertically through such vapors until it's skimming over their surface. In sufficiently misty environs, it's even possible for the ship to rise high enough to sail on the clouds themselves. However, while vapor-borne, the ship cannot benefit from Speed bonuses from oars or currents. If this spell ends, or there's no vapor left for the ship to sail on, it descends downwards, landing safe and undamaged, albeit potentially landlocked.

A sorcerer with this as her control spell is constantly wreathed by pale mists, though she may disperse them with a thought unless distracted by involved activity, deep contemplation, or tumultuous emotion. She may walk on mist or fog as though it were solid ground, albeit as difficult terrain (**Exalted**, p. 199).

Distortion (Goal Number: 8): Distorting this spell causes mist to envelop the ship in a thick cloud, making it all but impossible for its crew to see outward. Sail rolls to pilot it suffer a -3 penalty, and those aboard have no warning if it's about to run out of mist that can support it.

Sculpted Seafoam Eidolon

Cost: 10sm, 2wp

Keywords: None

Duration: One day

The sorcerer shapes foam and aqueous reflections into a simulacrum of reality. From nothing, she may create a lifelike, convincing water-replica of a person, an animal up to the size of a horse, or an object up to the size of a wagon. She rolls (Manipulation + Occult) to determine the quality of the illusion. The illusion performs lifelike motions, is capable of simple speech, and has scent, body heat, and other sensory qualia, though it's not capable of taking actions. While the sorcerer is present, she may direct the illusion's behavior; if she goes further than long range from it, it reverts to a default pattern of behavior that is realistic but uncomplicated.

A character within short range can roll (Perception + Awareness) opposing the sorcerer's initial roll to realize its illusory nature. Touching the eidolon's water-sculpted surface grants three bonus dice on this roll. A character who speaks with the eidolon may realize it's illusory by reading its intentions, opposing the sorcerer's initial roll.

A sorcerer with this as her control spell may create up to (Manipulation) separate illusions each time she casts it.

Distortion (Goal number: 10): Distorting this spell allows the opposing sorcerer to wrest control of the illusion away from the sorcerer who cast it.

Spoke the Wooden Face

Cost: 5sm, 1wp

Keywords: None

Duration: One scene

Closing her eyes and entering a trance, the sorcerer projects her awareness into a tree that bears her visage. To use this spell, the sorcerer must have first carved a likeness of her face into the bark of a living tree, a basic Craft (Woodworking) project with difficulty 1. Casting this spell lets her perceive and speak through the face, regardless of distance. She may make Perception-based rolls from its vantage or make influence rolls as she speaks through it, but cannot enhance her actions with Charms. While using this spell, she can't sense anything through her own body nor take actions with it, unless she chooses to end it prematurely. Taking damage automatically ends this spell.

While the sorcerer isn't speaking, her projected presence can't be detected without the use of magic. A character who knows or suspects that a tree has been marked for use with this spell may destroy the carved visage to render it unusable. This usually doesn't require a roll, unless the tree has been reinforced with other magic.

A sorcerer with this as her control spell may simultaneously project herself into up to (Perception) separate wooden faces, seeing and speaking through all of them simultaneously.

Distortion (Goal Number: 5): To distort this spell, a sorcerer must be within short range of the tree, not the sorcerer. Distortion renders the wooden face blind, deaf, and mute (**Exalted**, pp. 168-169), plunging the casting sorcerer into sensory isolation that causes her to lose one Willpower.

Stalwart Earth Guardian

Cost: Ritual, 1wp

Keywords: None

Duration: Twelve hours

Drawing a geometric figure in the soil or tracing it out on stone with chalk, the sorcerer wards herself and her allies from harm. This figure spreads out to close range from its center. Characters within the ward gain +1 Defense and +1 Resolve against any attacks or other effects used on them from without. Characters outside the ward but within medium range of its center come under attack as the earth turns against them, an environmental hazard with difficulty (higher of Essence or Intelligence) and Damage 1B/round. Characters who fail a roll against the hazard treat moving through it as difficult terrain (**Exalted**, p. 199) for that round. In addition, the churning earth makes stealthy approaches all but impossible, increasing the mobility penalty of characters caught within it by -2 and making enough noise to awaken anyone sleeping inside the ward.

A sorcerer with this as her control spell has a certain earthiness to her, smelling of plowed soil and loamy clay. She can use her fingernails to etch lines in stone, an exceptional tool (**Exalted**, p. 580) for Craft rolls to work stone or Linguistics rolls to inscribe writing on it.

Distortion (Goal Number: 15): Distorting this spell inverts the ward, nullifying its effects outside while causing those within to suffer the environmental hazard and mobility penalty.

Thunder Wolf Howl

Cost: 15sm, 1wp

Keywords: Decisive-only

Duration: Instant

White winds swirl around the sorcerer as she draws forth the ancient echo of a slain behemoth's death-howl. The sorcerer designates a point within medium range as the center of a deafening thunderclap that extends out to short range from that point. Characters caught within it, including allies, roll (Stamina + Resistance) at a difficulty of (the sorcerer's higher of Essence or Intelligence). Battle groups suffer a penalty of (their Size). Characters who fail suffer base **decisive** damage of (Essence)B, ignoring Hardness, and the sorcerer divides her Initiative evenly among them, rounding up, to determine the total damage rolled against them. As long as one character fails his roll, the sorcerer resets to base Initiative. A character that takes damage is deafened (**Exalted**, p. 198) until he receives medical treatment, and suffers a crippling penalty on all actions equal to the number of 10s on the damage roll. This penalty falls by one at the end of each of that character's turns. Objects and structures made of wood, glass, and similarly flimsy or fragile material suffer damage at the Storyteller's discretion.

A sorcerer with this as her control spell increases the difficulty and base damage of this spell by one each. When overcome with strong emotion, her voice booms and echoes like the peal of distant thunder.

Unslakable Thirst of the Devil-Maw

Cost: 15sm, 1wp

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

The flesh of one of the sorcerer's hands splits to reveal a monstrous gaping mouth with fangs of tourmaline and a squirming viridian tongue. The maw leeches away at water, condensing vapor from thin air and desiccating plants or living flesh. She rolls (Intelligence + Occult) as an unblockable **decisive** attack against all characters, including allies, in a ninety-degree arc out to medium range. Against battle groups, it's unblockable and undodgeable. Each character hit suffers ([sorcerer's Intelligence + extra successes] – [lower of target's Stamina or Resistance])A dice of **decisive** damage, minimum one die. This doesn't include the sorcerer's Initiative or reset her to base Initiative. Enemies with no body moisture whatsoever, such as fire elementals or bonesiders, are immune. Conversely, enemies primarily made of liquid, such as water elementals, don't subtract anything from the damage. Trivial plant life within range is completely desiccated, dying instantly.

Moisture siphoned by this spell is gathered into a sphere of solid water that floats above the sorcerer's hand for up to a few minutes after casting this spell. The sorcerer may direct it into a container for storage, or it can be drawn on with Charms such as Elemental Sheath (p. XX). Even if there are no victims of her spell, she may gather water with it in all but the most arid environments.

A sorcerer with this as her control spell has a devil-maw permanently opened on one of her palms. Unarmed attacks with that hand deal aggravated damage and gain the Piercing tag (**Exalted**, p. 586) against enemies that have any body moisture, draining it through their armor. Against water elementals and similar enemies, her unarmed attacks deal an additional die of **withering** or **decisive** damage.

Virtuous Guardian of Flame

Cost: 15sm, 2wp

Keywords: None

Duration: One day

The sorcerer draws a flaming sword from her own heart, shaping a fiery sentinel to keep vigil over her. As she completes the spell, the burning blade collapses into a will-o'-the-wisp no larger than a torchlight — the sorcerer may conceal the Virtuous Guardian of Flame by commanding it to rest within an existing lit lantern or torch she carries. Should she be attacked, the wisp flares back into sword shape to fend off her enemy, protecting her as per the defend other action (**Exalted**, p. XX) with a Parry of ([higher of Essence or Intelligence] + 1). The virtuous guardian can even notice threats of which the sorcerer is unaware, rolling (Essence + Perception + Occult) to detect hidden enemies. Wooden projectiles or weapons successfully blocked by the guardian are burnt to ashes. If it parries an unarmed attack or other natural attack, the attacker suffers one die of lethal damage, ignoring Hardness. Even when its parries fail, its flames blunt the force of attacks against her, adding (Essence) natural soak against all but unblockable attacks.

The guardian has soak (Essence + 5), Hardness (Essence), and (Essence + Intelligence) –0 health levels. When the sorcerer Joins Battle, it gains Initiative equal to hers. It cannot take any actions of its own; instead, this Initiative is used solely as a buffer against **withering** attacks. If the guardian is crashed, it dissipates for a scene, unable to protect the sorcerer, but reforms after that. If its health track is filled with damage, it's utterly destroyed, and the sorcerer cannot resummon it until its full duration has elapsed.

A sorcerer with this as her control spell may awaken Evocations from it, enhancing the guardian's defensive power or wielding it offensively.

Distortion (Goal Number: 15): Distorting the virtuous guardian lets the distorting sorcerer temporarily usurp it from its caster, stealing its protection away from her for one scene.

Left Hand Chalima was the bad kind of tired. Her daiklave and devil caster sat on her dining table, red jade polished and gleaming. Her boots were mudless and her firedust pouch was full. Only the ink-stains on her fingers proved she'd done any kind of work at all. Her fingers drummed without rhythm, and she stared at the latest militia report without reading it. Her cloak of office rested on the back of her chair, where its oppressive warmth couldn't stifle her. Nobody'd warned Chalima that the queen's cloak would chafe. She wouldn't have grabbed it off the old king if she'd known.

Chalima's husband Xocha had offered to take over the administrative tasks for the evening, and Chalima had said no. After an hour, Chalima privately admitted she should've said yes. She got up, stretched her back, and headed for the basement. She took her weapons with her and left the reports behind.

The royal shrine beneath the manor was tasteful, in Chalima's opinion: several crematory urns surrounding an incense bowl carved from interlocking ivory pieces. The old royal shrine had been a wasteful, imposing thing, and Chalima had gotten rid of it — respectfully — when she moved in. The old ghosts protested, but their descendants weren't in charge now. Their choices were Chalima or nothing, and most chose Chalima. At least she honored them, unlike the Immaculate Order.

But Chalima wasn't here for an old ghost. She lit a candle with a finger-snap and a spark of Essence, and with the candle lit several sticks of incense. She breathed in the scent, eyes closed, then breathed out a name.

"Itzli, it's your wife." She smiled wryly at his imagined, teasing greeting. "Still breathing, thanks for asking."

Chalima never knew when her prayers might get a response. But she knew she could talk, and Itzli would feel it. Most nights, that was enough.

"I've been running in circles all day, Itzli, putting out fires. Which is a lot harder than starting them, it turns out." Chalima rested her weapons against the shrine. "That rat-bastard riotmonger I told you about is still out there. Still spreading his heresy. Still breaking down my city — our city — piece by piece."

You'll stop him, said nobody.

"It wouldn't be so bad if he'd give me a fight, but he's like a weevil in grain. His zealots are everywhere, and he's nowhere." Chalima clenched her hand. "He's Anathema. I can feel it in my gut. But my gut can't summon a Wyld Hunt."

You know why, said nobody.

"It didn't used to be like this. Do you remember? We used to go years between Anathema sightings, and now they're all through the Hundred Kingdoms. And good luck putting together a hunt like in the old days. We used to be fast as a rumor and twice as mean. I used to be...."

The incense smoke was thick and hot, and Chalima's hands itched for her weapons. Her jaw was clenched. She had to do something. Anything. And she would have, if she hadn't felt the cooling touch of a hand on her own. She gasped slightly, but didn't open her eyes.

Itzli didn't look like he used to, after all. Instead she rested her head against his, soaking in his calm.

"I wish my Kinship was here," said Chalima, surprising herself. "Mathar's letters don't compare to his voice. I'd even take River preaching 'proper canon' at me. How would they deal with this?"

Chalima felt Itzli's touch, familiar and unfamiliar, on her cheek.

"It's not too late to find out," said Itzli.

Chapter Nine

Heirlooms of Power

THIS SIDEBAR CAN GO ANYWHERE ON THE FIRST PAGE OR TWO OF THIS CHAPTER

Resonance and Dissonance

Different Exalted harmonize differently with each of the magical materials. An Exalt can be resonant with a material, neutral, or dissonant. The Resonant and Dissonant keywords mark Evocations that function differently depending on the user's connection to an artifact. Solars are resonant with all magical materials, while Dragon-Blooded are resonant with jade; neutral with orichalcum, moonsilver, and starmetal; and dissonant with soulsteel. See **Arms of the Chosen**, pp. 16-17, for more.

Calumny (Green Jade Wrackstaff, Artifact ●●●)

Centuries past, a lone thief drove the Great Houses to wrath. Concealed behind her signature mask, the Artful Tanuki uncovered the Realm's rarest treasures and most forbidden secrets. She sold both to eager buyers, sowing chaos among the Scarlet Dynasty.

Peasants and Dynasts alike speculated about the Artful Tanuki's prowess and motivations. Magistrates and assassins sought the thief's head and the mysteries kept therein. After years of infamy, the Artful Tanuki vanished. Then her true work began. Without her mask, no one recognized the daughter of House Cynis as the infamous thief, and her stolen secrets fed a budding political career.

Though many spoke of her insolent mask, few recalled the Artful Tanuki's unassuming staff. Calumny is a length of bamboo cut from the slopes of the Imperial Mountain and banded with green-and-brown speckled jade. It has been passed down through generations of Cynis blackmailers, offering its secrets to those who feed its hunger.

Attunement: 5m; **Type:** Medium (+3 ACC, +12 DMG, +1 DEF, OVW 4)

Tags: Bashing, Melee, Reaching

Hearthstone Slot(s): 1

Era: Reign of the Scarlet Empress

Evocations of Calumny

Calumny may be collapsed to a jade-tipped rod six inches in length, giving it the Concealable tag (**Exalted**, p. 588), or extended back to full length, as a reflexive action.

Calumny feeds upon secrets. A secret's intensity corresponds to the level of task that would be required to persuade the person it concerns to reveal it to the world: inconvenient, serious, or life-changing (**Exalted**, p. 216). A secret can lose or gain intensity as circumstances change, such as being widely revealed.

Rustling Grapevine Whispers

Cost: 2m; **Mins:** Essence 1

Type: Reflexive

Keywords: Resonant, Uniform

Duration: Instant

Prerequisites: None

Hidden truths speak through silence. The wielder may activate this Evocation whenever she hits or touches another character with Calumny. The target's unspoken secrets vibrate up Calumny's length, whispering a one- or two-word clue to the target's most potent or most immediately relevant secret, decided by the Storyteller. This adds an automatic success on a read intentions or profile character roll to uncover that secret. Only the wielder hears Calumny's whispers.

Special activation rules: This Evocation cannot be purchased with experience points. Instead, it awakens at no cost when the wielder whispers a serious or life-changing secret of her own to Calumny. A Cynis scion may awaken it with an inconvenient secret.

Resonant: Rustling Grapevine Whispers may be used from short range, using shared contact with significant plant life (e.g., vines, tall grass, a tree) as a medium instead of direct contact.

Unassuming Ornament Camouflage

Cost: —; **Mins:** Essence 1

Type: Permanent

Keywords: None

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisites: Naked Thief Style

To find secrets, one must keep secrets. The Dragon-Blood may use Naked Thief Style (p. XX) while Calumny is collapsed to conceal it as a small mundane object, such as an ornamental fan, necklace, or pipe. No roll is necessary to conceal it; its true nature is completely undetectable by anything short of Eye of the Unconquered Sun or comparable effects.

Salon-Spider Entrapment

Cost: 2m; **Mins:** Essence 2

Type: Supplemental

Keywords: Resonant, Stackable, Withering-only

Duration: Instant

Prerequisites: Rustling Grapevine Whispers

A tangled web traps its maker. A successful **withering** attack spins the opponent's secrets into sticky, binding threads of Essence until the end of his next turn. A bound foe must pay one Initiative in order to take a movement or attack action.

If the wielder knows a bound foe's secrets, she may strike him again with this Evocation, renewing the binding web for another of her enemy's turns and raising the Initiative cost it imposes by one. She may stack it up to a maximum based on the most potent secret known: 2 for inconvenient; 3 for serious; 4 for life-changing.

Resonant: A crashed enemy cannot take movement actions while bound.

Swallowtail's Grace

Cost: 3m, 1wp; **Mins:** Essence 2

Type: Reflexive

Keywords: Counterattack, Dual, Perilous, Resonant

Duration: Instant

Prerequisites: Rustling Grapevine Whispers

He who denies, attacks; she who knows, invites. After parrying an attack made by an enemy whose secrets she knows, the wielder makes a **withering** or **decisive** counterattack. The attack roll gains a bonus success for a serious secret, or two successes for a life-changing secret.

Resonant: The wielder may reflexively make an influence roll in place of a counterattack, leveraging one of the attacker's secrets against him. She steals a point of Initiative from him for each threshold success, maximum (Manipulation).

Ripened Bitter Fruit

Cost: 5m, 5i, 1wp; **Mins:** Essence 3

Type: Supplemental

Keywords: Decisive-only, Dissonant, Resonant

Duration: Instant

Prerequisites: Salon-Spider Entrapment, Swallowtail's Grace

Secrets poison the heart in which they take root. The wielder whispers one of her opponent's secrets to Calumny, and ferments that secret into a deadly poison through a **decisive** attack. If the wielder's attack deals damage, the poison takes hold with a duration of (5 + damage dealt) rounds. This secret-poison's damage/interval and penalty both correspond to the secret's potency: 1L/round and -1 for inconvenient; 2L/round and -2 for serious; 3L/round and -3 for life-changing.

Characters poisoned by Ripened Bitter Fruit cannot speak above a whisper until free of the poison. Hearts stopped by this secret-poison grow hard and black, like the stone of a fruit.

The secret used to create the venom no longer holds power for Calumny's Evocations. This Evocation may be used once per day, unless reset by discovering a life-changing secret. The Dawn Caste anima cannot reset this Evocation.

Dissonant: A character dissonant with jade cannot awaken this Evocation.

Resonant: Crashed characters suffer the poison's entire remaining duration and lethal damage at once, at the end of the round.

Daring Venture (Green Jade Powerbow, Artifact ●●●)

When V'neef was a girl, still considering what manner of life she'd lead, the hills and forests of the Dragon's Blanket offered novelty that her studies couldn't. To her tutors' consternation, V'neef would disappear for days on end, returning from her wanderings soiled, smiling, and animated with some discovery. Her father recognized this curiosity as the seed of wisdom, and commissioned Daring Venture for V'neef's 14th birthday to accompany her in her travels.

In her 17th year, while journeying with Daring Venture, V'neef discovered a great wolf, grown giant through some lost First Age magic, wounded by a hunter's lance. Though it snarled and snapped at her, she calmed it with notes plucked from Daring Venture's bowstring and tended to its wounds, winning the beast's affections. She named the wolf Hundred Rivers, and his legend has been intertwined with Daring Venture's ever since.

Daring Venture is a tall, slender powerbow of opaque emerald jade. Etchings depict scenes of wild splendor — waterfalls, pine forests, sunrises — whose details change to reflect its wielder's recent journeys. Daring Venture yearns to traverse the wilderness, calling its wielder to explore new vistas at the edges of Creation's maps. Its Evocations embolden the wielder with wood's dynamism, rewarding discovery with flowerings of inspiration, and summon Hundred Rivers to its master's aid.

As matriarch of her house, V'neef has little time for the adventures of her youth, though she still enjoys the occasional escapade. She grants Daring Venture to scions with kindred spirits, charging them to go forth and discover House V'neef's shining future.

Attunement: 5m; **Type:** Medium (+12 DMG, OVW 4)

Accuracy: Close -1; Short +5; Medium +3; Long +1; Extreme -1

Tags: Lethal, Archery (Long)

Hearthstone slot(s): 1

Era: Reign of the Scarlet Empress

Evocations of Daring Venture

Daring Venture's wielder adds an automatic success on Survival rolls to navigate unfamiliar terrain.

Song of Sunlit Dreams

Cost: 1m, 1wp; **Mins:** Essence 1

Type: Supplemental

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisites: None

Daring Venture's golden bowstring vibrates with its progenitor's beauty, giving a serene note that soothes wild beasts and calms the wounded. Add (higher of Essence or Occult) bonus dice on a Performance- or Presence-based roll to influence a wild beast, or on a Medicine roll.

Special activation rules: A V'neef scion awakens this Evocation at no cost upon attuning to Daring Venture.

Resonant: A wielder who resonates with jade may use this Evocation reflexively to enhance any action taken by an animal familiar, or to add ([higher of Essence or Occult] / 2, rounded up) to her familiar's Defense, Resolve, or Guile for one instant. This doesn't stack with other effects that add bonus dice to the familiar's roll.

Seeker's Heart Intuition

Cost: 2m; **Mins:** Essence 1

Type: Simple

Keywords: Resonant

Duration: Instant

Prerequisites: Song of Sunlit Dreams

Imbued with the spirit of exploration, Daring Venture probes the wilderness for unfamiliar places of interest and guides its wielder in their direction. If the wielder seeks an unknown location she can name, such as a town or natural feature, Daring Venture provides the wielder with its direction relative to her position. Alternatively, if the wielder seeks novelty from the unknown, Daring Venture points her toward undiscovered or forgotten places of significance or power, such as demesnes or historical ruins. Daring Venture never points the wielder toward locations she's previously visited.

Resonant: A wielder who resonates with jade gains one Willpower when she activates this Evocation, which she can only spend on any applicable Ride, Sail, or Survival charm to move in the direction indicated.

Beckon the Wandering Wolf

Cost: 1m, 1wp; **Mins:** Essence 2

Type: Simple

Keywords: Resonant

Duration: Instant

Prerequisites: Seeker's Heart Intuition

Upon awakening this Evocation, the wielder of Daring Venture gains the legendary wolf Hundred Rivers as her familiar. She may activate it to call the wolf to her current location. No matter how great the distance between them, he'll travel towards her as fast as possible.

Resonant: A Dragon-Blooded wielder always counts Hundred Rivers as one of her Sworn Kin.

Hundred Rivers, the Wandering Wolf

Hundred Rivers has a Minor Tie of kinship towards his master upon first being summoned. At the end of each session, this Intimacy is strengthened one step if the Storyteller deems he had a positive experience with his master at any point during it. If he had a negative experience he deems his master's fault, the Tie instead weakens by one step, and he flees her side to wander the wilderness. She cannot summon him again with Beckon the Wandering Wolf until a week has passed.

Hundred Rivers, like Daring Venture itself, yearns to explore Creation. He won't enter buildings, and exhibits great discomfort on paved surfaces. He especially loves sweet citrus fruits.

[THE REST OF THIS SIDEBAR IS A STAT BLOCK.]

Essence: 3; **Willpower:** 8; **Join Battle:** 8 dice

Personal Motes: 70

Health Levels: -0/-1x6/-2x6/-4/Incap.

Speed Bonus: +4. Hundred Rivers consents to carry riders toward whom he has a Major Tie.

Actions: Feats of Strength: 8 dice (may attempt Strength 7 feats); Resist Poison/Illness: 8 dice; Senses: 10 dice; Stealth: 8 dice; Threaten: 8 dice; Tracking: 10 dice

Appearance 3, Resolve 5, Guile 2

Combat

Attack (Bite): 10 dice (Damage 17)

Attack (Grapple): 10 dice (12 dice to control)

Combat Movement: 5 dice

Evasion 4, Parry 3

Soak/Hardness: 10/2

Hundred Rivers may be trained in any of the latent or magic special attacks or merits of a wolf (**Exalted**, p. 562).

Special Attacks

Harry: If Hundred Rivers moves into close range of an enemy and deals 5+ **withering** damage on the same turn, that enemy cannot disengage on her next turn.

Pack Hunting: Hundred Rivers considers his master and any of her Sworn Kin his pack. When Hundred Rivers attacks, he adds one automatic

success for each packmate in close range of its target, maximum three successes.

Merits

Keen Nose: Hundred Rivers doubles 9s on scent-based Perception rolls.

Marvel of Coat and Claw: Those who see Hundred Rivers' master and her companions in the beast's presence are treated as having a Minor Tie towards her, either positive or negative depending on how they view the legendary wolf. Dynastic youths might marvel at the sight of him, while Thousand Scales bureaucrats might find his presence distasteful.

Wild Guardian: Hundred Rivers grants his master three automatic successes to Survival rolls to track quarry or find food, water, or shelter.

Wolf-and-Dragon Bond

Cost: —; **Mins:** Essence 3

Type: Supplemental

Keywords: None

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisites: Beckon the Wandering Wolf, Mother-of-Beasts Mastery (x2)

This Evocation upgrades Mother-of-Beasts Mastery (p. XX). When the Dragon-Blood uses it to train Hundred Rivers, the time required is halved, and she waives the experience point cost of awakening his magical abilities. Any experience she's already spent doing so is refunded upon awakening this Evocation.

Special activation rules: This Evocation cannot be purchased with experience points. It awakens at no cost when the wielder risks her life or undergoes great hardship to defend, heal, or otherwise help Hundred Rivers.

Packmate Devotion

Cost: —; **Mins:** Essence 4

Type: Permanent

Keywords: Resonant

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisites: Wolf-and-Dragon Bond

After bonding over the course of many adventures, Hundred Rivers accepts the wielder as a lifelong packmate. He rejects any influence that would cause him to betray his master or weaken or alter his Tie to her as unacceptable (**Exalted**, p. 220). He'll only weaken his Tie to his master at the end of the session if she betrays him outright. Hundred Rivers gains two Initiative when he witnesses his master suffer **decisive** damage.

Special activation rules: This Evocation cannot be purchased with experience points. When Hundred Rivers' Tie toward the wielder reaches the Defining level, the wielder awakens this Evocation at no cost.

Faith's Pillar (White Jade Grand Goremaul, Artifact ...)

Mnemon Beral, son of Mnemon herself, set the house standard for proselytizing across Creation. His journeys led him to every corner of Creation, then to the secretive cities of the inhuman Mountain Folk below its surface. The Jadeborn do not speak of their faith in their few exchanges with the Dynasty, but they speak of Beral with the utmost respect.

Mnemon Beral never returned home. Faith's Pillar did. The Mountain Folk carved it out of respect for Beral's wisdom and courage against the unholy monsters of the depths, and he carried it into battle against those horrors. After he fell in defense of a Mountain Folk city, the Jadeborn entrusted the weapon to his family.

Faith's Pillar is a glittering white jade obelisk representing the Imperial Mountain, with symbols for the four outer Directions on each of its faces. At the end of its long haft, the pommel bears a sign of the Center, just as the mountain's roots reach far below the light of day. Faith's Pillar traditionally serves monks of House Mnemon, consecrated in a Mountain Folk dedication ceremony kept by house savants.

Attunement: 5m; **Type:** Heavy (+1 ACC, +14 DMG, +0 DEF, OVW 5)

Tags: Bashing, Melee, Reaching, Smashing, Two-Handed

Hearthstone slot(s): 1

Era: Reign of the Scarlet Empress

Evocations of Faith's Pillar

Upon attuning to Faith's Pillar, the wielder chooses one of her Principles of religious belief or social order to dedicate the goremaul to, gaining an additional +1 Resolve against influence opposing it. She may change the chosen Principle once per story with a ritual rededication.

Faith Maintains

Cost: 2m, 1wp; **Mins:** Essence 1

Type: Simple

Keywords: None

Duration: One scene

Prerequisites: None

A life of virtue begins with a foundation of faith. Touching Faith's Pillar to the ground, the wielder consecrates the ground on which she stands. As long as she doesn't move from this point, she adds (Essence + the dedicated Principle) to her natural soak and gains (Essence) Hardness.

Special activation rules: This Evocation awakens at no cost when a Mnemon scion attunes to Faith's Pillar with the proper dedication ritual.

Dragons Provide

Cost: 4m, 1wp; **Mins:** Essence 1

Type: Reflexive

Keywords: Resonant, Withering-only

Duration: One scene

Prerequisites: Faith Maintains

When the faithful call, the very stones answer. On her turn, the wielder draws Faith's Pillar through earth, loose stones, or even solid rock, compacting them into a boulder to serve as her hammer's head. This boulder adds (lower of Strength or the dedicated Principle) dice of raw damage and +1 Overwhelming on **withering** attacks with Faith's Pillar. Enemies may attempt to destroy the boulder with a difficulty 4 gambit, ending this Evocation.

Resonant: While standing on ground consecrated by Faith Maintains, the wielder's **withering** smash attacks don't cost Initiative.

Orison of Thunder

Cost: 4m; **Mins:** Essence 2

Type: Supplemental

Keywords: Decisive-only

Duration: Instant

Prerequisites: Dragons Provide

The Earth Dragon's judgment is abrupt and devastating, brooking no response. The wielder's **decisive** attack channels Earth Essence into an echoing rebuke. On a hit, the attack's target is selectively deafened (**Exalted**, p. 168) for (wielder's Charisma) rounds. He hears only the wielder's voice, and takes a -2 Resolve penalty against her.

The wielder may end Dragons Provide upon landing a **decisive** attack with Orison of Thunder to explosively detonate the boulder-head of Faith's Pillar. This adds up to (lower of Strength or Principle) attack roll threshold successes as dice of damage.

Special activation rules: This Evocation awakens at no cost upon joining battle against a non-trivial foe who has violated the Principle that Faith's Pillar is pledged to.

Foundations of Sand

Cost: 3m, 1i; **Mins:** Essence 2

Type: Reflexive

Keywords: Perilous, Uniform

Duration: Instant

Prerequisites: Faith Maintains, Dragons Provide

The earth shall not suffer the heretic's tread. When the wielder is attacked from close range by an enemy standing on earth or stone, she may use this Evocation. A successful parry causes her attacker to be sucked into the ground up to the waist, suffering the

effects of being prone (**Exalted**, p. 202). He must succeed at a difficulty 2 ([Strength or Dexterity] + Athletics) roll to free himself, which counts as his move action.

The wielder may end Dragons Provide, detonating the boulder-head of Faith's Pillar, upon successfully parrying with Foundations of Sand to instead shatter the surface (earthen or otherwise) on which the attacker stands, creating a hole one range band deep. The attacker falls if he doesn't catch its edge with a reflexive difficulty (Dexterity + Athletics) roll with a difficulty of (1 + the number of successes he missed by).

If the attacker has defied Faith's Pillar's dedicated Principle and stands on ground consecrated by Faith Maintains, the difficulty to extricate himself or arrest his fall increases by (Principle – 1).

Iniquity's Reward

Cost: 5m, 1i; **Mins:** Essence 2

Type: Reflexive

Keywords: Perilous, Resonant

Duration: Instant

Prerequisites: Faith Maintains

Discord and lawlessness encumber the soul. The wielder imposes a penalty of (her Intelligence) on an enemy's roll to disengage.

Resonant: If the wielder stands on ground consecrated by Faith Maintains, the penalized character loses an additional (Principle – 1) Initiative for disengaging.

Pasiap's Gentle Embrace

Cost: 10m, 1wp; **Mins:** Essence 3

Type: Reflexive

Keywords: Decisive-only, Dissonant, Resonant

Duration: Instant

Prerequisites: Foundations of Sand, Iniquity's Reward

Those who shun the perfected path deserve only the mercy of a proper burial. Immediately after crashing an opponent, the wielder prays for nearby earth and stone to rise and entomb the fallen, reflexively rolling an unblockable gambit with difficulty 4.

Success seals the opponent in a rocky tomb without light, air, or room to move. Shattering the tomb is a Strength 3 feat of strength, with a difficulty of (the wielder's Essence), or (the wielder's Essence + the dedicated Principle) if that enemy has violated the Principle. Outside of combat, each roll takes 20 seconds to complete, and time is of the essence as the sealed character asphyxiates (**Exalted**, p. 232). Ghosts, demons, and other creatures of darkness suffocate and die within the tomb as if made of flesh and blood, sending ghosts to Lethe and destroying other beings permanently. More wholesome spirits reform, if able, sealed within the tomb until freed.

This Evocation may be used once per day, unless reset by instilling a non-trivial opponent with the Principle Faith's Pillar is pledged to at Major Intensity. The Dawn Caste anima power cannot reset this Evocation.

Dissonant: A character dissonant with jade cannot awaken this Evocation.

Resonant: If the wielder slays a spirit with a **decisive** attack, she may use this Evocation to entomb it without rolling a gambit.

Heavenly Typhoon (Blue Jade Infinite Chakram, Artifact ●●●)

Many among the Scarlet Dynasty have heard of Heavenly Typhoon, but few know its true story. The common tale in House Ledaal is that the magnificent chakram was forged in a bygone era by an ancient Dragon-Blood who used it to cut down Anathema through the ages. Inspired by a summer gale, the artisan made a weapon to strike down the unjust like a thunderbolt and cut down the wicked as a storm tears down trees and buildings. Heavenly Typhoon's real origin is more complex.

In truth, Heavenly Typhoon dates back to the First Age, when the Lawgiver Sees-in-Shadow forged it for her spymaster (and sometimes lover), the Dragon-Blood Rising Storm. Together they uncovered plots, hunted the corrupt, and slew infernalists and blasphemers. Rising Storm passed her drive for retribution unto her lineage. In the Usurpation, Rising Storm's granddaughter took up Heavenly Typhoon and struck down Sees-in-Shadow, grown wicked in the centuries since Rising Storm's death, at the cost of her life. Over a thousand years later, it would be discovered by a distant descendant and scion of House Ledaal, drawn to the Anathema-slaying weapon by their shared lineage.

Heavenly Typhoon is a blue jade infinite chakram. Orichalcum inlay on its cloudy, marbled surface resembles a jagged bolt of lightning. Viewed from another angle, the pattern looks like bared dragon fangs.

Attunement: 5m; **Type:** Light (+10 DMG, 3 OVW)

Tags: Lethal, Thrown (Medium), Cutting, Special

Hearthstone slot(s): 1

Era: The Midnight Century

Evocations of Heavenly Typhoon

An Exalt who attunes to Heavenly Typhoon awakens Righteous Enemy-Slaying Strike at no cost.

Other Magical Materials

While the Realm's artificers sometimes incorporate the other magical materials into jade artifacts, an artifact that is made primarily or entirely from another material is considered second-rate, more suited to an outcaste than a Dynast. Their use is accepted but likely to draw disparaging marks from other Dynasts.

Righteous Enemy-Slaying Strike

Cost: 3m; **Mins:** Essence 1

Type: Supplemental

Keywords: Decisive-only

Duration: Instant

Prerequisites: None

The golden etchings upon Heavenly Typhoon glow with righteous fury and snap with lightning. An enemy damaged by a **decisive** attack is *condemned* by the weapon's wrath. Condemnation is permanent unless revoked Heavenly Typhoon's wielder, although new wielders don't gain the benefit of past wielders' condemnations. Heavenly Typhoon adds (Essence/2, rounded up) **withering** damage and +1 Overwhelming against condemned foes.

Resonant: A character resonant with jade waives this Evocation's cost against creatures of darkness.

Storm-Shield Bulwark

Cost: —; **Mins:** Essence 1

Type: Permanent

Keywords: None

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisites: Seed and Salt Warding

The Exalt draws a line with the keen edge of Heavenly Typhoon and creates a stormy boundary no creature of darkness can cross. This Evocation upgrades Seed and Salt Warding (p. XX). The Dragon-Blood may use it as an Air-aspected Charm to create a line of rippling air pressure that affects condemned characters as well as the undead.

Special activation rules: This Evocation awakens at no cost when a Ledaal scion attunes Heavenly Typhoon.

Demon-Slaying Zealot's Mantra

Cost: 5m, 1wp; **Mins:** Essence 2

Type: Reflexive

Keywords: Counterattack, Withering-only

Duration: Instant

Prerequisites: Righteous Enemy-Slaying Strike

When a condemned target attacks the wielder, a ring of ancient script appears in gold around her, driving her attacker to fear and despair. The wielder makes a **withering** counterattack. If it deals more than (her attacker's current temporary Willpower) damage, his Hardness is set to zero against **decisive** attacks with Heavenly Typhoon for the rest of the scene.

This Evocation may only be used once per scene, unless reset by incapacitating a non-trivial condemned enemy.

Searing Wind-Razor Bolt

Cost: 3m, 1wp; **Mins:** Essence 2

Type: Simple

Keywords: Decisive-only, Resonant

Duration: Instant

Prerequisites: Demon-Slaying Zealot's Mantra

Golden lightning trails behind Heavenly Typhoon as the wielder summons a storm to cut down an unjust foe. The wielder makes a **decisive** attack against a condemned enemy with a lower Initiative, adding the difference between their Initiative ratings in bonus dice to the attack and damage rolls, up to a maximum of (higher of Essence or 3).

Resonant: A wielder resonant with jade also knocks her target back one range band if any damage is dealt.

Standing in the Storm's Eye

Cost: —; **Mins:** Essence 3

Type: Permanent

Keywords: None

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisites: Searing Wind-Razor Bolt, Storm-Shield Bulwark

This Evocation permanently upgrades Hundred Devils Whirlwind (p. XX), affecting condemned foes as though they were dematerialized spirits.

Ten Thousand Typhoon Burst

Cost: 5m, 3i, 1wp; **Mins:** Essence 3

Type: Simple

Keywords: Dissonant, Perilous, Resonant, Withering-only

Duration: Instant

Prerequisites: Searing Wind-Razor Bolt

Heavenly Typhoon roars through the air like a tornado unleashed, splitting into a dozen spiraling afterimages that shower enemies with furious cutting Essence. The wielder rolls a **withering** attack against a condemned target, and also applies her attack roll against every condemned enemy within short range of him. She only rolls damage against the original target; other foes struck lose Initiative equal to the 10s on the damage roll. The wielder cannot gain more than (Essence) total Initiative from the secondary targets.

This Evocation may only be used once per scene, unless reset by incapacitating a non-trivial condemned enemy.

Dissonant: A character dissonant with jade cannot awaken this Evocation.

Resonant: A character resonant with jade gains one Willpower if this Evocation crashes at least one enemy.

Pyre of Legions (Red Jade Grand Daiklave, Artifact ...)

Cathak Falu was never well-loved by her comrades or her commanders in the house legions. She was an adequate but unexceptional officer, never equaling the martial glory of her fellow Dragon-Blooded no matter how doggedly she practiced weapon drills with her daiklave or memorized strategies from *The Thousand Correct Actions*. Perhaps this could have been forgiven, if not for her lack of social graces, her standoffish demeanor, and her taciturn brooding. She was most comfortable on the battlefield, and spent the rest of her time isolated from the women and men of her legion. Her fellow Dynasts often wondered why she hadn't been married off quietly and never spoken of again, and rarely cared whether or not she was in earshot of their questions.

It was at the Rainbow Scales that Cathak Falu, for once in her life, won the admiration of all in her house. The Dynasty lost a soldier, but the invaders lost a vanguard. House Cathak recovered her blade from the boiling river that had been the Rainbow Scales. Now celebrating the former reject as the pinnacle of soldierly virtue, Cathak elders show the blade called Pyre of Legions to their young heirs in its resting place before Cathak Falu's tomb, her burning handprint still visible upon its hilt.

Attunement: 5m; **Type:** Heavy (+1 ACC, +14 DMG, +0 DEF, OVW 6)

Tags: Lethal, Melee, Reaching, Two-Handed

Hearthstone slot(s): 2

Era: Reign of the Scarlet Empress

Evocations of the Pyre of Legions

Falu's last desperate thoughts were burned into Pyre of Legions when she fell in battle, carved into searing hot jade, and any who wield the blade feel them coursing through their own heart as surely as though they were her own. Its wielder gains a Defining Principle of "I will give anything to protect my comrades" that cannot be weakened or altered so long as she's attuned to the daiklave.

Loyalty-Kindling Warmth

Cost: 2m; **Mins:** Essence 1

Type: Supplemental

Keywords: Dual

Duration: Instant

Prerequisites: None

Pyre of Legions' loyal soul empowers those that stand with their comrades, such that they may face a thousand foes as one. **Withering** attacks against battle groups ignore

(Strength) points of soak; **decisive** attacks against them add (Strength) bonus dice on the attack roll.

Special activation rules: This Evocation awakens at no cost when attuned by a scion of House Cathak.

Resonant: A character resonant with jade may pay an additional two motes to use this Evocation against an individual enemy with lower Initiative.

All-Consuming Guardian Stance

Cost: 4m, 1i; **Mins:** Essence 2

Type: Supplemental

Keywords: Perilous, Resonant

Duration: Instant

Prerequisites: Loyalty-Kindling Warmth

Flames leap from Pyre of Legions to guard a comrade, burning away volleys of arrows and pushing back errant blades. She takes a defend other action to protect an ally within medium range. Used together with Flame Warden Stance (p. XX), it extends that Charm's range to medium as well.

Resonant: When defending her ward against the attacks of battle groups, the wielder gains +1 Parry.

Army-Routing Aegis

Cost: 3m, 3i, 1ahl; **Mins:** Essence 3

Type: Reflexive

Keywords: Perilous, Resonant

Duration: Until next turn

Prerequisites: All-Consuming Guardian Stance

The passion within Pyre of Legions cannot be contained in the form of a single hero — she's consumed alive, becoming a walking pyre that scorches the earth around her. On her turn, she wreathes herself in a bonfire (difficulty 5, damage 4L/round) that extends out to short range, moving with her. The flames deal her no damage (other than the health level cost). If she activated this Evocation on her previous turn, she waives its mote cost.

Resonant: The bonfire gains +1 difficulty and +2L Damage.

Unstoppable Heart-Stoking Incandescence

Cost: 2i; **Mins:** Essence 3

Type: Reflexive

Keywords: Perilous

Duration: One scene

Prerequisites: Army-Routing Aegis

The air around Pyre of Legions shimmers and burns with heroism, encouraging ferocious loyalty in soldiers following that awesome apparition. While the wielder is rolled into combat, the mote cost of her War Charms is reduced by (her wound penalty + 1), to a minimum of one mote. Exalted with non-Ability Charms apply this discount to any Charms that deal with leading battle groups or defeating enemy strategies.

Somber Pyre Conflagration

Cost: 2ahl, 3a; **Mins:** Essence 4

Type: Simple

Keywords: Dissonant, Uniform

Duration: One scene

Prerequisites: Army-Routing Aegis

The wielder's anima banner burns away in the crucible of the Pyre, leaving in its place a towering inferno that can be seen for leagues. Battle groups don't add their Size to attack rolls or damage against the wielder, and cannot move past her without disengaging, treating the wielder as though she were a battle group of Size (higher of Essence or Strength) for these purposes (**Exalted**, p. 209).

She waives the health level cost of Army-Routing Aegis while this Evocation is active.

Special activation rules: As long as the wielder isn't dissonant with jade, this evocation awakens at no cost when she upholds a Major or Defining Tie of loyalty when confronting a significant threat alone.

Ashes Feed the Seeds

Cost: —; **Mins:** Essence 4

Type: Reflexive

Keywords: Resonant

Duration: One scene

Prerequisites: Somber Pyre Conflagration

No matter how an inferno scars the countryside, it leaves fertile soil ripe for the future. The Exalt ignores wound penalties, and may spend Willpower in place of health levels for the cost of Pyre of Legions' Evocations. She's treated as having a -4 wound penalty for Unstoppable Heart-Stoking's Incandescence's discount.

This Evocation can only be activated once per story. This may be reset by accomplishing a legendary social goal (**Exalted**, p. 134). The Dawn Caste anima can't reset this Evocation.

Special activation rules: This evocation cannot be awakened with experience points. It awakens at no cost if the wielder is reduced to her -4 health level while upholding Pyre of Legions' Intimacy.

Sea's Verdict (Black Jade Longfang, Artifact ●●●)

When the wheel-priests of Zumachi made sacrifices to the Vortex of Scales, begging him to wreck an inbound Peleps tribute ship, they assumed they'd won a few months respite. An hour later, the folly of assumptions was laid bare when Peleps Lirel stalked from the waves, dragging their elemental patron's serpentine carcass up the beach.

Sea-soaked and glaring, she recited a list of charges as the three lead priests threw themselves on her mercy, promising the young judge whatever she desired. In reply, she dragged the triumvirate to the secret jade monolith on which they offered their youths, bound them with their silver chains of devotion, and waited for the tide to come in.

The final judgment she returned to House Peleps included "Attempted bribery."

Hewn from the dismantled sacrificial stone, Sea's Verdict is a jet-black trident engraved with argent serpents and capped by moonsilver prongs. In the hands of poets and pirate-hunters it's smashed through the living masts of the Lintha, drowned shining bandit queens in their desert castles, and cast evildoers to distant shores.

To those versed in its use, the Sea's Verdict is a reminder that seafaring romance is a pleasant illusion. The trident's spirit remains unstained by those it's condemned, unmoved in its search for justice. Guilty or innocent, its victims are mere crimson drops in the deep black sea within. The sea has only one verdict, which it returns without thought or qualm.

Attunement: 5m; **Type:** Medium (+3 ACC, +12 DMG, +1 DEF, OVW 4)

Tags: Lethal, Melee, Thrown (Short), Disarming, Piercing

Hearthstone slot(s): 2

Era: Reign of the Scarlet Empress

Evocations of Sea's Verdict

The Sea's Verdict has its own anima banner, which grows one level when its wielder spends 5+ peripheral motes on Charms or Evocations enhancing a single attack or parry with it. As the weapon's anima intensifies, its silver engravings writhe and dissolve like broken chains, and the black jade itself begins to expand, crack, rumble, and leak or spray dark water; a dam ready to burst.

With its anima at burning, the Sea's Verdict gains the Smashing tag (**Exalted**, p. 586). At bonfire, the Initiative cost of smash attacks is waived.

From the Depths

Cost: —; **Mins:** Essence 1

Type: Permanent

Keywords: None

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisites: Elemental Sheath

Drifting in pelagic shadow, the Sea's Verdict remembers its true nature. If the wielder calls the trident forth from a large body of open water, its anima immediately flares up to glowing.

In Water Aura, she can use Sea's Verdict's anima to pay the cost of her own Charms.

Special activation rules: This Evocation awakens at no cost when a Peleps scion attunes to Sea's Verdict.

Kraken's Gavel

Cost: 3m, 2i; **Mins:** Essence 1

Type: Simple

Keywords: Uniform

Duration: Instant

Prerequisites: None

The crushing weight of the sea whirls between Sea's Verdict's forks, sweeping foes to the depths. This Evocation can only be used while Sea's Verdict's anima is at burning or higher. The wielder makes a **withering** or **decisive** smash attack with no Defense penalty. If it hits a target at close range, all other opponents at close range must roll (Strength + Athletics) at a difficulty of (wielder's Essence + 2) or be knocked back one range band away from the wielder.

Hull-Breaking Tsunami Swipe

Cost: 4m; **Mins:** Essence 1

Type: Supplemental

Keywords: Resonant, Uniform

Duration: Instant

Prerequisites: Kraken's Gavel

All castles are built on sand. When attacking, the wielder unleashes a crashing wave of force, reflexively rolling a feat of demolition (**Exalted**, pp. 229) with (Sea's Verdict's anima x2) bonus dice to destroy an object in her opponent's range band that's not being carried. This can reduce cover (including full cover) before the attack is resolved.

Resonant: The wielder adds (Sea's Verdict's anima) to her Strength rating to determine what feats of demolition she may attempt.

Lost Blade Riptide

Cost: 5m, 2i, 1a from Sea's Verdict; **Mins:** Essence 2

Type: Supplemental

Keywords: Decisive-only, Dissonant

Duration: Instant

Prerequisites: Hull-Breaking Tsunami Swipe

Sea's Verdict's prongs spin and twist, unleashing a whirl of black water that rips weapons away. If an enemy tries to parry a **decisive** attack, the wielder first reflexively rolls a disarm gambit (**Exalted**, p. 200), waiving the Initiative cost. A disarmed enemy can only use his Evasion to defend against her attack.

Dissonant: This Evocation can only be used once per scene.

Awaken the Tide

Cost: —; **Mins:** Essence 3

Type: Permanent

Keywords: None

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisites: From the Depths, Lost Blade Riptide

A dark ocean stirs into wakefulness, its waters spilling forth to swirl around the wielder's feet and drag at enemies with unnerving strength. While Sea's Verdict's anima is glowing, enemies within close range of the wielder are slowed as though moving through difficult terrain (**Exalted**, p. 199) if their Initiative is lower than hers. At burning or higher, the whirlpool clutches possessively at fallen foes, applying the difficult terrain penalty on rolls to rise from prone. At bonfire, the penalty rises to -4.

Gaol Without Fathom

Cost: 8m, 1wp, 2a from Sea's Verdict (2i per enemy); **Mins:** Essence 3

Type: Simple

Keywords: Decisive-only, Dissonant, Resonant

Duration: Instant

Prerequisites: Awaken the Tide

The air flickers with hadal darkness and insurmountable pressure as the wielder slams Sea's Verdict to the ground, fraying the chains on its power. Gaol Without Fathom can only be used while Sea's Verdict's anima is burning or higher. The wielder rolls a **decisive** attack against every opponent at close range, but doesn't roll damage normally. She may pay two Initiative for each enemy hit to knock them prone and grapple them without needing a gambit, pinning them beneath spiritual pressure like that of the ocean depths. This cost is waived against prone enemies.

Each victim rolls for control separately, comparing their results to the wielder's original attack roll. The wielder can only restrain her victims, who are slammed prone and rendered mute, deaf, and blind (**Exalted**, pp. 168) while grappled, as a lightless silence presses against them. The wielder doesn't lose rounds of control for being attacked or damaged, but a grappled enemy may attempt to struggle free as his action for a round, which can't be placed in a flurry, removing two rounds of control.

Dissonant: Non-prone characters are unaffected by Gaol Without Fathom.

Resonant: While Sea's Verdict is at bonfire, the restrain action costs only one turn of control.

Thunder of the Abyss

Cost: —(+1-3a from Sea's Verdict); **Mins:** Essence 4

Type: Permanent

Keywords: Decisive-only

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisites: Gaol Without Fathom

The Sea's Verdict strains under the pressure of its own infamous Gaol, black water spraying from every crack. The released waters unnaturally swirl above the wielder as a great maelstrom that she can collapse into a pelagic hammer blow, dissolving the trident's silver prongs like corks popping from a bottled ocean.

The wielder can end Gaol Without Fathom by inflicting a **decisive** slam attack on every grappled character, dividing her Initiative evenly, rounded up, between every victim. The damage ignores Hardness. She doesn't add bonus damage for remaining turns of control. Instead, she may expend one level of Sea's Verdict's anima for each round she's maintained the clinch, dealing that many levels of bashing damage to each victim. The bodies of those killed by the Thunder of the Abyss vanish, only ever found as water-bloated flotsam on some distant shore.

The Sea's Verdict reforms unscathed after using this Evocation, but its silvery chains wrap with watertight urgency, resetting its anima to dim and preventing it from growing for the rest of the scene.

Smiling Razors (Red Jade Short Daiklaves, Artifact ...)

Sesus Kalama, the Grinning Wicked Flame, received the Smiling Razors from the Empress for exceptional service in the Immaculate Order. She wielded them in many a Wyld Hunt, stalking Anathema as a flickering shadow and gouging painful burning wounds across their skin before dispatching them.

Kalama loved the violence of the Wyld Hunt, but grew discontent with the life of a monk. She publicly decried the Order, igniting her anima to incinerate her robes and profaning an offering-laden Immaculate altar. She declared herself a force against those who clung too tightly to tradition and order, publicly challenging monks to duels so that she might demonstrate the fallibility of the Immaculate Texts, and seducing Dynasts into apostasy.

There was only one word for what the Grinning Wicked Flame had become — Anathema. A Wyld Hunt was dispatched to hunt down the flame-devil, led by her cousin Sesus Bajo tracking her by the wake of blasphemy and fire she left across the Blessed Isle. Kalama fought fiercely, and maimed many of the shikari sent to kill her, but in the end, she fell. Her death became an object lesson to young Dragon-Blooded on the dangers of heresy, and the specter of the flame-devil lingered as a threat whispered to rebellious adults and disobedient children alike.

Bajo retrieved the Smiling Razors from his cousin's corpse to return them to his house. Though the cruel blades were ill-suited to his temperament, he made a show of wielding them publicly to cleanse the stain of Kalama's blasphemy. Once the house deemed its reputation suitably repaired, the Smiling Razors were turned over to its vaults. House Sesus' Masked Council has chosen subsequent wielders of the Smiling Razors, reforging Grinning Wicked Flame's legacy into a weapon suited to their clandestine purposes.

Attunement: 5m; **Type:** Light (+5 ACC; +10 DMG; +0 DEF, 4 OVW)

Tags: Lethal, Melee

Hearthstone slot(s): 2

Era: Reign of the Scarlet Empress

Evocations of the Smiling Razors

Surprise attacks made with the Smiling Razors add one die to the attack roll.

Still-Burning Ember Ambush

Cost: 3m, 2i; **Mins:** Essence 1

Type: Reflexive

Keywords: Mute, Perilous, Resonant

Duration: Instant

Prerequisites: None

Like an ember that burns an unsuspecting hand, the Exalt strikes suddenly from ambush and vanishes as quickly as she came. When she rolls to establish concealment in combat, she doubles 9s.

Special activation rules: A Sesus scion who attunes the Smiling Razors awakens this Evocation at no cost.

Resonant: If the wielder is resonant with jade, a surprise attack made with the Smiling Razors on the turn after entering concealment with this Evocation adds one automatic success on the damage roll.

Coiling-Smoke-Plume Deception

Cost: —; **Mins:** Essence 1

Type: Permanent

Keywords: None

Duration: One scene

Prerequisites: Still-Burning Ember Ambush, Vanishing Wind-Body Technique

This Evocation permanently upgrades Vanishing Wind-Body Technique (p. XX). The Dragon-Blood may use it as a Fire Charm to render herself immune to detection via her body heat rather than air movement. Such uses grant their enhanced benefits in Fire Aura instead of Air Aura.

Inviting Fireside Distraction

Cost: —; **Mins:** Essence 1

Type: Permanent

Keywords: None

Duration: One scene

Prerequisites: Rose-Among-Thorns Distinction, Still-Burning Ember Ambush

This Evocation permanently upgrades Rose-Among-Thorns Distinction (p. XX). The Dragon-Blood may use it as a Fire Charm to gain a specialty in non-criminal organizations that she's targeting for infiltration, theft, assassination, or similar uses of Larceny or Stealth.

Searing Pain Infliction Tactic

Cost: 4m, 1i; **Mins:** Essence 2

Type: Simple

Keywords: Decisive-only, Resonant

Duration: Instant

Prerequisites: Still-Burning Ember Ambush

The Exalt descends upon her victim with the intent to inflict terrible pain as smoke and coiling flames roll from Smiling Razors' blades. To use this Evocation, she must be in concealment. She makes a **decisive** attack against an opponent who cannot perceive her. If her attack deals enough damage to increase his wound penalty, he doubles his wound penalty for the rest of the scene, to a maximum of (4 + wielder's Essence).

Resonant: If the wielder resonates with jade, the victim's wound penalties are doubled until he's healed at least one level of lethal damage.

Soul-Burning Mark

Cost: 3m, 2i; **Mins:** Essence 2

Type: Simple

Keywords: Withering-only

Duration: Instant

Prerequisites: Searing Pain Infliction Tactic

The Smiling Razors burn their mark into the flesh of victims with sadistic glee. Their wielder makes a **withering** attack. If it deals more than (5 + number of marks the victim already has) damage, it brands him with a mark that lasts until the scene's end, maximum (Essence + 1). **Decisive** attacks with the Smiling Razors gain one die for each mark the victim has.

Resonant: If the wielder lands an unexpected attack, it automatically marks her victim regardless of how much damage she deals.

Drifting Smoke-Cloud Passage

Cost: 10m, 1wp; **Mins:** Essence 3

Type: Reflexive

Keywords: Dissonant, Mute

Duration: Instant

Prerequisites: Inviting Fireside Distraction, Soul-Burning Mark

The wielder of the Smiling Razors transmutes her body into drifting smoke, passing through places where she normally couldn't. She can fit through spaces so tight that only smoke could pass through with a single move action on her turn, and ignores difficult terrain or environmental penalties on the roll. Any tight space she wishes to flow through must be short enough that she could successfully traverse it in a single move action. If she's in concealment, she doesn't need to make another Stealth roll as long as she ends her movement in a location that provides concealment, and she may even rush while in concealment.

This Charm may only be used once per day, unless reset by incapacitating a non-trivial enemy with an unexpected attack.

Special activation rules: This Evocation may not be awoken with experience points. Instead, it awakens at no cost when the wielder kills a non-trivial enemy from ambush.

Dissonant: A character dissonant with jade cannot awaken this Evocation.

Vengeant (Black Jade Razor Claws, Artifact ●●)

Part of it came from Petal Glider, the vain daiklave that defeated the Grass Dancer at the Battle of Three Crossings for the sake of its master's camaraderie with foreign traders. Another came from Crow's Friend, which annihilated the Gutter Water Gang, opening Nexus to Iselsi ambitions. A third piece belonged to Amara, which slit Sesus' cheek in revenge for a night of adulterous beauties now long forgotten. Now all that remains is Vengeant.

Many of House Iselsi's ancestral blades were destroyed by the Scarlet Empress for their foolish attempt to strike at her. She had fragments of each forged into a new weapon to remind the Iselsi of her mercy and of the state she'd forced upon them. The Iselsi took the lesson well. With their old blades they'd fought to create dynasties — with Vengeant, they would end them.

Attunement: 5m; **Type:** Light (+5 ACC, +10 DMG, +0 DEF, OVW 3)

Tags: Lethal, Brawl, Concealable, Worn

Hearthstone slot(s): 2

Era: The Fall of House Iselsi

Evocations of Vengeant

Vengeant remembers those who wronged its former wielders, and delights in the chance to humble their descendants. The wielder may focus Vengeant's spite against a specific individual or group, marking him as *despised*, after one of the following events:

- The wielder reveals her true identity and her enmity to the object of a negative Tie.
- An Iselsi wielder discovers how the target or his ancestors have wronged House Iselsi.

Vengeant gains +1 Overwhelming against despised opponents. This effect is indefinite, lasting until the wielder manages to destroy the target or rededicates Vengeant against a new despised individual or group.

Still Waters Hide Fury

Cost: 5m, 1wp; **Mins:** Essence 1

Type: Simple

Keywords: Mute, Resonant

Duration: One scene

Prerequisites: None

The Great Houses think the Iselsi dead, a mighty river tamed to barely a trickle, but those waters bely the violent currents that hide below the surface. To use this Evocation, the wielder must be in concealment and choose a target that's unaware of her. At the start of each of her turns, the wielder makes an opposed roll of (Manipulation + Stealth) against her target's (Perception + Awareness) roll, gaining (Essence/2, rounded up) Initiative if she wins the opposed roll. Each subsequent round, she incurs a cumulative -1 penalty on the Stealth roll. If she fails the roll, her target detects her, sensing Vengeant's killing intent. This Evocation ends when the wielder is detected by her target or leaves concealment. If she makes a **decisive** attack against an enemy other than her target, the Initiative she gained is lost.

This Evocation can be used once per scene, unless reset by incapacitating a despised opponent or a non-trivial foe who wishes to protect him.

Resonant: As long as the wielder has a Major or Defining Intimacy that would be furthered by killing the target, she may waive this Evocation's Willpower cost.

Ember-Smothering Convolution

Cost: 3m; **Mins:** Essence 2

Type: Supplemental

Keywords: Resonant

Duration: Instant

Prerequisites: Still Waters Hide Fury

Spurred on to finish the grudge before Vengeant's victim can escape, the wielder adds two bonus dice on a rush against a character she has a negative Tie towards. She gains one Initiative if she wins the rush.

Resonant: The wielder may pay an additional mote to extend this Charm's duration to one scene against a despised opponent, enhancing all rushes she makes against him. She may stack multiple uses against multiple despised foes.

Earth-Eroding Tactic

Cost: 4m, 2i; **Mins:** Essence 2

Type: Supplemental

Keywords: Decisive-only, Mute, Resonant

Duration: Instant

Prerequisites: Still Waters Hide Fury

Vengeant's patient hatred wears down even the most resilient. To use this Evocation, the wielder must have surveilled him with Still Waters Hide Fury in the same scene. If her **decisive** attack hits him, his total onslaught penalty doesn't refresh at the start of his turns until he's taken a number of turns equal to the number of turns she spent undetected while using Still Waters Hide Fury, maximum three.

Resonant: Vengeant's **decisive** attacks against a despised opponent suffering from this Evocation ignore Hardness until his onslaught penalty refreshes.

Breath-Denying Vengeance Current

Cost: 5m; **Mins:** Essence 3

Type: Simple

Keywords: Decisive-only, Resonant

Duration: Instant

Prerequisites: Earth-Eroding Tactic

The wielder inundates her victim with Vengeant's sluggish, hateful essence, filling his lungs with black bile. This is a gambit whose difficulty is (higher of target's Essence or Stamina). Success causes the victim to begin asphyxiating (**Exalted**, p. 232). He may attempt to clear the obstruction with a (Stamina + Resistance) roll as a miscellaneous action that can't be flurried. A single success is sufficient for that round not to count against the total he can hold his breath, while overcoming a difficulty of (wielder's Essence) purges the obstruction entirely. With a stunt, a character may roll a different dice pool, such as (Wits + Medicine), to clear the obstruction.

Resonant: Against a despised opponent, each threshold success on the gambit's Initiative roll adds one bonus die on her rolls to oppose his disengage actions until he's cleared the obstruction.

Drink the Lesser Seas

Cost: 2m, 1wp; **Mins:** Essence 3

Type: Simple

Keywords: Decisive-only, Resonant

Duration: Instant

Prerequisites: Ember-Smothering Convolution

Vengeant's attack tears away flesh while drinking deeply of the water in its victim's body, leaving nothing but desiccated skin and bone. To use this Evocation, the wielder must be in concealment. She makes a **decisive** attack against an enemy who's unaware of her, adding (Essence) dice of damage and doubling 10s on the damage roll.

This Evocation can only be used once per scene, unless reset by incapacitating a non-trivial despised opponent.

Resonant: Against a despised opponent, the wielder doubles 9 on damage rolls.

Hundred-Generation Forest Desecration

Cost: —(+5m, 1wp); **Mins:** Essence 4

Type: Permanent

Keywords: Dissonant

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisites: Drink the Lesser Seas, Breath-Denying Vengeance Current

Ten thousand gentle crests can leave even the grandest groves of trees stunted and malformed, poisoned from the roots with the sea's saltwater grief. When the wielder uses Still Waters Hide Fury against a despised character with whom she's interacted socially in a previous scene, she may pay five motes and one Willpower to treat each such scene as a turn studying him from concealment, up to a maximum of (Essence) scenes. She makes a single (Manipulation + Stealth) roll against his (Perception + Awareness) for these past interactions, gaining (Essence/2, rounded up) Initiative for each one on a successful roll. Failure doesn't reveal her presence.

This Evocation can only be used once per story, unless reset by achieving a major character or story goal (**Exalted**, p. 170) by killing a despised character.

Dissonant: Characters dissonant with jade cannot awaken this Evocation.

Dragon-Shattering Restitution

Cost: 1m, 1wp; **Mins:** Essence 4

Type: Reflexive

Keywords: Decisive-only, Dissonant, Psyche

Duration: Instant

Prerequisites: Hundred-Generation Forest Desecration

In death, the foes of House Iselsi serve as a gruesome warning to their kin that none are safe from the Vendetta. This Evocation can be used when the wielder kills a despised enemy, leaving his remains as reminder to the rest of House Iselsi's enemies that they're next on the list.

Relatives of the victim, including her Sworn Kin, who discover the body must roll (Wits + Integrity) against a difficulty of (victim's Essence + 3). On a failure, they form a Minor Tie of horror towards House Iselsi that cannot be weakened or altered by any means until the story's end. If a target already has a related Intimacy, it's instead strengthened by one step and is likewise protected for the story.

Special activation rules: This Evocation cannot be purchased with experience points. It awakens at no cost and can be used for free when the wielder slays a despised opponent she has a Major or Defining negative Tie for. Her victim must have been aware of both her presence and her Intimacy for him.

Dissonant: Characters dissonant with jade cannot awaken this Evocation.

Horizon Cleaver (Blue Jade Grimcleaver, Artifact ●●●)

When the Dragon-Blooded and Sidereal Exalted threw down their Solar masters in the Usurpation, the fury of Creation's Chosen stirred the heavens into world-spanning storms, a thunderous reflection of the struggle below. Inspired by strife and storm, the Sidereal mastermind Echo Gyre forged Horizon Cleaver, a titanic battle axe that honors the resplendence of those storms, for Ashen Tiger, her most trusted lieutenant.

A six-foot rod of blue jade forms the grimcleaver's haft, wrapped in braided steel and black rubber. Twin blades resemble reflections of a jagged moon, with inlays of red jade extolling the Usurpation in lyric poetry. Horizon Cleaver hums while resting, and in battle wreathes itself with blue, rapacious lightning. A wielder with sufficient discipline can direct the axe's fury, but one who falters spills the storm and decimates without aim.

Ashen Tiger carried Horizon Cleaver as she led legions against surviving Lunar mates of dead Solars. Her daughter, Song of Ivory, used it to raze an insubordinate city, beginning its long ancestral lineage. It was wielded by one of Tepet's sisters in their ill-fated siege of the Imperial City, and she and the grimcleaver joined House Tepet. Its most recent wielder, the dragonlord Tepet Yasenar, fell during the house's ruinous campaign in the North. Accounts conflict as to the grimcleaver's fate. Some say it sank into the White Sea; others that it answers now to the Bull of the North; and others still that Yasenar's daughter, Tepet Mareja, recovered the axe and gathers strength to reclaim her house's glory.

Attunement: 5m; **Type:** Heavy (+3 ACC, +12 DMG, +1 DEF, OVW 4)

Tags: Lethal, Melee, Chopping

Hearthstone slots: 2

Era: Dawn of the Shogunate

Evocations of Horizon Cleaver

Horizon Cleaver crackles with lightning, adding one die of **withering** or **decisive** damage on chopping attacks. Unattuned characters who draw it from its ebony case become thunderstruck for the remainder of the scene, as per Brilliant Reproach.

Brilliant Reproach

Cost: 5m; **Mins:** Essence 1

Type: Simple

Keywords: Decisive-only, Resonant

Duration: Instant

Prerequisites: None

Horizon Cleaver's wielder can unleash its lightning — at great collateral risk. She makes a **decisive** attack. If it deals damage, its victim loses (Essence) Initiative, which the wielder doesn't gain, and becomes *thunderstruck* for the scene, suffering a -2 penalty on physical actions.

If the wielder's 1s and 2s on her attack roll exceed (lower of her Integrity or Resistance), she loses control of Horizon Cleaver, and the attack is redirected to a random target within range — including the wielder or her allies.

Special activation rules: A Tepet scion who attunes to Horizon Cleaver awakens this Evocation at no cost.

Resonant: If a character resonant with jade has a Principle that reflects her code of honor, she adds its rating to the total number of 1s and 2s she can roll without losing control of the lightning.

Arcing Death Strike

Cost: —(+2m); **Mins:** Essence 2

Type: Permanent

Keywords: Resonant

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisites: Brilliant Reproach

The wielder may pay two motes to attack an enemy at short range when she uses Brilliant Reproach. This also increases the range at which it can strike random targets if she fails to control the attack.

Resonant: At Essence 3, a wielder who resonates with jade may extend its range to medium for a four-mote surcharge. At Essence 4, she may pay a four-mote, one-Willpower surcharge to extend its range to long.

On Wings of Deadly Lightning

Cost: 5m, 1wp; **Mins:** Essence 3

Type: Reflexive

Keywords: Perilous

Duration: Instant

Prerequisites: Arcing Death Strike

Horizon Cleaver's master becomes one with the lightning. On her turn, she may reflexively rush a thunderstruck character within long range. On a success, she instantly moves to close range with him without having to cross the intervening space. If she attacks him using Brilliant Reproach, she adds an automatic success on the attack roll.

Intemperate Tempest Fusillade

Cost: —(+2m, 1wp); **Mins:** Essence 3

Type: Permanent

Keywords: Dissonant

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisites: Arcing Death Strike

Lightning rips from Horizon Cleaver, striking in all directions. The wielder may pay two motes and one Willpower when she uses Brilliant Reproach to apply her **decisive** attack roll against up to (Essence) total enemies within range. She divides her Initiative evenly among all hit characters, rounding up, to determine the **decisive** damage rolled against

them, ignoring Hardness. If she loses control of the lightning, then it instead strikes (Essence) randomly chosen targets.

Dissonant: A character dissonant with jade cannot awaken this Evocation.

Maelstrom-Taming Warrior's Code

Cost: —; **Mins:** Essence 4

Type: Permanent

Keywords: Decisive-only, Dissonant

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisites: Intemperate Tempest Fusillade, On Wings of Deadly Lightning

Horizon Cleaver's lightning submits to the wielder's will. She's mastered its mercurial zeal, gaining the following benefits:

- Horizon Cleaver doubles 10s on **decisive** damage rolls against thunderstruck characters.
- When she incapacitates a non-trivial enemy who's thunderstruck, she adds (Essence) to her base Initiative upon resetting.
- Only 1s on her attack roll count towards losing control of Brilliant Reproach.

Dissonant: A character dissonant with jade cannot awaken this Evocation.

Imprimatur (White Jade Daiklave, Artifact ●●●●)

Under the bough of a heavy fruit tree in the final spring of Nellens' life, the Empress bequeathed her consort — a mortal man — the blade that would protect his legacy. Before the jealous proxies of the Empress' daughters and their gossiping servants, she gave him Imprimatur, sheathed in a scabbard of stone from which it couldn't be drawn, bound by a crimson tassel. Inscribed on the blade she left a message she promised that only Nellens' heirs would ever read.

Nellens passed soon after, but despite the Empress' proclamation, no heir of House Sesus or House Jurul — sired by Nellens — ever received the blade. It remained in the Empress' armory until the day she elevated House Nellens. Since then, the blade has become a familiar sight whenever a Nellens Dragon-Blooded appears at a heated debate or tense negotiation. For almost a generation, the infamous duelist Nellens Zijiren used it to humiliate his rivals of high social standing, until his recent demise. The sight of Imprimatur has always meant the same thing for those that oppose House Nellens — an upstart who thinks herself their equal, and a weapon that proves it.

Attunement: 5m; **Type:** Medium (+3 ACC, +12 DMG, +1 DEF, OVW 5)

Tags: Bashing, Melee

Hearthstone slot(s): 2

Era: Reign of the Scarlet Empress

Evocations of Imprimatur

Imprimatur's emblazoned sheath is a seal of the Empress's approval. This is measured by *Renown*, which begins at zero and is increased by Imprimatur's Evocations, up to a maximum of (the wielder's Essence + Charisma). Nellens scions add 1 to Imprimatur's maximum Renown. Renown resets at the end of every scene.

Attuning to Imprimatur awakens *As Two Strangers Upon the Road* at no cost.

As Two Strangers Upon the Road

Cost: 2m; **Mins:** Essence 1

Type: Supplemental

Keywords: Withering-only

Duration: Instant

Prerequisites: None

The wielder draws power from Imprimatur's authority, growing in strength and arrogance with each strike. She adds (Renown/2, rounded up) to a **withering** attack's raw damage. She may forgo gaining points of Initiative from the damage roll to gain Renown instead, maximum (higher of Essence or 3).

Sibling-Humbling Placation

Cost: 3m, 2 Renown; **Mins:** Essence 1; **Type:** Supplemental

Keywords: Decisive-only, Resonant

Duration: Instant

Prerequisites: *As Two Strangers Upon the Road*

With a flourish, the wielder bats her foe's weapon from his hand with Imprimatur. If her disarm gambit succeeds, she also treats its Initiative roll as either a persuade roll to convince the foe to cease or deescalate hostilities, or as an inspire roll to fill him with shame, embarrassment, or frustration.

Resonant: The wielder's influence roll targets all who witness the disarm gambit, ignoring the penalty for multiple targets.

The Matchmaker's Cockerel Stride

Cost: 5m; **Mins:** Essence 2

Type: Supplemental

Keywords: Resonant

Duration: Instant

Prerequisites: *Sibling-Humbling Placation*

The wielder may flurry a supplemented full defense with a disengage roll, and it grants her an additional +1 Parry, which counts as a bonus from Charms. Until her next turn, she gains one Renown whenever she successfully parries an attack.

Resonant: If the wielder flurries a full defense and a disengage and succeeds on the disengage roll, neither action costs Initiative.

Youngest Son's Inheritance

Cost: 5m, 1wp; **Mins:** Essence 3

Type: Reflexive

Keywords: Clash, Decisive-only, Dissonant

Duration: Instant

Prerequisites: Sibling-Humbling Placation

Imprimatur's keen edge and social license work as one, empowering the wielder to swat aside errant blades and poisonous words with equal ease. The wielder reflexively clashes a **decisive** attack from close range with a disarm gambit, adding (Renown) bonus dice on the attack roll. Attack roll threshold successes are added to her Initiative roll. This doesn't count as her attack for the round.

Alternatively, the wielder may oppose another character's influence roll with her own (Charisma + Presence) roll, adding (Renown) bonus dice. If successful, the wielder's repartee leaves the target stunned silent. He's unable to attempt another influence roll until he's able to compose himself with a miscellaneous action. She gains one Willpower from her triumph.

This Evocation can only be used once per scene, unless reset by going a round without either being hit by an attack or having one's Resolve beaten.

Dissonant: Characters dissonant with jade cannot awaken this Evocation.

The Final Words of Queens

Cost: 10m, 1wp; **Mins:** Essence 4

Type: Simple

Keywords: Dissonant

Duration: One scene

Prerequisites: The Matchmaker's Cockerel Stride, Youngest Son's Inheritance

Striding the battlefield and the courts of the Blessed Isle alike with noble bearing, Imprimatur's master awakens the sealed blade. This Evocation can only be activated at Initiative 15+. For the rest of the scene, the Exalt may reflexively spend any amount of Renown to add that many dice to the initiative roll of a **decisive** attack.

Additionally, upon using this Evocation, the wielder is given a vision of a unique message etched across the blade in Old Realm, an excerpt of the Empress's words to the proud inheritor. She may choose one of the following messages to gain the benefit of for this Evocation's duration as long as Imprimatur has the requisite amount of Renown.

- **Ambition is a Promise** (Renown 3): After winning a clash with a **decisive** attack, the wielder may expend all Renown and roll that many dice of damage, ignoring Hardness, instead of using her Initiative. This doesn't include her Initiative or reset her to base.

- **Marriage is a Blade** (Renown 5): The wielder may reflexively spend a point of Renown to share Imprimatur's power with another, granting him access to all of its Evocations, other than this one, until the scene ends. She pays any Renown costs, and any Renown he'd gain is instead granted to her.
- **A Dragon is Born** (Renown 7): The wielder may make a special disarm gambit that resets an Exalt's anima banner to dim or cancels a Dragon-Blood's Elemental Aura. The wielder may choose to add the stolen levels of anima to her own banner or enter the stolen Aura.

Upon awakening this Evocation, the Storyteller and the wielder's player may work together to create a new unique message discovered by the wielder with benefits comparable to the above options.

The Final Words of Queens can only be used once per story, unless reset by upholding a Major or Defining Tie to one's family, be they by blood or by adoption, by accomplishing a major character or story goal (**Exalted**, p. 170). The Dawn Caste anima power cannot reset this Evocation.

Dissonant: A character dissonant with jade cannot awaken this Evocation.

Perdurant Vault (White Jade Thunderbolt Shield, Artifact ●●●●)

Perdurant Vault — a reflective disc of milk-white jade — emerged from the workshop of the occultist Ragara Lasime during his family's solidification as "the Imperial Bank." Among the innumerable deals House Ragara struck during that climb, Lasime sojourned to the Underworld to treat with the ghost-queen Hymn of Shackles, whose consortium once monopolized earthly goods passing through Stygia. No one knows what Lasime offered, but the fruits of his workshop display what he gained.

Four feet in diameter and strung with an obsidian chain, this ornate aegis complements high-society fashion, offering Evocations that shield the wielder from Dynastic intrigue. Its polished surface occasionally reflects glimpses of an ethereal city, a secret world hidden within its depths. Perdurant Vault has been wielded by bureaucrats, sorcerers, and politicians of House Ragara, and seen use in occult experiments conducted by the house's inner circle. It's often entrusted to scions carrying out important matters for the house that require the utmost discretion and incorruptible will.

Attunement: 5m; **Type:** Medium (+3 ACC, +10 DMG, +1 DEF, OVW 4)

Tags: Bashing, Melee, Shield

Hearthstone slot(s): 1

Era: Reign of the Scarlet Empress

Evocations of Perdurant Vault

Perdurant Vault's wielder adds one bonus die on Appearance-based rolls.

Clairvoyant Mirror Technique

Cost: 5m; **Mins:** Essence 1

Type: Reflexive

Keywords: Mute

Duration: Instant

Prerequisites: None

Perdurant Vault's gleaming surface reflects the hearts of those who engage with its wielder, providing her with secret insight. When the wielder resists an instill action, she makes a reflexive read intentions roll against the influencing character, doubling 9s. Success reveals that characters' Intimacy most relevant to his attempted influence. For instance, if a House Cynis blackmailer failed to persuade the wielder to aid in a conspiracy, Perdurant Vault might reveal the Cynis' Major Tie of hatred for House Cathak that motivates the conspiracy.

Special activation rules: This Evocation awakens at no cost when attuned by a Ragara scion.

Unblemished Petal Prana

Cost: 4m; **Mins:** Essence 1

Type: Reflexive

Keywords: Resonant

Duration: Instant

Prerequisites: None

Perdurant Vault's elegance bolsters its wielder against defilement by pestilence and poison. Its wielder adds a non-Charm success on a roll against the virulence or morbidity of a disease, or to resist a poison. Using this Evocation against poisons also reduces their penalty by one.

Subliminal Sanctuary

Cost: 4m; **Mins:** Essence 2

Type: Reflexive

Keywords: Mute, Resonant

Duration: Instant

Prerequisites: Clairvoyant Mirror Technique

Perdurant Vault shelters the wielder's psyche behind an ephemeral spiritual wall. The wielder gains +2 Resolve against an influence roll, or negates the Guile penalty for being unaware of an observer on a single roll.

Resonant: Each time a character resonant with jade uses this Evocation, the cost of subsequent activations in the same scene is cumulatively discounted by one mote, to a minimum of zero.

Protect the Empress

Cost: 5m, 1wp; **Mins:** Essence 3

Type: Reflexive

Keywords: Resonant

Duration: Instant

Prerequisites: Subliminal Sanctuary

In moments of vulnerability, Perdurant Vault conceals its wielder's deepest beliefs from all prying minds — including her own. When a character penetrates the wielder's Guile with a read intentions action, she may use this Evocation before any information is revealed to seal away one of her Major or Defining Intimacies inside the City of Opal Unstained, a dream-realm within Perdurant Vault. That Intimacy is sealed away for (Willpower) days, during which it has no effect on the wielder.

Hidden Intimacies manifest in the City of Opal Unstained as spirits of appropriate nature whose strength is based on their intensity: Minor Intimacies yield spirits only as strong as weak gods or First Circle Demons, while a Defining Intimacy's spirit is comparable to a notable terrestrial god or Second Circle Demon. A Principle of faith in the Immaculate Philosophy might manifest as a pious, ceremonially robed monk, whereas the Principle of "Creation must burn" might appear as a raging fire elemental. If the wielder enters the dream-realm via Traverse the Secret City, she can interact with her Intimacies, potentially learning some insight or nuance about her belief or destroying a spirit to remove the Intimacy entirely.

This Evocation can only be used once per story, unless reset by successfully preventing the discovery of a Defining Intimacy whose revelation would have significant consequences for the wielder.

Resonant: A wielder who resonates with jade can activate this Evocation as if it were Simple, manifesting an Intimacy in the dream-realm at will rather than in response to social influence. Such uses don't require this Evocation to be reset.

Banish the Afflictions

Cost: 15m, 1wp; **Mins:** Essence 3

Type: Simple

Keywords: Dissonant

Duration: One day

Prerequisites: Protect the Empress, Unblemished Petal Prana

Perdurant Vault's wielder may retreat to a place of serenity and meditate over the shield, banishing a disease or poison from her body into the artifact's dream-realm. After a full day of meditation, the wielder rolls (Stamina + Resistance), rerolling (Essence) failures. Against disease, she rolls against its morbidity, reducing its intensity by one step on a success or purging it entirely if it's Minor. Against poison, each success reduces its remaining duration by one interval.

When the wielder completely purges a disease or poison using this Evocation, that affliction manifests as a spirit in the City of Opal Unstained, as per Protect the Empress. Such spirits linger for a number of weeks equal to (their Essence), attacking visitors to

the dream-realm or attempting to corrupt them when encountered. Destroying them allows the wielder to add (Essence) bonus dice to her (Stamina + Resistance) rolls to resist that disease or poison for as long as she remains attuned to Perdurant Vault.

This Evocation may only be used once per week.

Dissonant: A character dissonant with jade cannot awaken this Evocation.

Traverse the Secret City

Cost: 10m, 1wp; **Mins:** Essence 4

Type: Simple

Keywords: Dissonant, Resonant

Duration: (Essence + Integrity) days

Prerequisites: Protect the Empress, Imprison the Afflictions

A wielder who masters Perdurant Vault gains access to its secret depths: the City of Opal Unstained, a dream-realm of timeless purity. The city contains an urban landscape of white marble, alabaster, and jet — a jewel-box of domed villas, near-vertical amphitheaters, filigreed cupolas, and hidden courtyard fountains. It serves as private retreat and storage space, offering many halls and daises for meditation, as well as alcoves and pedestals for the wielder's panoply. She also might encounter here any Intimacies, diseases, or poisons she manifested as spirits via Protect the Empress or Banish the Afflictions.

When the wielder activates this Evocation, her body leaves Creation and manifests within the City. Any belongings she wears or carries accompany her, including Perdurant Vault itself. At the Storyteller's discretion, the City of Opal Unstained may contain artifacts or legacies of narrative significance hidden somewhere throughout its spires and corridors that once belonged to the shield's former wielders, whose locations might be bargained from its resident spirits.

Any changes visitors make to the City disappear as soon as all visitors leave. (Spirits count as visitors and prevent this reset, until the City dissolves them.) The City is secure against mundane intrusion, but can be entered for this Evocation's duration as though it were a spirit sanctum by dematerialized characters or characters using sanctum-opening magic to pursue the wielder and her companions at the spot where they entered. When the wielder wishes to depart, she and her companions reappear instantly at the same spot where they entered.

Special activation rules: This Evocation cannot be purchased with experience points. It awakens at no cost when the wielder achieves a major character or story goal (**Exalted**, p. 170) despite the efforts of her enemies to influence her, impede her with poison or disease, or set similar narrative obstacles in her path.

Dissonant: A character dissonant with jade cannot awaken this Evocation.

Resonant: A character resonant with jade can bring other willing characters within close range into the dream-realm with her.

“...numbering at least four, my lady.” The young minister was bold — perhaps too bold for a mortal.

“Four.” River winced internally. Four Anathema on the loose, on the Blessed Isle itself. “And that is a minimum, is it? What is the highest possible?”

“Well, my lady, we can be fairly confident the number is no higher than eleven, after checking the records.” The rice-paper sheets in the youngster’s hands rustled gently as he leafed through them, speaking absent-mindedly as he did. “The documents found on the site of the breach detailed approximately seven times that number throughout the history of the Realm, but the majority of ledger entries show the Anathemas’ death in various manners.”

“I see. Thank you. That, though, still leaves the question — why bring this to me?”

“A courtesy, my lady, from my superior.” Presumably that would be River’s cousin Ledaal Idisa. The boy had the Ledaal eyes. But Idisa had never favored River much — this was uncharacteristic of her. River thoughtfully thumbed the end of her braid. The boy paused to read something on the papers, and then said, “She thought my lady ought to know, and besides... ah, yes, here it is. It would be pleasing if my lady would take a look at this.” He handed over a page.

River took it, concerned, and started reading. The boy spoke again, “Ah, very good... my lady might wish to focus her attention upon the second line below the crease, if it pleases her.”

[PLEASE CENTER THESE FIVE BULLETS]

.....

“Are you sure?” Jihe’s voice was calm, as usual. Her sheer, unflappable stoicism had been one of the first things that drew River’s eyes; she’d never regretted leaving the Immaculate Order or going against her family’s wishes to be with her wife. They had talked about what happened fifty years ago, of course. The death of three fellow shikari wasn’t the sort of thing for which River could truly forgive herself.

“I sent someone to verify. All the facts are consistent with the magistrate’s report. He’s free.” It had been half a day at least, and the cold, dark lump in River’s belly had not loosened in the least. “I cannot sit idly by, Jihe. We should never have taken this creature alive. We should have killed him. I should have killed him. They deserved that much.”

“So you feel responsible for his — *Adan!*” The conversation was interrupted by a small child dashing into the room. “Young man, I have told you not to interrupt when Dragon-Blooded are talking, especially not your parents!” The boy froze, scared.

A flustered young man came jogging in after the youngster. “I am so sorry, mistress Ledaal, I swear it will not happen again!” He took the young child’s arm, and hustled on out.

Jihe muttered darkly, “I swear, that boy will never turn out well. We must have the tutor flogged.” River nodded, and her wife continued. “You performed your duties

impeccably, River. I will not dishonor you by failing mine. And right now, it is my duty to tell you that your guilt is misplaced.”

River nodded, only paying half a mind to words. The sight of the child only strengthened the pit in her belly, now made of ice-cold iron. Her old Anathema nemesis had taken three sword-sisters from her. If he were to....

“You’re in danger, Jihe. Take Adan and go into hiding.”

“And you, my love?” Jihe’s concern seeped through her normally impeccable poise.

River drew a deep breath. “I’m going to see Eshuvar. I think it’s time the Hearth reunited.”

Chapter Ten

Princes of the Earth

Thousands of Dragon-Blooded champions can be found across Creation, ranging from princes and ministers to monks and rogues. The following quick characters can be used both to represent specific characters and as guidelines for others. Some are movers and shakers in the Realm; others are travelers who might enter a story for many purposes.

Might of the Dragon-Blooded

The powers listed in each of these Quick Character stat blocks are meant only as a sampling of their most iconic powers, not a complete list. Storytellers should feel free to customize them by adding Charms, Evocations, or spells as they see fit.

Amon Mora

Amon Mora is among the most important patricians in the Realm. As Keeper of the First Imperial Seal, he was trusted by the Empress to oversee the Imperial Palace’s day-to-day functioning. Under his management, Palace staff are seen as among the most efficient, least corruptible servants and bureaucrats in the Realm, even as the Great Houses descend into chaos. Entering or leaving the city-sized Palace — or removing the treasures, documents, and artifacts stored therein — is nigh-impossible without approval from Mora or his deputies.

Mora’s appointment was preceded by a long, upstanding history in the Stewards of Imperial Assets. He began his career tainted by his family name; his parents were the last generation of a once-powerful Shogunate gens whose privileges and holdings were being swallowed up by the Empress and her new Great Houses. Their only Exalted child, Mora refused to join the Great Houses through marriage or adoption, and though never explicitly seditious, maintained vocal pride in his family’s heritage. Persistent, rigid adherence to bureaucratic rules eventually earned his colleagues’ trust, and he eschewed backroom deals for advancement in favor of honest work. The Empress took note, and saw use for him.

Mora never produced Exalted children, and his only marriage was centuries ago. Belonging neither to a Great House nor to the influential patrician families dominating the Imperial Service, he’s cultivated a reputation for impartiality. In a nation mired in

familial politics, Amon Mora is a rare Prince of the Earth without close relatives to sway his opinions. He guards this reputation fiercely, and is careful about showing favoritism towards friends and protégés, or even his few remaining Amon cousins. He only steps in to find a mentor or teacher for a suitable young relative, someone who'll drill them hard but reward capability.

Old friends hope Mora will back a candidate for the throne who'll grant the patrician families power at the Great Houses' expense, playing to his old frustration with the Great Houses who lessened his family name and his continued disgust for Dynastic corruption and excess. He listens and is tempted, but has yet to be convinced.

Despite the Realm's many failings, Mora held the Empress herself in the highest esteem. From the ashes of the Shogunate, she built an empire that held half the world together. Mora is hidebound, but no fool: He's seen how the world has changed and knows the Realm cannot simply pick up where it left off, but despises the thought of alterations to his precious system. Every candidate for the throne is either too reckless or too mired by tradition, and he despises both in equal measure. He cedes as little control over the Palace as he can, and does nothing to legitimize the pretensions of any would-be Empress.

Mora could never be mistaken for young, though even with his cane and bent back he towers over many younger Terrestrials. He dresses plainly for his station, as if to contrast with his colleagues' gaudy displays, and keeps his white hair long, tied back in a style passé a century ago. More than one young Dynast on her first trip to the Palace has mistaken him for a well-appointed servant.

Day-to-day execution of his orders falls to numerous deputies and protégés. Mora doesn't like drawing attention to himself; he prefers to act unseen and unnoticed, when acting in person at all. Only a few situations demand his personal attention, such as the legal requirement for him to lead the Imperial Force — the elite law-enforcement unit empowered to bring Dragon-Blooded before the Imperial courts — if it must perform its duties in the Palace.

To the frustration of those who'd buy his favor through vice, Mora is disinterested in career advancement, satisfied regarding money, and thoroughly asexual. He's also reaching the end of his lifespan, and fears that his efforts in rooting out corruption within the Imperial Service will die with him.

Aspect: Air

Essence: 4; **Willpower:** 8; **Join Battle:** 6 dice (+2 for 2m)

Personal: 15; **Peripheral:** 39

Health Levels: -0/-1x2/-2x2/-4/Incap.

Actions: Administration: 11 dice (+3 successes for 6m); Code-breaking: 8 dice (+2 successes for 4m); Read Intentions: 8 dice (+2 successes for 4m); Senses: 7 dice (+2 for 2m); Social Influence: 10 dice (+2 successes for 4m); Stealth: 9 dice (+4 for 4m);

Appearance 3, Resolve 4 (+2 for 4m), Guile 5 (+2 for 4m)

Combat

Attack (Elemental bolt): 11 dice at short range (4m per attack, +4 for 4m; Damage 14L/5, ignores 4 points of soak from metal or artifact armor)

Attack (Unarmed): 10 dice (+2 for 2m, Damage 8B)

Attack (Grapple): 6 dice (+2 for 2m; 4 dice to control, +2 for 2m)

Combat Movement: 8 dice (+4 for 4m)

Evasion: 4 (+2 for 4m); Parry 2 (+1 for 2m)

Soak/Hardness: 2/0

Intimacies:

Defining Principle: Law and order must be maintained.

Defining Tie: The Scarlet Empress (Admiring Loyalty)

Major Principle: Bureaucratic corruption is a mark of poor moral character.

Major Principle: The Realm needs change to survive.

Major Tie: Old friends in the ministries (Trusting Loyalty)

Minor Principle: The Imperial Service is the backbone of the Realm.

Minor Tie: Dynasts (Dislike)

Minor Tie: Protégés and former protégés (Benevolence)

Escort

Mora is usually accompanied by Imperial Palace guards. Use Legion of Silence Quick Characters from **The Realm**, or elite troops (**Exalted**, p. 497). He may also be accompanied by Dragon-Blooded protégés or underlings.

The First Imperial Seal (Artifact •••)

In addition to officially sealing important documents in the Empress' name, the Seal is the key to the Imperial Palace. Mora or an appointed underling (her palm blazoned with luminous scarlet by the Seal for one committed mote) must officially welcome all visitors to the Palace, or they're marked and targeted as intruders by its many sorcerous defenses; several junior ministers are thus blazoned to handle Palace traffic. He may also revoke this welcome at any time. A few rooms of the Palace can only be opened by wielding the Seal as a more literal key, though the inconvenience of dragging the aging Keeper away from his business elsewhere means most are rarely accessed.

The Empress never needed the Seal to control every facet of the Palace, and those who share her blood are welcomed by it automatically and irrevocably. She extended this immunity to other agents during her time on the throne, and it hasn't been rescinded in her absence.

Social Charms

Ascendant Ideal Inspiration (6m, 1wp; Simple; Indefinite; Air): Mora dedicates himself to a Defining Principle. Influence to weaken it must be rolled twice, using the lower

result. Double 9s on influence rolls to instill the Principle in others or persuade them to act on it.

Clear-Eyed Courtier's Scrutiny (10m, 1wp; Simple; Instant; Air, Mute): Roll Read Intentions with double 9s against all characters in a scene. Once per day.

Puissant Precursor's Monologue (6m, 1wp, expend Air Aura; Simple; Instant, Aura, Air): Roll social influence with double 7s to persuade targets to take action that upholds one of Mora's Defining Intimacies. Resisting costs an additional Willpower for targets that share the Intimacy. Once per story.

Thundering Dragon Proclamation (10m, 1wp; Simple; One scene; Air): Mora can be heard out to extreme range, doubling 9s and ignoring environmental or distance-based penalties on inspire and threaten rolls, but unable to use other influence unless he lowers his voice. Once per day.

Miscellaneous Charms

Bestow the Saffron Mantle (5m, 1wp; Simple; Indefinite; Water): Subordinate with a positive Major/Defining Tie toward Mora gains a Bureaucracy specialty in following his orders. She gains +1 Resolve against influence opposing that Tie, and it can't be fully eroded. Once per day, she may ignore Willpower cost of resisting influence opposing that Tie.

Evocations

Keeper of the Eternal Dynasty (10m, 1wp; Reflexive; One scene): Within the Imperial Palace, Mora gains +1 Defense, +15 soak, and Hardness 10 against attacks by enemies marked as intruders. He also gains +1 Resolve and Guile against them, and is immune to any Psyche effects they use.

Berit

There is no House Berit.

It's not a matter of "...yet," nor is it the tale of a house that fell into obscurity. Berit is a daughter of the Scarlet Empress, alive and well. She's a decorated general of the Imperial legions. Once, she rivaled even the great Cathak for acclaim on the battlefield.

Berit has become, for many Dynasts, a cautionary tale of achieving *too much*.

Berit's reputation was sterling. She had her troops' respect and her colleagues' admiration. The Realm's enemies were rightfully afraid when they saw her mon on the approaching army's banners. And, for many years, the Empress herself expressed her confidence in Berit's command.

As word of Berit's tactical brilliance spread, and as more and more troops aspired to one day serve under her leadership, Berit let it be known she desired — and deserved — her own Great House. The Empress left this petition ungranted, to Berit's ever-increasing frustration.

For nearly a decade, the Lunar Anathema Evisa Drinks-the-Sky harried satrapies at the edges of her territory. Efforts to draw her and her cohort out failed; thousands of soldiers sent into the forests to hunt them never came back.

Then Berit led a legion into Evisa's dominion. Villages who'd sheltered the Anathema were persuaded to give up information or face the sword. When the Lunar and her forces attacked, Berit and Evisa clashed. The Water Aspect slew the Lunar single-handedly.

The Empress acknowledged the victory, celebrating Berit and her troops as befit their accomplishments. Parades were thrown in their honor. Officers and their families received generous gifts and writs of recognition. Yet the Empress still refused to name Berit matriarch of her own Great House.

Berit voiced her unhappiness. The two quarreled bitterly, first in letters, then in person. Any witnesses to their last argument are long dead, but in its wake, Berit removed herself to the island of Iora, capital of rustic Wading Crane Rookery Prefecture, where she's dwelt ever since. Her exile is widely regarded as self-imposed. Though the Empress never reconciled with her daughter, neither did she send assassins against her.

Berit occupies the House of the Rusted Sword, a cliffside manse overlooking Iora city. She very rarely leaves its confines — many Iorans go their entire lives without ever seeing her. She has a few friends in the city whom she'll visit once in a great while; the occasional scholarly pursuit will also lure her out of the manse for short periods. Otherwise, the only way to see Berit is to make the treacherous climb to the House.

Those who disappear on the island are considered "taken by Berit" by the locals, though what purpose she'd be taking people *for* is unknown. Perhaps she takes them as slaves or lovers, or uses their blood in sorcery. Perhaps she leads them into the manse's depths to feed some devil trapped within, or calls on the wind and waves to sweep travelers off the cliffs before they've made the ascent.

Now that the Empress is missing, Berit's star is rising again. There's been a significant uptick in the number of ships sailing into port bearing the mons of Great Houses, and more than a handful of majestic ships flying no flags, but clearly carrying people of great import. All aim to win Berit's favor, gather her wisdom, and possibly bring her to side with their cause and serve as a general to their favorite for the throne.

Berit hasn't forgotten her own ambitions. If a faction with a sizable army were to back her, she'd be a willing contender for the throne herself.

Berit looks just past middle age, with twists of gray winding through her blue-black hair. She speaks and carries herself as though still in charge of a legion, the military bearing something she never lost despite over a century in exile.

Dynasts who come seeking her help find Berit formidable. She makes no promises, but listens coolly and intently to her visitors and asks pertinent questions.

Aspect: Water

Essence: 5; **Willpower:** 8; **Join Battle:** 9 dice (+4 for 4m)

Personal: 16, **Peripheral:** 32

Health Levels: -0/-1x7/-2x7/-4/Incap

Actions: Command Soldiers: 9 dice (+4 for 4m); Dynastic Education: 9 dice (+2 successes for 4m); Feats of Strength: 6 dice (+1 success for 2m, may attempt Strength 3 feats); Read Intentions: 8 dice (+2 successes for 4m); Resist Poison/Disease: 6 dice (+1

success for 2m); Senses: 10 dice (+4 for 4m); Social Influence: 8 dice (+2 successes for 4m); Sorcery: 8 dice (+4 for 4m); Strategy: 10 dice (+5 for 5m)

Appearance 3, Resolve 4 (+2 for 4m), Guile 4 (+1 for 2m)

Combat

Attack (Black Vein's Compass, jade daiklave): 13 dice (+6 for 6m, Damage 16L/5)

Combat Movement: 9 dice (+2 successes for 4m)

Evasion 2 (+2 for 4m), Parry 6 (+3 for 6m)

Soak/Hardness: 14/10 (Maelstrom, jade articulated plate)

Intimacies:

Defining Principle: The Realm is my home. I am still loyal to it, even if it isn't always loyal to me.

Defining Tie: Herself (Pride)

Major Principle: Hard work is *not* its own reward; my efforts deserved better recognition.

Major Principle: Mastering the enemy general is no challenge compared to mastering oneself.

Major Tie: The Scarlet Empress (Feelings of Betrayal)

Minor Principle: I have done much for the Dynasts. Now what can they do for me?

Minor Principle: The battlefield is where I belong.

Escort

The House of the Rusted Sword contains dozens of household guards trained to the level of elite troops (**Exalted**, p. 497), which form a Size 2 battle group with elite Drill. It's also home to Berit's former lieutenant, the outcaste Riven Dusk (use the traits for an experienced Dragon-Blood, **Exalted** p. 544).

Offensive Charms

Crimson Fang Bite (3m, 1wp; Supplemental; Instant; Dual, Fire): Add +5 **withering** damage or double four 10s on **decisive** damage.

Harnessed Firestorm Assault (10m, 1wp, expend Fire Aura; Simple; Instant; Aura, Decisive-only, Fire): Make three **decisive** attacks, each with (Initiative/2, rounded up) damage. Once per scene.

Roaring River Slash (5m, 1wp, expend Water Aura; Simple; Instant; Aura, Decisive-only, Water): Make a **decisive** attack, roll damage twice and add together. Once per scene, unless reset by going one round without attacking or being attacked.

Defensive Charms

Fighting-the-Tide Gemstone (Hearthstone): The first time Berit parries an attack in a round, she takes no onslaught penalty from it.

Graceful Flowing Defense (2m, 1i; Reflexive; Instant; Perilous, Uniform; Water): Ignore one point of penalty to Parry (five points in Water Aura).

Mirror-on-Water Focus (7m, 1w; Simple; Aura-length; Aura, Counterattack, Decisive-only, Mute, Perilous): Must be at dim anima to use; Charm ends when anima reaches glowing or higher. When enemy attacks, may end Charm to make a **decisive** counterattack before his attack roll, using (his Initiative/2, rounded up) for damage. Each level of damage strips one Initiative from his attack, in addition to dealing damage. Doesn't include her Initiative or reset her to base. Counts as her attack for the round. Once per scene.

Portentous Comet Deflection (3m, 1wp; Reflexive; Instant; Clash, Decisive-only, Fire): Clash with a **decisive** attack. Counts as her combat action for the round unless she expends her Fire Aura.

Ripples-on-Water Defense (4m; Reflexive; Instant; Aura, Dual, Water): Up to three 1s on **withering** damage roll subtract successes; up to three 1s on **decisive** damage reroll successful dice.

War Charms

Fog-of-War Misdirection (6m, 1wp; Simple; Until stratagem is completed; Mute, Water): Roll strategy against opposing general. Winning with 3+ threshold successes shrouds battlefield in mist, imposing -2 penalty on vision-based rolls and attacks from medium range or beyond. Enemy battle groups take -1 rolls to resist rout, and commanders must pay one Initiative to target them with command actions. If an enemy group is routed, Berit gains its (Size/2, rounded up) Initiative, maximum 5 per round. Once per story.

Hidden Thorn Treachery (5m, 1wp; Simple; Until stratagem is completed; Wood): Roll strategy against opposing general. Winning with 3+ successes lets Berit reveal a traitor in his ranks once fight begins, automatically routing a battle group. If opposing general can successfully rally, he preserves one dot of Size per two successes, with the rest switching sides to fight for Berit. If not rallied, entire battle group switches sides on next turn.

Roaring Dragon Officer (3m; Reflexive; One turn; Balanced, Earth): Flurry a command at only a -2 penalty, and no defense penalty. Negate penalty entirely in Earth Aura.

Sorcery

Shaping Ritual: When shaping a spell in a manse, gains one additional sorcerous mote per round. Once per story, can drain her Fighting-the-Tide Gemstone for ten sorcerous motes that last until the story's end, but losing its benefit until the story ends.

Beckoning That Which Stirs the Sky (Ritual, 2wp; [1 + threshold successes] hours): Roll sorcery to alter the weather, with difficulty based on degree of change and climate. Altered weather extends out to (5 + threshold successes) miles.

Sculpted Seafoam Eidolon (10sm, 2wp): Roll sorcery to create a convincing illusion of a person, an animal no larger than a horse, or an object no larger than a wagon. Characters within short range can roll (Perception + Awareness) against her roll to see through the illusion (+3 dice if they touch it), or roll (Perception + Socialize) against her roll if speaking with the illusion.

Silent Words of Dreams and Nightmares (Ritual, 1wp; One dream; Control spell): Roll social influence to instill, persuade, or inspire a character through a sorcerous dream the next time he sleeps. His Intimacies don't modify his Resolve, and he can't spend Willpower to resist unless the influence opposes an Intimacy.

Summon Elemental (Ritual, 2wp; Instant): Summon an Essence 1-3 elemental in a four-hour ritual, rolling sorcery against its Resolve to bind it.

Cathak Cainan

Handpicked by the house founder as head of House Cathak, Cainan is well over three centuries old. Today, he barely recalls his youth. Training to join the legions, he Exalted feuding with his bullying eldest brother, scarring him forever. Fearful and guilty over losing control, Cainan turned to the strictures of the Cloister of Wisdom. Having spent years learning to control his body in combat, in the Cloister he learned to control his mind and emotions, to better and more safely serve with his peers. Returning to the legions, he continued to grow in skill and power, until his devotion and temperament led to his being named Cathak's successor.

Cainan takes his role as head of House Cathak with the utmost gravity, knowing his house's power to influence the rest of the Realm. While preserving Cathak's legacy, he also seeks to maintain and stabilize the Realm, despite it slowly crumbling around its occupants. He's willing to work with other houses to achieve his goals — suppressing satrapial rebellions against the Realm, strengthening the Wyld Hunt to destroy the Anathema, securing Cathak's position against its rivals should civil war come — so long as any alliances or deals don't besmirch Cathak's honorable name. In everything he does, he strives to uphold the values and the honor of House Cathak, steadfastly determined to maintain his founder's legacy.

Given his advanced age, Cainan doesn't aspire to Imperial power — to die on the throne before securing the Realm's stability would only prolong the Realm's suffering. But he understands that if the Realm is to persist, it needs a leader in the Scarlet Empress' absence. He's willing to back any viable contender to the throne — someone with the tenacity to survive, the will to employ the power of the throne against the Realm's enemies, and the honor to place the Dynasty's needs over that of house or personal desires — but so far such a contender appears difficult to find.

An imposing figure, Cainan stands tall and heavily muscled. He bears his scars with pride, testaments to every struggle he overcame in the legions. Each move he makes is purposeful and practiced, with the subtle grace that comes from being entirely aware of his body as all times. Only the streaks of gray in his scarlet braid and the wrinkles around his eyes belie his advanced age, its effects held at bay by exercise, age-staving cordials, and a family heritage of longevity. Others have yet to notice, but he can feel himself slowing.

When Cainan speaks, his cadence is even and measured, each word carefully considered. He prefers to fully formulate his answers before speaking, sitting in silence until he's decided his response. Yet even when still and silent, he radiates intensity. His gaze, heavy and steady, is often enough to silence a room on its own. His eyes glow like embers on the battlefield, but otherwise hold surprising warmth.

Cainan seeks to treat all matters with fairness and give each the time it deserves. Of course, not all things deserve his time — he spares no mind for the laments of Cathak's satrapies as the house raises their taxes and imposes its order (and favors making violent examples of rebellious populations). An honorable man of an honorable house, devoted more than ever to Immaculate precepts, he doesn't tolerate under-the-table, back-alley dealings from his kin, and will swiftly replace anyone he discovers taking part in such practices.

Aspect: Fire

Essence: 5; **Willpower:** 9; **Join Battle:** 9 dice (+5 for 5m)

Personal: 15, **Peripheral:** 29

Health Levels: -0/-1x4/-2x8/-4/Incap.

Actions: Command Soldiers: 10 dice (+5 for 4m); Feats of Strength: 9 dice (+2 successes for 4m); Read Intentions: 5 dice (+1 successes for 2m); Resist Poison/Disease: 8 dice (+2 successes for 4m); Senses 8 dice (+5 for 5m); Social Influence: 11 dice (+3 successes for 6m); Strategy: 10 dice (+6 for 6m)

Appearance 3, Resolve 4 (+2 for 4m), Guile 2 (+1 for 2m)

Combat

Attack (Tempering Wisdom and Inferno Razor, jade short daiklaves): 14 dice (+6 for 6m, Damage 14L/4)

Combat Movement: 10 Dice (+3 successes for 6m)

Evasion 2 (+1 for 2m), Parry 6 (+3 for 6m)

Soak/Hardness: 13/7 (Unbowed-by-Armies, jade lamellar)

Intimacies:

Defining Principle: Self-discipline is everything.

Defining Principle: Creation should be ruled by the firm grip of the Dragon-Blooded.

Defining Tie: House Cathak (Pride)

Major Principle: No mercy for enemies of Creation, enemies of the Realm, or heretics.

Major Principle: The truth of the Immaculate Philosophy is unquestionable.

Major Tie: The Immaculate Order (Pious Obligation)

Minor Tie: His wife, Cathak Urima (Respect)

Escort

In addition to his many elite bodyguards (**Exalted**, p. 497), a Size 2 battle group with elite Drill, Cainan is rarely found without at least one Dragon-Blooded Cathak scion nearby.

Offensive Charms

Burning Pinnacle Strike (3m; Reflexive; Instant; Aura, Fire, Uniform): After a **withering** attack raises his Initiative above all enemies', make a reflexive **withering** or **decisive** attack.

Crimson Fang Bite (3m, 1wp; Supplemental; Instant; Dual, Fire): Add +4 **withering** damage or double four 10s on **decisive** damage.

Harnessed Firestorm Assault (10m, 1wp, expend Fire Aura; Simple; Instant; Aura, Decisive-only, Fire): Make three **decisive** attacks, each with (Initiative/2, rounded up) damage. Once per scene.

Smoldering Essence Attack (5m, 1a; Simple; Instant; Fire, Withering-only): Make a **withering** attack that drains additional Initiative equal to 10s on damage roll (which he doesn't gain). Enemy loses this much Initiative again on each of next four turns, or until she hits Cainan with a **withering** attack.

Defensive Charms

Overwhelming Fire Majesty Stance (6m, 3i; Reflexive; Until next turn; Fire, Perilous): Attacks against Cainan take a -5 penalty; enemies who hit take one die of Hardness-ignoring lethal damage. Foes can pay one Willpower to resist penalty (but not damage) in scene. No Initiative cost in Fire Aura.

Portentous Comet Deflection (3m, 1wp; Reflexive; Instant; Clash, Decisive-only, Fire): Clash with a **decisive** attack. Counts as his combat action for the round unless he expends his Fire Aura.

Mobility Charms

Dancing Ember Stride (4m, 2i; Simple; Instant; Fire, Perilous): Rush with double 9s, instantly move to close on success. Expend Fire Aura to rush from medium range.

Inescapable Blazing Advance (5m, 1wp, expend Fire Aura; Supplemental; Instant; Aura, Fire): Rush with four non-Charms dice. Up to four 1s on enemy's opposed roll subtract Initiative from him and grant it to Cainan; crashed enemies burn for that many dice of lethal damage each turn until extinguished.

Social Charms

Dragon Warlord's Convocation (10m, 1wp; Simple; Instant; Fire): Make an instill roll with double 9s to create a Major Tie of loyalty towards himself, or strengthen such a Tie to Defining. Resisting costs two Willpower in a Decision Point. Intimacy can't be voluntarily weakened unless Cainan wrongs the target. Once per story.

Implacable Dragon Mien (5m, 1wp; Simple; One day; Earth, Mute): +2 Guile to conceal Major or Defining Intimacies of emotion (+3 in Earth Aura, or +1 Guile to conceal non-emotional Intimacies).

War Charms

Deadly Wildfire Legion (5m, 1wp, expend Fire Aura; Supplemental; Instant; Aura, Fire): Add 4 non-Charms dice on a roll to order a battle group to attack and let it take its turn immediately, regardless of Initiative. Every two successes also add +1 damage to its

attack. Once per scene unless battle group incapacitates a significant foe or routs an enemy battle group on Cainan's orders.

Indomitable Flame of Valor (4m, 1wp; Supplemental; Instant; Aura, Fire): Rally with double 9s; elite Drill troops gain perfect morale for one round. Pay 4 Initiative to extend perfect morale to one scene.

Roaring Dragon Officer (3m; Reflexive; One turn; Balanced, Earth): Flurry a command at only a -2 penalty, and no defense penalty. Negate penalty entirely in Earth Aura.

Cynis Cogen

To most Cynises, the two things that matter are profit and pleasure. Other things can be important, of course, but at the end of the day, what are you living for if not to make a world that's more fun to live in? Love, hope, joy, jade, armies, magic — they're all different means to the same end. Few Cynises choose to go against this path, but some have eschewed it entirely.

One such Dynast is Cynis Cogen.

Cynis Cogen is a grandson of Cynis by one of her older daughters. He was raised among vineyards and drank wine like water. In his youth, he took upwards of a thousand lovers — some say a hundred in the first week after he Exalted. He was a dilettante and a duelist, a useful spy for his house, and a lover of pleasure for its own sake.

He wasn't a devout follower of the Immaculate Philosophy; he paid it the homage expected of a Dynast, and ignored it otherwise. When one of his lovers died to an Anathema, he rode in the Wyld Hunt to chase it down, then went right back to his everyday life.

But after his two hundredth year, his old pastimes began to bore him. Slowly, he pulled back from his socialite life — the galas and orgies, liquor and drugs, spying and scheming. And when his wife, who gave him three Exalted daughters, died of old age, he turned to the Immaculate Order to find some meaning in his life.

He found his purpose outside of the cloister. As an itinerant monk, Cynis Cogen travels across the Blessed Isle and throughout the Threshold, teaching the Immaculate Philosophy and rooting out heresies. He collects knowledge as he travels, and he brings it back to share with the Order to better perfect their tactics.

Anyone who sees Cynis Cogen might mistake him for someone's grandfather at first glance. He wears a tattered blue traveling cloak, enjoys telling stories, and always has a snack in his satchel alongside some secondhand romance novel. But his robes conceal a powerfully muscled body, and he's ferocious in the face of threats to the helpless or to himself. Cogen knows he doesn't have much time left. He fights as though he has nothing left to lose — and he enjoys it, which makes him extremely dangerous as a result.

But while Cogen has moved on from his old life, he cannot entirely turn away. As before, his daughters turn to him for advice and support in their troubles; as before, old friends come to him for aid in their schemes. He cannot quite shed his old affections and old loyalties, even knowing that they sway him from wholehearted devotion to his new path, and all too often he finds himself swept away from his duties into Dynastic intrigue.

Aspect: Water

Essence: 3; **Willpower:** 7; **Join Battle:** 8 dice (+5 for 5m)

Personal: 14, **Peripheral:** 35

Health Levels: -0x2/-1x7/-2x7/-4x2/Incap.

Actions: Disguise: 7 dice (+2 successes for 4m); Feats of Strength: 9 dice (+2 successes for 4m, may attempt Strength 5 feats); Investigation: 5 dice (+1 success for 2m); Read Intentions: 8 dice (+3 successes for 6m); Resist Poison/Disease: 8 dice (+2 successes for 4m); Senses 7 dice (+5 for 5m); Social Influence: 9 dice (+2 successes for 4m); Stealth: 8 dice (+2 successes for 4m)

Appearance 4, Resolve 4 (+2 for 4m), Guile 5 (+3 for 6m)

Combat

Attack (Unarmed): 13 dice (+6 for 6m, Damage 10B)

Attack (Clinch): 9 dice (+6 for 6m; 9 dice to control, +6 for 6m)

Combat Movement: 9 dice (+2 successes for 4m)

Evasion 3 (+1 for 2m), Parry 5 (+3 for 6m)

Soak/Hardness: 4/0

Intimacies:

Defining Principle: Selfless devotion to the Immaculate Philosophy is my true path.

Major Principle: Deceit can be used for more than selfish means.

Major Principle: Empty pleasure gnaws at the soul.

Major Tie: Old friends and colleagues (Nostalgia)

Major Tie: His daughters (Affection)

Major Tie: Immaculate Order (Obedience)

Minor Principle: Truth to tell, at times I miss the scheming and debauchery.

Minor Tie: House Cynis (Troubled Loyalty)

Offensive Charms

Drowning-in-Blood Technique (3m; Supplemental; Instant; Decisive-only, Water): Double 10s on **decisive** damage (add half foe's wound penalty, rounded up, to damage in Water Aura). Dealing 3+ damage raises foe's wound penalty by one until the scene ends or she crashes Cogen.

Essence-Dousing Wave Attack (5m, 1wp; Supplemental; Instant; Decisive-only, Water): If a **decisive** attack against a crashed enemy deals (her Essence) or more damage, cancel a single one of her ongoing combat Charm. Expend Water Aura to use against an enemy not in crash.

Flow Reversal Strike (7m, 1wp; Simple; Instant; Decisive-only, Water): Make a **decisive** attack that forces an enemy to roll her (Stamina + Resistance) at a difficulty of

attack roll threshold successes. On failure, she takes one die of **decisive** damage for each success she failed by, ignoring Hardness, then takes **withering** damage equal to her wound penalty. Once per scene, unless reset by crashing higher-Initiative enemy.

Mantis Form (7m; Simple; One scene; Form): +1 Parry; add (Parry) to natural soak and gain (Parry/2, rounded up) Hardness against blocked attacks. Double 10s on **decisive** damage rolls against lower-Initiative enemies or enemies he's grappling. Enter reflexively by grappling a non-trivial foe.

Water Dragon Form (10m; Simple; One scene; Form, Water): Attacks gain bonus dice equal to target's wound penalty, +4 soak. Enter reflexively by raising a non-trivial foe's wound penalty with a **decisive** attack.

Defensive Charms

Bottomless Depths Defense (5m, 1ah; Reflexive; Instant; Decisive-only, Perilous, Water): Roll 7 dice, negate that many levels of **decisive** damage. Expend Water Aura to negate all damage. Once per day unless reset by being hit by three **decisive** attacks without taking any damage.

Iron-Arm Block (4m; Reflexive; Instant; Uniform): +1 Parry. Successful block inflicts -1 onslaught penalty on attacker.

Social Charms

Rumor-Dredging Gaze (6m, 1wp; Simple; Instant; Mute, Water): Roll read intentions with double 9s to uncover the Intimacy target most wishes to keep hidden from him. Using it to blackmail target in the same scene doubles 9s on a bargain or threaten roll; success grants one Willpower.

Smoothing-Over-the-Past Technique (5m, 1wp; Simple; Instant; Water): Make an instill roll against one character to make her forget a past incident of misconduct by Cogen for one scene. If this would make her act against a Major or Defining Intimacy, she may resist for one Willpower.

Miscellaneous Charms

Instant Disguise Prana (1m, 1wp; Simple; Instant; Water): Roll disguise in one minute, ignore penalties for lacking equipment. With equipment, double 9s.

Ledaal Kes

Ledaal Kes was already known as a skilled Gateway player when his family sat him across the board from the Scarlet Empress at a gala. For her part, the Empress played against eight-year-old Kes the same way she'd played against the grizzled old Dynasts who'd challenged her earlier that evening. Though Ledaal Kes ultimately lost the game, the story of that match swept across the Realm.

His Exaltation shortly after his ninth birthday made him one of the youngest on record to Exalt. Wagging tongues speculated on what further feats he might accomplish, and from that day on, Ledaal Kes was determined to excel at everything he attempted. His skill at mathematics and finances landed him a job as an Imperial Treasurer right out of school.

Kes' childhood fame made him a sought-after guest at society events, where he developed an eye for observation. He learned to spot deals being made, conflicts arising, alliances being formed. While it was frustrating to be dismissed for his youth, Kes practiced using that to his advantage — a skill he employs to this day, still appearing much younger than his years, even for a Dragon-Blood.

As he grew older, Ledaal Kes availed himself of all the Realm's hedonistic pleasures — exotic drugs, fine foods, luxurious accommodations. Growing up among the Imperial City's movers and shakers taught him how to be charming, intriguing, and occasionally scandalous. His romantic pursuits are a perpetual topic of conversation; he falls for a new man seemingly at the turn of each season. Decades removed from youthful fame, he's still an honored guest at any celebration.

Shortly after graduation, he married friend and Gateway rival Ragara Szaya (p. XX). Their union is one of equals, two intensely intelligent and inventive minds working together. Kes and Szaya are known amongst their peers for strange and wondrous inventions, many of which are accomplished in a few feverish days, their senses heightened and minds racing from whatever magical or alchemical substances they've ingested. Both Ledaal Kes and Ragara Szaya are homosexual. They pursue relationships outside of marriage with each other's blessing, and have produced multiple Dragon-Blooded children as the Realm requires.

In his position as a high-ranking official in the Imperial Treasury — and a member of Treasury head Bal Keraz's inner circle — Kes is charged with managing coin and goods flowing into and out of the Realm, keeping tabs on the coffers, and knowing whether the obol has risen or fallen in value and why. He's aware of how money moves between the houses: who has it flowing in, and who's bleeding jade at an alarming rate. Following the money trail is as exciting to him as plotting out moves on a Gateway board. All of which lends itself quite nicely to his other, secret position as an agent of the All-Seeing Eye.

He still resents the way other Dynasts dismiss him; the sexist things said about him that reach his ears still grate. No matter his accomplishments, his youthful appearance means that others sometimes fail to read him as a threat. These things sting bitterly, yet he uses them to gather information from the unsuspecting. There's an advantage in being underestimated, and Ledaal Kes wields it like a knife.

It all comes back to puzzles, in the end: Gateway, the Treasury, the All-Seeing Eye. He derives great pleasure from putting seemingly disparate pieces together, and few are better at doing so.

Though in the latter half of his sixties, Kes looks young for his age. Even this is a subject of gossip: they say it's due to the drugs he takes, or his myriad lovers keeping him young-at-heart, or exorbitant amounts spent on cosmetics. There are, of course, whispers of sorcery and deals with demons.

His clothing always reflects the height of current trends; his closets could swallow up some patricians' houses. Kes tends toward understated looks and dark tones, but every outfit has a flash of color or an intricate design to draw the eye.

Aspect: Air

Essence: 3; **Willpower:** 7; **Join Battle:** 8 dice (+2 for 2m)

Personal: 14; **Peripheral:** 35

Health Levels: -0/-1x2/-2x2/-4/Incap

Actions: Administration: 11 dice (+2 successes for 4m); Crafting: 7 dice (+2 for 2m); Disguise: 9 dice (+2 successes for 4m); Dynastic Education: 10 dice (+3 successes for 6m); Investigation: 7 dice (+2 successes for 4m); Playing Gateway: 11 dice (+3 successes for 6m); Read Intentions: 9 dice (+2 successes for 4m); Senses: 6 dice (+2 for 2m); Social Influence: 9 dice (+3 successes for 6m); Stealth: 7 dice (+2 successes for 4m)

Appearance 4, Resolve 4 (+2 for 4m), Guile 4 (+2 for 4m)

Combat

Attack (Throwing Knives): 8 dice at close range (+2 for 2m; Damage 9L)

Attack (Unarmed): 7 dice (+2 for 2m; Damage 9B)

Combat Movement: 7 dice (+4 for 4m)

Evasion 4 (+2 for 4m), Parry 2

Soak/Hardness: 2/0

Intimacies:

Defining Principle: The world is a puzzle I will solve.

Major Principle: It's my duty to serve the Realm.

Major Tie: Ragara Szaya (Respect and admiration)

Major Tie: Bal Keraz (Loyalty)

Major Tie: The All-Seeing Eye (Loyalty)

Minor Principle: Underestimate me at your own peril.

Escort

Kes rarely has personal guards, but is accompanied by battle-ready household troops (**Exalted**, p. 496) while on the road, a Size 1 battle group with average Drill. It's not uncommon for him to be accompanied by one or more young Dynasts (**Exalted**, p. 541) beguiled by his wit and charm; these often have their own bodyguards as well.

Offensive Charms

Winter Fang Attack (4m; Supplemental; Instant; Air, Balanced, Decisive-only): If **decisive** Thrown attack or gambit succeeds, enemy loses Initiative equal to 10s on Initiative roll, maximum 3 (which Kes doesn't gain).

Defensive Charms

Safety Among Enemies (5m, 1wp; Reflexive; Instant; Air, Aura, Decisive-only, Perilous): Redirect a **decisive** dodged attack to another character in range, as long as his Initiative exceeds the combined sum of his attacker and the new target.

Social Charms

Clear-Eyed Courtier's Scrutiny (10m, 1wp; Simple; Instant; Air, Mute): Roll Read Intentions with double 9s against all characters in a scene. Once per day.

Foul Stench of Lies Discernment (3m, 1wp; Reflexive; Instant; Air, Mute): Roll Investigation with three non-Charms dice against a character's Guile when he speaks to determine if he's lying. Waive Willpower cost for subsequent uses once a lie's been found.

Smoke Without Flame (4m, 1wp; Reflexive; Instant; Fire): +1 Guile (non-Charms in Fire Aura). If opposing character fails, he instead sees a misleadingly exaggerated version of Kes' emotional state or an emotion-based Intimacy.

Voices on the Wind (3m, 1wp; Simple; One scene; Air): Add +2 dice on Senses rolls to eavesdrop. Reading intentions while eavesdropping from medium range or farther imposes -2 Guile.

Wind-Carried Words Technique (3m; Simple; Instant; Air): Send a message of up to a few sentences to a character within 15 miles.

Miscellaneous Charms

Zone of Silence Stance (10m, 1wp; Simple; One scene; Air, Mute): 10s on Stealth rolls reroll non-1 failures, and Kes can't be heard. Can extend silence to everything within close range (expands an additional range per round in Air Aura, maximum long); characters may pay one Willpower to make a single spoken social roll if silence threatens a Major or Defining Intimacy.

Mnemon

In the Realm today, there's perhaps no name spoken with such reverence, and such resentment, as that of the Empress' eldest living daughter. Over four centuries old, Mnemon remains active in politics and warfare. Her bloodline's strength is impeccable. Manses raised by her own hand are among the finest on the Blessed Isle. Her house's prestige is unquestioned. She doesn't hide her plays for the Scarlet Throne, and some talk of her as the de facto new Empress, though rarely happily. Ruthless and uncompromising, Mnemon is more like her mother than any other contender for the throne, and other Great Houses have no desire to see the rise of a new Scarlet Empress — especially one bearing grudges against them.

When her brother Ragara was born, he was greeted with a meteor shower. Mnemon's birth was heralded by an earthquake that shook the Imperial Mountain. She received the best education the Blessed Isle could offer. She Exalted at age fifteen, during a sparring bout with an Immaculate monk — secretly a Sidereal, placed in her retinue by Chejop Kejak himself.

This was the most dangerous time in her life. Ragara, uninterested in being overshadowed as heir apparent, set assassination plans in motion, beginning with a suit of poisoned armor on her sixteenth birthday. When that failed, his tactics became more overt. Mnemon fled the Versino — precursor to the Heptagram — under cover of darkness, and found shelter with the Immaculate Order.

Under the Order's protection, Mnemon furthered the training in warfare and sorcery that makes her what she is today, and honed her wary distrust of those around her into a nigh-constant vigil. Even when she bears no obvious weapon, she's never defenseless, surrounding herself with loyal guards, invisible demons, and devious sorceries. Her knowledge of magic and miracles is second to none — but still she wants more. Mnemon is a collector of knowledge and artifacts, such as the mighty demon-binding Emerald Thurible.

Mnemon is a devoted adherent of the Immaculate Order that took her in and protected her. She's personally funded the construction of many monasteries and was influential in the selection of the current Mouth of Peace. Several Wyld Hunts have ridden with Mnemon at their head, and she's funded many more. She also makes a point of following the Philosophy's precepts, though possibly more in letter than in spirit. Members of House Mnemon who take the vows may expect a private audience with their house founder, with congratulations and careful instructions on how to best serve both house and Order.

Mnemon remains unmarried, though she has many consorts and would-be lovers. She selects her partners carefully, based on pedigree and power, and lavishes affection on them until she can find them a marriage that better suits her aims.

As house matriarch, Mnemon keeps herself intimately involved with her descendants' personal lives. Every member of the house receives her wisdom, scolding, comfort, or scorn. Mnemon is the beating heart of her family, and to go against her guarantees retribution. Her scions are a clannish lot by design, and they're the pillar on which her power rests. There are nights where she won't sleep in order to fuss over a great-great-grandchild's marriage, or counsel a child who's nervous about studying at the Heptagram or entering the Immaculate Order. While it's rare for anyone outside of the house to interact with her as anything other than a general or sorcerer, those in House Mnemon know her to be exacting but generous, with an acerbic sense of humor and a bone-deep devotion to Dynastic duty.

Small wonder she's considered a major contender for the Scarlet Throne. It irritates Mnemon that she's considered a contender and not the heir apparent. After all, isn't it her birthright?

Aspect: Earth

Essence: 5; **Willpower:** 9; **Join Battle:** 9 dice (+5 for 5m)

Personal: 16, **Peripheral:** 32

Health Levels: -0x2/-1x7/-2x7/-4x2/Incap.

Actions: Administration: 10 dice (+2 successes for 4m); Crafting: 11 dice (+6 for 5m); Dynastic Education: 10 dice; Read Intentions: 7 dice (+1 success for 2m); Resist Poison/Disease: 8 dice (+2 successes for 4m); Senses 9 dice (+5 for 5m); Social Influence: 10 dice (+2 successes for 4m); Sorcery: 11 dice (+6 for 6m)

Appearance 4, Resolve 5 (+3 for 6m), Guile 4 (+1 for 2m)

Combat

Attack (Sword of Sorrows, jade daiklave): 12 dice (+5 for 5m, Damage 14L/5)

Attack (Unarmed): 12 dice (+4 for 4m; Damage 9B)

Combat Movement: 6 dice (+1 success for 2m)

Evasion 1 (+1 for 2m), Parry 5 (unarmed 4) (+2 for 4m)

Soak/Hardness: 14/10 (Omphalos' Embrace, jade-reinforced breastplate)

Intimacies:

Defining Principle: I alone deserve to be Empress; I alone can restore the Realm's glory

Defining Principle: My devotion to the Immaculate Philosophy is unwavering

Defining Tie: House Mnemon (Authoritarian Pride)

Major Principle: I crave the secrets of the First Age

Major Tie: The Scarlet Empress (Admiration)

Major Tie: The Immaculate Order (Gratitude)

Major Tie: Ragara and his house (Hatred)

Minor Tie: The Anathema (Pragmatic Wariness)

Minor Tie: The Sidereal Exalted (Mistrust)

Minor Tie: V'neef (Resentment)

Escort

Mnemon never goes unprotected. In addition to elite bodyguards (**Exalted**, p. 497), bound demons, and sorcerous defenses, she's rarely found without at least one Dragon-Blooded Mnemon scion nearby.

Offensive Charms

Burning Fury Wreath (3m; Supplemental; Instant; Balanced, Fire, Decisive-only): Ignore (2 + 10s on attack roll) points of Hardness with a Melee attack.

Earth Dragon Form (9m; Simple; One scene; Earth, Form): Add +2 dice on unarmed smash attacks and attacks against prone enemies. +3 natural soak. May activate reflexively when hit by the attack of a lower-Initiative enemy.

Essence Disruption Attack (5m, 1wp, expend Earth Aura; Simple; Instant; Aura, Earth): Touch a character (difficulty 1 gambit) and roll social influence against his Resolve. Success raises the total cost of any magic he uses in a single instant by (4 + threshold successes) motes, until he's paid this surcharge (6 – his Integrity) times.

Defensive Charms

Flame-Borne Interception (3m; Reflexive; Until next turn; Balanced, Fire, Uniform): Each attack blocked with Melee Parry grants +1 Parry. Bonus resets if she's hit with an attack or defends with Evasion or unarmed Parry.

Perfect Scales of the Dragon (7m, 1wp, expend Earth Aura; Reflexive; Until next turn; Aura, Decisive-only; Earth): Gain Hardness 16. Attackers that fail to overcome

Hardness lose two Initiative, which Mnemon gains. Can't attack or move on next turn (but can shape sorcery).

Unfeeling Earth Meditation (3m; Supplemental; Instant; Earth): Ignore all wound penalties for one action. In Earth Aura, ignore all wound penalties while in Aura.

Unmoving Mountain Stance (6m; Reflexive; Instant; Dual, Earth, Perilous): After being hit by an attack, but before damage is rolled, reduce Initiative enemy gains from **withering** damage by two points (3 in Earth Aura). Smash attacks and similar effects won't move her unless they deal 8+ **withering** damage (13+ in Earth Aura) or 3+ **decisive** damage (8+ in Earth Aura).

Social Charms

Ascendant Ideal Inspiration (6m, 1wp; Simple; Indefinite; Air): Mnemon dedicates herself to a Defining Principle. Influence to weaken it must be rolled twice, using the lower result. Double 9s on influence rolls to instill the Principle in others or persuade them to act on it.

Unfaltering Pillar of Unity (10m, 1wp; Simple; Instant; Earth, Mute): Roll to instill group members with a Tie of loyalty to their group, doubling 8s. Resisting requires calling on a Major or Defining Intimacy in a Decision Point. The instilled Intimacy can't be voluntarily weakened for (6 – target's Integrity) weeks, and requires overturning influence to erode with instill rolls. Once per story.

Miscellaneous Charms

All-Encompassing Earth Sense (3m; Reflexive; Instant; Earth): Roll Senses with double 9s to detect hidden threats standing on the same surface as her out to short range.

Sense-Riding Technique (5m, 1wp; Simple; 10 days; Earth): Touch a character and roll social influence against his Resolve to ride his senses, perceiving the world through them while meditating.

Evocations

Breath of the Demon City (5m, 5i, 1wp; Simple; One scene; Perilous): Fill a single range band with thick, sickly-sweet smoke. Demons in the smoke halve the mote cost to materialize (round down).

Sweet Scent of Hell (5m; Supplemental; Instant): The Emerald Thurible doubles 9s on a roll to bind a demon, or an instill, persuade, or bargain roll against a demon.

Sorcery

Shaping Ritual: Once per story, Mnemon may study her vast collection of sorcerous texts to roll sorcery with +3 non-Charms dice, gaining that many sorcerous motes until the story ends.

Dragon-Sorcerer Puissance: Gain one sorcerous mote per round while shaping an element-based spell; three per round in the appropriate Elemental Aura.

Corrupted Words (15sm, 1wp; Psyche; Indefinite; Control spell): Roll sorcery against the Resolve of a target at short range to forbid him from speaking of a single subject. Casting this can't be detected without magic.

Death of Obsidian Butterflies (15sm, 1wp; Decisive-only; Instant): Roll sorcery as an undodgeable **decisive** attack against all characters in a line out to medium range (battle groups take -2 Defense). Roll (5 + threshold successes)L damage, or (10 + threshold successes)L against battle groups. This doesn't reset Mnemon's Initiative.

Demon of the First Circle (Ritual, 2wp, Instant): Summon a First Circle Demon in a night-long ritual, rolling sorcery against its Resolve to bind it.

Infallible Messenger (5sm, 2wp): Conjure a cherub to deliver a message up to five minutes long to a single individual anywhere in Creation, reaching him within a day. Can convey social influence, but not social Charms.

Stormwind Rider (15sm, 1wp; One hour + an additional hour per 5m): Ride a flying whirlwind that can carry up to ten other characters. Roll sorcery for movement actions, can double 8s for 1m, 1wp. In combat, the whirlwind is light cover; passengers that are hit by **decisive** attacks or crashed fall from it.

Demon of the Second Circle (Ritual, 3wp; Instant): With the power of the Emerald Thurible, Mnemon may summon a Second Circle Demon on the night of the new moon, rolling sorcery against its Resolve to bind it.

Ragara Benoru

Ragara Benoru was, from childhood, blessed with an overdeveloped sense of morality that no amount of schooling seemed to drive from her — she'd criticize instructors' lapses with as much ferocity as her peers', without the slightest sense of decorum. Even her parents found it difficult to tolerate her moral excess, but no admonishment or punishment deterred her commitment to make the world around her more just.

It was scarcely a surprise to her family when Benoru rode into the hills to join the Bloodied Scythe Uprising, siding with the peasants against a cruel Dynastic prefect. Among the rebels of Cypress Mountain, the girl who couldn't stomach the hypocrisy of fellow Dynasts became a woman who captured the imagination of peasants she'd sworn to defend. One of the Seventy-Two Heroes of Cypress Mountain, she commanded the righteous militias of the Bloodied Scythe Uprising, leading lightning raids under the noses of the corrupt prefect and crafting stratagems that confounded legions sent to crush the rebels. Then Imperial messengers approached, offering clemency for herself and the peasants who served with her from the Scarlet Empress herself in return for surrendering to her total and divine mercy. In her wisdom, the Empress set Benoru to a task eminently suited to her uncompromising nature — serving the Realm as a magistrate.

And served she has. For fifty years Benoru lived in austerity, holding neither wealth nor title, witnessing the humble lives of the poorest peasants and the decadent displays of Dynastic families hoping to sway her judgment. Long years have honed Benoru's instincts and ground away her bravado. She's sought out the perpetrators of everything from fixing exchange rates for agricultural goods to betrayals of Great House matriarchs. To this day, peasant children fall asleep to stories of the Corvée-Swallowing Mountain Devil, Sixteenth of Seventy-Two Heroes, Ragara Benoru — stories that are officially disallowed but thrive nonetheless.

Now the Empress is gone and the magistrates' world has changed drastically. Rather than wandering each farming village in turn, Benoru spends most of her days leaning on Dynastic families' hospitality, balancing their contempt for the magistrate with their fear of a magistrate's death within their compounds — even if the Empress herself is no longer there to protect them, few magistrates are quite so loved by the people as Ragara Benoru.

With or without the Empress on the throne, it's her duty to see that the Realm is a just place, and nothing will dissuade her from the task. Her family safely sheltered in Ragara holdings in the Threshold, Benoru sees no reason not to use her power to keep the land orderly and punish the spoiled children that seek to better themselves in their Empress' absence. After fifty years, the experiences of a rebel leader are coming in handy again. She once led starving peasants against soldiers of the world's mightiest empire. Should the rich and powerful unleash their hounds against her, they'd do well to remember that this hare was once a dragon.

Ragara Benoru is a weathered woman, with dark brown skin from years living in the wild and wandering amongst the poorest villages in the Blessed Isle. Approaching a century old, she's starting to show her age from a life on the road — more so than peers who've taken easy jobs in Dynastic high society. She dresses simply even in the company of Dynastic hosts, preferring clothing that's easily mended and replaced over whatever impractical style is in fashion this season. Her signature weapon is a white jade firewand, but she does not own it herself; it belongs to her wife Ledaal Quya, who vigorously advocates on Benoru's behalf within House Ledaal. Benoru carries herself with the attitude of a peasant, but takes on the aggression and thunderous voice of a drill sergeant when acting in her role as magistrate, a change in character that takes most people off guard.

Aspect: Earth

Essence: 3; **Willpower:** 8; **Join Battle:** 8 dice (+4 for 4m)

Personal: 14; **Peripheral:** 30

Health Levels: -0/-1x4/-2x4/-4/Incap.

Actions: Command Soldiers: 9 Dice (+4 for 4m); Feats of Strength: 7 dice (+2 successes for 4m); Investigation: 11 dice (+3 successes for 6m); Read Intentions: 8 dice (+2 successes for 4m); Senses 7 Dice (+4 for 4m); Social Influence 7 dice (+2 successes for 4m); Strategy: 10 Dice (+4 for 4m); Tracking: 8 dice (+2 successes for 4m)

Appearance 3, Resolve 4 (+2 for 4m), Guile 2 (+1 for 2m)

Combat

Attack (Swan's Cry, jade dragon sigh wand): 12 dice at close range (+5 for 5m, Damage 18L/5)

Attack (Unarmed): 12 dice (+3 for 3m, Damage 10B)

Attack (Grapple): 10 dice (+3 for 3m; 8 dice to control, +4 for 4m)

Combat Movement: 6 dice (+2 successes for 4m)

Evasion 4 (+2 for 4m); Parry 4 (+2 for 4m)

Soak 7/0 (Chain shirt)

Intimacies

Defining Principle: The powerful must protect the meek.

Major Tie: The Seventy-Two Rebels of Cypress Mountain (Camaraderie)

Major Principle: I shall not be deterred from the path of justice.

Major Tie: Ledaal Quya and their child (Love)

Major Tie: Those who abuse their power (Righteous Fury)

Minor Principle: I don't believe in peasant superstition, but why risk bad luck?

Escort

Benoru often travels alone, but has a handful of archons that she can call upon. Use archon Quick Characters from **The Realm**, or spymasters (**Exalted**, p. 499).

Offensive Charms

Blossom of Inevitable Demise (3m; Supplemental; Instant; Dual): Attack at medium range with her dragon sigh wand; double 10s on **decisive** damage.

Boughs of Burning Autumn (2m, 1i; Reflexive; Instant; Fire/Wood, Perilous): Reloads her dragon sigh wand reflexively.

Phoenix Flies on Golden Wings (3m; Supplemental; Instant; Dual): Dragon sigh wand **decisive** attack deals +4 damage dice at close range; +3 at short; +2 at medium; +1 at long. **Withering** attacks add that many successes instead.

Righteous Devil Form (5m; Simple; One scene; Form): Roll social influence with three bonus dice against all enemies to threaten or inspire guilt. Affected enemies must pay one Willpower to resist or take -3 penalty on disengage, withdraw, and Stealth rolls. Benoru may reflexively aim at an affected enemy once per turn (even if he paid Willpower).

Defensive Charms

Earth Bears Witness (5m, 3i; Reflexive; Instant; Aura, Decisive-only; Earth/Wood, Perilous): Subtract two dice of damage from a **decisive** attack. In Earth Aura, subtract three dice within short range of large stone objects.

Impervious Skin of Stone (4m; Reflexive; Instant; Balanced, Withering-only): +3 soak. In Earth Aura, can use after being hit.

Unfeeling Earth Meditation (3m; Supplemental; Instant; Earth): Negate wound penalties on a single action.

Social Charms

Falsehood-Unearthing Attitude (3m; Simple; Earth; Instant): Roll Investigation with two bonus successes against a character's Guile; success reveals an Intimacy he'd lie to protect.

Miscellaneous Charms

Bloodhound's Nose Technique (4m, 1wp; Simple; 4 days; Water/Wood): Roll investigation with double 9s to determine who left behind a piece of evidence. Double 9s on rolls to track him.

Echoes Caught in Stone (3m, 1wp; Simple; Instant; Earth): After finding evidence, roll investigation against a difficulty of the number of days since it was placed. Success reveals a relevant conversation that occurred near it within the last three months. Once per story.

Sesus Nagezzer, The Slug

The old keep on the hill seems more nocturnal than not. By day, merchants and courtiers move to and fro through the gates, but at night, the place seems to come alive, thronging with exotic crowds. Newcomers and children whisper that under the keep is the lair of some terrible monster, and to some degree, they're right. Once called the Throne of Roses, it's now better known as the Fungal Manse. It's home to a massive transient population of lowlives, hangers-on, criminals, shady dealers, and con artists. And in the center of it all, ruling from a throne of affected civility amidst chaos, is the prodigious bulk of Sesus Nagezzer.

Sesus Nagezzer is a huge man. When he stands, he's over six feet tall, and he more than amply fills out his heavy frame. His fashion sense is impeccable, and he's ostentatiously meticulous in dress and grooming. Nagezzer can be surprisingly fast despite his bulk and maimed leg, and his strength is formidable. He makes no apologies for his proclivities, which run towards food and carnality. Nagezzer's appetites in both areas are legendary: In a typical dinner, he'll consume an entire table of food alone, and in the morning he'll often awaken refreshed with multiple partners in his bed.

When he holds court or attends other Dynastic social events, he speaks little, listening quietly as others beseech his favor, gossip, or ramble drunkenly. When he does speak, it's most often to punctuate the awkward silence after someone commits a faux pas or realizes she's revealed too much, and even then, he speaks but briefly.

Nagezzer knows what it means to be a hero, for he was once one himself. A graduate of the House of Bells and an officer in the Imperial legions, he styled himself a paragon of House Sesus' martial prowess. His promising destiny died abruptly the day that his pursuit of the dangerous spirit Wind Across the Savanna ended in his maiming and near-fatal wounding at the god's hands. He sees his younger self reflected in fledgling heroes, and knows the value of holding leverage over them — be it an unpaid debt, an imprisoned loved one, or a sense of obligation to a kindly, if unpleasant, mentor who saw value in a young protégé that no one else saw.

After his maiming, Nagezzer was discharged from the Imperial legions, and sent to the Cloister of Wisdom to heal. In his time among the monks, Nagezzer realized he'd never achieve the power and peace he sought through conventional means. He might never again lead a legion in the Empress' service. Instead he'd create a silent army, unseen and underestimated.

Inheriting the Throne of Roses upon his hated mother's death, Nagezzer transformed it from an elegant sanctuary into a den of vice. Now it serves as the capital of his hidden empire. There he holds court among layabouts and sycophants whom he's carefully

cultivated to act as set dressing for those who seek his counsel. From behind that veil, he rules a shadow network of spies, informants, messengers and assassins that runs from tiny unnamed satrapies all the way up to the highest halls of power in the Imperial City. In the hinterlands of the Threshold, his mercenaries — directed by his cousin Sesus Waru, a drunkard veteran of the Red-Piss Legion — fight for causes of his choosing under the anonymous banner of a white rose.

At this point, Sesus Nagezzer is vital to many of the simple-day-to-day workings of several prefectures. He didn't need an army to conquer his enemies, only time and leverage. But despite his underhanded ways and his accumulation of profit, he's no common crime lord. He serves the Empress' Realm, and would sacrifice everything he has for its continuance.

Aspect: Wood

Essence: 4; **Willpower:** 8; **Join Battle:** 6 Dice (+3 for 3m)

Personal: 15, **Peripheral:** 29

Health Levels: -0/-1x6/-2x6/-4/Incap.

Actions: Administration: 6 dice (+2 successes for 4m); Command Soldiers: 7 dice (+2 successes for 4m); Disguise: 7 dice (+2 successes for 4m); Dynastic Education: 7 dice (+2 success for 4m); Investigate: 6 dice (+1 success for 2m); Medicine: 5 dice (+2 for 2m); Read Intentions: 9 dice (+3 successes for 6m); Resist Poison/Disease: 7 dice (+1 success for 2m); Senses 6 dice (+2 for 2m); Social Influence: 11 dice (+3 successes for 6m); Strategy: 8 dice (+2 successes for 4m); Tracking: 5 dice (+1 success for 2m)

Appearance 4 (Hideous), Resolve 3 (+1 for 2m), Guile 6 (+2 for 4m)

Combat

Attack (The Sower's Rod, jade wrackstaff): 8 dice (+4 for 4m, 14B/4)

Attack (Unarmed): 9 dice (+4 for 4m, Damage 9B)

Combat Movement: 3 dice

Evasion 1, Parry 4 (+2 for 4m)

Soak/Hardness: 9/4 (Thousandfold Tantra Mantle, jade chain shirt)

Intimacies:

Defining Principle: I serve the Realm, and nothing else.

Defining Principle: I delight unashamedly in pleasures of the flesh.

Major Principle: Understanding others' desires is the key to my triumphs.

Major Tie: Himself (Self-Pity)

Major Tie: House Sesus (Distrust)

Minor Principle: I devote myself to the Immaculate Philosophy.

Minor Tie: Sesus Waru (Trust)

Minor Tie: Anathema (Enmity)

Escort

Nagezzer almost never leaves his palace, which is protected by dozens of battle-ready household guards (**Exalted**, p. 496), a Size 2 battle group with elite Drill led by grizzled mercenary lieutenants. He's also protected by his twin Western concubines, Spinda and Echo (use assassin traits, **Exalted**, p. 499), and by his teacher and bodyguard, the Wood Aspect monk Autumn Spiral.

Merits

Sobriquet: Once per story, when Nagezzer makes an influence roll that aligns with his image as a debauched hedonist, the level of the stunt he's awarded is increased by one.

Offensive Charms

Eyes of the Wood Dragon (4m; Supplemental; Instant; Withering-only, Wood): Add +3 raw **withering** damage. Pay +1i and take a -1 Defense penalty to ignore 4 points of armored soak (no Defense penalty in Wood Aura).

Defensive Charms

Mind-Over-Body Meditation (5m, 1wp; Simple; Instant; Perilous, Wood): Roll 4 dice; successes heal non-aggravated damage levels. Once per scene.

Wood Dragon Vitality (5m; Reflexive; Instant; Dual, Wood): Gain +4 soak (+8 in Wood Aura) or reduce **decisive** attack's damage by -1 (-2 in Wood Aura).

Social Charms

Poisonous Sneer Reproach (2m, 1wp; Reflexive; Instant; Wood): When another character makes an influence roll, roll social influence; impose penalty equal to successes. If this reduces target's pool to 0 or she botches, her influence has opposite of intended effect.

Rose of Millions (Hearthstone): Can automatically tell if a character shares his Principle of "I serve the Realm, and nothing else."

Rumor-Dredging Gaze (6m, 1wp; Simple; Instant; Mute, Water): Roll read intentions with double 9s to uncover the Intimacy target most wishes to keep hidden from him. Using it to blackmail target in the same scene doubles 9s on a bargain or threaten roll; success grants one Willpower.

Sweeten-the-Tap Method (5m, 1wp; Simple; One scene; Fire/Wood): Partygoers gain positive Minor Tie for fellow carousers and -1 Guile.

Tepet Ejava, the Roseblack

Disgraced and dishonored after losing its legions, House Tepet desperately searches for a means to regain its lost favor. Its greatest hope may lie with a woman who has disdained house politics and dedicated her life to the defense of the Realm.

Tepet Ejava was born while her mother was in the field. War was the first thing she knew, and for good or ill, it set the tone for the rest of her life. As a child, she excelled at strategy and war-games, and her Exaltation attuned her to the violent struggles underlying the natural world. As she matured, Ejava found herself ill at ease in the well-

manicured garden of Dynastic society — something that became less metaphorical when she inadvertently devastated the dominion's beloved rose garden. Her classmates nicknamed her "Roseblack" after the incident, but rather than seethe, Ejava embraced the nickname as a symbol of humility. It stayed with her through her training at the House of Bells, and through her engagements as a newly commissioned officer of the Imperial Legions, from putting down bandits and peasant revolts to vicious battles against Anathema and the Fair Folk. By the time Ejava made winglord, the name "Roseblack" was spoken with pride.

Then came the Battle of Futile Blood. Ejava wasn't with the Tepet legions when it happened, and still regrets that she wasn't there to fight alongside them. When word of the Tepet legions' fate arrived, Ejava found her world upended. Not only had she lost friends, comrades, and loyal soldiers, but the Realm she loved had been dealt a devastating defeat.

Even those Tepets jealous of Ejava's rising star now acknowledged her value as one of the house's most capable surviving officers. Promoting her to general, they placed her in charge of the one legion that had been foisted on the house in the partition of the Imperial legions — the infamous Vermilion, or "Red-Piss," Legion. While many officers might quail at the thought of managing such a disgraceful mob, the Roseblack saw it as an opportunity. Over the past three years, she's rebuilt the Vermilion into a competent and disciplined fighting force, equal to any legion fielded by the other Great Houses.

Ejava is the consummate Dragon-Blooded officer — disciplined, resolute, and professional. While other members of her house might chide her for putting off marriage, Ejava feels that she's exactly where the Realm needs her, and that her own career is fulfillment enough. Her closest confidant is the Chanos prefect, Ragara Nova, a socialite who once tried to win her hand. Other than Nova, there are few who've really gotten to know her. Her true home is the battlefield, and her soldiers are her true family. She has little time for anything else.

Ejava is a tall, imposing woman with the same long red hair as the Empress. When in the field, she's rarely seen without her armor and sidearm — a full suit of green jade articulated plate, and Thorn, her daiklave.

Aspect: Wood

Essence: 3; **Willpower:** 7; **Join Battle:** 9 dice (+6 for 6m)

Personal: 14, **Peripheral:** 24

Health Levels: -0x1/-1x6/-2x6/-4/Incap.

Actions: Command Soldiers: 10 dice (+6 for 6m); Feats of Strength: 8 dice (+2 successes for 4m); Read Intentions: 5 dice (+1 success for 2m); Resist Poison/Disease: 7 dice (+2 successes for 4m); Senses 7 dice (+5 for 5m); Social Influence: 9 dice (+2 successes for 4m); Strategy: 10 dice (+6 for 6m)

Appearance 3, Resolve 4 (+2 for 4m), Guile 3 (+1 for 2m)

Combat

Attack (Thorn, jade daiklave): 14 dice (+6 for 6m, Damage 15L/5)

Attack (Long Bow): 11 dice at short range (+2 for 2m, Damage 12L)

Combat Movement: 9 dice (+3 successes for 6m)

Evasion 1, Parry 6 (+3 successes for 6m)

Soak/Hardness: 14/10 (Triumph's Blossom, jade articulated plate)

Intimacies:

Defining Principle: A Dynast's only honor is defense of the Realm.

Defining Tie: House Tepet (Impatient Frustration)

Major Principle: I have no time for romance.

Major Tie: Those who sold out the legions for political gain (Contempt)

Major Tie: The Red-Piss Legion (Camaraderie)

Minor Tie: Her grandfather, Tepet Arada (Irritated Respect)

Minor Tie: Ragara Nova (Friendship)

Minor Tie: Her uncle, Tepet Fokuf (Loathing)

Escort

When not with the Vermilion Legion, Ejava is usually accompanied by a young Dragon-Blooded officer (**Exalted**, p. 541) and several elite house guards (**Exalted**, p. 497), a Size 1 battle group with elite Drill.

Merits

Sobriquet: Once per story, when Ejava makes an influence roll that aligns with her image as a heroic commander, the level of the stunt she's awarded is increased by one.

Offensive Charms

Burning Fury Wreath (3m; Supplemental; Instant; Balanced, Decisive-only, Fire): Ignore (2 + 10s on attack roll) points of Hardness with a Melee attack.

Crimson Fang Bite (3m, 1wp; Supplemental; Instant; Dual, Fire): On a Melee attack, add +4 **withering** damage or double three 10s on **decisive** damage.

Demon-Crushing Wolf Bite (4m, 1i; Supplemental; Instant; Perilous, Withering-only; Wood): Add +3 Overwhelming to a Melee attack. In Wood Aura, add +3 **withering** damage.

Defensive Charms

Aura of Grasping Branches (5m, 3i, 1wp; Simple; One scene; Perilous, Wood): Ignore up to four points of onslaught penalty to Parry each round. In Wood Aura, parried attacks don't inflict onslaught penalties.

Aura of Invulnerability (5m, 1wp; Simple; Aura state; Aura, Fire, Perilous): Roll (current temporary Willpower) dice and gain that many temporary -0 health levels and add +4 natural soak.

Earth Bears Witness (5m, 3i; Reflexive; Instant; Aura, Decisive-only; Earth/Wood, Perilous): Subtract two dice of damage from a **decisive** attack. Subtract three dice within short range of large stone objects (in Earth Aura) or trees (in Wood Aura).

Impervious Skin of Stone (4m, Reflexive; Instant; Balanced, Earth, Withering-only): +3 natural soak. In Earth Aura, can use after being hit.

Portentous Comet Deflection (3m, 1wp; Reflexive; Instant; Clash, Decisive-only, Fire): Clash with a **decisive** Melee attack. Counts as her combat action for the round unless she expends her Fire Aura.

War Charms

Deadly Wildfire Legion (5m, 1wp, expend Fire Aura; Supplemental; Instant; Aura, Fire): Add four non-Charms dice on a roll to order a battle group to attack and let it take its turn immediately, regardless of Initiative. Every two successes also add +1 damage to its attack. Once per scene unless battle group incapacitates a significant foe or routs an enemy battle group on her orders.

Enfolded in the Dragon's Wings (3m, 1i; Reflexive; Instant; Earth, Perilous, Uniform): Make a command roll when a battle group in short range is attacked; every two successes grant +1 Defense and soak. Once per scene, unless reset with a successful rally.

Roaring Dragon Officer (3m; Reflexive; One turn; Balanced, Earth): Flurry a command at only a -2 penalty, and no defense penalty. Negate penalty entirely in Earth Aura.

Evocations

Thousand-Thorn Strike (1m, 1a, 1wp; Simple; Instant; Decisive-only): Make a **decisive** Melee attack, thorns of anima bursting from within the foe's body as the daiklave strikes. Add three attack roll threshold successes to **decisive** damage and double 10s unless the enemy accepts a crippling injury (**Exalted**, p. 201).

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River massaged her writing hand absently as her chatelaine departed with the packet of letters. It was an old habit, the memory of long-ago correspondence bringing on a phantom ache. She supposed the news of the Anathema her Hearth had captured breaking out of the Imperial Manse had exacerbated it. For a moment that morning, even though she sat in her own study, separated from that place by fifty years and more than a thousand miles, she'd gone right back there: sitting by the roadside in the River Province in her monk's robes, scratching out *I regret to inform you...* over and over again.

But she wasn't sitting idly, waiting for someone else to fix this. Eshuvar had agreed as soon as she'd laid out her plan, and she knew the others would answer the call as well. The Solar was their responsibility. They'd dragged him here to the Imperial City — alive — and received the Empress' accolades. How proud they'd been that day: the Hearth who had slain one Anathema and captured another. If River had given any other thought to the Wretched in the years since, it was little more than the hope he was being tormented deep within the Imperial Manse, facing punishment for all the lives he'd taken.

They should have killed him. The Empress would have honored them just as much for it.

But the past was already written, and she'd dwelled on it long enough. Her wife Jihe said as much, and she was right. All they could do now was track him down and finish the job. Before he came for them first. Before he came for their families.

[PLEASE CENTER THESE FIVE BULLETS]

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Eshuvar leaned against the ship's rail, his back to the sea, and grinned at River. She couldn't help but think the wind whipping his hair artfully about his face was his own doing. The direction of the sea breeze should have been blowing it *into* his eyes. The same could be said of his clothing: no salt spray marred the silks, and the tassels at the end of his ornate belt hung smooth and untangled. It might have been an infuriating use of his anima to another Dynast, but to River it was just Eshuvar. A little vain, a little bit of a show-off. "It will be good to see him again. Mathar."

"I know who you meant."

"Swift and Chalima, too, of course."

"Of course." She didn't tease him about it, though over the years they'd become like brother and sister. When River and Jihe wanted to have a child, it was Eshuvar who summoned the neomah that gave them Adan. When a dalliance of Eshuvar's caused a bit more scandal than he'd intended to bite off, it was River who smoothed things over between him and his wife.

She remembered how young he'd seemed when they set sail on that first Hunt, fifty years ago. He'd aged well, still tall and slim and handsome, his face's youthful softness giving way to harder angles. Still, she couldn't help but notice how a weight seemed to lift from his shoulders the farther out to sea they drew.

She wondered if he saw the same weight lifting from hers.

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Tereya Kingfisher Swift still wasn't used to Seren's study. She'd been head of the Tereya household guard for three years now, stood in this room more times than she cared to count, and still felt like she wasn't quite at home. Most things were the same: the room, the clock, the tea set, Swift herself. Only Seren's appearance spoke to the passage of time. She was grayer than when she'd first offered Swift the position, more frail. Her mind was still sharp and her hands still steady, but her mortality was an undeniable fact.

Now, she was frowning in turn at Swift and the letter the Earth Aspect had brought her. "I suppose you have little choice in this matter?"

"They're my Sworn Kin, niece. And the thing that's broken free...." Swift gestured to the windows that overlooked the garden, where a pair of her young cousins were playing. "It might come for our families. It's best we do this now, before it runs too far and starts building up support again. Before it comes back here looking for us."

Seren's mouth twisted in displeasure. "And what if someone else comes? What if one of the Great Houses finally makes their move while you're out in the Threshold?"

She thought of the letters she and River had exchanged. There were always schemes afoot, and River knew how to read the political currents better than anyone Swift had ever met. Between what River's letters said and the whispers Swift herself had heard, she thought the status quo might last a little longer. "It's been three years, niece. It might be another three before anyone dares try to claim the throne. It *won't* be another three before this Anathema harms people again."

Seren *hmmphed*, but it was a sound that said she knew Swift was right. "Very well," she said, folding the letter and handing it back to Swift. "But I expect that if you hear word of an uprising, you'll hurry back here right away. We'll need you."

Less than an hour later, by the chiming of the Varangian clock, Swift rode out from the gates of the Tereya estate. She'd only paused long enough to write back to River and don her white jade armor. Anything else she needed, she could purchase on the road.

[PLEASE CENTER THESE FIVE BULLETS]

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Much had changed for Mathar since last he'd seen his Brotherhood. Oh, Chalima called on him now and again, when her kingdom's responsibilities let her sneak in a diplomatic visit. Eshuvar wrote from time to time, his letters full of his exploits. But to see them all together again? He almost wished he'd learned some basic sorcery, to find some spell to get everyone gathered faster. His warhorse stamped as he checked the saddle one last time. The horse's green jade barding jingled, and Mathar knew he wasn't alone in the stable anymore.

"What do you want?" he said, not bothering to turn.

"I heard you were leaving Lookshy. Going out ranging. Where to?" The voice was smooth and smug, and it took all of Mathar's strength not to lift the biwa from the horse's back and smash it in his companion's face.

He didn't. Mainly because it would be a waste of a damned fine instrument. "What business is it of yours?"

She slipped into view, keeping a safe distance both from Mathar and the horse. A well-trained warhorse might bite on command, and Vaya wasn't going to find out how well Mathar's horse obeyed. "I thought I'd offer you another chance to change your mind about your friends. To prove your loyalty to Lookshy rather than a trio of Dynasts."

Mathar also didn't reach for his longfang. That took more effort. "I told you, no. I've told you that for forty years and it's not going to change."

Once, Mathar and Vaya had been peers. They were both vying to climb the ladder in Lookshyan intelligence, and Mathar was, by all accounts, the favorite for a newly opened position.

Until Vaya remembered his renown for killing the Anathema, and started asking around about his companions on that Hunt. Two Dynasts and a "found egg" married into a wealthy patrician family: one in the Imperial Navy, one respected among the Immaculate Order, and one in the Imperial Legions. His outcaste friend, ascended as queen of a Hundred Kingdoms province. Surely Mathar could lean on his friends for information, couldn't he?

Wouldn't he?

But to do that, to pass the contents of Swift's letters along to his higher-ups, or to ask River not-at-all innocuous questions about her observations in the Imperial City, or see what Eshuvar could tell him about Sesus' current interests, or report on Chalima's territory... no. He refused. His loyalties lay with his Hearthmates, even above his beloved Lookshy.

Vaya had reported that up the chain, and there had gone years of Mathar's hard work and ambition.

But he'd do it all over again, exactly the same.

"Your loss," said Vaya.

"I recommend you not be in the stables when I leave," said Mathar. His normally bright smile instead resembled a shark's hungry grin. "People get trampled all the time."

[PLEASE CENTER THESE FIVE BULLETS]

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Left Hand Chalima draped her cloak of office over the chair and let Xocha help her with her steel breastplate's buckles. On the table beside her daiklave and devil caster sat River's letter. It had come the day after Chalima sent River a letter of her own, asking what the Realm's view on the surge of Anathema might be. She hadn't been accusatory in it — she respected River too much for that — but neither had she been subtle about her desire to ride in a Wyld Hunt, if she could. She supposed River could answer her questions in person when they were reunited.

Xocha checked the straps and buckles one more time, then declared Chalima ready. "Promise me you'll take care out there. I want you to come back to us."

Chalima smiled as Xocha caressed her cheek. “I will.” She said it again, this time for Itzli, and felt her dead husband’s cool, ghostly fingers trace her jaw.

“Good,” said Xocha. “I’ll only do so much of your paperwork before I decide to set the whole desk on fire.”

“I wouldn’t stop you if you wanted to. In fact....” She looked over at the piles of parchment needing her attention and reached for a pinch of firedust with a grin.

Xocha laughed and smacked her hand — gently, so as not to ignite the firedust. “When you get home, we’ll see how far behind I am.”

“It’s a deal.” Chalima kissed him once more, then hefted her weapons, and went to meet Mathar on the road.

[PLEASE CENTER THESE FIVE BULLETS]

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They came together by the northern borders of the River Province, arriving within hours of one another. First Mathar and Chalima, then Swift, then Eshuvar and River. Where once there’d been an empty road, a town had sprung up. It was small, still, but had enough traffic and trade passing through to support a caravanseraí. River suspected that its common room sat on the place where her commander’s tent once stood, fifty years gone. She wondered if any of the things they’d left behind had paid for this place. If she peeked in the study, would she find the lap desk she’d used so long ago to write her dreadful condolences?

She shuddered. She hoped not. She hoped that had sunk into the ground and rotted away fifty years ago.

But here she was, among her friends. Among her Hearth. Eshuvar and Mathar sat close, their foreheads touching as they shared some intense story. Eshuvar said something that made Mathar throw back his head and laugh. It was the same laugh River remembered, hearty and full, unconstrained. Swift and Chalima had acquired a newly drawn map from somewhere — perhaps from off the inn’s wall? They were already pointing out places to begin their search. River’s contacts in the All-Seeing Eye had sent her a few leads, while Mathar had accessed reports from Lookshy’s Intelligence Directorate. Small markers were scattered across the River Province where there’d been sightings of the Wretched.

Swift looked up and caught River watching them all. “We should swear again,” Swift said. Mathar and Eshuvar went quiet. Chalima set down her glass.

“We should,” said River, and got up to lead them all outside. She was fairly certain she knew exactly where they’d been standing the first time they swore their oath. It didn’t take long to find it. By the time they all stood in a loose circle, a small crowd had gathered to watch.

“I swear,” Chalima said, her voice as sure now as it had been back then, “by Earth; by Wood; by Fire; by Air; by Water....”

As their voices joined together and rang out into the evening, River thought how good it was to be home.