EXALTED
SECOND EDITION

Do not believe what the scientists tell you. The natural history we know is a lie, a falsehood sold to us by wicked old men who would make the world a dull gray prison and protect us from the dangers inherent to freedom. They would have you believe our planet to be a lonely starship, hurtling through the void of space, barren of magic and in need of a stern hand upon the rudder.

Close your mind to their deception. The time before our time was not a time of senseless natural struggle and reptilian rage, but a time of myth and sorcery. It was a time of legend, when heroes walked Creation and wielded the very power of the gods. It was a time before the world was bent, a time before the magic of Creation lessened, a time before the souls of men became the stunted, withered things they are today.

This is the story of that time.

THIS IS THE STORY
OF THE EXALTED.

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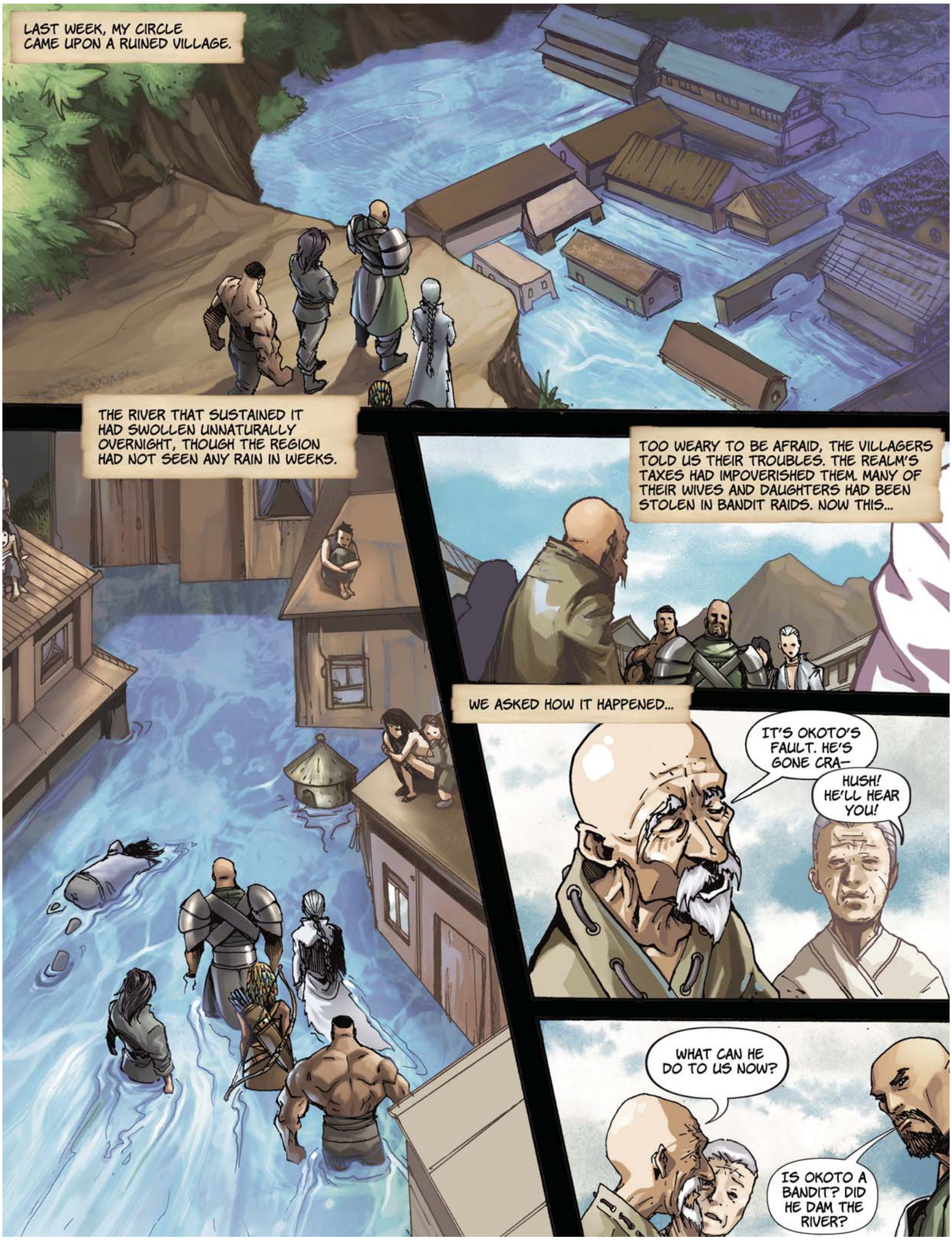
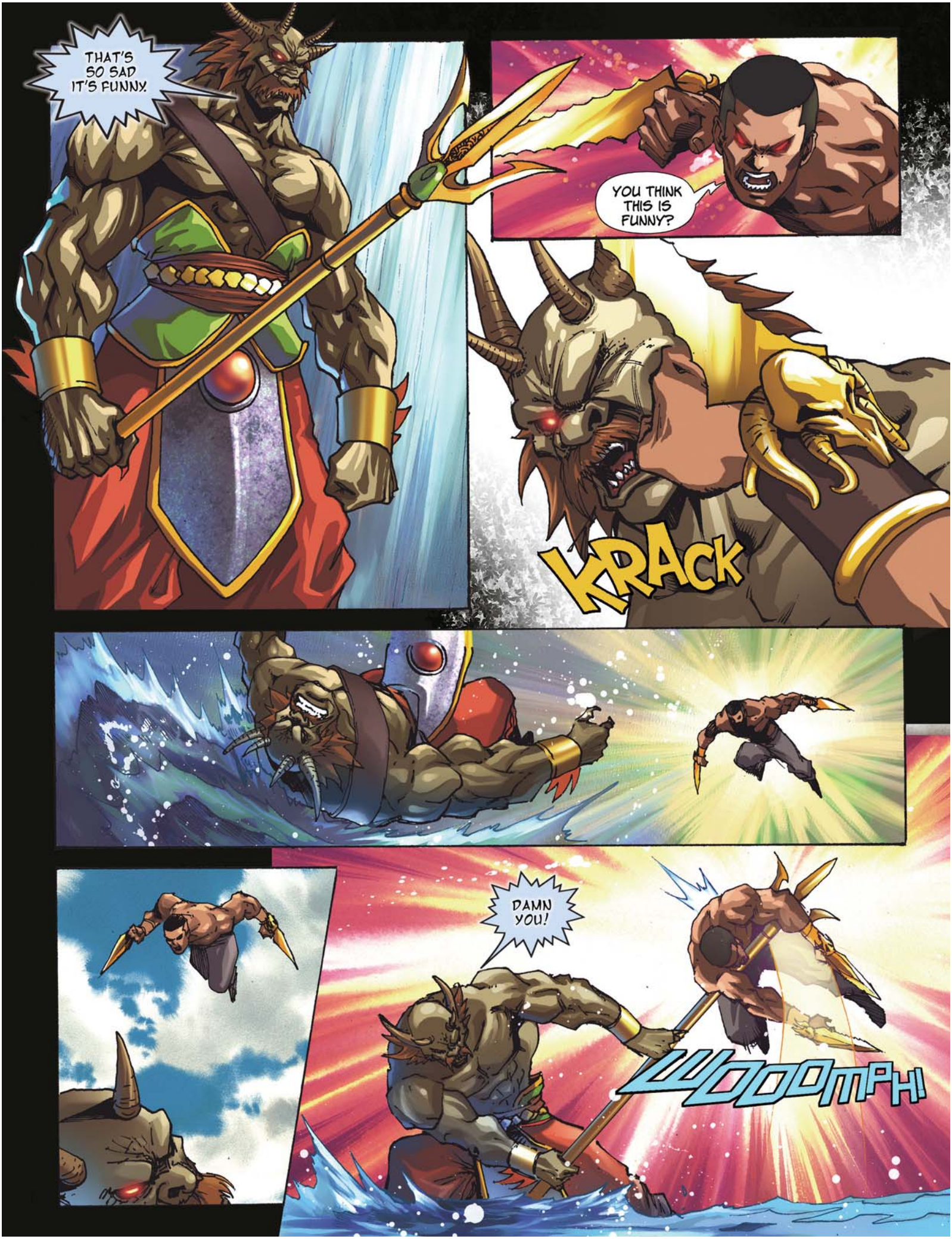

LAST WEEK, MY CIRCLE CAME UPON A RUINED VILLAGE.
THE RIVER THAT SUSTAINED IT HAD SWOLLEN UNNATURALLY OVERNIGHT, THOUGH THE REGION HAD NOT SEEN ANY RAIN IN WEEKS.
TOO WEARY TO BE AFRAID, THE VILLAGERS TOLD US THEIR TROUBLES. THE REALM'S TAXES HAD IMPOVERISHED THEM. MANY OF THEIR WIVES AND DAUGHTERS HAD BEEN STOLEN IN BANDIT RAIDS. NOW THIS...
WE ASKED HOW IT HAPPENED...
IT'S OKOTO'S FAULT. HE'S GONE CRA—
HUSH! HE'LL HEAR YOU!
WHAT CAN HE DO TO US NOW?
IS OKOTO A BANDIT? DID HE DAM THE RIVER?

NO...
ACTUALLY, THEIR OWN RIVER GOD HAD SET THIS DISASTER UPON THEM.
HAD THEY OFFENDED HIM SOMEHOW? HAD HE JUST GROWN SPITEFUL AND CRUEL? THEY KNEW NOT.
NONETHELESS...
WHATEVER HIS REASONS, OKOTO WILL PAY FOR THIS.
THEY SHOULD HAVE BEEN RELIEVED, BUT THEY'D JUST BEEN THROUGH SO MUCH.

WE LEFT IMMEDIATELY, OUTRAGED ON THEIR BEHALF.
MOST LITTLE GODS IN CREATION ARE WILLFUL AND PRONE TO MISBEHAVIOR, BUT THIS WAS JUST TOO MUCH.
IN A BETTER WORLD, THIS WOULDN'T BE NECESSARY.
VERY ASTUTE, JADE.
LET'S GO.
THIS IS THE PLACE.
WHAT'S THIS? MERCENARIES?
YEAH. HE PROBABLY KNOWS WE'RE HERE.


THAT'S SO SAD IT'S FUNNY.
YOU THINK THIS IS FUNNY?
KRACK
DAMN YOU!
WOOOMPH!

FWAK
THE HELL...?
DIE!

HOLD STILL!
AAAAHH!!!
SLASH!
UP YOU GO. ANYTHING BROKEN?
I'M ALL RIGHT.

THAT'S ENOUGH OUT OF YOU.
AND THAT'S WHEN THE RIVER GOD SURPRISED US.
DAMN THOSE VILLAGERS! I THOUGHT THEY LOVED ME!
HE TOLD US HE'D AGREED TO PROTECT THE VILLAGE LONG AGO, ASKING ONLY THAT VILLAGE GIRLS COME UP INTO THE CANYON TO SING TO HIM ONCE A YEAR.
BUT THIS YEAR, THE GIRLS HADN'T COME, AND IT BROKE OKOTO'S HEART. HIS LONELY TEARS HAD MADE THE RIVER RISE, UNBEKNOWNST TO HIM.
HE WAS ONLY CARELESS AND SELF-ABSORBED, IT SEEMED, NOT MALICIOUS. HE'D NEVER EVEN GONE TO THE VILLAGE TO FIND OUT WHAT HAPPENED TO THE GIRLS.
HE WAS SURPRISED AND ASHAMED WHEN WE TOLD HIM. THE GIRLS WHO USUALLY SANG TO HIM HADN'T FORSAKEN HIM, THEY'D BEEN CARRIED OFF BY BANDITS. WALLOWING ALONE IN SELF-PITY, HE MIGHT NEVER HAVE KNOWN.
YOU, HOWEVER, KNEW THAT ALL ALONG.

AND THAT BRINGS US TO THE MATTER AT HAND.

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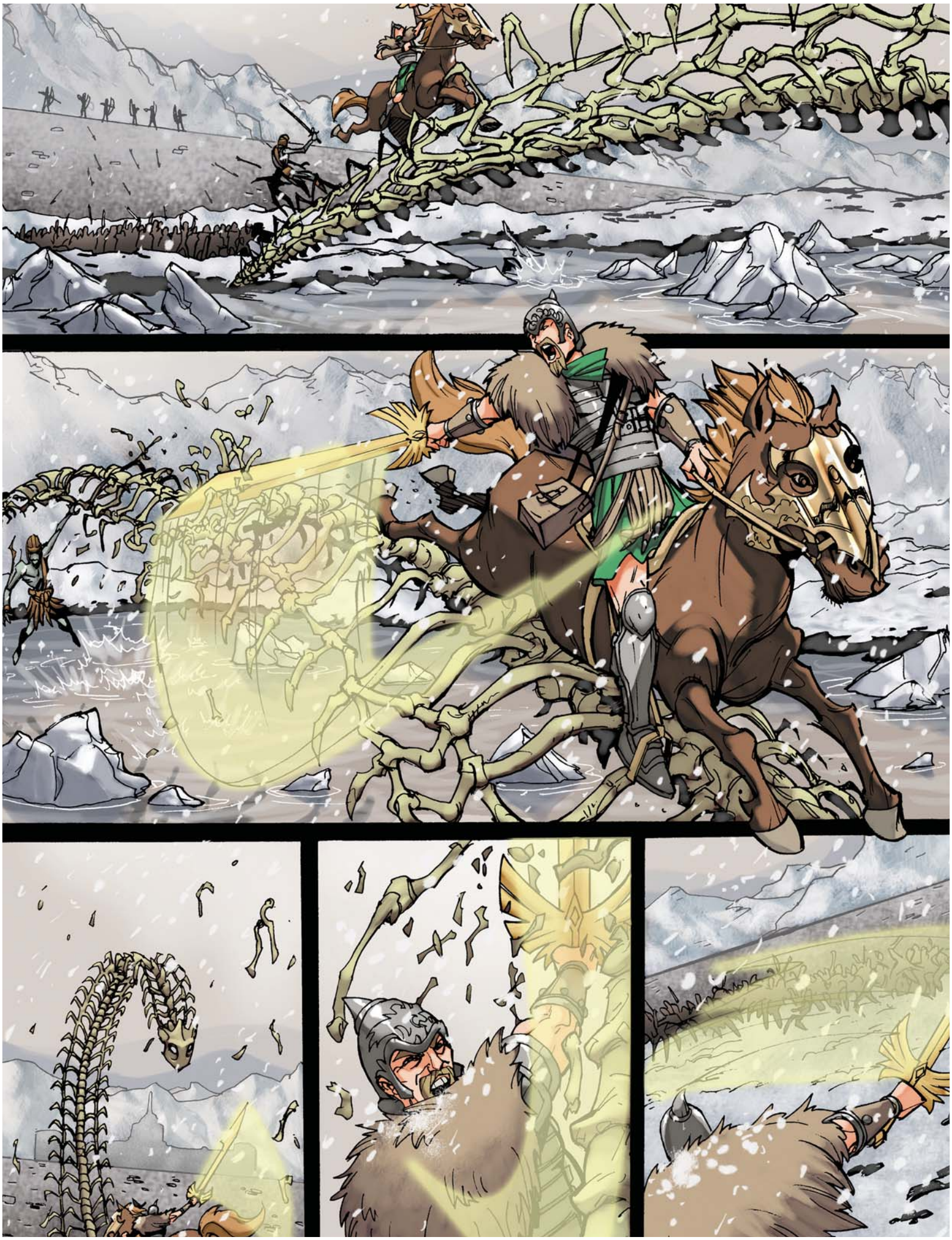


I THOUGHT I SAW A SNAKE IN THE GRASS.
YOU NOTCHED MY BLADE, SUN CHILD...
DO COMMEND THAT ACHIEVEMENT TO YOUR ANCESTORS!
NOT TODAY, PRINCESS!
TODAY, YOU CRAWL BACK TO YOUR BLEAK MASTER WHIMPERING MY NAME!

# INTRODUCTION

*The world's great age begins anew,*
*The golden years return,*
*The earth doth like a snake renew*
*Her wintry weeds outworn:*
*Heaven smiles, and faiths and empires gleam*
*Like wrecks of a dissolving dream.*
—Percy Bysshe Shelly, *"Hellas"*

So, you've picked this game up and you're wondering what makes **Exalted** different from any other fantasy role-playing games on the market? First, there are its influences. Almost every fantasy game can directly trace itself back to that monolith of 20th-century fantasy, J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*. **Exalted**, however, draws its inspiration from Western and Eastern sources both older and more recent. The first major influence are the ancient epics of the West and the East: *The Ramayana*, *The Iliad*, *Journey to the West*, *The Arabian Nights*, et cetera. All feature larger-than-life heroes capable of laying waste to nations and challenging the might of the gods themselves. The second source is pulp fiction. This genre includes the pre-Tolkien fantasy produced by Edgar Rice Burroughs, Robert E. Howard and Fritz Leiber, which birthed Tarzan, Conan, Fafhrd and the Gray Mouser. The final sources of inspiration for **Exalted** are Asia's over-the-top manga, anime, video games and wuxia films, which have only recently found a large American following. More than the rest, it is this last source that differentiates **Exalted** from its competitors.

The second way **Exalted** is different from other roleplaying games is in the power levels involved. In most games, a player's "heroic" character starts out as a complete wuss. He's lucky if he owns a rusty dagger and a loincloth, and he's possessed of all the fighting prowess of an asthmatic schoolboy. **Exalted** is different. **Exalted** characters begin the game as bad-asses—reborn heroes of old wielding powerful magic and weapons so massive mere mortals can't even lift them. These heroes are easily capable of challenging armies in combat and prevailing.

Finally, what truly sets **Exalted** apart is the strength of its setting. Creation is a fantastic place, a flat plane larger than the whole of our Earth formed by the confluence of elemental forces and the will ancient primordial beings. Once an even larger and more fabulous place, all of Creation was nearly destroyed some 800 years ago by powerful forces arrayed against it. Just beyond the edges of the world, the Fair Folk bide their time, waiting for another opportunity to march forth from the formless Wyld to undo shaped reality. Just beneath the skin of the world, the necrotic lords of the

Underworld plot to share the gift of Oblivion with all living things. And imprisoned within the infinite body of the Yozi known as Malfeas, the Demon Princes strive to escape their prison to wreak vengeance on the gods and the gods' champions. Meanwhile, in the Celestial City of Yu-Shan, even the greatest of the gods cannot tear their attention away from the seductive Games of Divinity although Creation teeters on the brink of apocalypse. That leaves the Chosen of the Gods, the Exalted, as Creation's only hope.

Those Exalted are your characters. What legends will you tell of their deeds?

## Storytelling

At its heart, storytelling is make-believe with rules. Rather than playing House or Cops and Robbers in your backyard, you and a group of friends describe and bring to life the heroic exploits of your characters. To make sure every player shares the same vision, one takes the role of narrator of events and mediator of disputes (the Storyteller), who is in charge of describing events and keeping the story moving forward. In order to prevent argument over who did what first and how successfully, certain rules outline what a character can and can't do. Typically, the players' characters are allies against the imagined opposition portrayed by the Storyteller.

Yet although storytelling is an outgrowth of games children play, that doesn't make it childish. **Exalted**'s setting is much more intricate and engrossing than most folk's childhood fantasy worlds, and it can be taken as seriously as its players want. If they want to treat it like improvisational theatre, great.

In order to play **Exalted**, you'll need a group of three to six people. One of you will take on the role of Storyteller while the others generate characters. It's the Storyteller's job to bring the game world to life for her players. She describes the environment and how events unfold, she portrays all the characters of the **Exalted** world with whom the players' characters come into contact, and she moderates any rule disputes. The players thrill to the heroic derring-do of their characters on the stage provided by the Storyteller.

**Exalted** is typically played as an ongoing game. There are no winners and losers, just players. Such games are most enjoyable if the players meet every week or two to play as it keeps things fresh in everyone's minds and gives everyone a genuine sense of their characters' development over time. Although an **Exalted** series can be open-ended and continue indefinitely, most Storytellers construct series with an end in mind, as both Storyteller and players often want to try their hand at new characters and genres of play.

## How to Use This Book

**Chapter One: Setting**

This chapter describes the **Exalted** world in detail, giving players and Storytellers a context in which to play their games.

**Chapter Two: Character Creation**

This section is a step-by-step walkthrough of creating a Solar Exalted character.

**Chapter Three: Traits**

This chapter describes in detail the non-magical characteristics that Exalted characters possess.

**Chapter Four: Drama and Systems**

This section provides the nuts-and-bolts rules of **Exalted** game play, from combat resolution to how one employs the Abilities described in Chapter Three in play.

**Chapter Five: Charms, Combos and Sorcery**

Just as Chapter Three describes the mundane characteristics of the Exalted character, this chapter focuses on the supernatural abilities of the Exalted that elevate them above common people.

**Chapter Six: Storytelling**

This chapter provides Storytellers with the tools they need to run entertaining and engaging **Exalted** games.

**Chapter Seven: Antagonists**

No epic hero is complete without a proper villain to test his mettle, so this chapter provides statistics and descriptions of characters with whom the Solar Exalted might come into conflict—as well as those with whom they might ally.

**Chapter Eight: Panoply**

This section provides players and Storytellers with all the gear they need to properly outfit their heroic protagonists and villainous antagonists. It also features a breakdown of Exalted currency and banking, for when characters need to finance that expedition to the lost city of Rathess.

## Lexicon

**Anathema:** The term used by adherents of the *Immaculate Order* to demonize the *Celestial Exalted*. According to Immaculate teaching, the *Solar*, *Lunar* and *Abyssal Exalted* are individuals who have become conduits for the power of evil *spirits*. Their souls forever tainted by dark power, they must be destroyed before they can use that power to destroy *Creation*. This doctrine is believed almost without question on the *Blessed Isle*. Although the people under Imperial domination in the *Threshold* are forced to pay lip service to the Immaculates, few Thresholders accept Immaculate doctrine without question. An individual's deeds are more likely to determine the reaction there. Were any known to still exist, *Sidereal Exalted* would also be deemed Anathema.

**anima:** A normally invisible aura that surrounds all living things. When an *Exalted* uses *Essence*, that Essence often spills into his anima, making it visible. Therefore, Exalted who expend a great deal of Essence are often surrounded by a brilliant display of power that can be visible miles distant.

**Blessed Isle:** This is the continent-sized island located at the center of *Creation*. Surrounded by the Inland Sea and weeks distant from the closest Threshold port, the Blessed Isle is the center of the *Realm* and the unquestioned dominion of the *Dragon-Blooded*.

**caste:** The predisposition toward a certain role or certain duties, shaped by the *Unconquered Sun* at the moment a mortal is *Exalted* and becomes a *Solar*. The five Solar castes are as follows:

- **Dawn Caste**: The leaders and champions of the armies of the Unconquered Sun.
- **Zenith Caste**: The priest-kings, prophets and mystics of the Unconquered Sun.
- **Twilight Caste**: The scholars, sorcerers and craftsmen of the Unconquered Sun.
- **Night Caste**: The spies, assassins and thieves of the Unconquered Sun.
- **Eclipse Caste**: The diplomats and bureaucrats of the Unconquered Sun.

**caste mark:** All *Celestial Exalted* are branded on their foreheads with a sign of their status. This caste mark, like the *anima*, is usually invisible, but can be seen when an Exalt spends *Essence*. No two types of *Exalted* share a caste mark, so they may be used to distinguish one type of Exalt from another.

**Celestial Exalted:** A catch-all term for the *Solar*, *Lunar* and *Sidereal Exalted*—so called because of their patron gods' celestial nature. Though it's a bit of a misnomer to group them as such, the *Abyssal Exalted* are also often referred to as Celestial Exalted as well.

**Charm:** A form of *Essence* manipulation that focuses Essence through a character's Abilities. Charms allow Exalts to perform superhuman feats and are the most basic form of magic the *Exalted* wield.

**circle:** A circle is a group of Exalted bound together by oaths of loyalty and mutual need. Most modern *Celestial Exalted* circles are merely renewals of circles formed in the First Age. Circles of *Terrestrial Exalted* are more commonly called sworn brotherhoods after the spell used to sanctify them.

**Creation:** The world of **Exalted** and everything in it. Beyond its borders lies only the formless *Wyld*.

**Cult of the Illuminated, the:** A cult devoted to the worship of the Shining Ones, mystical saviors who are prophesied to lead mankind into a new golden age. The Gold Faction of the *Sidereal Exalted* has subverted the Cult in order to use it to find, shelter and train newly Exalted Solars.

**Deathlord:** One of 13 mighty ghost-kings of the *Underworld*. Their power springs from their *Neverborn* masters and from their own great age and unmatched knowledge. The Deathlords are quite possibly the greatest threats to *Creation* in the *Second Age*.

**demesne:** A place where *Creation*'s dragon lines have eddied together and formed a nexus of magical power. These places possess a surfeit of *Essence*, which may be tapped by those who know how. *Exalted* typically raise *manses* atop such sites to harness their power.

**demon:** One of a myriad of terrible offspring born of the *Yozis* since their banishment to *Malfeas*.

**Demon Prince:** Any demon of the Third Circle. These beings are the subsidiary souls of the *Yozis* and each one represents some aspect of one of those dread beings.

**Dragon-Blooded:** The more common name for the *Terrestrial Exalted*.

**Dynast:** A member of the *Scarlet Dynasty*.

**elemental:** An elemental is a naturally materialized *spirit* of one of the five elements: air, earth, fire, water, or wood. Elemental personalities tend to reflect some facet of the element whence they spring. Although many elementals are quite powerful, they are looked down upon by many *gods* as rustic and provincial.

**Elemental Dragons:** The offspring of *Gaia*, the Elemental Dragons are the lords of the Terrestrial Bureaucracy, responsible for overseeing its hierarchy of *spirits*. Like most *gods*, the Dragons have become decadent and self-absorbed in the time since the end of the *First Age*. The Elemental Dragons seldom inquire into the state of their subjects, and the Terrestrial spirits ignore their duties more and become more independent with each year that passes. *The Immaculate Order* venerates the Elemental Dragons as the Immaculate Dragons, the apotheosis of spiritual development and the lords of *Creation*.

**elemental pole:** One of the five cardinal points of *Creation*. In the North is the Elemental Pole of Air, in the East is the Elemental Pole of Wood, in the South is the Elemental Pole of Fire, and in the West is the Elemental Pole of Water. These four poles act as the boundaries of shaped *Creation*, beyond which lies only the *Wyld*. At the center of the *Blessed Isle* lies the Elemental Pole of Earth, the central axis of Creation, upon whose stability all else relies. As one moves closer to the four active poles, their elemental effects grow stronger, so only the mightiest of Exalts and elementals of the appropriate type can survive in close proximity.

**Essence:** The most basic building block of *Creation*, Essence is the energy that unites all things and from which all magic springs. To channel Essence is to work miracles, and the might of the *Exalted* comes from their ability to do so.

**Exalted:** (Also called the Chosen.) The champions of the gods, who were given power to stand up to the Primordials at the beginning of time. The victorious Exalted were given custody of Creation at the end of the Primordial War. The prominent types of Exalted include:

**Abyssal Exalted**: Also called deathknights, these Exalts are the champions of the *Deathlords* and their *Neverborn* masters. The Abyssal Exalted have only recently appeared, but they appear to be dark reflections of the returned *Solar Exalted*, with dark mockeries of the *Solars' caste marks*, *animas* and even *Charms*.

**Lunar Exalted**: These mighty savages are the champions of *Luna*. The Lunars were once the mates of the *Solar Exalted*, as well as their bodyguards and commanders of their armies. The Lunar Exalts either fled to the hinterlands of the Threshold after the murder of the Solars or died alongside their mates in futile battle. Today, most of these shapeshifting warriors live as barbarians, blaming the downfall of the Solars (and even their inability to save them) on civilization's softening effects.

**Sidereal Exalted**: The Sidereals are the champions of the *Five Maidens*. The Chosen of the Maidens are the savants and astrologers of the Exalted, as well as matchless martial artists. It was the *Great Prophecy* of the Sidereals that led to the murder and usurpation of the *Solar Exalted*, and the Sidereals have lurked in the shadows since then, manipulating the course of not only the *Realm*, but *Creation* as a whole. The Sidereals have been split into two factions, Bronze and Gold, since a disagreement over the fate of the Solar Exalted 1,500 years ago, and the Solars' return has led to a renewal of outright hostility between the two groups.

**Solar Exalted**: Known also as the Lawgivers, these Exalted are the champions of *the Unconquered Sun*. Once the masters of *Creation*, the Solars were betrayed and usurped by their trusted advisors and soldiers. Most Solars were unable to be reborn until recently, and the *Wyld Hunt* was organized to slay those few who did find a way to reincarnate.

**Terrestrial Exalted**: Also called the Dragon-Blooded, these are the champions of the five *Elemental Dragons*. For the last millennium and a half, they were the unquestioned rulers of *Creation* itself. Despite being the weakest Exalted in terms of raw power, the Terrestrial Exalts are the most numerous by far. Once the soldiers of the Exalted armies that fought the *Primordials*, the Terrestrials murdered the Solar Exalted at the behest of the Sidereals and took over the reins of Creation.

**Fair Folk:** A term used to describe the beings who dwell beyond the *elemental poles* in the *Wyld*. The unshaped Fair Folk who remain beyond the edges of *Creation* are hostile to all things of constant shape and form. A great number of Fair Folk, however, have entered the world and taken on shape. The vast majority

of these beings are inimical to the beings of *Creation*—hunting down humans and feeding on their hopes and dreams—but a few do live among men as either lords or simple citizens. During *the Great Contagion*, the Host of Faerie rode out in a great crusade to bring an end to the blasphemy of shaped existence. It might well have even won had the *Scarlet Empress* not succeeded in bringing the *Realm*'s magical defenses to bear against them.

**First Age:** This was the Golden Age after the *Exalted* defeated the *Primordials*, when wonders and magic undreamed of in the *Second Age* were commonplace. The First Age is commonly considered to stretch from the end of the Primordial War to the time of the *Great Contagion*, nearly eight centuries ago. Most learned savants place the fall of the First Age some 600 years earlier, however, with the murder of the *Solar Exalted*.

**Five Maidens:** These five deities are second in power only to the *Unconquered Sun*, though *Luna* is rightly considered an equal. The Maidens are Mercury, the Maiden of Journeys; Venus, the Maiden of Serenity; Mars, the Maiden of Battles; Jupiter, the Maiden of Secrets; and Saturn, the Maiden of Endings.

**Gaia:** She is the spirit of *Creation*, the mother of the *Elemental Dragons*, and godmother of all living things born of Creation. Gaia is, in fact, one of the *Primordials*, but she sided with the gods out of love for her consort *Luna*.

**ghost:** This is the soul of a human being that lingers on after death because of some attachment it has to its prior existence rather than reentering the natural cycle of reincarnation. Ghosts are aberrations to the proper course of existence, and they have existed only since the deaths of the Neverborn.

**god:** A god is a naturally dematerialized *spirit* of some facet of *Creation*. As many gods exists as there are things and concepts, though few are of significant might to challenge the *Exalted*. Those gods who represent universal concepts dwell in the Celestial City of *Yu-Shan*, where they look down in scorn or pity upon their Terrestrial brethren. Since the end of the *First Age*, the gods have become increasingly decadent and remiss in their duties, often extorting worship, and the Essence it brings, to perform their rightful duties. The *Immaculate Order* has striven with some success to impose order onto these rogue gods, but truly, it is the recent return of the Lawgivers that worries many of these spirits.

**Great Contagion:** This supernatural plague was engineered by the *Deathlords* in the hopes of ending all life. Although the world survived, much of the glory of the previous Age was lost, as well as 90 percent of *Creation*'s population. In its wake, the Fair Folk invaded the world en masse and would have destroyed it had not the woman who would become the *Scarlet Empress* dared enter the Imperial Manse and gained control of the Realm's *First Age* defenses. The Great Contagion is popularly considered to mark the fall of the First Age.

**Great Curse:** As the *Primordials* fell to the Chosen of the various gods, they cursed their *Exalted* killers. The Curse was elaborate and vast, but its core was that the Exalted would forever be cursed with the hate, immoderation and treachery they'd shown in the Primordials' murder. The Great Curse has dogged all the Exalted since that day, but it settled most squarely on the shoulders of the *Solar Exalted*. Ever since, the Solars have been subject to terrible melancholy and violent emotional outbursts.

**Great House:** One of the noble bloodlines that make up the *Scarlet Dynasty*. There are 11 Great Houses, and together they form the aristocracy that governs the *Realm*.

**Great Prophecy:** It was this prediction made by a conclave of all the *Sidereal Exalted* that set the course of the *Solar Exalted*'s murder at the hands of the *Dragon-Blooded*. Concerned with the Solars' increasingly erratic behavior, the Sidereals prophesied three possible futures. In one, they did nothing, and the world was destroyed. In another, they tried to guide the Solar Exalted back onto the path of righteousness and had a small chance of success, though the world would become a place of darkness and misery if they failed. In the third, they eliminated the Solars and the world continued on, diminished but whole. It was decided by the Sidereals that this last future was the safest bet to ensure Creation's survival, so they conspired with the *Terrestrial Exalted* to bring it about.

**Guild:** This organization is a vast network of merchants, trading in goods of all form, from foodstuffs, textiles and metalwork to addictive drugs and human slaves. The Guild is unconcerned with good and evil. Its only concern is profit. If it is profitable to do something, you can bet the Guild is doing it, has done it, or will do it as soon as it is brought to the merchant princes' attention. Though based in the city of Nexus, the Guild operates *Creation*-wide.

**hearthstone:** This is an egg-sized crystal of pure solidified magical energy accreted at the center of a *manse*. If an Exalt attunes to the manse whence the hearthstone comes and carries the stone on his person in a focal device constructed from one of the five magical materials, he can draw on the capped demesne's power to perform miraculous feats. The power and nature of these feats depends on the aspect of the demesne. The precise manifestation of power, however, is based on the geomantic Essence-focusing of the Manse's occult architecture.

**Immaculate Order, the:** This is the state religion of the *Scarlet Empire*. The Immaculate faith preaches that the soul is reincarnated again and again over successive lives until it reaches perfection and joins with *the Five Elemental Dragons*. The final incarnation before joining with the Dragons is as one of the *Terrestrial Exalted*, making the *Dragon-Blooded* the pinnacle of the Order's Perfected Hierarchy and the natural rulers of *Creation*. The Immaculate Order frowns upon the popular worship of *spirits* of any sort, because it is believed they are merely celestial functionaries rather than true *gods*. Instead, the Order itself propitiates these spirits at predetermined times. It is the Immaculate Order that branded the *Celestial Exalted* as *Anathema* during the period of the early Dragon-Blooded Shogunate. Immaculate monks are known for their martial-arts skill, and Dragon-Blooded monks are rightly feared for their mastery of elemental style martial arts.

The Immaculate Order also serves as a front organization for the Bronze Faction *Sidereal Exalted*, allowing these Exalts to continue shaping the destiny of the *Realm*. The existence of the Order has let these shadowy Exalts manipulate the course of the Realm for nearly 800 years.

**Loom of Fate:** The divine structure upon which is woven the Tapestry of Creation.

**Luna:** Luna is a many-faced trickster god, appearing equally male and female. Luna is the consort of *Gaia*, is a ferocious warrior nearly the equal of the *Unconquered Sun*, and is the mother and patron of the *Lunar Exalted*.

**magical materials:** Orichalcum, moonsilver, jade, starmetal and soulsteel comprise the five known magical materials. These materials are all easily enchanted, and each one resonates with a particular type of *Exalted*. This resonance makes any item that is both constructed from one of the magical materials and attuned to an Exalt's anima preternaturally deft and sure in

that Exalt's hands. It also gives the Exalt access to the powers of any *hearthstone* mounted on the item.

**Malfeas:** Malfeas is the demon realm in which the *Yozis* are imprisoned. This realm is constructed from the body of the mightiest Demon Prince, Malfeas himself.

**manse:** A manse is a structure of occult architecture used to cap and channel the energy of a *demesne*. The demesne's energies are geomantically focused by the manse into the creation of a *hearthstone* and also to power various features of the structure itself.

**mote:** The smallest divisible unit of Essence in the parlance of savants and sorcerers.

**necromancy:** This is a form of magic that harnesses the dark *Essence* of the *Underworld* to generate powerful negative effects. Necromancy is practiced only by the *Deathlords* and their *Abyssal Exalted* servants today, but it was originally developed by Twilight Caste *Solar Exalted* of the *First Age*. Like sorcery, necromancy features three levels of initiation: Shadowlands Circle, Labyrinth Circle and Void Circle. Necromancers may also practice *sorcery*, but advancement in one art inhibits development in the other.

**Neverborn:** Cousins to the *Yozis*, the Neverborn were those *Primordials* slain by the *Exalted* in the time before history. In dying, they created the *Underworld*. They sleep forever in their enormous sepulchers overlooking the Void, dreaming of the day when all that exists will join them in death.

**outcaste:** An outcaste is a Terrestrial Exalt who does not belong to one of the Great Houses of the *Scarlet Dynasty*. In the *Realm* proper, such unfortunates are termed "lost eggs."

**Primordial:** This is the term applied to those who came before the gods and first wrenched *Creation* from the chaotic stuff of the *Wyld*. Only two Primordials survive intact, *Gaia* and the Great Maker Autochthon. The rest were either slain, becoming the *Neverborn*, or imprisoned, becoming the *Yozis*.

**Realm:** The empire that, until quite recently, controlled the whole of civilized *Creation*. Called also the Scarlet Empire, the Realm never officially "ruled" more than the *Blessed Isle* directly, but it exacted tribute from countless local governments, which paid it homage. Those governments were independent in theory, but they were actually little more than puppet states.

Since the *Scarlet Empress* has disappeared, the Realm has been paralyzed by indecision. There is a weak regent on the Scarlet Throne, and the various Houses of the *Scarlet Dynasty* plot endlessly, each attempting to gain enough power to place its own candidate on the Throne.

In this Time of Tumult, many of the Realm's tributaries have had their garrisons recalled and been left to their own devices. While some remain loyal vassal states, a few have openly declared their independence. Many more have effectively done so quietly, withholding their tribute under flimsy excuses. Whoever takes the Throne will be faced with the monumental task of re-conquering a majority of the Realm's old territory.

**savant:** A scholar and sage who devotes his life to the study of a particular subject, or simply to study in general.

**Scarlet Dynasty, the:** A collective term for the scions of the 11 *Great Houses* that rule the *Realm*. Each House may trace its lineage back to the *Scarlet Empress* herself.

**Scarlet Empress, the:** During the *Great Contagion*, it was she who braved the Imperial Manse and used its control of the *Realm*'s ancient magical defenses to save Creation from the invading *Fair Folk*. She then crowned herself Empress of the Realm—using her control of the Realm defenses to crush all opposition—and proceeded to rule the world for the next 750+ years. Her disappearance five years ago has upset the status quo of Creation, and the return of the *Solar Exalted* has only complicated the situation.

**Scavenger Lands, the:** The Scavenger Lands is a disparaging term the *Realm* coined for an alliance of petty kingdoms and city-states in the Eastern *Threshold* more properly named the Confederation of Rivers. Located in the *First Age* River Province, these nations have never bent knee or offered tribute to the *Scarlet Empress* or her *Realm*, despite repeated attempts by the Realm to subjugate them. The most powerful of these states are the enormous trading metropolis of Nexus, home to the *Guild*, and Lookshy, home of the surviving *Dragon-Blooded* Shogunate Era Seventh Legion and its enormous cache of First Age armaments.

**Second Age:** This is the current Age of *Creation*, having begun either with the murder of the *Solar Exalted* or the end of the Great Contagion, depending on whom one asks.

**Second Breath:** When a baby draws its first breath, the soul enters that child's body. When a person is *Exalted*, the influx of divine *Essence* is very similar. Thus, Exaltation is often referred to as taking the Second Breath.

**shadowland:** A shadowland is an area where constant or massive amounts of death, possibly augmented by negative geomancy, have brought the lands of the living and the dead into close proximity. Such places are invariably dismal, haunted places plagued by hungry *ghosts* and the evil *spirits* of Creation, both of which are drawn to such places by the areas' negative energy.

**sorcery:** Sorcery is a more sophisticated and demanding form of *Essence* manipulation than *Charms*. With Charms, the Exalt focuses Essence through her Abilities, while, with sorcery, she focuses it through sheer will alone. Sorcery features three levels of initiation: Terrestrial Circle, Celestial Circle and Solar Circle. Sorcerers may also practice *necromancy*, but advancement in one art inhibits development in the other.

**spirit:** The term spirit is a catch-all term for all beings of a semi-material nature, be they *ghost*, *elemental* or *god*. This term, however, is most often used to denote one of *Creation*'s many small gods.

**Stygia:** This city is the largest city of the *Underworld* and the capital of the Isle of the same name. Though it is technically ruled by a pair of eternal ghostly monarchs, it is actually dominated by the *Deathlords*.

**Threshold:** Savants referring to the Threshold typically mean all that lies between the shores of the Blessed Isle and the elemental poles that mark the boundary of Creation. More commonly, it is the term applied to the ring of kingdoms, principalities, satrapies and city-states that abut the Inland Sea.

**Unconquered Sun, the:** Greatest of the gods, the Unconquered Sun inspired the gods to revolt against the *Primordials*. His champions, the *Solar Exalted*, led the charge in the war that followed. After the war's end, the Unconquered Sun continued to advise his Chosen in their rule of *Creation* until their pride grew so great he turned his back on them. After the murder of the Solars, his temples were pulled down and his worship banned.

**Underworld:** This is the land of the dead, a dark mirror of the sunlit world dominated by the 13 *Deathlords*. The Underworld is a land of long shadows and vast, still seas—a dark wonderland full of dangers foreign to the world of the living.

**Wyld:** The term "the Wyld" is used to describe both the formless chaos that exists beyond the *elemental poles* and the places where that chaos has intruded upon *Creation*, most notably in the wake of the *Fair Folk* invasion that followed the *Great Contagion*.

**Wyld Hunt:** The Hunt is a group of battle-hardened *Dragon-Blooded* gathered both from the *Immaculate Order* and the *Realm* military for the express purpose of hunting down *Anathema*. With the disappearance of the *Scarlet Empress*, the Wyld Hunt's effectiveness has begun to suffer, as those Dragon-Bloods who would be most effective in the Hunt now choose to stay at home to lend their support to their Great Houses in the contest for the Scarlet Throne.

**Yozis:** Cousins to the *Neverborn*, the Yozis are forever imprisoned outside *Creation* in their twisted kingdom of iron and black marble beneath a mad green sun. The Yozis constantly plot to escape the demon realm *Malfeas* and to overthrow the gods.

**Yu-Shan:** Also called Heaven or the Celestial City, this continent-sized metropolis is the dwelling place of the gods and home to the *Loom of Fate*, from which all *Creation* springs.

## Suggested Resources

### Fiction

*Tales From the Flat Earth*, Tanith Lee

This collection of stories originally released as three separate novels—*Night's Master*, *Death's Master* and *Delusion's Master*—that with two more novels—*Delirium's Mistress* and *Night's Sorceries*—make up Lee's Flat Earth Series. These novels formed the single largest influence to **Exalted**'s development as a game.

*Hawkmoon*, Michael Moorcock

The magitech of **Exalted** in particular owes a lot of its look and feel to this seminal work. In it, the hero strives to save the world from being overrun by a decadent empire of sorcerer-warriors led by an immortal king. These tyrants consider themselves and their system of beliefs to be in all ways superior to those around them.

*The Complete Pegana*, Lord Dunsany

The third great literary influence to **Exalted**, Dunsany's Pegana tales birthed a number of ideas that made their way into this game. The gods, especially the Five Maidens, owe a great deal of their character to his work.

### Classics

*The Bible*

That's right. It's not just a book of commandments and begetting, it's also a story of epic heroes given power by God and a mandate to go out and right what is wrong with the world.

*The Iliad* and *The Odyssey*, Homer

*The Iliad* is basically the template story of the flawed hero from which every other story in Western civilization draws its inspiration. And if you want to see the classical underworld from which grew the Underworld of **Exalted**, look no further than *The Odyssey*. Besides, there is no greater juxtaposition of Dawn Caste and Eclipse Caste than Achilles and Odysseus in these two works.

*Journey to the West*, Wu Cheng'en

This cornerstone of Asian myth follows the quest of the priest Sanzang and his three disciples (Pig, monk Sand and the Monkey King) as they travel from China to India to retrieve the Buddhist Sutra. More than perhaps any other tale of Asia, this has found its way into world culture via everything from anime such as *Dragonball* and *Saiyuki* to live-action productions such as *A Chinese Odyssey* and *The Lost Empire*.

### Manga

*InuYasha*, Rumiko Takahashi

This manga, featuring a modern girl flung back in time to feudal Japan, is excellent in its depiction of larger than life characters in battles versus demons while the normal folk just take it all in stride. Besides there are few better depictions of a daiklave in action than InuYasha's sword, the Tetsusaiga. If you're not a fan of manga, at least check out the anime based on it and the movies it's spawned.

*Ragnarök*, Myung-Jin Lee

Though more properly a manwha (a Korean comic book), this reinterpretation of Norse myth is full of over-the-top combat and sorcery, and its conflict between larger-than-life demigod heroes striving against the forces of undeath greatly mirrors the Solar/Abyssal conflict of **Exalted**.

### Movies and Anime

*RG Veda* (1992)

This series has everything; equivalents to many of the major Exalt types—Solar, Sidereal and Terrestrial—beautiful animation, an engaging story, and great depictions of what **Exalted** would term Charms and sorcery. What it lacks is an ending. Only two episodes were ever completed, so it's a bit of a tease, but it's a fun ride nonetheless.

*Ninja Scroll* (1995)

This anime was one of the main inspirations for **Exalted**, and there's not a better depiction of Wyld mutants out there. The later series is also good inspiration.

*Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* (2000)

Probably the most popular wuxia film ever made—winning four Academy Awards—this film served as many Americans' first exposure to wire-fu. This film rises above the many such films released from Hong Kong studios every year through its gripping story of love and honor, brought to life by the gripping performances of Chow Yun-Fat and Michelle Yeoh—not to mention the beautiful visuals, pulled off by its director Ang Lee.

*Kung-Fu Hustle* (2004)

Yes, it's silly and irreverent, but this movie features possibly the best depiction of **Exalted**-level martial arts ever committed to film. Besides, it's a great story that will leave you with a smile on your face long after the credits roll.

### Video Games

*Dynasty Warriors 5*

Admittedly, this *Dynasty Warriors* game is little different from those that preceded it, but it and its predecessors do one thing quite well, and that is showing heroic characters leading units of mundane forces against other such heroes and their units. There's no place where **Exalted** mass combat is better illustrated.

*Jade Empire*

This game is just awesome. It's beautiful; the threats, look and tech are very **Exalted**; and it's got maybe the best supernatural martial-arts system ever devised.

*Thief: Deadly Shadows*

Like the Night Caste? This game is all about sneaking, spying, stealing and assassination, just like the stereotypical member of the Daggers of Heaven. And you fans of Wood Aspects, check out the moss arrow. It's greenery-gagging good fun.

YOU'VE BULLIED EVERYONE WITHIN TEN MILES OF THIS FOREST. YOU'VE DEMANDED ILLICIT WORSHIP.
YOU'VE EXTORTED HUMAN SACRIFICES. YET, EVERY APPEASEMENT JUST MAKES YOU BOLDER.
I'M HERE TO PUT A STOP TO IT!
I'VE NO TIME FOR JOKES. CRAWL AWAY HOME BEFORE YOU MAKE ME ANGRY.
I'M NOT JOKING, AND I'M NOT LEAVING!
*SIGH* VERY WELL.
KILL HIM.
WHOP!!
FOOL! I'M NOT PLAYING EITHER.

HOW DARE YOU?
I SAID...
...GET OUT OF MY FOREST!
YOU'RE NOT LISTENING!
YOU'RE GOING TO ANSWER FOR YOUR TYRANNY.
STARTING RIGHT NOW!
CRAAAK!!!

# CHAPTER ONE
# SETTING

The history of Creation is a great sprawling tapestry, embroidered in blood and jade and gold, stretching from the furthest past to the current hour. Immortal demigods once shaped Creation to their will and made it a place of miraculous splendor. Today, men fight with sword and mail in the ruins of ancient glory. The immortal Scarlet Empress has vanished, and the Realm she founded shudders as the Great Houses of the Scarlet Dynasty turn against each other. The forces of the Wyld make war on the bordermarches of reality, and newly reborn heroes from the ancient past return to save the world—or doom it.

## Essence

This is truth: The world is a great field of energy known as Essence. This Essence pervades all things, composes all things and controls all things. It is often called "breath," but it forms not only the respired medium of life, but also the physical material of that life. Essence is the wall of structure that maintains Creation, and Essence is the swirling insanity that lies beyond it. Every creature is inseparably linked to Essence. When immortal, beings who can control and channel Essence are called gods. When mortal, they are named Exalted.

### The Primordials

In the beginning, there was raw Essence, existing in constant swirling chaos, unshaped and unformed. Within this chaos existed the Primordials. It cannot be known whether they were born from the Essence, if they predated its existence, or if they were somehow coterminous with it, but they were the first of all shaped things.

In the madness around them dwelt the Fair Folk, creatures whose very nature was antagonistic to the Primordials and all that sprang from them. The Primordials warred with the Fair Folk, and matters have not changed since the first days of the world. Even today, the faerie seek to burn away all Creation and return the Wyld to the formless purity of the time before shape.

### What They Made

The Primordials desired a place for themselves, so that they might shelter from the endless storm of chaos

and the tiresome warrings of the Fair Folk. There, they would rest from the struggles of existence in the Wyld and play their Games of Divinity. From this thought and their united will sprang Creation. They gave shape and form to the world, from the sun in the skies to the tiniest ant in the dust. And when the Primordials saw that it was sound and safe and suitable to their desires, they settled down to play the Games.

Creation was too complicated to maintain or sustain itself, however, and their games did not permit long lapses of attention. Therefore, the Primordials created the gods to protect and maintain Creation, leaving it in their charge.

## What Came After

In time, the gods grew discontent at their slavery. They could raise no hand against their creators, however, so they empowered mere mortals to be both their weapons and their champions. These chosen mortals, these Exalted, then rose up and made war against the Primordials on the gods' behalf. Strife wracked Creation, and many things were destroyed that would not be made again. The five great elementals were unmade by the Primordials lest they should serve as a weapon against them. The pre-human race of the Dragon Kings died by the millions, and those who survived had no choice but to retreat into a techno-magical state of torpor until a future Age.

After years of battle, the Primordials were defeated. Some were slain, and beneath them yawned a horrid Abyss that swallowed their dying souls. Others surrendered, lest they too fall into the Abyss. At the intercession of Gaia—the only Primordial who sided with the Exalted—these defeated Primordials were spared execution. Instead, they were forced to swear powerful oaths on their very names, which banished them Elsewhere and imprisoned them within the body of their general, Malfeas.

Those Primordials who died became known as the Neverborn. They were too vast to pass into nothingness, and the rules of the cycle of reincarnation they had created for mortals did not apply to them, so they lingered on the doorstep of existence. Their collapse into the Abyss damaged the cycle of reincarnation, however, and polluted much of the Essence with which they had formed Creation. This polluted Essence abscessed and congealed into a parallel plane of existence that is now known as the Underworld. In time, this necrotic Essence even began to seep into Creation itself. And hardly had the Neverborn begun their endless, dreamy slumber in their vast subterranean tombs than a portion of the spirits of other creatures that had died began to filter into their gray new world as well, rather than obeying the rules of the cycle of reincarnation.

Those Primordials who were taken captive became known as the Yozis, or demons. Yet hardly had the gods locked these demons away, when they began to dream of escape and revenge. They produced races of offspring to serve and amuse them in their imprisonment.

Yet in their defeat, all the Primordials cursed the gods, the Exalted who served them and the Creation that housed them all. Their curses were as true and wicked as the curses of a creator betrayed by her own connivings always are, but such matters were of little concern to the Exalted and the gods. (After all, the Neverborn and the Yozis were merely the shades of foes already defeated.) Ghosts were ignored as a curious echo of the war against the Primordials, while the Yozis' demon offspring were summoned and harnessed in sorcerous servitude for their might and used to build public works and palaces.

In the days after the Primordial War, a body known as the Solar Deliberative was founded as a council where all Exalted

might have a voice. Its purpose was to provide a collective defense and to help decide the future of Creation. In these early years, the Celestial gods passed Creation into the control of the Exalted, and a golden age of peace and prosperity reigned throughout the world. The Solars ruled, the Lunars were their warlords and mates, the Sidereals advised them and planned the future, and the Terrestrial Exalted served in a great bureaucracy. The gods and elementals obeyed their orders, and great works of art and sorcery were created—wonders of a magnitude that shall likely never be seen again.

This was the First Age of Creation, and it was a time of miracles beyond description. The sorcerous might of the Exalted knew no limit. Armies expanded the borders of the world itself. Cities flew through the sky on Essence engines. Little did those who lived at that time think of the foes they had defeated, so secretly did the curse of the Primordials grow within their souls.

## The Great Curse Matures

The Primordials' curse fell first upon the Exalted, and not the gods. It grew unrecognized in their hearts like a sickness, warping virtue to excess and magnifying natural faults. Valor became vainglory and rivalry, honor became rigidity, compassion became corruption, and the Solar Exalted turned to tyranny, cruelty and malice.

The Great Curse lay on the other Exalted as well, but most heavily on the Solar Exalted, as they were the leaders who had brought down the Primordials. Eventually, the Solar Exalted turned from the guidance of the Unconquered Sun, their patron and the invincible chieftain of the gods. In turn, he averted his face from them.

The Sidereals saw that their masters were turning to evil, so they took counsel with each other. They peered into the Loom of Fate and saw there three alternatives for Creation. In the first, they did nothing, which resulted in the corruption and downfall of the whole world. In the second, they attempted to reason with and restore the Solars, which might or might not save Creation. In the third, they guided the Dragon-Blooded to seize power and to wipe the Solars utterly from the face of the world. That act would surely preserve the world, if only in a considerably diminished form.

They chose the third option.

At the subtle behest of the Sidereals, the Dragon-Blooded came to believe that they had no choice but to slay their Solar masters and replace them. In secret they laid their schemes, then attacked by surprise while the Solars were at a great banquet, slaughtering many on the spot and managing to separate the others from their resources and seats of power. The Lunars, who had already grown troubled by the Solars' excesses, were not as vigorous in their defense as they might have been. Some Lunars were slain, some fled into the far reaches of Creation, and the rest retreated into the Wyld beyond the elemental poles.

Despite their great skills and powers, the Solars who survived the initial ambush fell one by one. As they died, the portions of their souls that the Unconquered Sun had empowered were whisked into the cycle of reincarnation so that new Solars could be Exalted. To prevent this—and forestall an otherwise eternal war—certain Sidereal Exalted used powerful magics to coerce those portions of the Solars' souls into an apparatus called the Jade Prison. The Dragon-Blooded then sank this enormous structure into the depths of the Inland Sea to lock the Solars away forever. A tiny handful of Solar Essences remained free and continued to reincarnate when the prison was sealed, but on the whole, Creation was purged of the Solar Exalted—making way for the rule of the Dragon-Blooded.

### The Birth of the Deathlords

Although the Exalted portions of their souls always moved into the cycle of reincarnation, some of the Exalted yet lingered beyond their deaths as ghosts. The spirits of the Solars were largely appeased by the tombs, the riches and the sacrifices the Terrestrials heaped upon their places of burial, and most either hurried into their next life or fell into nothingness and were consumed. Yet 13 wicked ghosts who once were god-kings lingered in the Underworld, and there they found a greater darkness and became its servants. That darkness was the poison of the slain Primordials, who had been waiting all that time for the Solars' arrival.

Seeking to simplify matters for their Terrestrial pawns, the Sidereal Exalted vanished from sight through the use of prodigious magic, obliterating all knowledge of themselves from history and the stars. With the Solars overthrown, the Lunars in fugitive exile and the Sidereals occulted behind eldritch misdirection, the Age of the Celestial Exalted came to an apparent end. The Terrestrials then rewrote history to cast the Solar and Lunar Exalted as diabolical Anathema who had been mad with power and in league with demons. Those who had witnessed or suffered from the excesses of the Solar Exalted raised no objection to this comfortable lie.

## The Shogunate

The Terrestrial Exalted now ruled in the Solars' place, establishing a Shogunate in place of the Deliberative. Yet as year followed year, the glories forged in the First Age failed and could not be replaced. For century upon century, Dragon-Blood fought Dragon-Blood for dwindling magical weapons and resources, hiding the true reasons for their conflicts behind the ideologies of leaders long since lost to history.

Throughout this era, a loose confederacy of warring daimyos ruled Creation, periodically united by a strong shogun until the next disputed succession or palace coup. It was a time of growing unrest and declining standards of living. The Terrestrials were unequal to the challenge of maintaining the wonders of the First Age—those that had not already been destroyed, sabotaged by the Twilight Caste Solars or hidden by the Sidereals.

The borders of an expanded Creation shuddered. The armies of the Fair Folk breached the boundaries of reality, sowing chaos in terrible breakthroughs. Finally, having grown mighty in their centuries of Underworld exile, the Deathlords showed their hand. These creatures of black power joined their might to conjure a vast, sorcerous disease into Creation.

The Great Contagion, as it was known, struck the world like a hammer, slaying nine out of every ten individuals in Creation, and the dead flooded the Underworld to swell the

armies of the Deathlords. By the time the Contagion abated, so many had died that great holes had been torn in the fabric of Creation itself. From these holes seeped the necrotic Essence of the Underworld, pooling into gloomy shadowlands where Creation and the Underworld overlapped. The Fair Folk eagerly seized their opportunity and set upon Creation in its hour of greatest desperation. Shadowlands grew and swelled in the heart of the world, the Wyld ate at the borders of Creation, and it seemed that all might be destroyed.

In the midst of this chaos, as the world spiraled to a cataclysmic end in a welter of plague and faerie-fire, one soldier managed to win her way to the ancient seat of the defenses that protected Creation. There, at the heart of the world's power, she activated those defenses and became their master.

## The Rise and Fall of the Scarlet Empress

First, the Dragon-Blooded hero destroyed the Fair Folk armies in an incredible cataclysm of power. Then, she used the nation-leveling geomantic weapons at her personal direction to consolidate her power, annihilating utterly anyone who opposed her. Seizing a fateful opportunity, a cult known as the Immaculate Order—which believed the Terrestrials had a divine mandate to rule Creation—helped legitimize her action by claiming that the Elemental Dragons smiled upon her. With the blessing and devotion of this widespread and fanatical cult, she consolidated her surviving Terrestrial kin about her. Through marriage and adoption, blackmail and skullduggery, she united them in the Scarlet Dynasty—a sprawling political empire with her, the Scarlet Empress, as its unquestioned ruler.

In the ruins of the Contagion, the Empress set up new governmental ministries, reorganized and rebuilt the military legions, established a new Deliberative to occupy the more fractious nobles, took consorts, bore children who founded the Great Houses and maintained the Wyld Hunt to strike down any reborn Anathema. The Realm she created was merely a pale shadow of the Shogunate that had come before it, but it maintained the peace and enforced her will on a world far too shattered to resist. Over the course of several tumultuous centuries, she came to rule all of Creation. All but two of her rivals submitted to her rule or were destroyed by the vast weapons at her command. Those two were the famed sorcerer Bagrash Köl, who raised a kingdom for himself in the Northern Wyld, and the commander of the Seventh Legion, who later founded the city-state of Lookshy on the far side of the Inland Sea.

Through it all, despite barbarian invasions, Fair Folk incursions and endless peasant rebellions, the Realm endured. For almost 800 years, the Empress ruled her barbaric Dragon-Blooded empire amid the twilit ruins of a miraculous past.

## Since Then

That was then. This is now.

Five years ago, the Empress disappeared during the notoriously inauspicious year-end period called Calibration. Some say she was destroyed while trifling with black magic. Some say she is in hiding and is watching to see who will first attempt to seize power in her absence. Others say she was assassinated by one of the ancient Anathema, for nothing else could have penetrated her security. Regardless, she is gone, and a great deal has come to pass in her absence—not the least of which is an epic internecine struggle among the Great Houses of the Scarlet Dynasty to seize the throne. Ambitious Dragon-Bloods all over the Blessed Isle have been plotting against and clashing with one another, pulling their military forces home to shore up their power. In so doing, they have significantly diminished the Realm's presence and military might in the Threshold beyond the Inland Sea, which has birthed an equal amount of opportunity and tumult.

For instance, four years ago, a Deathlord known as Mask of Winters marched an army into Creation to attack and sack the city of Thorns in the Scavenger Lands. His mighty undead citadel, Juggernaut, now squats in the growing shadowland there. His army's vanguard consisted of not only dead and undead horrors under his direct control, but also baroque, sinister Exalted whom the denizens of Creation have come to call deathknights. And the Mask of Winters was merely the first Deathlord to tip his hand about this matter, for it soon became apparent that all the other Deathlords have such servants as well.

In that same year, in the Northeast, a Solar Exalted barbarian warlord defeated the legions of House Tepet at the culmination of two years of campaigning. In so doing, he destroyed much of the cream of the Imperial military. What's worse, it has also become apparent that more Solar Exalted are being reborn since the Empress's disappearance than has been the case in centuries. And with more soldiers withdrawing to the Blessed Isle every day to aid the scions of the Scarlet Dynasty, there are fewer warriors to ride with the Wyld Hunt and keep this upsurge of Anathema in check.

In the years since the crushing defeat of the Tepet Legions, the Realm has been reluctant to campaign abroad. House Tepet has been effectively knocked out of the race for the throne, so no House is willing to contribute its portion of the military to risky endeavors. Yet they all demand more and more taxes from their Threshold tributaries as they seek to improve their military position for the coming civil war. The people of the Threshold, especially those of the Scavenger Lands, are beginning to grow tired of the Dynast's demands.

It is a time of opportunity and risk. It is clear that an age of war is at hand. The armies of the Deathlords stir in the Underworld, the Fair Folk launch raids and demonstrations along the borders of Creation, and the Lunar Exalted are called forth from the wilderness by the scent of their long-lost mates. The world as it was is passing away, and a new world with a new balance of power will soon be born. In most places, the world waits breathlessly for the storm. In some places, the first raindrops have already begun to fall.

## Who You Are

Shortly after the disappearance of the Scarlet Empress, a door that was never meant to be opened was wrenched asunder by the ambition of great evils. Five years ago, the Deathlords connived to seize the banished power of the Solar Exalted.

They half-succeeded.

From their success were born the deathknights, and from their failure, the Solar Exalted sprang forth again. Imprisoned and denied reincarnation for centuries, the power of the Solar Exalted relentlessly seeks out talented and ambitious individuals and starts them on a meteoric path to prominence and supernatural might. Though only half as many Solars exist now as did in the First Age, they are still mighty enough to reshape the world.

### The Wyld

The unformed chaos outside Creation is termed the Wyld. It is a place of perfect potential, with no structure and no easily discernable rules. The primary inhabitants of this unformed chaos are the Fair Folk. These faerie princes make their nations in the substance of the madness beyond Creation and themselves comprise that substance. They have always been hostile to Primordials and their creations. Ever since the foundation of Creation, the Fair Folk have striven to see the world reduced to Wyld-tossed ruins and dissolved.

When they have entered our world, the Fair Folk most often appear to be tall, beautiful beings of elemental aspect. They could be mistaken for Terrestrial Exalted were it not for their inhuman cast of their features and the alien miracles that trail in their wake. Their servants are will-less drones, called hobgoblins, who appear in our reality as twisted and bestial servants.

At one point sophisticated magical wards and defenses completely barred the Fair Folk from Creation. The world of **Exalted** was once much larger than it is in the present day, however, and large portions of reality collapsed during a series of massive disasters almost 1,000 years ago. The culminating disaster of the Great Contagion was a vast invasion of Fair Folk, stopped only through the use of Creation's geomantic defense weapons by the woman who came to be known as the Scarlet Empress.

Today, Fair Folk often slip through the ruined edges of Creation and lurk on the damaged edges of reality, seeking to undermine the world or simply to accomplish their alien agendas. Unfortunately, contact with the influence of the Wyld is addictive and exhilarating and also ultimately fatal for creatures of Creation. Fair Folk often use the addictive nature of the Wyld to trap and enslave their prey, for the faerie must consume human dreams to survive in the stifling reality of Creation.

These reborn heroes, their immense power long banished, their memories vilified, are the last hope of a world wracked by turmoil and strife. Yet, within them lie the seeds of the same darkness that consumed them at the dawn of history.

## Creation

This is the lay of Creation:

At the center of Creation is the Elemental Pole of Earth, a great mountain that rises nearly to Heaven itself. This is the Imperial Mountain, the axis of Creation and the heart of reality.

Around it lies the Blessed Isle, surrounded in turn by the Great Inland Sea.

Surrounding the Inland Sea is the Threshold, the ring of land and islands that stretches out to the tattered edges of Creation. The Empress ruled the Blessed Isle as her own, while she ruled the Threshold as subject states and tributaries.

At the extreme North of Creation is the Elemental Pole of Air, a precipice beyond which lies nothing but air and snow. The northern stretches of Creation are cold lands, where ice is lord and wind is master.

To the uttermost South of Creation is the Elemental Pole of Fire, a precipice beyond which exists naught but endless, smokeless flame. Deserts lie in the South of Creation, and the sands grow ever hotter the further south one travels.

In the farthest West is the Elemental Pole of Water, where the seas are endless and no more islets break their surface. The Western reaches of Creation are great archipelagoes of island nations.

To the East is the Elemental Pole of Wood, and in the farthest East, a great cathedral of huge trees darkens the skies, rising up from an infinite gulf. The East is a land of forests and fields and fens. In the Far East, savage tribes dwell in the branches of trees, and a man can live his whole life and never touch the ground.

Above Creation lies Yu-Shan, the city of the gods, the home of the Celestial Court and the Games of Divinity.

## Weather and Climate

Creation has a climate driven by its peculiarly sorcerous nature. Weather comes from the elemental poles, with warm winds coming from the South, blizzards from the North and rainstorms from the East and West. Each part of Creation receives some attention from all four poles, but the poles exert the greatest influence over the areas closest to them. The Blessed Isle at the center of Creation is truly blessed, because it benefits from the temperate attentions of all four quarters.

The lunar calendar used by the Realm has spread through much of the rest of Creation. The moon passes through its phases every 28 days, and each of the five seasons (Air, Water, Earth, Wood, Fire) consists of three months. Each of the three months represents a phase of the season: the first month is the Ascending phase, the second Resplendent and the third Descending. After the season of Fire is Calibration, a moonless five-day holiday that is not part of any season. During this topsy-turvy time, the spirit courts are in disorder, the worlds of men and gods are closer than normally, and many strange phenomena are observed as the world ties up loose ends and prepares itself for another year.

Ascending Water is usually the coldest month of the year, when the North is draped in ice. Frost and cold bind the East and West during this month, while pleasant rains cool the South. Temperatures rise through the months of spring in Descending Water and the early months of the season of Earth, bringing hurricanes to the South, monsoons to the West and drenching downpours and storms to the East. Then, there is a long growing period of increasing warmth for the last month of Earth, all of the season of Wood and the first month of the season of Fire, until the height of summer comes with Descending Fire. In that month, the South is scorched by endless days of blazing sun, the breadfruit trees of the West are dried up, the endless forests of the East are parched and dry, and the North is bright and temperate, fully open to traders and travelers. After this, temperatures fall rapidly, bringing storms across Creation and a hurrying in the year's last harvest before winter grips the world once more.

These natural patterns of climate and weather are affected by gods, elementals, sorcery, Charms and other supernatural influences. Winds move under the direction of the weather gods, weather magic is commonplace, and elementals and local gods can be relied upon to disturb the regular flow of climate in response to a few prayers or favors—or in order to spite an enemy. While the major weather patterns continue according to the season, with monsoons slashing across the Western coasts in the rainy season and sandstorms moving through the desert, smaller changes constantly occur. In the First Age, these fluctuations were regulated by the Exalted, who would have set matters in order and ordered the gods to keep the weather patterns in balance. Alas, the First Age is long gone, and the Solar Deliberative with it, and now, every petty deity is prepared to divert a rainstorm for a bit of worship on the side.

The combination of a very long growing season and the effects of magic and prayer result in high crop yields; the gardens of Creation are heavy with vegetables and the paddies full of rice all through the season of Wood. Most areas can harvest three crops of rice a year, while the Blessed Isle and the Scavenger Lands bring in five rice crops in the most fertile areas. This vast bounty encourages large and complicated societies, for one peasant can nourish many people with her labor.

## Demesnes

In some areas of Creation, natural Essence is channeled into standing vortices of power. Such places, demesnes, are natural holy places, dedicated to the character, the "flavor," of the Essence that comprises the vortex. The character of the power may vary across a wide spectrum from elementally aspected Essence to that drawing on the tainted power of the Underworld. Each demesne is aspected toward a particular form of Essence. This Essence may be Solar, Lunar, Sidereal, Terrestrial (in one of five elements) or Abyssal.

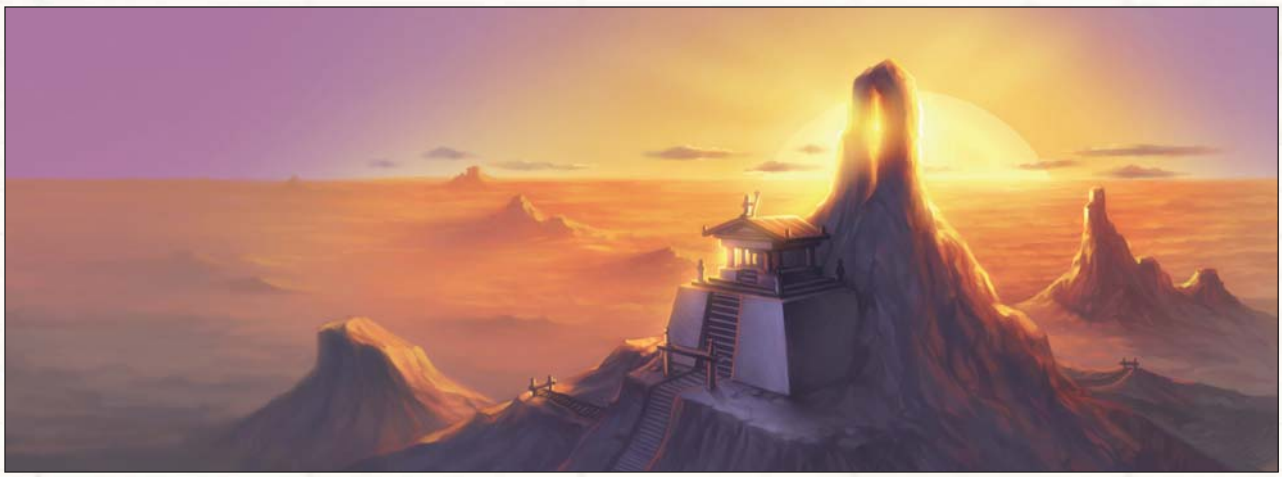
As Essence vortices, demesnes are rivets in the structure of Creation, nodes in the pattern that maintains the world as it is. To the average inhabitant of Creation, they are wild sources of power, seething with untapped energy and full of danger. Those who are not masters of their own Essence are twisted by the ambient power of such places after prolonged exposure, and common folk usually avoid demesnes, out of fear of mutation. Beings who can wield Essence can attune themselves to the vortex and suckle on its vast power. Yet only death can break attunement to a demesne, and there can be only one attunement at a time. Once aligned with a demesne, an Essence-user will forever be a target of those who covet its supernatural power.

## Manses

A suitably skilled savant-architect can redesign the area of a demesne in order to harness its geomantic power, creating a manse. Once, during the First Age, manses were the temple-fortresses of the Solar Deliberative and the strongholds of their rule. Those built afterward were also designed to be used as palaces or military installations. As such, manses often have a very solid construction, and the term conjures visions of a powerful stronghold in the minds of most inhabitants of Creation. But the term manse refers only to the geomantic harness, which can be constructed any number of ways.

The actual form of the manse may be anything from a mighty tower roofed with orichalcum to a forest glade that has been carefully laid out in order to channel and master the power of the land. Regardless of its shape, if the manse is built properly, the land around it will no longer brim with spontaneous miracle and twist those who live on it into creatures of magic incapable of surviving away from its radiance.

The owner of a manse can attune himself to it, just as if it were a demesne. In fact, a manse is superior, for it can be attuned repeatedly, allowing shared use of its resources. In addition, the manse creates a crystal nodule (a hearthstone) about the size of a hen's egg, formed from and fueled by the raw power of the demesne. An attuned being who carries this Hearthstone can draw Essence from the manse at a distance. The connection to the Essence vortex is attenuated, but it is still an important lifeline whose effectiveness at replenishing the life energies can surpass transcendental meditation. In addition, if the crystal is placed in a specially crafted hearthstone setting, it becomes a sort of talisman, and the bearer is blessed with the lingering effects of a miracle, the effectiveness of which can vary from useful tricks to attacks of devastating power. Finally, many ancient artifacts of especially miraculous character use these crystals for power and will not function without one of these geomantic resonators. Anyone who wishes to master the secrets of the First Age must also master sufficient manses to fuel their wonders.



## Gods and Elementals

All of the gods of Creation hold a defined place in a vast Celestial Bureaucracy. Be they great or small, all gods serve a function, from the highest Celestial deities, the Unconquered Sun and the Celestial Maidens, to the least god who guards a single road or a tiny spring. Sometimes, lesser gods are referred to as "spirits," though this appellation may be taken as an insult by a god. All things are watched over by some god, from acts of mercy to city roads, from toads to murders and from diseases to true love. A wise man knows which gods govern the areas that interest him and what to offer them when he seeks to gain their favor or turn aside their anger. Gods are everywhere, naturally immaterial, but they can manifest physically at a great cost of their personal Essence.

There is a clear distinction between celestial and local deities. Celestial deities are gods of universal phenomena such as storms, war, darkness, cities and lost things, while local deities are gods of single places or areas. While celestial deities are a part of the Celestial Court and generally have higher status than gods with a purely local domain, it is possible—especially in these later, degenerate days—for a strong local deity to be more powerful than a minor Celestial one. Local gods are not permitted to dwell in Yu-Shan, the Celestial City, though they may visit it and are allowed only fleeting access to the Games of Divinity.

The greater the deity, the more Essence it takes for him to remain fully materialized inside Creation. As a result, gods favor manses and demesnes for their dwellings if they spend much time in material form. A manifest god may be slain, but he will rise again, weakened yet still fundamentally himself. To destroy a god totally requires great power or the ability to journey to Yu-Shan itself and to lay a case before the bureaucracy of Heaven.

Elementals are different from gods, as they are created through the mingling of elemental matter and Essence. They are personifications of particular aspects or functions of Creation: storm spirits and wood beings, fire dancers, water hags and deep hiders of stony secrets. While elementals often serve gods, truly powerful elementals, such as the Elemental Dragons, can cause even powerful gods to tremble. Elementals lose their memories if they are slain, and they revert to the original matter of the element that formed them.

### Yu-Shan

The Primordials dwelt in their palace of Yu-Shan, playing the Games of Divinity, while the gods spent their time in Creation maintaining the order of the world and living on the Blessed Isle. Yu-Shan is a pocket in the fabric of Creation, similar to (but far larger than) any of the individual sanctums maintained by gods. It is a single great city surrounded by a huge wall of shining adamant and constructed on the same topography as the Blessed Isle, but with parks the size of nations and orchards the size of city-states. Above the wall rises the dome of the sky, which joins seamlessly to the wall and is impossible to breach or mar. The dome blazes with a radiance matching that of the god who is currently leading in the Games of Divinity, whether this should be bright gold for the Unconquered Sun, silver for Luna, or black and full of colored stars for one of the Maidens.

At the heart of Yu-Shan is the Jade Pleasure Dome wherein the Incarnae play the Games of Divinity. It is surrounded by palaces, manses, orchards, museums, banqueting halls and other divine buildings. A network of quicksilver canals traverses the entire metropolis, providing one of the most expedient methods of transport, though cloud-riding and artifact vehicles are also common. Yu-Shan is truly the dwelling of the gods, and the peaches of immortality grow in its orchards and celestial wine is served at the dining tables.

## Celestial Incarnae

Foremost among the servants of the Primordials were the Celestines, or Celestial Incarnae: the Five Maidens, Luna and the Unconquered Sun. They are termed celestial because they are each associated with a heavenly body—the sun, the moon, or one of the five planets. Gaia is sometimes counted among the Incarnae, increasing their number to eight, but she is actually one of the only surviving Primordials, rather than a god.

**The Unconquered Sun:** The Unconquered Sun was the god who first suggested the overthrow of the Primordials. None can match him as a strategist and leader. He is the greatest warrior in all Creation and is typically depicted as a clean-shaven, handsome four-armed male, wearing bronze armor and carrying a lance, a shining shield, a laurel branch and a horn.

**Luna:** Luna is the constant companion to Gaia and is pictured as male or female with equal frequency. Many-faced, cunning and possibly mad, Luna is a trickster and shapeshifter without peer. During the war against the Primordials, she advised the Unconquered Sun on battle stratagems. Less is known of her than of the other Incarnae, except to savants and to her Chosen.

**Mercury, the Maiden of Journeys:** Mercury is associated with going and doing, as well as travel and what results from it. She is the god of merchants, messengers, wanderers and explorers. She has the most diverse interests of any of the Maidens, but her interests are so diverse that she rarely focuses on one thing for any length of time and has a reputation for fickleness. Her astrological house is the Golden Barque of the Heavens, made up of the constellations of the Captain, the Gull, the Mast, the Messenger and the Ship's Wheel. Her color is yellow-gold, and she is often pictured dressed in saffron-colored robes.

**Venus, the Maiden of Serenity:** Venus is the god of leisure, joy, art and all the things that make life worth living. She oversees the desires that cause life to continue and motivate humans and immortals alike. She is said to be the Maiden who cares the most about mortals, though some claim that she is more concerned with her own pleasures. Her astrological house is the Cerulean Lute of Harmony, consisting of the constellations of the Ewer, the Lovers, the Musician, the Peacock and the Pillar. Her color is sapphire blue, a color often seen in both marriage gowns and the veils of courtesans.

**Mars, the Maiden of Battles:** Mars is the mistress of war and strife, and though the Unconquered Sun is the greatest warrior among the gods, Mars may be the greater general. Her symbol, a stylized sword and shield, is the universal sign of an

armory or weapon smithy. Her astrological house is the Crimson Panoply of Victory, consisting of the constellations of the Banner, the Gauntlet, the Quiver, the Shield and the Spear. Her color is crimson, and she is often depicted as an armed woman with short red hair, wearing red lacquered armor.

**Jupiter, the Maiden of Secrets:** Jupiter is the eldest and most mysterious of the Five Maidens. She is said to know the allotted span of every mortal thing, of even the gods and Creation itself. She is associated with wisdom and learning, but also with spying, stealth and secrecy. Her astrological house is the Forbidding Manse of Ivy, consisting of the constellations of the Guardians, the Key, the Mask, the Sorcerer and the Treasure Trove. Her color is green, and she is depicted as handsome rather than beautiful, with a measuring rod in her hand that is used for measuring the length of threads on the Loom of Fate.

**Saturn, the Maiden of Endings:** Saturn is the most feared of the Five Maidens. Her task is to cut the threads of the Loom of Fate at Jupiter's direction, and she is the god of death and undoing. Unlike the Deathlords, though, hers is a merciful and final ending that gives way to new life, not a twilight stagnation. Her astrological house is the Violet Bier of Sorrows and includes the constellations of the Corpse, the Crow, the Haywain, the Rising Smoke and the Sword. Her color is a deep violet, which is often used in funerary shrouds. Saturn is depicted as a beautiful maiden with white hair and a sad expression, bearing a sword whose touch means death.

**Gaia:** Gaia is the spirit of the whole of Creation, a Primordial equal to or even greater than the gods of the various planets. She is sometimes called the Maiden of Plenty, though this is a misnomer. She is venerated abstractly by the Immaculates as the source of all life, and though many offer her prayers of thanksgiving, few ask for her intercession. She is benevolent, and her compassion for life is boundless, but she is as distant as the Celestial Incarnae. The Five Elemental Dragons are her offspring.

## The Celestial Bureaucracy

Beneath the Celestial Incarnae are many other gods who are charged with watching over Creation. All gods hold some rank in the Celestial Bureaucracy, whether or not they choose to observe their duties, and even those deities who have been degraded for improper conduct are still part of the divine system. The Bureaucracy is divided into five Bureaus, under which all the functions of Creation and Heaven fall. Two criteria determine a deity's position in the hierarchy: power and history.

Each god, from lowest to highest, knows his duty and should perform the tasks that are assigned to him. Even those lesser gods that have been created through mortal actions and mortal worship (such as the spirit of a boat) are aware of their relative status and obligations. Gods may be defined in terms of their assigned duties (whether or not they perform them) and their areas of patronage.

## Elementals and the Terrestrial Bureaucracy

By nature, the Elementals are personifications of particular aspects or functions of Creation. The first and greatest elementals were created by the gods from Essence-infused elements, under the tutelage of Gaia and after the example of her offspring, the five Elemental Dragons. At the time, there was no need for spirit courts, and everything ran like clockwork for uncounted ages. Lesser elementals came into existence after the war with

## The Anthropomorphic Realities of Heaven and Hell

In **Exalted**, immortality does not necessarily come with omniscience, perspective or selflessness. A deity is, by its nature, biased in a particular direction. It wants to protect and strengthen the area that it was formed to guard and supervise. Gods often lack perspective in anything *not* associated with their particular guiding motivation, however, and they are prepared to take or give bribes (in praise, service or favors) to advance their own interests. They also frequently feud with each other, struggling for the worship of mortal followers or attempting to decrease another deity's standing in order to increase their own. Gods are capable of quite astonishing pettiness. Living forever makes deities very good at holding grudges.

Ideally, Heaven functions in perfect order and rectitude. The Celestial Bureaucracy is meant to be directed by the Five Celestial Bureaus from Yu-Shan. These are the Commission on Abstract Matters and Celestial Concern (the Bureau of Heaven), the Celestial Monitors of the Seasons and Weather (the Bureau of Seasons), the Divine Witnesses of Human Works and Deeds (the Bureau of Humanity), the Superintendency of Nature Grand and Humble (the Bureau of Nature) and the Most Excellent Designers of Destiny and Sidereal Conjunctions (the Bureau of Destiny). The higher gods of the Bureaus issue directives to the lower ones, the elementals ensure the proper behavior of weather and other natural phenomena, mortals provide worship and praise, and Creation moves smoothly on from day to day.

In practice, however, corruption exists at all levels of the Celestial and Terrestrial Bureaucracies. Under the ancient system, the Celestial Exalted kept order in the Terrestrial Bureaucracies, and the little gods did not dare stray far from their duties. With the Solar and Lunar Exalted gone after the Usurpation, however, the Dragon-Blooded could not maintain the same level of control. Even the best work of the Immaculate Order could maintain a degree of stability only on the Blessed Isle and in certain of its satrapies.

Fortunately, there are ways of dealing with renegade gods. The Celestial Censors of the Bureau of Heaven have the power to conduct audits—a form of celestial scrutiny that spirits fear—and in the days when many of the lesser elemental dragons that serve as censors were not corrupt or overworked, this was a powerful tool indeed. The Exalted themselves also have the power to deal with gods, from destroying their worship to physically assaulting them. The return of the Solar Exalted, the Lawgivers of old, might even signal reform in Heaven.

the Primordials, and they were set in order by the gods under the direction of the Elemental Dragons.

All elementals are aspected toward one of the five elements: Earth, Fire, Wood, Air or Water. They come into existence to fulfill some task associated with their element, such as protecting it, helping it to increase, governing its movements or otherwise guiding it through a natural cycle. Elementals do not do so out of duty, as do the gods, but by their very nature. They range in size from mighty masters of the winds and guardians of entire forests to smaller creatures such as need fires, brine curs or fire butterflies. Elementals can rise or fall in power. Those who grow to truly great power alter, as their forms change to match their nature, and become dragons. Elementals are static creatures, closely tied to their physical surroundings, such that to modify their behavior would require modifying their own substance.

After the Usurpation, when the Solar Exalted were thrown down, and the Great Contagion, which slew millions, and the invasion of the Fair Folk, many elementals died, and the world was so changed that those who remained found it hard to pursue their duties as they had once done. Some formed spirit courts in imitation of the gods, while others remained solitary and shunned what contact with gods or mortals they had once had.

The Terrestrial Bureaucracy is inefficient, slack and overridden by protocol. Apart from those small areas that still function effectively (and the Blessed Isle itself, where the Immaculate Order largely keeps the elementals and lesser gods in check), the Terrestrial Bureaucracy is a shambles, invoked only when it is to the advantage of the more significant participants.

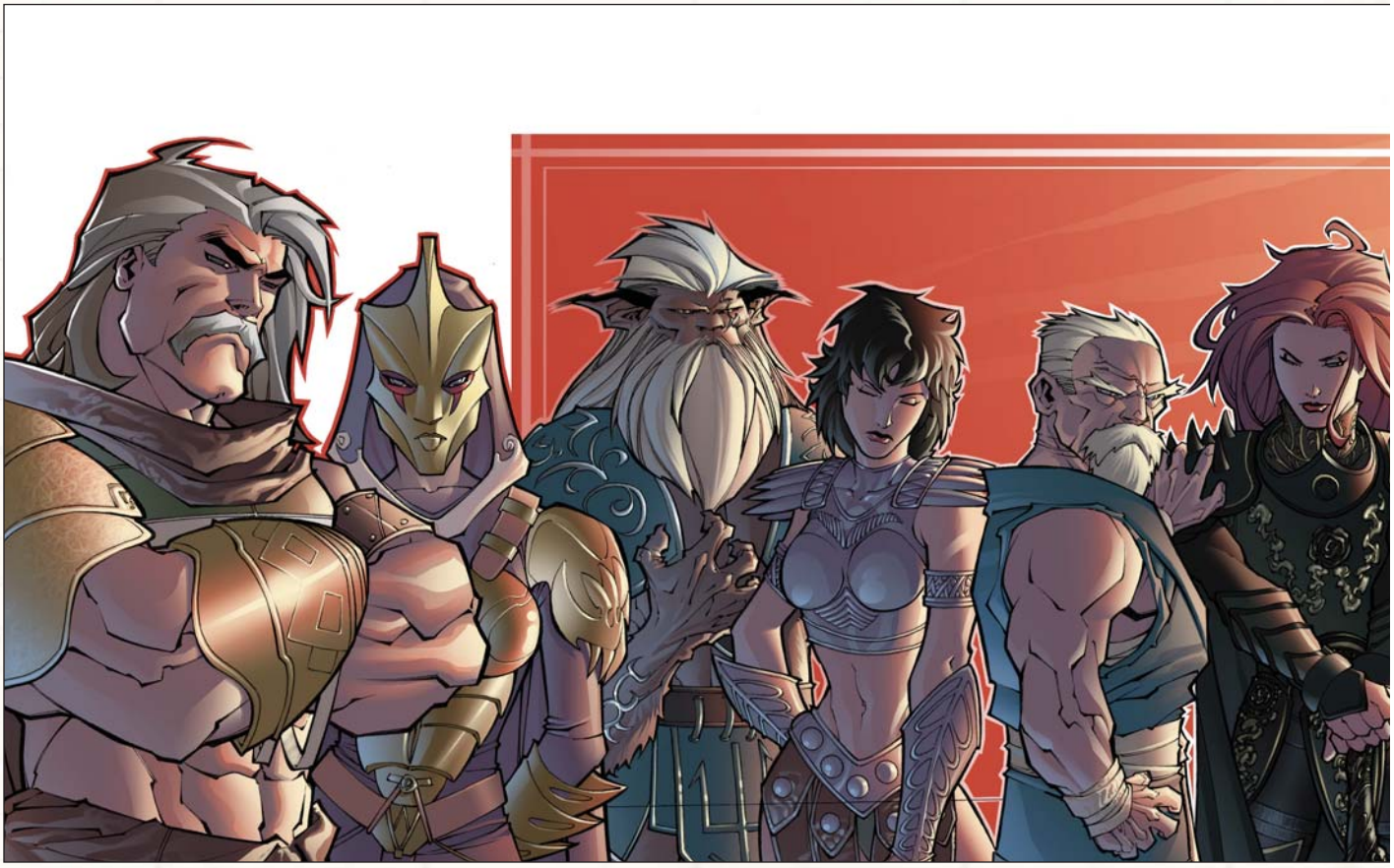
## The Exalted

The Exalted have been chosen by the great powers of Creation, from the Elemental Dragons to the Deathlords, and given power like that of the gods themselves. A shard of imperishable might has been set within their souls, allowing them to master their internal Essence and empowering them to slay monsters, lead armies, work puissant sorceries and perform other deeds appropriate to the brightest of heroes. Once, the Solar Exalted ruled the world, but they were cursed and fell and were slain, leaving the Terrestrial Exalted—commonly called the Dragon-Blooded—to become rulers in their place.

## The Creation of the Exalted

In the earliest times, the gods became discontented with their lot as keepers of the world, tenders of Creation and mere servants of the Primordials. The Primordials had created the gods with mighty geasa laid upon them, however, such that the gods could not use anything that was divine, or any of the stars or planets or moons or turning seasons, to work the undoing of their creators. The Primordials did not mention mortal life in these geasa, for they did not believe that anything mortal could be a threat to them.

The Unconquered Sun proposed to his fellow Incarnae that they should take humans and give them great power, so that the humans could fight as their champions against the Primordials. The other Incarnae agreed, and they went out and chose mortals to become heroes—the first of the Exalted. Gaia would create no soldiers, but she gave her blessing to the Elemental Dragons, and



they raised up soldiers to serve as the armies for the heroes, the Dragon-Blooded. Autochthon, also a Primordial and the first of all smiths, turned against his brothers and gave the Exalted the designs for mighty weapons that could destroy the Primordials.

After the war with the Primordials was concluded, the Incarnae took up the Games of Divinity, leaving the stewardship of Creation to the Exalted. In turn, the Exalted took up the position that the Celestial Incarnae had once held, having authority over Creation and the Terrestrial gods.

Of the Exalted, there are five primary types:

**Solars:** The Solar Exalted are the Chosen of the Unconquered Sun, created to be the rulers of the world and the leaders of the other Exalted. Solar Exalted come in one of five castes. The Dawn Castes are unparalleled warriors, the Zenith Castes are priests and mystics, the Twilight Castes are savants and sorcerers, the Night Castes are spies and assassins, and the Eclipse Castes are diplomats and ambassadors.

**Lunars:** The Lunar Exalted are the Chosen of Luna, the viceroys, generals and strategists of the Solars—and often their consorts as well. They are shapeshifters and hunters, warriors and survivors. Their power is divided in terms of the moon's phases. The Full Moons are warriors and lovers of battle, the No Moons are keepers of lore and sorcery, and the Changing Moons are the tacticians and shapeshifters and scouts. Originally, instead of the Changing Moons, there were three separate castes—the Waxing Moons, priests and courtiers; the Half-Moons, observers and tacticians; and the Waning Moons, guileful spies and tricksters—but the separation between the three was lost following the Usurpation.

**Sidereals:** The Sidereals are the Chosen of the Five Maidens, the most secretive and inscrutable of all the Exalted. They are advisors, viziers, planners, counselors and masters of intrigue and the martial arts. Each Sidereal Exalt is chosen by a particular Maiden, but there are never more than 100 total Sidereals at any time.

**Dragon-Blooded:** The Terrestrial Exalted differ from the Celestial Exalted in that they can pass on their powers to their descendants. They were formed by the Elemental Dragons as foot soldiers to the Celestial Exalted. Separately they are weaker, but when working together, the Terrestrials can topple dynasties and menace even the mightiest gods into submission. A Dragon-Blood has one of five elemental aspects: Air, Earth, Fire, Water or Wood.

**Abyssal Exalted:** At the recent destruction of the city of Thorns, the Deathlord Mask of Winters was shown to have dark Exalted servants, and there have been increasing reports of such beings from around Creation. These "deathknights" are a subject of terrible rumor, but little certain knowledge.

## The Role of the Exalted

Though the Terrestrial Exalted can pass on a heritage of power to their progeny, the power of the greater Celestial Exalted is too mighty to pass through heredity. Instead, when a Celestial Exalt is slain, the fragment of Essence that grants him his power flees to a new host, granting her Exaltation. Thus, there are a fixed number of each type of Celestial Exalt. In Creation, there are about 300 Lunar Exalted and about 100 Sidereal Exalted at any time, and no new Exaltations have been set loose in

Creation since the war against the Primordials. There were also once 300 Solar Exaltations, but their number has been halved by the Deathlords, who snared the other half of the Exaltations and made from a number of them the Abyssal Exalted.

It is important to understand that although the Exaltation springs from a divinity and is clearly aligned with that god's influences, its maker has no natural control over it. Had this been otherwise, the gods would have merely been ordered by their Primordial overlords to gather the power of the Exalted back up and forced to crush their own uprising. Exaltation is a fire passed into the hands of man, a gift that cannot be taken back, and what the Exalt does after receiving it is governed by his will and vision alone.

# The Realm

Today, the Realm is the single greatest power in the whole world. Secure in its core lands on the Blessed Isle and nearly invulnerable to attack, the Realm has set policy for the rest of Creation for nearly a millennium. For most of the last 800 years, the decisions of the Scarlet Empress have raised up kings and brought them down, they have sent armies across deserts and seas and made gods and Exalts tremble. Enforced by the Dragon-Blooded and the martial prowess of her legions, her decisions seemed to march the whole of Creation along a path of her choosing. Even now in her absence, the Realm still acts while other nations only react. The policies and philosophies of the Realm's princes, bureaucrats and satraps affect the day-to-day lives of millions of beings.

Indeed, there is a close connection between the growing confusion within the Realm and the reappearance of the Solar Exalted. The Wyld Hunt no longer pursues its Anathema with the vigor it did during the days of the Empress. Instead, like all the resources of the Realm, the Wyld Hunt is increasingly turned to the purposes of various rival powers within the Realm, rather than against the Realm's external enemies.

Without the clear and firm guidance of the Scarlet Empress, the various factions she encouraged and played against each other to support her rule are now dueling for control of her empire. In the process, they have forgotten or ignored the responsibilities she assigned to them, and the Realm no longer acts with one mind. Yet, even in its decline, the Realm is a great force in the world, capable of mighty deeds and terrible action in a time of tumult.

The Realm consists of two main regions, which are geographically distinct from one another and governed by two different means. The first region is the Blessed Isle itself, centered around the Imperial Mountain. The Isle is the heartland of the Realm, and the Realm has imposed a high level of discipline and control upon all aspects of life and society there, from the small gods who watch over each forest, beach, and hill to how deeply a peasant genuflects to a Terrestrial Exalt riding by. Each being has a place and purpose on the Blessed Isle, and there is little room for interpretation or variation. The Scarlet Empress was the Isle's sole lawgiver and benevolent despot—a role now nominally filled by the Regent.

The second region is a series of disparate, fractious and occasionally rebellious territories in the Threshold that owe allegiance and pay tribute to the Realm. These territories are

## Of the Nature of the Exalted

Among men, Exalted have no equals, for they were created to be the weapons of the gods in the war against those that came before the gods. When young in her power, an Exalt might be mistaken for the miraculous child of a mighty god or for a particularly talented thaumaturge, but as she matures, she far surpasses the potential of both. Each sort of Exalt is its own distinct being, but the following is true of all Exalted, from an adolescent Terrestrial to the most hoary Lunar.

- **The Exaltation grants a vast life span.** The mayfly Terrestrials endure for only two or three centuries, while the Celestial Exalted typically live ten times as long. In addition, the Exalted are nearly ageless. They endure, seemingly in the prime of their lives, until the very end of their long spans. Any Exalt who appears elderly is ancient indeed.
- **The Exaltation grants tremendous vitality.** The physical body of an Exalt is incredibly resilient. Exalted heal with incredible rapidity, are largely immune to disease, and are intensely resistant to poison. An Exalt can endure the most incredible hardship and survive wounds that would instantly fell a mortal.
- **The Exaltation demands heroes.** Exaltation is a fundamental alteration of destiny, turn a mortal into a semi-divine weapon. To be capable of benefiting from the Exaltation's power, the Exalt-to-be must already have an important destiny. No Exalt is unwilling to wield his power. The Exaltation is not a rational or moral force, though. It simply seeks out beings who can and will wield divine power. It could descend on the most pious of hermits or the most immoral of rascals, so long as the chosen one is of consequence to history and will put its might to use.
- **The Exaltation is desirous of hale hosts.** The Exalted heal without scar and recover without permanent disability from all but the most terrible non-magical maiming. In addition, the power that inhabits the Exalted is a military weapon. Though rare exceptions occur for those whose talent and destiny surpasses their limitations, the vast majority of those who become Terrestrial Exalted are free of any serious birth defect and are generally superior physical specimens. Those who become Celestial Exalted are almost always of age to serve in the military—between 13 and 60—and possess full use of their limbs and senses. Exaltation knows no gender or ethnic preference. It desires only quality base material from which to make a hero.
- **The Exaltation is imperishable and inseparable.** No known process can sunder the bond between soul and Exaltation in either Terrestrial or Celestial Exalted. In addition, the Exaltation is protective. As godly beings and creatures of magic, the Exalted suffer lesser or no effect from many magical powers.

When a Celestial Exalt is slain, the power flees her mortal frame and seeks out a new host. Only once has this succession of power been interrupted, when the Solar Exalted were slain and banished, and that merely postponed their return until the current day.

called satrapies. Each satrapy has its own local government and political system, which is watched over and "advised" by an official of the Realm (called a satrap). Each satrap serves as the voice and ears of the Empress in the region and speaks her decrees. The satrap's advice is usually received with a dutiful obedience by the local government. This is not surprising, since the satrap's personal staff usually consists of a substantial body of elite troops, several monks of the Immaculate Order, and representatives of the Realm's secret police.

## The Empress

To understand the Realm today, it is necessary to begin with an understanding of the Scarlet Empress. The Realm has been her creature, the jade-steel glove around her strong-willed fist, for more than 700 years. Four generations of the long-lived Dragon-Blooded have grown up and died since she came to the throne, and more than 20 generations of mortals have turned to dust during her reign. "What the Empress desires, the Realm performs" has been an adage and a warning in the Threshold for longer than most kingdoms have lasted.

Both the official histories and more private reminisces reveal the Scarlet Empress to be a physically beautiful woman of good family and enormous personal resolve, capable of a wide range of emotions and possessed of a razor-sharp wit. It is said she routinely remembered people by name even decades after their only meeting. She spoke and wrote nine languages, she could shoot a sparrow in mid-flight from a distance of a mile, and she once strangled a great-grandson to death in full view of her court. Midway through her eighth century, she resembled a mortal woman in her early 30s, the epitome of grace and charm. Yet, she is also a powerful warrior in her own right. Only a decade ago, she personally led a Wyld Hunt against a newborn Solar Exalt in the western prefectures of the Blessed Isle. Courageous, cunning, charismatic, lucky, beautiful, elegant, half-divine, willful—all these words were used to describe the Scarlet Empress. Mere description fades before the basic truth of her accomplishment—she created and maintained the largest empire in Creation in the very teeth of the powers of the Wyld and Oblivion, while manipulating a restless and ambitious nobility to serve her own ends.

It had never been done before her, and it is a deed unlikely to be repeated by any less formidable and awe-inspiring a specimen.

## Philosophy of Rulership

Numerous scrolls and codices are filled with treatises by the wise on the Scarlet Empress's methods and philosophy. The arguments of scholars are endless, but some basic principles can be found within and beneath all of her known actions. These can be summarized as follows:

• **Divide and Rule:** The Empress never allowed power to rest in one pair of hands where it might better rest in two pairs. Rather, she set three pairs of hands and eyes where one pair alone might be best. The Realm has three different types of secret police, watching each other almost as carefully as they watch the populace at large. The Empress also has 11 *whole families* of potential heirs, rather than a half-dozen princes of her own blood.

• **All Favor from the Center:** The Empress reserved to herself power over all appointments, all commissions, all medal-giving,

all land grants and all beneficence. If someone wanted honor, glory, responsibility or recognition, the only place to seek it was on bended knee before the Empress's throne. With the power of appointment came the power of recall, and the Empress used this power with startling speed and frequency.

• **Dishonor Before Death:** The Empress always sought to wreck the reputation and standing of those who thought to replace her, rather than to murder them. Many of her most fanatical supporters were those she had once driven from high office, as they constantly sought restoration to her good graces. Her disfavor could last decades, but she always had a corps of willing bureaucrats and officers to draw upon in a crisis.

• **Perpetual Violence at the Fringe:** The Empress encouraged the Realm to be in a state of constant low-level warfare all along its boundaries—in essence, along the edges of its satrapies in the Threshold. Thus, the Realm's troops were kept exercised, the most capable military commanders learned their business efficiently, and the most dangerous and ambitious of the Realm's future leaders were kept at a distance from the center of power.

• **Privileged Responsibility:** The Empress shaped the Realm's legal and cultural climate so that the Dragon-Blooded can expect unquestioned obedience from every ordinary human on the Blessed Isle. Every Terrestrial Exalt enjoys a host of privileges and advantages even without an official title from the Realm, including the right to maintain a small private army. Yet the Dragon-Blooded also accept a huge burden of responsibility. They care for their underlings with a deep sense of noblesse oblige and are personally liable for the failings of their subordinates. All praise and all blame sits squarely on the Dragon-Blooded's shoulders, always.

## Outcaste and Dynasty

One of the most critical divisions within the Empress' policy lies between the two different types of Terrestrial Exalted—different not in terms of physical or magical capabilities, but in cultural awareness and social standing. The Realm's outward successes in the Threshold, or against the forces of the Wyld, have depended upon the apparent unity of the Dragon-Blooded before any adversary. At the same time, however, the Empress secured her throne through the creation of an artificial distinction between two cultural groups within the Dragon-Blooded, the Dynasts and the outcastes.

Outcastes are those Dragon-Blooded born among the common people of the Realm, born in the Threshold or born of slaves. The Empress sought out these oddities and offered them wealth, power and privilege in exchange for loyalty. The outcastes who accepted found postings in the Realm's bureaucracy or the legions or were accepted as monks in the Immaculate Order. The outcastes gained power and prestige on the basis of personal merit and individual action, allowed the chance to fly by the Empress herself.

Dynasts, by contrast, belong to one of the 11 families whose founders were the consorts of the Empress in years, decades, and centuries past. Dynasts claim blood descent from the Empress and hold enormous power in the Realm, but much of this power comes to them by virtue of a famous family name rather than their own individual abilities. Superbly trained, they nevertheless face the world with a startling degree of arrogance, as if the whole of Creation should be theirs only for the threat of their names.

The outcastes and the Dynasts have played against each other in a delicate game of respect and mutual distrust for centuries. The outcaste were the Empress' ill-bred lackeys, dependent on her good will—but their puissance more than made up for breaches of manners. The Dynasts had impeccable manners and were beholden to no one, but their lack of real-world hardening could lead them into fatal mistakes. Now, for the first time since the Realm's founding, the Dynasts have the best tiles on the table, and the outcastes are scrambling, looking for friends in hostile places.

## Polity and Policy

During the Calibration between Realm Year 762 and 763 (counted since the ascendancy of the Scarlet Empress), the Empress disappeared. The immediate members of the Empress's household hid her absence from the Realm's leadership. The Empress had taken long sabbaticals before, and she had standing instructions on how her occasional absences should be handled. These directions sufficed for a time, but by the last months of RY 764, the failure of the Empress to act on a number of important items of business prompted the Dynasts first to request, and then to demand, an audience with the Empress. When their most vocal and even insolent remarks were greeted with silence, the Empress's chamberlain revealed the truth—she had been missing for almost two years.

### The Regent

The absence of the Empress came as a terrible shock to Dynasts and outcastes alike. The Realm needed a monarch. The entire political and social structure of the Realm absolutely required it. The Empress had ruled on the basis that all favor and goodness flowed from a single center, the Scarlet Throne. Without an occupant upon that throne, no business at all could be completed or even genuinely considered. The Realm would look weak and divided before both its spirit-foes and its more mundane enemies. *Someone* had to take on the responsibilities of being the ruler of the Realm.

But what if the Empress should come back?

The Dynasts chose an unassuming middle-aged nobody from House Tepet named Fokuf. Though born of a distinguished lineage, Fokuf had been a failure at every assignment he had ever been given in a short and deplorable bureaucratic career. Genial, good-natured and extremely biddable, he accepted the Dynasts' offer and became Regent of the Realm. He would perform the Empress's official functions in her continuing absence and take the blame—and the punishment—if she came back.

Fokuf proved a poor choice to sit on the most important throne in Creation. He meets with his self-appointed councilors a few minutes every day to sign and seal every decree placed before him. The rest of the time, he hides in his apartments in the Imperial Palace practicing onanism in contemplation of the Immaculate Texts, the holy scriptures of the Immaculate Order. Whether this behavior stems from his already strange nature or from the pressure of being Regent, no one knows.

### The Deliberative

What is clear is that much decision-making power has fallen back upon what Threshold wits and Realm half-wits often called the Empress's Two-Ring Circus—that is, the Greater and Lesser Chambers of the Deliberative.

## The Great Houses

Most of the Dragon-Blooded of the Realm were born or were adopted into one of the 11 Great Houses that form the Scarlet Dynasty. The peoples of the Threshold tend to view the Great Houses in following ways:

House Mnemon (Earth) wants the Scarlet Throne. Many members of the House serve as satraps, extracting burdensome tributes. The House lacks experienced military commanders, but its leader is arguably the most powerful sorceress in the Realm.

House Tepet (Air) wanted the throne desperately but has lost its legions fighting the Bull of the North. The Regent is a hideous embarrassment to the Tepets, and many of their soldiers go berserk when taunted with Fokuf's name. Tepet used to be supported by House Cathak and House V'neef, but now it seems to be hanging in the wind.

House Cathak (Fire) wants to be a critical power behind the Scarlet Throne and it possesses the military experience to put someone on the throne and keep her there. It is allied with House V'neef and once supported House Tepet.

House V'neef (Wood) vacillates between wanting the throne and avoiding it. The House's vacillation—or is it a power struggle in the House?—is costing it control of its satrapies, which are slowly breaking loose. The V'neef run the Realm's merchant marine defense force and protect their wineries and orchards by overthrowing governments that want their land for peasant farms.

House Sesus (Fire) wants the southeastern quadrant of the Blessed Isle for itself. Its legions never pay for food or other supplies but take what they want from their host countries.

House Peleps (Water) commands the navy. It wants the throne, but probably lacks the might necessary to take it. Increasingly, the Peleps work on making the islands off the coast of the Blessed Isle their exclusive dominions, and they raid Threshold ports for experienced sailors and ships in good repair. Thresholders regard Peleps as better-equipped pirates.

House Ledaal (Air) wants control of the whole Southern half of the Blessed Isle and matching territories in the Threshold, and its scions are preparing to fight any new Emperor or Empress who refuses their rights. Ledaal are staunch defenders of the Immaculate Philosophy.

House Ragara (Earth) does not want the throne, but it wants whoever sits on it to be deeply in debt to its banks and loan agencies—just like everyone else. The Ragara used to support House Tepet.

House Cynis (Wood) has no real allies and has no chance at the throne. Its satraps wring taxes from the poorest provinces and seize the prettiest boys and girls for the slave markets.

House Nellens (N/A) is a pack of sharp traders and jade thieves. There isn't an honest merchant in the bunch. This Great House tends to support Ledaal as if it were a minor patrician house, since House Nellens' troops haven't the strength to back up their swagger.

House Iselsi (Water) is a has-been House, dismembered and disgraced by the Empress centuries ago and now used as assassins and workhorse courtiers. House Iselsi wants to survive, and it wants the Realm to survive—but it probably cares more about its own survival than that of the Realm. The House is closely allied with the missionary factions of the Immaculate Order.

The Empress founded the Deliberative centuries ago to serve as a law-drafting body and advisory board. While she reigned, it had no power to enforce any of its opinions, which were presented to her in the form of advisory letters. With a biddable Regent, though, the legislative process has sped up considerably.

The Greater Chamber of the Deliberative, whose members are all Dragon-Blooded Dynasts addressed with the title of Senator, proposes all legislation and opens all debates. Its newly claimed powers include the rights to set taxation levels, to conscript troops and to draft laws. Every Senator must have held a military commission in the field and must also have served in the Realm's bureaucracy, at least until recently. The Greater Chamber presented Regent Fokuf with a list of over 50 new candidates who did not meet the Empress's stringent requirements, but the Regent accepted all of them.

The Lesser Chamber of the Deliberative has relatively few Dragon-Blooded members, almost all of them outcaste. Outnumbering the Senators by at least four to one, the members of the Lesser Chamber are titled Deliberators, and they are drawn from the ranks of the mortal patrician and merchant classes of the Realm—the younger sons of the native rulers of the satrapies. Most of the Deliberators were appointed to the Lesser Chamber by the Empress, and there have been no new additions to the ranks of the Lesser Chamber since she disappeared. The Lesser Chamber is nearly powerless, serving only to approve or reject each proposed law that comes from the Greater Chamber. The charm of this tedious process lies in the degree to which the debate drags on. The Deliberators debate each and every bill in a melodramatic display that resembles a cross between a shadowboxing routine and stand-up comedy.

## The Scarlet Dynasty

To say that any real power lies with the Deliberative, even in the Empress's absence, is something of a misnomer. Experienced Dynasts and outcastes can look at the Realm in its present state, and what they see is not simply fragmentation but dissolution. The Regent signs elaborate scrolls, and the Deliberative debates, but these are merely the outward forms of an empire's governance. The Realm's beating heart and soul is missing, and the Realm cannot properly govern if there is no Empress to *command*.

So, while the power to make decisions rests with the Deliberative, the power to decide which decisions are acted upon rests with another group entirely—the various members of the Scarlet Empress's 11 extended families. The Great Houses, as these 11 families of the Scarlet Dynasty are styled, are fractious and disagreeable. Each has different goals and philosophies, and all of them dislike one another to varying degrees.

Here, the outcastes reveal their greatest weakness. Loyal to the Empress alone, the outcastes are only nominally loyal to each other. Now, bereft of their leader, they tend to be ill positioned to seize power and easily swayed by others.

By contrast, the Great Houses are united by mutual ties of blood, common interests, and, perhaps most importantly, concentrated fortunes. The younger members of the Great Houses are dependent upon their elders for jade, weapons, responsibilities, titles and education. The elders of each Great House rely on their juniors to carry out missions and bring success to the family, and they dispense rewards in proportion to their nieces' or nephews' successes.

To a great degree, then, the Great Houses are choosing the Realm's course in Creation. Yet the road they are choosing is defined by 11 separate and sometimes mutually exclusive goals. Moreover, the leadership of each Great House is increasingly aware that the interests of their Houses might not be best served by the perpetuation of the Realm. It could be that the Scarlet Throne will be filled again, but it might also happen that the Scarlet Throne will fall.

## The Thousand Scales

The Dragon-Blooded of the Realm, whether outcaste or Dynast, are the emissaries and agents of an empire that has stood the test of time. As such, they rarely act alone, but rather as directors and commanders of significant amounts of personnel and equipment. Even in the present tumult, each Dynast typically possesses a team of well-trained household servants, a competent official staff, a company of bodyguards, a troupe of preferred entertainers and a crew of slaves with their overseers. Even the average outcaste has at least a dozen human retainers to help her carry out her official duties. This staff can be turned to nearly any project the Dragon-Blooded desire. In the Empress's absence, the bureaucrats have arrogated an enormous degree of authority to themselves. Armed with brush and scroll, the decisions of the ministries have begun to affect the course of the Realm as a whole.

### The Legions

The legions are the blunt instrument of the Realm's forces, and for most of the reign of the Scarlet Empress, there were 37 legions. At times, though, there were as many as 81. These crack troops, led and commanded by the Dragon-Blooded, have a fearsome reputation throughout the Threshold. Even today, in the midst of the present crisis, the arrival of an Imperial legion strikes fear into the heart of the Realm's foes. Those enemies are thus profoundly relieved that the Regent and Greater Deliberative have reduced the number of active legions in the Imperial Army to 30, including the infamous Vermilion Legion. They are even further delighted by the attachment of each legion to a sponsoring Great House.

The troops and officers from those extra legions were recruited by the militaries of the Great Houses or forcibly retired, but a substantial number of legionaries and their officers are still unaccounted for. Many of these missing soldiers have become mercenaries or joined forces with local principalities in the Threshold, where they are trying to make new lives in new surroundings. Others are actively carving out territory to rule for themselves.

Everyone in the Threshold is well aware of the profound differences between the legions of the Empress and those of the Great Houses. The Empress's troops are elite soldiers, and their commanders are promoted on the basis of talent in the field. Sent into battle with adequate provisions, superior equipment, and excellent discipline, an Imperial Legion is still hardy and capable, among the best military forces in Creation. By contrast, the House legions are officered on the basis of patronage and political infighting, rather than true merit. Their equipage is usually shoddy and their discipline is lax. Moreover, the Imperial Legions tend to train and fight as unified forces, while the House legions tend to prepare in smaller numbers, usually in half-legion formations or smaller. Each House is allowed to field up to two legions' worth of men in the Blessed Isle or up to nine in the Threshold, and each House is additionally expected to deploy these legions as the Empress requests in the event of an emergency. For this reason, most of the Great Houses have rarely deployed their maximum allowable complement of forces. Even House Tepet maintained only six legions before its fall.

Each legion, whether maintained by the Realm or a Great House, contains 5,000 soldiers trained in a mixed force of heavy and medium infantry—at least on paper. The actual average complement is often smaller, as legions are usually understrength due to battle losses, disease, retirement or injury.

On paper, the battle order of a legion is divided into 10 *dragons* of 500 warriors apiece, each commanded by a dragonlord. Four of these dragons usually form the heavy infantry line, while the remaining six dragons are medium infantry. Dragonlords are ranked by seniority, with the four heavy infantry dragonlords having greater seniority than the medium infantry dragonlords. When a legion is under-strength, the commanders tend to even out the dragons into formations of roughly equal size. Each dragon is further divided into *wings* of 250 soldiers, and each wing is capable of operating independently in two *talons* of 125 soldiers each. Each talon is capable of operating in 25-soldier *scales*. Each scale is further broken down into five five-man *fangs* commanded by a noncommissioned sergeant, but fangs rarely operate alone.

In addition to the infantry, each legion has about 2,500 support troops divided into talon-sized groups. Ideally, the Realm worked to maintain a proper balance of support troops in these 20 additional talons. The support troops were organized as four talons of lightly armored skirmishers, two talons of archers, four talons of slingers, three talons of light cavalry, one talon of heavy cavalry, two talons of camp guards, two talons of engineers and their crews, a talon to protect the legion's sorcerers and thaumaturges and a signal corps. In practice, most legions were rarely so well supported, even under the Empress. Competent archers are always less widely available than slingers, for the bow is a weapon requiring considerable training, while the sling can be learned easily in six weeks.

Each legion has about 300 officers: its commanding general, 10 dragonlords, 20 winglords, 40 talon-captains and 200 fang-lieutenants, plus a subaltern for every officer holding the rank of winglord or higher. There are also 1,000 sergeants, each in charge

of a fang. The Imperial Army's high commanders would like for every legion to have all its officers be Dragon-Blooded, but in fact, this is impossible—the legions could commission every Exalt in the Realm and still need more officers. So the army makes do with what it can get. Each legion's commanding general and her 10 dragonlords are always Dragon-Blooded, and these 11 senior officers become both the foundation and the leadership of the legion. From time to time, a legion may have as many as 50 or 60 Terrestrial Exalts in its ranks, but this is unusual.

## The Magistrates

The magistrates were the Realm's original secret police. Appointed by the Empress from among the most cunning and clever Dragon-Blooded outcastes she could find, these officials wander the Blessed Isle and the satrapies, looking for wrongdoing and correcting it. Their mandate extends from dealing with bandits on the Realm's roads to removing corrupt officials from their posts. Often, they handle crisis situations or direct the management of natural disasters or civil rebellion. Their goal is the assurance of stability and security throughout the Realm's territories.

During the Empress's reign, the magistrates had wide latitude. Each magistrate had plenipotentiary powers and could commandeer any of the empire's resources upon presentation of her credentials. Magistrates could even execute other Dragon-Bloods without recourse to the judiciary. The Empress alone had the power to review their decisions and actions, and now that she is gone, the magistrates are answerable to no one.

This situation is hardly an advantage, however. Though everyone pays lip service to the idea of the magistrates, in reality, these officials are now the prey rather than the predators. Both as individuals and as a group, the magistrates have made a huge number of enemies, both inside the Realm and beyond. Many of them were criminals or outlaws before their appointments—dragon's teeth harnessed by the Empress to her will and purposes as her special tools. Without the Scarlet Empress to protect them, the magistrates often find themselves hunted or hounded by their many enemies, giving rise to the derogatory term describing them as the Magistracy of Hares.

The magistrates rarely work alone. Each has several archons to assist her. The archons are sometimes Dragon-Blooded, but they are all usually criminals or outlaws themselves. Most archons were saved from execution and often have as many rivals and foes as their masters. Magistrates use them as spies, assassins, messengers, expert advisors, bodyguards and assassins. Magistrates are ranked according to the number of archons they are allowed to recruit and sponsor. Those with four, 12, 18 and 25 archons are the most common rankings.

## The Ministers

Officially subordinate to the magistrates, the ministers of the Thousand Scales form the Imperial Bureaucracy of the Realm. The ministers run all the day-to-day bureaucratic functions of the Realm, from setting the tax rate on bolts of silk cloth to publishing the debates of the Lesser Deliberative. Staffed almost entirely with un-Exalted Dynasts and patricians, with only a rare Dragon-Blooded among them, the ministers have shown their power and strength largely in the last four years. While the Great Houses hunted the magistrates, the ministers expanded their regulatory functions into many new areas of imperial life.

Many of the ministries of the Thousand Scales are quite small. (The Office of the Imperial Overseer of Airships has only one clerk, and its minister himself has not reported to work in 16 years.) Many more are mundane. (The Minister of Weights and Measures is responsible for keeping the Realm's standard weights and measures in a special vault in the Imperial City.) The greatest ministers and their ministries are now helping to shape the Realm's policy, however, and their opinions are sought out by the Deliberative on a regular basis.

The most important ministries are the Imperial Assessors, who collect the Realm's taxes; the Imperial Treasury, which decides how that money will be spent; and the Foreign Office, which advises the Empress (now the Regent) on foreign policy. In the early months of the Empress's disappearance, these three ministries pushed hard for the elimination of the magistrates, hoping that by removing those dangerous and unpredictable elements from the Realm's structure, they might keep the empire together a while longer. Now, however, they find themselves increasingly in thrall to the desires and whims of the Great Houses. The Foreign Office in particular is discovering how hard it is to get anyone to obey it without threats from the Scarlet Empress to keep them in line. The Imperial Assessors are being forced to squeeze more funds from the peasantry and townsfolk alike, but more and more of those collections are never reaching the Treasury.

Cathak Curuk, the head of the Assessors, and Bal Keraz, the head of the Treasury, were among the Empress's most loyal servants. In a sense, these two men were her right and left hands on the reins of empire. In her absence, they have struggled to maintain her prestige, her mystique and her role in the Realm's governance. Now that the actions of the Deliberative and the Scarlet Dynasty have made the work of preserving the Empress's prerogatives almost impossible, however, the two ministers are wondering how to force the Regent from the throne and see that a new, strong and vigorous Empress is appointed. They argue long into the night about how to do this, sometimes inviting Ledaal Arnis, the head of the Foreign Office, to join them. None of them see any easy solutions.

## The All-Seeing Eye

As the magistrates became part of the judicial apparatus of the Realm, the Empress created another organization to act as the empire's police force and intelligence service. The All-Seeing Eye is that agency. Since the disappearance of the Empress, it is the one branch of the Imperial Service that has stayed most true to its chartered purposes: to learn what the Realm's enemies are thinking, to destroy those enemies who cannot be fought on the battlefield, and to suppress potential rebellions against the Empress arising from the peasantry and the Dynasty alike.

Organized and controlled by the few surviving elders of House Iselsi, in coordination with Treasurer Bal Keraz, the All-Seeing Eye focused on external threats to the Realm's security and internal threats to the Empress's rule. The Eye's budget was approved directly by the Empress, and so were its missions and long-term programs. The Eye conducted surveillance operations against the Realm's enemies in the Threshold and kept the Dynasts under observation. It also authorized and performed assassinations of corrupt officials and foreign princes, and in addition, it organized the Wyld Hunt.

Since the disappearance of the Empress, the Eye has reported to Bal Keraz—and to the Deliberative. While Keraz has been quite forthcoming with money for foreign operations and for programs designed to prevent peasant rebellions, the Deliberative has reined in the Eye on matters of domestic security. Most of the Eye's spy networks within the Great Houses have been dismantled publicly or destroyed unofficially, and the Eye has much more limited resources to create new networks. As a result, the Great Houses are much less carefully observed than they used to be.

At the same time, the Deliberative is demanding greater access to the Eye's intelligence files and greater control over its assassin squads. The Great Houses are particularly keen to tap into the covert resources of the Eye for use in the civil war that seems to be brewing. Because each Great House is so interested in what the other Great Houses are doing, more of the Eye's attention is focused inward, rather than outward. The Realm is spending an enormous amount of time and money observing itself.

In consequence, events in the Threshold are going unobserved, and therefore uncontrolled. Kingdoms are rising or expanding, boundaries are changing, and the Realm has little idea what these things mean for the future. Perhaps most importantly, the Wyld Hunt is called out only intermittently these days, and the Eye is less able than ever to control what it does or how it performs.

## The Wyld Hunt

The Wyld Hunt is the Realm's method for destroying the Anathema—particularly Solar Exalts—before they can rise to full power in the world. Being chosen for the Hunt used to be considered a great honor, but in the current political climate, the Dynasts are likely to see it as a waste of time when exciting things are happening at home. Fewer young Dragon-Bloods are adding their names to the Book of the Hunt each year, choosing instead to stay at home where they can be of more use to their families and their Great Houses.

Among the older generations, serving in a Hunt is considered part spiritually fulfilling duty and part noble sport. Each Wyld Hunt usually consists of five to ten Dragon-Bloods and a few mortal attendants. The Eye and the Order each make a point of contributing one agent or monk to each Hunt, to prove that this is a sufficiently important duty to warrant risking their own personnel. Of late, however, both the Eye and the Order have been doubling up or tripling their numbers to increase the likelihood of success. On one hand, this practice has tended to make each Hunt more especially dedicated, as the Eye and the Order both consider the destruction of the Anathema to be of paramount importance. On the other hand, it has tended to reduce the overall capabilities of each Hunt, because fewer military officers or long-time House elders come along on Hunts with all their heirloom jade-steel armor and weapons.

Most disturbing to the leaders of the Hunt these days are the sheer number of targets. It used to be that there would be one Anathema loose every decade. Now, there are dozens in the Scavenger Lands and hundreds more in the Threshold as a whole, and there have been at least 20 on the Blessed Isle itself. The Eye and the Order are even considering forming a permanent, roving Hunt to track down and destroy the Anathema continuously, rather than going through the laborious process of forming a new group for each prophesied rebirth.

## The Immaculate Order

Officially named the Order of the Immaculate Dragons, this monastic order is composed of both Exalted and human acolytes of varying abilities. Most of the Exalted monks are Dynasts who seek refuge from the political life of the Realm or who desire enlightenment. The mortals who fill out the ranks come from all walks of life, but rarely do they advance to positions of high responsibility in the Order. If the Imperial Army is the Realm's spiked club, then the Immaculate Order is the axe. The legions are ultimately good for little besides protecting trade routes, guarding cities or holding territory. The Immaculate Order is a tool of both peace and war for the Realm, shaping subject territories to the Realm's liking.

The Mouth of Peace is the head of the Order, whose title derives from her traditional counsel to the Empress against warfare. Such is the power of the Order that if the Mouth of Peace condemns an official or military officer, even a Dragon-Blooded is disgraced. Few see the Mouth of Peace besides the high-ranking Exalts of the Order and the elders of House Iselsi, though the current Mouth of Peace, like many of her predecessors, is known to wander the Blessed Isle in disguise to determine the spiritual state of the Realm. The Mouth of Peace's official residence is the vast and looming manse called the Palace Sublime.

Beneath the Mouth of Peace are the five Most Righteous Paragons, each representing one of the Five Immaculate Dragons. The Paragons are those members of the Order who have most rightly and faithfully emulated their chosen Immaculate Dragon. There is a murky hierarchy of abbots, vartabeds and sybils below the Mouth of Peace and the Paragons, but few outside the Order even begin to understand it, for it wanders almost as much as the Immaculate Texts, which are the Order's scriptures.

### Duties of the Order

The Immaculate Order regards the recovery of new Immaculate Texts and the teaching of the Immaculate Philosophy as the core of its work in Creation. Since the Immaculate Texts are usually drawn from larger First Age documents, the Order is now the largest repository of knowledge of the First Age outside of Heaven. As such, the Order substantially influences all education in the Blessed Isle, and it also functions as a college of advisors to the Realm on all sorts of matters. The Order thinks of itself as independent of the Realm and, indeed, above its petty concerns.

To the denizens of the independent regions of the Threshold, however, the Order looks suspiciously like a tool of the Realm rather than an independent body. Often, the Order will establish a mission in a region that the Realm intends to conquer later by force or threat, or the Order will attempt to convert the inhabitants of a region that the Realm has already conquered. Realm and Order always go hand in hand. Moreover, the Order's operations usually follow a set pattern that has little to do with finding new Immaculate Texts. A few monks will set up a monastery. Then, the mortal monks will start teaching

the local inhabitants about the Philosophy. Meanwhile, the Exalted abbot and his allies will begin challenging local gods and spirits to martial-arts duels and forcing them to conform to the Order's expectations of divine behavior.

### The Immaculate Philosophy

Millions of beings, from small gods in Yu-Shan to peasants in the most backwater prefectures of the Realm, adhere to the Immaculate Philosophy and accept the teachings of the Immaculate Order. Though it is secretly a tool of the Sidereal Exalts and remains wedded to the ambitions of the Realm, the Philosophy genuinely appeals to people's sense of order and harmony. The Philosophy is both intellectually compelling and emotionally satisfying. Many accept the teachings of the Immaculate Dragons not because they are forced to do so or because they have been hoodwinked, but because the teachings of the Philosophy seem to reflect the underlying structure of Creation. Its system of prayers and meditations gives the devotees of the Philosophy a sense of tranquility and the ability to accept their place in Creation.

At the heart of the Immaculate Philosophy are five core beliefs called the Noble Insights and five basic behaviors and duties called the Diligent Practices. Different monastic traditions within the Immaculate Order promote or downplay different Insights and Practices, but all the various schools within the Order accept these 10 elements as the essentials of the Immaculate Philosophy.

The Noble Insights are:

- All beings in Creation are constantly dying and being reborn, ascending and descending the Road of Enlightenment. Those who are Exalted are very close to the end of the Road, while insects and plants are near the beginning. Most sentient mortals are somewhere near the middle.
- As beings approach the end of the Road, they approach the infinite perfection of Essence that is the Elemental Dragons, who hold Creation together.
- Working in solitude and striving to surpass their lot in life, all beings in Creation draw away from the perfection of the Elemental Dragons. Working together and accepting their present incarnations, all beings in Creation mimic the Elemental Dragons and approach their perfection.
- The Dragon-Blooded, who were the disciples and children of the mortal incarnations of the Elemental Dragons, are leading the Immaculates toward that degree of perfection.
- The Anathema, who reject the Elemental Dragons and obey only their own ambitions, are drawing Creation toward despair and ruin.

The Immaculate Philosophy specifically endorses attention to community, obedience to the Realm's masters and genuine concern for the present well-being of every living thing. It acknowledges rebirth but places most of its focus on one's present incarnation. It urges an adherent to focus on the here and now: to aid one's neighbors, to heed the commands of the Terrestrial Exalted, and to report the Anathema whenever they appear. The expectations placed upon an ordinary devotee, therefore, are relatively few.

Even so, the Immaculate Philosophy holds to a set of five specific obligations that mark a follower of the Philosophy as particularly devout. Monks of the Order are expected to perform the Diligent Practices all the time, but the Practices need not be followed quite so strictly by the average layperson.

The Diligent Practices are:

- Hear a recital of an Immaculate Text at least once a month, in the company of at least 17 other followers of the Philosophy.
- Respect and honor spirits only according to the calendar and in the specific rites set down by the Immaculate Order, giving each spirit its due only insofar as it serves the harmony of Creation. Worship no spirit, elemental, small god or Anathema at all.
- Imitate in word and deed the honorable behaviors of the five Immaculate Dragons, the mortal incarnations of the Dragons of the Elements. Emulate the thoughts appropriate to your incarnation as decreed by the Immaculate Dragons.
- Obey the Dragon-Blooded, who are the descendants and disciples of the Immaculate Dragons and are so close to enlightenment that their commands cannot cause a soul to stray from the Road.
- Resist the commands of the Anathema to the fullest degree of the abilities of your present incarnation, and do not fall into despair.

The Diligent Practices tend to bring communities of disciples together strongly. Often, the official rituals in the temple each day are followed by discourses led by a prominent abbot or teacher of the Order, who will lead a guided meditation on her favorite Immaculate Dragon. These discourses are often designed to promote a community project or civic duty, so that a new public bath or marketplace or orphanage will be built or provided for. The Immaculate Philosophy thus brings real and practical benefits to the communities it touches. That these communities are strongly opposed to the Solar Exalted only pleases the Order and its sponsors the more.

## The Mechanism of Empire

The policy-makers and military leaders of the Realm used to work hand in hand to make sure that the dominion of the Realm remained secure throughout Creation. That degree of cooperation and control has slipped in the last five years, but the Realm's forces continue to act with a substantially unified program in most areas. The Empress organized her territories in the Blessed Isle and the Threshold both to be defensible and productive. Although the Empress is no longer the guiding force that rules the organization, the organization remains.

The Realm's lands are divided into prefectures and satrapies. The prefectures are small territories on the Blessed Isle directly governed by the Empress through her appointees, the prefects. The satrapies are usually much larger territories in the Threshold. The Realm rules these territories indirectly through covert and overt domination of the local government. A small number of territories are styled dominions because of their physical size or political or economic importance, but even the dominions function exactly like prefectures or satrapies, only on a larger scale.

### The Prefectures

Each prefecture on the Blessed Isle consists of one city, seven to 12 small towns, their dependent villages and the surrounding wilderness. On average, each prefecture is about 100 square miles in area and contains a population of several hundred thousand people. The prefect is appointed by the Empress (or now the Regent) to be the region's chief administrator and judge of last resort. She is also responsible for appointing the governors, who are the judges and administrators of each district in the prefecture. The prefect and her governors have clear chains of command and precise areas of responsibility, but the prefect has overall authority for all the Realm's officials in her territory. If a tax collector

in one village in an outlying district is corrupt, the magistrates assume the prefect is corrupt and may take appropriate actions, from demotion or dismissal to exile or death. Few prefects are Dragon-Bloods—the Terrestrial Exalts usually only govern the dominions on the Blessed Isle. Most prefects and their assistants come from the mortal patrician class and are sponsored to their assignments by a Dragon-Blood or a Great House.

Prefectural assignments are rarely sinecures. There is all sorts of local trouble that needs to be dealt with. Bandit gangs are more common since the Empress vanished, for instance. The bureaucracy always needs to be monitored for corruption and indecency. Wild animals occasionally attack farmers or their crops and need to be destroyed. Roads, bridges, shrines, fortresses, and canals need to be kept in repair. Crops need to be harvested, and taxes must be collected, always.

Since the Empress disappeared, the work of running a prefecture has become considerably harder. In addition to carrying on all their usual work, the prefects must now also curry favor with whichever Great House is the largest leaseholder. Officially, all the land belongs to the Empress and everyone pays rent for their land. The Great Houses are now trying to free themselves of these payments, however, which is emptying the prefects' coffers. It is difficult to dispense justice in the name of a vanished Empress or an empty throne.

## The Satrapies

In the Threshold, there are no prefectures at all. The Realm does not directly rule any territory there. Instead, the Empress created a system of satrapies, in which one of her hand-picked relatives serves as the chief advisor to a local government. The government is free to create its own legal system and its own culture, provided that these remain within certain basic standards of fairness and provided the Realm receives a tribute payment each year.

In the days of the Empress, tribute payments were carefully set to be difficult but bearable. Usually a tribute payment was made once a year, in some combination of jade, goods and services. For example, the rich land of Harborhead in the South used to provide 20 talents of jade, 30,000 talents of grain, 12,000 slaves and two dragons of archers for 60 days each year (in addition to much smaller amounts of salt, wine, pears and spices). Since the Empress vanished, the satraps have been demanding higher and higher tribute payments, and they have pocketed more and more of the difference between the old tribute and the new tribute. Now, Harborhead is expected to contribute 200 talents of jade, 100,000 talents of grain, 30,000 slaves and nine dragons of archers.

## The Satrap

The Empress used to select each satrap personally, using a combination of intelligence about the posting from the All-Seeing Eye, the résumés of the available candidates, and her own gut feelings about her relatives. Once chosen, the Empress then sold him the office as a form of tax-farming. The satrap could pay for his posting by squeezing extra tribute out of the satrapy.

Under the Empress, satraps were almost always Dragon-Bloods nominated by the Great Houses from their elder members. The Empress was paid a "nominating fee" based on what they thought their candidate could extract in tribute from a given satrapy in a closed-bid system, but their candidate also had to be considered worthy. Most satraps had served in a number of advisory positions and had to spend at least a couple of years as prefects before being considered for a senior post in the Threshold. It is not uncommon, even today, for a satrap to be a veteran soldier, a well-trained bureaucratic wrangler, and a former prefect. At least some, however, are well-heeled Dynasts with no experience and less training, dumped in positions of authority in order to help their Houses get ahead.

Regent Fokuf appoints satraps on the basis of the petitions that are brought to him from various Dynasts, who seek to control the wealthiest satrapies for their own Great Houses. The sale price of these offices has dropped considerably. Whereas before the satraps tended to be keenly intelligent, careful advisors to the existing governments, the new satraps tend to be ham-fisted, grasping and arrogant. To the denizens of the Threshold, it sometimes seems as if the Realm's officers have gone mad and forgotten that they pretend not to rule.

## The Satrap's Advisors

It was common for the Empress to appoint not only the satrap, but also three of the satrap's four principal assistants. The Four Advisors, together with the satrap, would serve as the Realm's embassy to the Threshold government and the guarantors of the Realm's interests in the region. Where possible, all five of these officials would be Dragon-Blooded, but the Empress tried to make sure at least three were Terrestrial Exalts. To balance the factions of the Scarlet Dynasty, the Four Advisors were always members of different Houses than the satrap, and frequently from rival Houses. In this way, the Empress trained new potential satraps and placed a check on the powers of both individuals and Houses. In the last five years, that check has evaporated so satraps and their advisors act in the best interests of one House, rather than the Realm's interest or that of the government they are present to advise.

## Reporting

The satrap and each of the Four Advisors is required by the laws of the Realm to submit a report each season to the Empress. The report must be independently composed, and each report is sealed and sent separately. The format of the report is standardized, with each person reporting first on their own doings and then on the doings of each of the other four of the Realm's principal officials. In addition, the All-Seeing Eye compiles its own report from the observations of its agents in the satrapy. Thus, the Empress (now the Regent) receives six reports on the Realm's business in one satrapy and can dispatch investigators or even magistrates to handle any apparent inconsistencies between the satrap's report and the overseer's report. The existence of these regular reports kept the satraps honest, for the rivalries among their principal advisors meant cut-throat candor in reporting on one's errors and faults. If one official failed to be rigorously self-critical or insufficiently critical of her colleagues, the cool and dangerous eyes of a magistrate might appear in a satrapy to investigate the matter personally.

# The Dragon-Blooded

The Dragon-Blooded—the Terrestrial Exalted—lead interesting lives. Their schooling, their marriages, even their retirement are all quite different from those of their mere human relatives.

If they survive to old age, they can live for three or four hundred years. More often, however, they die in battle or while having great adventures. The Terrestrial Exalts shout "Ten Thousand Dragons Conquer the World!" before going into battle, and eight generations of Dragon-Blooded have never faced any other types of Exalted in combat except in vastly unequal fights where eight or nine experienced and cunning Dragon-Bloods take down one newly Exalted and naïve Solar or, at most, a small pack of Lunars. For most of the last thousand years, they have had no continuing rivalries or enmities other than with their own kind, and their whole culture and worldview is based on their sense of individual and collective supremacy. All of this is beginning to change, however, and both the world and the worldview of the Dragon-Blooded is crumbling around them.

## Childhood

Each child born into a Dynast's family, and even the children of outcaste parents, is treated from birth as though she might Exalt. The Scarlet Dynasty tries to make sure that all of the Dragon-Blooded in the Realm are born into one of the 11 Great Houses, even to the point of faking pregnancies so that illegitimate babies can appear to have Dynast mothers. Once a child is acknowledged as legitimate, the children are reared by wet nurses, governesses and tutors, and they rarely see their parents except under formal circumstances. Their parents do love them, but preparing them for life among the Dynasts is critically important—important enough to make sure a child gets a head start unencumbered by a mother's overprotective nature or a father's indulgence.

Boys and girls begin receiving tutoring and instruction of various kinds almost as soon as they can walk. Art, music, hunting, swordsmanship, dancing, riding, manners, calligraphy, languages—all these are suitable study for Dynastic children. Their family members or colleagues of their parents will regularly stop in to see them and to teach them something, and their parents' rivals will stop by to test and challenge them. Their diets are carefully regulated, and there is much physical activity in their lives before turning 10—daily martial-arts practice, long-distance running, wilderness survival, archery and sailing. The mental regime is no less grueling, involving studying at least a second language, a musical instrument, rhetoric, the tactics of the classic game Gateway and the geography and cultures of the Realm and the Threshold. At the age of 10, Dynastic children go away to a boarding school supervised by the Exalts and leave this rigorous childhood behind for some really hard work.

## Schooling

From the age of 10 until the age of 15, the future Dragon-Blooded of the Realm attend primary school. There is at least one such school in every prefecture, but only a few can be found in the satrapies. Most administrators send their children to the Blessed Isle for their educations. The primary schools teach a standard curriculum mandated by the Empress, including archery, bare-fisted fighting and self-defense, swordplay, athletics, history, geography, government and politics, religion, the Immaculate Philosophy and spirit lore. In addition to this basic curriculum, students must complete an advanced program in politics, religion, philosophy and combat. Students cannot be failed out of primary school, though some are returned to their parents for disruptive behavior. Some primary schools also offer specialized training

in art, outdoor activities, combat or politics. These institutions are particularly popular and have long waiting lists.

There are four main secondary schools for the Exalted children of the Dynasty, each supported by a sector of imperial society: the Cloister of Wisdom, run by the Immaculate Order; the House of Bells, which serves the Imperial Army and Navy as a military officer's school; the Spiral Academy, which supplies the bureaucracy with trained clerks and ministers; and the Heptagram, which teaches sorcery.

By the time students enter secondary school, they are engaged in an intense rivalry with students of other Houses. This rivalry takes many forms—athletic competitions and play combat are common, but so is artistic and academic rivalry. Students are expected, even encouraged, to sabotage the potential achievements of students from rival Houses and to support the works of members of their own or allied Houses. This rivalry characterizes not only their school lives, but the careers of all the Dragon-Blooded.

### Households

After finishing school but before marrying and establishing households of their own, Dragon-Bloods tend to live in the household of a married relative: an uncle or aunt, an older cousin or sometimes even a grandparent. While they visit their parents for major holidays, their House expects them to make an alliance with another branch of the family and to cement this alliance through regular association with a married couple. The young Dragon-Blood assists in the education of her hosts' children, contributes a portion of her income to the household and works to advance her hosts' careers.

The household system works in part because each Dynast receives a stipend from her House, which is paid out of a standard allowance paid to the Houses of the Scarlet Dynasty from the Imperial Treasury. This stipend increases based on a number of factors, ranging from the importance of the office one holds in the Realm, to the number of years one has been married, to the number of children one has and who have Exalted. For young, unmarried Dragon-Bloods just out of school, the stipend is insufficient to maintain an appropriate lifestyle. He often must pay for his lodging with a relative while spending most of his income on wardrobe, armor and the household's entertainment. His relatives run the household with their stipend, using their junior boarder's rent money to supplement their slush funds for bribes and for the education of their children. Denizens of the Threshold view these sorts of family arrangements as insane, but the system works for the Dragon-Blooded, in part because their loyalties are usually to their Houses rather than to their own parents.

### Marriage

The Dragon-Blooded get betrothed early and marry late. Courtship often lasts years, if not decades. The leaders of the Great Houses arrange most marriages, and many betrothals are established specifically to gain economic or political advantage. Few Dragon-Bloods get to marry for love, though some do fall in love with their selected spouses. As a result, having mistresses, lovers, party girls, boy-toys and concubines is almost expected. The Realm's law does not allow for divorce in most cases, with only the failure to produce children being considered appropriate grounds for an annulment.

### Pleasure

Perhaps 10,000 Dragon-Bloods pledge their loyalty to the Realm. Of these, perhaps two-thirds are on active duty at any given time, with an additional third in reserve. Yet these numbers are deceiving. The Dragon-Bloods on active duty in fact take numerous short vacations or seek adventure on a regular basis. They could be off participating in the Wyld Hunt, visiting a favorite aunt or going on a surreptitious diplomatic mission, or they could just be taking a hunting trip to the South or a leisurely weekend with their spouses.

Those Terrestrial Exalts in reserve tend to be equally active. While they are not on official duty with a legion or a ministry, these Dragon-Blooded tend to be engaged in serious work of their own. Some are involved in researching Charms or new sorceries or conducting archaeological digs at First Age sites. Some of them serve as teachers at their children's primary or secondary schools for a year or two or serve similar duty at the school of a colleague's child to help cement an alliance.

Many Dragon-Bloods participate in one of the three great endurance trials of the Realm: the Periphery Race, held once every 10 years, in which contestants run the Great Coast Road around the Blessed Isle; the Circumnavigation, a quadrennial sailing circuit around the Blessed Isle; or the Pilgrimage, in which participants climb the Imperial Mountain in order to touch the summit of the Elemental Pole of Earth. The time spent training for these events is intense, and the Terrestrial Exalts tend to engage in other adventures along the way, using their training as cover for other activities.

Nearly every Dragon-Blood has some sort of hobby that allows for competition, even if they don't go in for the long-distance trials. Gateway is the Realm's principal strategy game, but there are simpler games such as Dragon-draughts and Fireseed. Dances, choral performances, operas, solo and chamber music recitals, martial-arts displays, calligraphy parties and garden tours are all occasions for the Dragon-Blooded to show off their talents to their colleagues and to demean their rivals.

The Dragon-Blooded tend to engage in sensual pleasures almost as much as they train for these sorts of amazing displays of physical and intellectual prowess. Sex, drugs, food, wine and clothes are obsessed over almost as much as formal competitions. The Dragon-Blooded generally avoid the horrors of addiction to these sensual pleasures, though. Most of them learn the perils of addiction early in secondary school. Often, older students will invite them to try a drug, and then exploit their disorientation with a series of physical and mental attacks. The Dragon-Blooded might develop a taste for certain sensual pleasures, but they can rarely be blackmailed with them.

## Life in the Realm

The Realm is *the* civilized heart of Creation. Even now, at the opening of the Age of Sorrows, the Blessed Isle's poorest citizens still have a higher standard of living than anyone else in the world. While the Isle lost nearly half of its population during the Great Contagion, it retained much of the base infrastructure of the First Age and suffered fewer of the ravages of the Fair Folk than other parts of Creation did. Although many of its cities fell, the roads and highways of the First Age survived, as did many of the engineering projects of that ancient time. Dams, levees, polders, bridges, canals, aqueducts, manufactories, farming terraces, signal towers, tunnels

and harbors of the Shogunate are all still in use. Using the foundation provided by this infrastructure, the Dynastic Dragon-Blooded erected their own manses and re-founded cities. Therefore, the Realm is a vital mixture of the very new and the very old, and its power in world affairs rises as much from its production and transport capabilities as from the Dragon-Blooded's loyalty.

### Farming and Industry

The Blessed Isle harvests three cycles of crops a year, thanks to the deep magic woven into the land and the enormous fertility that surrounds the Elemental Pole of Earth. There is always food on every table for every meal, even if the substance of that meal is meager. Rice is the staple crop of the Scarlet Empire, both because it is easy to produce and because it is labor-intensive to grow—the peasantry of the Realm is kept constantly occupied in growing its food, which gives it little time to consider revolt or rebellion. Millet, barley, wheat and oats provide much of the other food for the Realm, while flax, cotton and hemp serve as the major fiber crops. Sesame oil is a major ingredient in peasant cooking, and vegetables ranging from lettuces to peppers round out the peasant diet. The tables of well-off city dwellers serve fish and chicken, as well as orchard fruits and nuts such as oranges, almonds and cashews. Olive oil replaces sesame oil in richer households, and beef replaces fish and chicken—mammoth meat is particularly popular at parties.

Much of the Realm's manufactories are cottage industries—a village or a group of villages working together to make flax into linen thread and thread into cloth, for instance. The Realm's so-called cottager ceramics, of simple line and colored in delicate blues, reds or greens, is highly valued in the Threshold. Blessed Isle cotton and linen with high thread counts is suitable wear for the highest nobility elsewhere. The simplicity of these products is part of their appeal; the status suggested by plain clothes made in the Realm is greater than the status suggested by Threshold silks or armor.

The more high-class an industry is perceived to be, the more likely that there are formal manufactories. Silk production, in particular, is most often confined to urban areas, though the silkworms come from the countryside. Weapons and armor factories are also tightly controlled by the government and usually exist in close proximity to the mines where the raw material is gathered.

## Social Class

Among mortal humans, there are five social ranks. The Dragon-Blooded have numerous nuances and gradations among themselves that contrast a Dynast of a major line from a Dynast of a minor line and that divide Dynasts from outcastes. Mortals in the Realm play these games of rank on a more limited scale as their mayfly lives permit.

### Patricians

At the top of the social ladder are the various patricians. The patrician families fill most of the offices too menial for the Dragon-Blooded in the ministries. Senior patricians become prefects and assistant sub-ministers in the Thousand Scales; they rarely rise higher in the legions than winglord; and while there are a number of patrician captains in the Navy, there are few human commodores, fleet captains or Admirals.

Patricians are considered noble in the Realm because they are descendants of one of the Exalts of the Scarlet Dynasty. Some of them are the children of outcaste Exalts, rewarded for their parent's exceptional service with patrician rank. Perhaps one patrician child out of 30,000 Exalts and is then adopted by one of the Great Houses of the Dynasty in exchange for favors, jade or offers of alliance.

Patrician families are often allied with one or another Great House and usually remain so for dozens of generations at a time. Their estates are never as large as those of the Great Houses, but they do amass large incomes and usually are as prominent in their prefectures as the Dragon-Blooded are in Creation as a whole.

### Citizens

Below the patricians are the citizens. This is a broad class of artists and artisans, merchants and traders, sailors and carters, and low-level bureaucrats and clerks. Most of the citizens live in the Realm's cities and large towns, and their wealth is sufficient to pay the bills and live reasonable lives. Citizens form the connective tissue between the peasantry and the patricians, transforming the works and produce of peasant factory and farm into things in which the patricians can delight. Barely visible to the Dragon-Blooded, the Realm's citizenry nonetheless is the recruiting pool for the legions, the Navy, the Immaculate Order and the ministries.

### Peasantry

Supporting the patricians, the citizens and even the mighty Dragon-Bloods are the peasants of the Realm. Outnumbering all the other classes by tens of thousands to one, the peasantry works the land and fishes the sea, collecting the food that supports the vast interlinked society of the Realm. Since the Empress took power, almost 30 generations of peasants have lived and died, and since the Usurpation, almost 100 generations have passed. The peasants of the Realm have never known any other reality besides the rule of the Dragon-Blooded.

The Dragon-Blooded regard the peasantry with a degree of paternal care, but truly, the peasantry of the Blessed Isle lives in a state of enforced helplessness. Forbidden to own weapons of any sort, schooled in only a limited version of the Immaculate Philosophy and dwelling in a state of near-serfdom, the Realm's peasants tend their villages and fields with hardly any hope of betterment in this life. A farmer may plant an olive grove to improve the lot of her granddaughter, and a fisherman may save jade-scrip to let his son buy a new boat. It has to be enough to provide for the next generation, because there is little else for which to hope.

### Slaves

The Realm purchases huge numbers of slaves and expects tens of thousands of additional bodies as part of the annual tribute from many of its satrapies. Nonetheless, ownership of slaves is illegal in the Realm. Mortals may not own them, and all slaves officially belong to the Realm, the Empress or the Houses of the Dynasty. Dragon-Bloods may have the long-term use of individual slaves and, occasionally, whole work gangs. Individuals or small work teams can also be "loaned" or "gifted" to patrician houses for private projects. This structure is supposed to protect them from abuse by dangerously ignorant peasant owners, but it is also intended to prevent a large-scale slave rebellion from breaking out on the Blessed Isle—by keeping slaves in tightly limited work gangs with

suitably trained overseers, the Realm keeps the slave population from communicating with intent to win its freedom.

Slaves are generally sorted into one of three categories upon enslavement. The largest groups are the work gangs. Gangs of up to 10,000 slaves labor on various civil-works projects, such as stone quarrying, road repair, land reclamation or harbor dredging. The Realm tries to ensure a ratio of at least one overseer to every 25 slaves in the Blessed Isle and one overseer to every 10 slaves in the Threshold to discourage rebellions. Every prefecture in the Realm has a slave gang to look after the Realm's infrastructure, which the prefect can allocate to various projects as needed. In addition, various ministries have slave gangs of their own, and some legions on garrison duty have slave teams to assist in various projects. The lives of the workhorse slaves are short and harsh—life expectancy in the mines or on the road crews averages only two years, and death is more common than any other sort of punishment, as the Realm feels that one troublesome but unskilled slave is easily replaced. Work-gang slaves are usually purchased in lots of 1,000 bodies.

The second category is formed of specialty slaves of various sorts. Often captured in war or sold into slavery to pay debts, these slaves have various skills from their earlier lives. Some may be literate or financially savvy, others are trained warriors, and still others are skilled engineers, artists or artisans. Dancers, musicians, sex toys and certain kinds of artisans command high prices and rarely leave their owners. Usually purchased singly or in small groups (depending on their knowledge and abilities), slaves in this category are usually able to work their way into their owner's good graces over a period of years and survive to old age.

The third category of slaves are the domestic slaves, who assist in one of the households of the Great Houses. Purchased in lots of 10 to 100, household slaves act as cooks, cleaners, launderers, gardeners and ordinary servants in Dragon-Blooded and patrician households. Many of them are ensorcelled in various ways to prevent them from revealing their owner's secrets, and all of them are demonstrably broken in some way, as proof that they are no threat to anyone in their owner's household.

## The Disenfranchised

Even below the slaves in the Realm's social structure are the disenfranchised. The Realm's law rarely distinguishes between one mortal and her neighbors, particularly for any human below patrician rank. When a villager is discovered breaking one of the Realm's laws, the magistrate or prefect or their archons or governors may declare every resident of that village disenfranchised. The affected peasants or citizens are turned out of their homes and are exiled from their prefecture. They can be abused or killed with impunity, and they may not take up residence in a new location until they have paid the residency pledge-fee of four koku. Few can pay this enormous sum, and so many disenfranchised are forced to wander place

to place, looking for somewhere with a shortage of workers, where the fee might be waived.

At present, there are many more disenfranchised on the roads of the Realm than in times past. Numerous villages and sometimes even whole towns have been uprooted to make space for the Great Houses and their patrician allies to expand their estates or to create no-man's-land regions between rival Houses. This state of affairs is yet another sign of the disintegrating fabric of the Realm's society.

## The Tools of War

The Realm not only has the Dragon-Blooded Host on its side, but also has the lion's share of Creation's First Age technology and weaponry at its disposal. Some of this weaponry takes the form of personal equipment: The Terrestrial Exalted are always well armed and armored, with jade-steel daiklaves and buff coats with jade-steel plates. Some of this personal armament is of recent construction, but many pieces of the Dragon-Blooded Host's personal equipment are heirloom weapons passed down from ancient times.

The House units and the Imperial legions, while not equipped with jade-steel weapons, are no less fearsomely armed. The Imperial legions train with shields, pikes and stabbing swords for close combat, and they travel with companies of trained engineers who can construct siege weapons for them on short notice. Each legion is expected to have a sorcerer or two in its officer corps, as well, to augment the powers of the actual soldiers. Each House unit tends to be differently armed and armored according to its preferences, but some sort of armor, polearm and sword are common, so that the House talons and legions can be trained using the Imperial Army's military manual.

### The Thousand Correct Actions

One of the tools of the Realm's military might is the famous book, *The Thousand Correct Actions of the Upright Soldier*. Usually ascribed either to Hesiesh, the Immaculate Dragon of Fire, or to Mela, the Immaculate Dragon of Air, the book details a thousand ways a commander can husband the strength of his troops and make use of their discipline at exactly the right moment. Espionage, small-unit tactics, individual training exercises and encampment procedures are all detailed carefully. Senior officers carry the complete manual, while the junior ranks carry heavily abridged versions. If correctly copied, the book contains a number of encoded Charms and sorceries specifically of use to military officers and their armies. A similar manual for the use of ship captains and admirals also exists.

Since the Empress disappeared and the Houses took over the sponsorship of the legions, this field manual has fallen into disrepute. Old outcaste and even Dynast officers regard this as a terrible waste and a disregard for tradition, for they know that an army trained according to the *Thousand Correct Actions* is nearly invincible in warfare.

### The Imperial Manse

The Realm's senior leadership today is greatly worried over its inability to access one of the most important military resources of the Realm, the Imperial Manse. Located at center of the Imperial Palace and surrounded by a vast garden, this huge and squat but opulent building is decorated with orichalcum and marble, and its single door is a slab of black jade. Within the Imperial Manse are the controls that coordinate the operation of the war manses of the Imperial Defense Grid as if they were a single entity, and it also contains the First Age mechanisms that made the Empress the equal of the Shoguns before her. The Imperial Manse gave the Scarlet Empress the power to destroy the hordes of Fair Folk who had invaded Creation and to rain down fire on the rebellious cities of the Threshold and the Blessed Isle. It also allowed her to project her image to every village, town and city in the Realm when she so chose.

No one among the Realm's current leaders has any idea how to get inside it, much less how the manse works.

It is known that the Empress entered with several companions more than 700 years ago and that she alone survived the deadly traps and dangers within. In all that time, no other mortal or Dragon-Blooded has ever entered and returned. While a number of sorcerers have been studying the manse, the Great Houses have mounted a number of security precautions to keep anyone from slipping inside. Everyone knows that whoever emerges from the manse knowing its secrets and its powers will be the next Emperor or Empress by default.

### The War Manses

Standing at over 200 known locations (and perhaps at as many as 100 more secret locations) around the Blessed Isle on positions of geomantic importance are the war manses, which tap the Essence of the Blessed Isle and funnel that power to Essence weapons of superior force and destructive capabilities. The war manses are nearly all squat, forbidding towers with four or more vicious jade-steel spikes rising from their roofs. Some of them shoot bolts of flame, while others stir up tornadoes and waterspouts and still others cause localized earthquakes.

The war manses can be controlled in two different ways: A crew of Dragon-Bloods attuned to the manse can operate the controls of these weapons while within the manse and direct their weapons upon a nearby region of land, sea or sky. The manses can also be controlled by the engines in the Imperial Manse and directed by a single intelligence within that manse against targets all over Creation.

It was the Empress's pleasure to gift the command and operation of the war manses to outcaste officers in the military and to Dynasts who lacked other nearby properties but possessed rivals in the area. In this way, the Army watched over the Dynasts, and the Dynasts watched each other, and the war manses were always carefully guarded from unauthorized visits. Today, the war manses are watched even more closely, and the Great Houses are likely targeting them for capture or destruction as part of the opening phases of a civil war. While the Realm stands, they are too important to use, but when it falls, they will be too important to let them stand. No one has any clear idea how to disconnect the war manses from the overarching control of the Imperial Manse, and this has dire implications for any future conflict.

### The Imperial Navy

The war manses serve as stationary fortresses throughout the Blessed Isle and act as the inner wall of the Realm's defenses, but the main line of the Realm's defense is the Imperial Navy. Largely commanded by House Peleps, the Navy consists not only of modern ships built in the yards of the Blessed Isle's ports, but also a number of much older vessels, ranging from

armed catamarans and trimarans to First Age battle hulks that do not need sails, but move over the sea with deadly grace and carry their own energy weapons.

The Navy maintains an aggressive watch on the coasts of the Blessed Isle, and it stops and boards ships regularly to search for contraband.

Lord High Admiral Peleps Sorugan has overall command of the five Peleps fleets and tactical control of the Merchant Fleet as well. Fleet Admiral Peleps Eralin, the "Sea Witch," commands the Earth Fleet that patrols the coast of the Blessed Isle from the Naval Shipyards of Dragonsmouth. Noble is home to the Fire Fleet, under Fleet Admiral Peleps Lundaer. The Fire Fleet patrols the Southern Quadrant of the Inland Sea. The Water Fleet under Fleet Admiral Ledaal Calin and based at Port Wavehold, across from the Eye of Creation, guards the Western Quadrant. The Air Fleet sails from Chanos and operates in the Northern Quadrant under Fleet Admiral Ragara Feria. The Wood Fleet sails from Sdoia and guards the Eastern Quadrant.

The Air and Water Fleets are traditionally the most powerful, but a strategic shift of naval resources is underway, with additional power being placed into the Earth and Wood Fleets at the expense of the Air and Water ones. Some see this as the Realm tightening into a defensive posture in a time of weakness. Others see House Peleps making a bid to choke the Realm in the event of a civil war, as the two looted fleets are both in command of admirals not of House Peleps.

A Merchant Fleet commanded by House V'neef controls landing and unloading rights and runs piloting services through the dangerous shoals just off shore. The Merchant Fleet uses Arjuf as its base and conducts operations in the Inland Sea. There is much rivalry between the Imperial Navy and the Merchant Fleet, but the balance of power is heavily in favor of the Imperial Navy, which has all the First Age ships, most of the best-trained officers and sailors and many of the best weapons.

### War Machines

Though rarely seen, the last major weapon group in the Realm's arsenals is a wide variety of war machines. Some of these devices are called warstriders—enormous hulking beasts constructed of metal and jade, which shoot fire from their nostrils or hurl exploding stones with their hands or shoot lances of light from their horns or eyes. Not only does the Realm have these weapons of war in its arsenals, but it also has the Dragon-Blooded individuals necessary to power them and bring them to bear against the Realm's foes.

In addition to these land-striding beasts of battle, the Realm has a number of First Age flying craft in operation, which gives it control of the skies over the Blessed Isle and some parts of the Threshold. These First Age weapons have wings like birds, bats or insects and can shoot streams of blazing fire. Finally, there are the great paddle-wheeled warships of the First Age, invincible dreadnoughts whose energy weapons can defeat any number of modern wooden-hulled vessels.

## The Contest for the Throne

For more than 700 years, the Scarlet Throne in the audience hall of the Imperial Palace was *the* symbol of true power throughout Creation. This jade chair, said to weigh a thousand talents, is supported and canopied by five dragons, sinuous and entwined around a place for a mortal to sit. The dragons' heads are deferential, reverent and yet fiercely protective of the person enthroned. From this throne, the Scarlet Empress spoke, and her will was carried out. No ruler in the Threshold could think on the power and strength that seemed to emanate from that throne and not sigh in awe and envy. In the few years that Regent Fokuf has sat his mild-mannered, agreeably frail bulk upon that elaborately carved chair of jade, though, it has become clear that the throne itself has no magic powers to confer greatness. The personality and dedication of the woman or man who sits there is far more relevant to the Realm's prominence than any mystical virtue that might rise into the one who sits upon it.

Therefore, there is a contest for the throne. At issue is not simply who will sit on it, but who will *not* sit upon it. All the major players are universally agreed that Fokuf will not stay on the throne as Regent forever. It is possible he will not last out the year, though if he's lucky, he might survive another year and a half after the next Calibration. As many are going out of their way to protect him as are trying to assassinate him. Everyone wants to make sure they are ready with their own candidate when the storm breaks, so the Regent's life is guarded for now.

There are two issues at work, pulling the contest first in one direction and then another. First, the Dragon-Blooded are largely aware that the Realm is tearing itself apart without the firm hand of the Empress guiding its various factions. Some members of the Great Houses think the Realm needs to be broken up, if only so that they can get a larger portion of wealth and power. Others are prepared to follow any new monarch just to get the Realm back on track again (somehow). The second issue is more complicated, but the basic problem is the lack of a body. If the Empress were dead and there had been a funeral—even if she had left instructions behind, explaining the succession—many might have followed her commands. Yet, every candidate for the Scarlet Throne ponders what would happen if she takes the throne and the Empress returns. One can easily imagine what would happen if the Empress returned to find that buffoon Fokuf dressed in scarlet sitting on her chair—and his title is only Regent! She would destroy him and scatter his ashes to the elemental poles. What would happen if she found someone there actually claiming to be Empress?

So, the Realm needs a new monarch, yet the threat of the old monarch returning gives many of the likely candidates pause. Still, a few names get bandied about, and it becomes a matter of guessing which of them will act—or whose minions will push their leader into acting—first. Knowledgeable bookies, particularly in House Cynis, have set up pools to help people bet on their favorites. The odds against the Empress's return grow longer, and possible candidates are beginning to make their intentions known.

### Mnemon

Mnemon, founder of the House that bears her name, grandmother and mother to more Dragon-Blooded than any other House leader, is probably the prime candidate for the throne and the most likely to win it. The only living direct daughter of the Empress not going senile with age, Mnemon is a powerful sorceress and a dangerous foe. If lineage alone determined inheritance in the Realm, she would be on the throne already. If lineage and ambition were sufficient to take the throne, Mnemon would be Empress.

Mnemon rages nightly, throwing people about and knocking down buildings in her fury, for she knows that while she could take the throne, she certainly could not hold it. She hates the other Great Houses, and the members of the other Houses know it. While her own brood remains loyal to her, the other Houses of the Dynasty would band together against her and find an acceptable compromise candidate, rather than let Mnemon rule them.

Mnemon has tried to open the Imperial Manse numerous times and failed again and again. At heart, she knows that her reasons for trying to enter are insufficiently pure. Her mother went in desiring to save all Creation from the Fair Folk, with no thought to her own safety, yet Mnemon wants only to ensure her own survival. For her, the prize is not entering the manse, but coming back out again, alive and in command of the Realm's most powerful defensive and offensive weapons.

Alliances with other Houses have also failed, and marriages between the scions of House Mnemon and those of the other Great Houses have not helped break the deadlock. Mnemon is confident that she can take the throne, but she can find no one who will commit to letting her keep it.

## The Roseblack

Meanwhile, the other Great Houses debate the idea of choosing to support the Roseblack, the nickname of Tepet Ejava, a recent military hero and superior strategist who is currently on campaign in the Southwest with the ragtag Vermilion Legion. Even with such a rebellious and broken force under her command, the Roseblack has given the Realm a series of successes and victories that raise people's hopes for the empire's glorious survival and renewal.

At present, no one can quite figure out how to keep her safe from Mnemon. If she were recalled to the Blessed Isle, Tepet Ejava would probably face an accident or even obvious assassination the moment she landed. While she is a military genius, she is not as politically savvy a woman as Mnemon—which is, of course, part of the Roseblack's appeal. But Mnemon is among the most capable sorcerers in the Realm. Even the Roseblack's most ardent supporters must face the truth: If the Roseblack wants the throne, she will have to take it and then discover how many supporters she has To offer her the throne is tantamount to signing her death warrant, though, for she likely would not survive long enough to be crowned.

## Other Candidates

Adding to the complications, every one of the Great Houses has its own pet candidate. The Ledaal clan advances one of the younger members of its House, a superior Gateway player by the name of Kes. No one thinks Kes wants the dubious honor of being Emperor, and he is regarded as something of a hothead. Most difficult of all, while he and his wife have dutifully produced children, both of them are known to have exotic and peculiar, troubling tastes in bed

partners and sensual pleasures. The other Houses tend not to like Kes very much.

Cathak Cainan is another such House-sponsored candidate. Great-great-grandson of the Empress, a former general, and now the elder of his House, Cainan has a great deal of power and prestige to throw into the contest—yet, he does not wish to be Emperor. His children, cousins and nieces think very highly of him and his loyalty to the Realm, however, and they think he might make an acceptable compromise candidate. Members of other Houses often agree, but few are prepared to acclaim him just yet.

And then there are the wild-card candidates, such as young V'neef Bijar. This young sorcerer graduated from the Heptagram several decades ago and now works as House V'neef's chief of security. For the last three years, she has been puzzling out the outer layer of the defenses of the Imperial Manse, and she now believes that she can bypass these defenses and open the door. She is considering daring the Imperial Manse, reasoning that if her grandmother could do it more than 700 years ago, she can too. If successful, of course, she would have access to and control over the Realm's most powerful engines of war, and she would likely become Empress without too much trouble.

## Roads to the Throne

In truth, there are five possible roads to the Scarlet Throne, any one of which could be the one that sets a new Empress or Emperor over the Realm.

The first of these is called the Rite of Acclaim. Under some obscure rules laid down by the Empress with the advice of the Deliberative, the Deliberative may declare the throne empty, and then, the Senators and Deliberators in each chamber may shout out the name of the Dragon-Blooded they feel most eligible for the throne. If there is a clear unity in both chambers about who that person is, then the throne is offered to that person. Yet the Deliberative cannot agree on how much the Scribe of the Upper Chamber must be paid per year, much less who should replace Regent Fokuf.

The second method is a coup. If someone kills Regent Fokuf, takes the throne and kills or neutralizes anyone who comes to try to kill her, then she will be Empress. Maybe. The question then becomes whether the Deliberative, the Army, the Immaculate Order and the Thousand Scales will recognize her, and how long it will take for someone to do the same thing to her.

The third method is invitation. If four or more of the Great Houses, the generals of several legions and some senior members of the Thousand Scales can agree on one candidate, those officials might invite their candidate to come to the Imperial City to visit the Regent in the palace and claim the throne with their sponsorship. The difference between an invitation and a coup is simply that Fokuf might not have to die (though he probably will), and the support of the various factions of the Realm is at least partly decided in advance.

The fourth method is procedural. With the Regent functioning as if he were the Empress, vigorous new leadership in the Army, the Imperial Service, the Houses and the Deliberative might simply find a new balance of power between all the Realm's various factions. Many of the Empress's powers will rest with other individuals and institutions, and the Realm will go on. When Fokuf dies or is murdered, the Deliberative will have a set of procedures in place (which are currently being drafted) to decide who takes his place, not as Regent but as Empress—albeit one with substantially reduced powers. Many are hoping for a resolution of this kind.

The fifth method is magical. If a group of brave, foolhardy or stupid Dragon-Blooded dares the Imperial Manse and succeeds, one or more of the survivors will become Empress, Emperor, Emperor and Empress, or some combination thereof. No one really knows quite what this will look like. There is sufficient awe and fear of the manse, however, that if someone comes back out and claims to be in charge, she probably will be if she possesses demonstrable control of the war manses.

# The Threshold

The term "the Threshold" typically denotes the ring of princedoms and city-states on the outer edge of the Inland Sea—too barbarous for the Empress to govern directly, but still civilized enough to pay tribute to the Realm. The Realm proper directly rules only the Blessed Isle. Everything else is nominally independent, a kingdom or republic paying tribute and advised by an imperial satrap. Until recently, this meant imperial rule in everything but name, but with the disappearance of the Empress, the power of the Realm has began to crumble. No longer do all pay respect to the Immaculate Order, acknowledge the spiritual superiority of the Dragon-Blooded, and deliver tribute to the satraps unquestioningly. The states that border the Inland Sea are now reducing their tribute payment or evading it altogether. This provokes retaliation by the Realm, and disputes with tributaries have flared into outright revolt all around the Threshold.

Much of the Threshold is still at relative peace, and many lands are largely untroubled and generally calm. Yet revolt is spreading, rumors about the disappearance of the Empress are rife, the Deathlords nourish shadowlands like cancers, and the reappearance of the long-lost Solars is profoundly disquieting.

## The North

Near the shores of the Inland Sea, the climate of this region is chilly grasslands and pine scrub. As one goes farther north, the cold becomes increasingly bitter, and the wind grows in strength, until the taiga stops and the tundra begins. Winters here are long and cruel, and the short summer barely gives the surface of the tundra time to thaw before the ice closes in again. Even in the summer, this is a frigid and windy land, where freezing rain lashes the herds of elk, mammoth and reindeer that eke out a marginal existence in the bleak landscape. The tundra eventually gives way to a permanently frozen waste that runs to the foothills of the northernmost mountains. It is said that in the farthest North, past the mountains, there is nothing but a great expanse of snow and wind. Beyond even that lies the Elemental Pole of Air.

The North is sparsely peopled, with city-states and wandering tribes scattered piecemeal across its vast expanse of land and snow. Civilizations in the North have accreted like nacre on pearls, with populations slowly gathering around defensible positions that have the food and shelter to provide for them. The nomadic icewalker tribes sweep across the plains in a constant wash of death and hunger, tending their herds and seeking war and plunder on their way. Wars between the city-states are rare, as it is difficult to support a standing army on the scarce supplies that the North provides. It's easier to bribe the tribes to do the work for you and then attempt to pick over what's left if they succeed.

When the First Age ended and the Solar wonders crumbled, many of the glories of the North fell with them. No longer could chariots transport riders thousands of miles in bare hours, and no longer could enchanted gardens grow fruit that would feed hungry cities. While some of the Solar roads remain, such as the Traveler's Road to Whitewall, most have been shattered by enemy armies or fallen to the corrosion of time. Cities drew in on themselves to survive, or they were lost to the snows, and the icewalker tribes picked over their bones.

A large number of petty kingdoms and city-states fringes the coastlines of the Inland Sea and the more northerly White Sea. The southward areas are tributaries and puppets of the Realm. Some are ruled by scion families, such as the city-state of Cherak, under the patrician Jerem family, but the cities become progressively more independent as one travels north. Northern states are often rude affairs, usually consisting of an enthroned strongman propped up by a table full of well-fed thugs with swords and axes. Only Whitewall, the Haslanti League and Gethamane are states of truly notable power. In the barren spaces between the seas, the kingdoms shrink to towns and the city-states to isolated hamlets, and people band together to scratch out a living as shabby democracies. Hunting and gathering is the rule, and elk and mammoth herders follow the yearly migration of the herds from east to west and back again. Exiles from across the rest of Creation hide in the North, finding havens in manses too dangerous for the Realm to claim, lands too harsh for others to survive in and hiding places where no other human may set foot for years.

Most Northerners are pale skinned, with hair ranging from jet black to platinum blond. Given the extreme conditions, the people are hale and hearty, with large frames and heavy builds predominating. Even in the cities, Northerners primarily make offerings to their ancestor cults and to the dark spirits of snow and frost and hunger. Herders and hunters offer sacrifices to the herd animal spirits and the spirits of the hunt, respectively, but the vast majority of devotions go to the ghosts of the dead. In turn, their ancestors' spirits protect them and guide them across the trackless snows, driving away evil spirits and bringing warnings of plagues and blizzards. Hidden tomb-mounds and cemeteries are guarded by the tribes' finest warriors, and chieftains are buried with their weapons to use in the Underworld and are sacrificed beasts to serve as their herds there. Although two Deathlords—the Lover Clad in the Raiment of Tears and the Bishop of the Chalcedony Thurible—have their dwellings in the Northern lands, those tribes who pay proper respect to their ancestors scorn the Abyssal cults.

There are no fixed customs for marriage in the North. Life is hard, and if the ghosts of one's ancestors do not signal their disapproval, then the marriage is blessed and deserves prosperity. Given the lack of spare food and resources, Northerners typically abandon unwanted or deformed children.

Roaming across the North, the icewalkers are nomadic bands of hunters and herders who follow vast herds of mammoth, elk and reindeer from the lush taiga to the frozen northernmost mountains. They travel all year round, walking, skiing and using the tamer herd animals as riding beasts or pack animals. During the warmer months, the icewalkers live in collapsible huts made of intricately carved wood and ivory frames covered with hide. When it grows colder, they cover the huts with packed snow, creating temporary encampments that are often mistaken as mere features of the landscape.

Each tribe of icewalkers pursues a particular type of animal. Some follow the migrations of reindeer or elk, while others accompany vast herds of mammoth. Each group regards its chosen animal as a totem and a source of identity, venerating and identifying with the spirits of the herd. All those who follow a particular spirit are brothers and sisters and will support each other in times of famine or war. Those who follow a different spirit are kin when times are prosperous but bitter rivals when the herds are thin and full winter drags its net of snow across the Northern plains.

The icewalkers are dangerous and uncivilized. They view the inhabitants of towns and cities with mingled pity and disdain, and they raid towns along their migration route if they feel the need. Such raids are often forestalled with a "spontaneous offering of gifts," which has become an accepted form of tribute in many places. The greatest taboo the icewalkers observe is cannibalism, and any among their number found guilty of this deed is condemned to a slow and painful death. They extend their abhorrence to anything not fully human—the Wyld barbarians, beastmen, Fair Folk, Ravagers, deathknights and the undead—and will go out of their way to slay such creatures. This is the icewalkers' true virtue, in the eyes of the Northern states. They serve as a convenient barrier against the worst things that prowl the Northern night.

For uncounted years, it has been prophesied that a great warlord among the icewalkers would someday rise to unify the tribes and go forth to conquer the entire North. Some fear that this prophecy has been fulfilled with the arrival of the mysterious Bull of the North, an icewalker leader who has arisen within the past decade and gathered a following among the disparate icewalker tribes. Both the Haslanti Oligarchs and the lords of Gethamane are offering large rewards to any spies willing to gather information about the Bull and his plans.

Directly north from the Blessed Isle lies Whitewall, one of the largest settlements in the Northlands. Located on rocky taiga, it lies several hundred miles north of the coast of the Inland Sea. This prosperous metropolis of more than 700,000 inhabitants is a trade hub for the region. While it was originally founded in the First Age as a center of religious study, it has become a powerful city-state in its own right. The end of the First Age left Whitewall isolated and without regular support. Three powerful beings of ice and silver, the Syndics, took control and hammered out a treaty of nonaggression with the local fae and the dead of the nearby shadowland. They still rule the city with a grip of frozen steel. While Whitewall is a nominal ally of the Realm, the city has never paid it tribute thanks to a combination of factors: the Syndics' puissance, the city's isolation, and its usefulness as a trade partner and jade producer.

By the conditions of the Syndics' treaty, the road to Whitewall is inviolate, and no walking dead, ghost or fae may enter the city without permission from someone inside the walls. The road itself dates from the First Age and is built of virtually indestructible white stone. Ancient enchantments on the road keep it clear of ice and snow in all but the worst weather. Anyone—living, dead or fae—may use the road, and none may harm any other on the road. For the living, the penalty for breaking the peace of the road is death, and stone pillars flank the road every 40 yards to mark it and to serve as gibbets for the bodies of those who violate the peace. By the terms of the treaty, the Syndics must set two dozen living people outside

the walls each year as sacrifices. In the past, these have ranged from notorious criminals (such as Mideh of the Snake Fist or the Hundred-Knife Jackal) to reformers or revolutionaries (such as the Snow Peacock, whose body was never found, but whose screams were heard for 10 nights without pause).

The city of Whitewall is a crowded place that breeds suspicion. Its buildings are constructed of heavy white stone, plain on the outside but decorated inside with bright colors, rich tapestries and vivid rugs. While the city's inhabitants will trust and befriend a stranger once they are sure of her intentions, they will be grim and taciturn until then, watching for signs of betrayal and stratagems. Just as nobody is invited inside the city without proof of humanity, no one is ever invited into a house casually. Any such invitation is a clear sign that the host considers the guest a long-term friend and ally.

The land surrounding Whitewall is rich and fertile, but heavy winters sweep down from the mountains. From late fall until late spring, blizzards make travel to Whitewall almost impossible. The winter's long nights breed fear, paranoia and suspicion. Every few years, some fool or madman lets in a fae or undead intruder, and the city guard must hunt it down in the city's narrow streets. On occasion, the Syndics are even forced to hire Exalted monster-hunters.

Justice in Whitewall is harsh, and penalties range from heavy fines to indentured servitude to mutilation. Individuals convicted of capital crimes (murder, treason, consorting with the fae or undead) are put outside the walls to face whatever calamity comes to them. They are given no supplies and are dressed in clothing to mark their status as convicts, so that no caravan will give them aid. In many ways, a death sentence would be kinder.

A number of other city-states of varying size lie around Whitewall, spokes to its central hub. While traders can journey to them directly, Whitewall serves as a convenient staging post and base, and many caravans would rather plot their trek via Whitewall and take the extra days that such a journey requires, rather than risk the Fair Folk and the walking dead on lesser roads and across the snow. To the southeast lies Cherak, affiliated with the Jerem scion family but haunted by infestations of the undead. While House Jerem has appealed to its Imperial connections, none of the Great Houses have the spare forces to cleanse the lands once and for all, and the state grows weaker with every passing month. Northeast is Shanarinara, a would-be expansionist democracy hemmed in by the Haslanti League and Gethamane and by Whitewall's own interests but without the strength to go further. It is pondering an alliance with one of the Deathlords. Southwest of Whitewall, scattered along the mountain peaks, are the tiny but independent silverholds, a collection of forts, mining camps and goat-herding villages that barely survive from year to year but have done so for centuries. Some of them are said to leave sacrifices for airborne demons or to make candles that have the power to summon and control spirits. Northwest on the tundra lies Fella, the City of Broken Walls, where no stone will remain atop another for more than an hour before casting itself down. All of its standing buildings are wood or ivory, and the inhabitants have cruel laws controlling where fires may be lit.

Directly north of Whitewall, and another frequent stop in northward journeys for traders, lies the mountain-city of Gethamane, set like a gem among the Northern peaks. While the city dates back to the First Age, no one knows the origins of this ancient fastness. The inhabitants tell stories of how their distant ancestors came here a century after the Contagion, fleeing plague and starvation and beset by raiders. They named the place Gethamane—"Sanctuary" in the tongue of the Old Realm. Its large halls are covered in intricate and beautiful carvings of unknown plants and beasts, strangely designed pictures that haunt the memories of visitors. The entire city is lit with glowing crystals that brighten during the day and dim at night, so that a man can live happily within for years and never see the sun. Fortunately for its inhabitants, Gethamane is distant enough that the Realm has never demanded that it pay tribute or attempted to make it a satrapy.

Gethamane consists of hundreds of twisting corridors that connect countless rooms. The only remaining traces of the prior inhabitants are the three strange temples, carved with ancient depictions of flying creatures, and the sunken gardens of mosses and fungi that feed the city. The temples are served by priests who are called in their dreams, answering a message that they cannot refuse. Those who make the attempt go stark mad and flee the city, seeking the snow-bound silences of the mountains instead.

Beneath the city lie endless tunnels that delve into the darkness far below. These delvings riddle the foundations of the city like wormholes, black and slick to the touch. Guards watch the dozens of entrances and bar the way against the things that, occasionally attempt to force entrance. Those who enter Gethamane's underways to seek long-lost treasures do so at their own risk.

On the edges of recognized civilization lies the Haslanti League. Few travelers dare go beyond it, into the lands where the

endless snows howl across the ice and where ancient ruins are buried and the Fair Folk wait to steal the breath and warm blood from those foolish enough to venture so far into the wilderness.

The Haslanti League is a loose confederacy of nine city-states located along the shore of the frozen White Sea, centered on the capital city of Icehome. The League owes its success to the White Sea itself, building iceships with complex sails and finely made steel runners that travel across the ice to carry trade goods and communications. The Haslanti also produce air boats, huge hot-air dirigibles heated by kerosene, which are capable of acting as mobile supply depots and troop transports during war or supplying the League's remoter settlements in times of peace.

Throughout the nation's history, the Haslanti Council of Oligarchs has proven willing to change with every passing wind, and the League's future has been harnessed to its ability to catch each moment's opportunity. When the nascent League warred with the Guild and was cut off from convenient food or travel to the South, the Haslanti built their first iceships. While pitiful when compared to the ancient air chariots that have long since fallen into disuse or been destroyed, the hot-air dirigibles of the League were made by mortals with mortal tools. And during the Wyldfog War, while simultaneously hunkering down to resist Fair Folk attacks, the Haslanti established the high-speed communication system that now links its cities.

Since its inception, the League has withheld tribute from the distant Realm, presenting suitable excuses coupled with polite refusals to the Imperial representatives who manage to reach the capital of Icehome. Similarly, the Haslanti have treaties with a number of Northern tribes, and they frequently cooperate to drive back the Wyld barbarians.

The League cities themselves are designed with the region's harsh winters in mind. All buildings stand at least two stories tall. In the winter, people use a dwelling's lower doors, which lead to a warren of tunnel-like covered streets. In the summer, they use the upper doors and walk on the roofs of the covered streets. While reindeer meat, fish, trapped game, cheese, lichen and mosses serve as base sustenance for the nation, it is the frequent mammoth hunts that provide the ivory that is used to raise the Haslanti cities and build their foundations.

While practicality rules the League, the Haslanti themselves worship spirits of ice, dream and fate and are guided by their dreams. A typical Haslanti regards his dreams as vitally important to his future and will discuss them with everyone he knows. In fact, lying about dreams is considered more unacceptable than lying about waking life, and concealing one's dreams is socially improper and likely to induce distrust in all Haslanti who know the tight-lipped dreamer.

The Haslanti League is currently in a state of controlled but vigorous activity. With the alliance with the Outwall tribes currently diverting to the north the Wyld barbarians who are the principal threat to the city-states, the League has the capacity to pursue its own projects. These projects range from excavating the ruins of a First Age metropolis near the city of Crystal (where it is buried deep in a glacier) to general expansion and planning war against Whitewall. The importance of Whitewall's jade mines to the Realm is one of the main factors protecting it, and the Realm's activities in the North in the near future will doubtless affect the League's decisions.

Down the northwest coast toward the West, the frozen White Sea becomes true water, with open sea breaking through the ice. Cormorants hunt up and down the coast between the fishing villages and small towns, where the sailors go out in longboats to hunt narwhals and whales, and where divers swim with trained dolphins to bring back fragments of First Age treasures from the seabed. One town along the coast, Liriel-Anneth, is said to house an entire First Age artifact, but it is full of shadows by day and snakes by night, and no sane man sets anchor in its docks.

## The West

To the Far West lies the Elemental Pole of Water. As one travels westward from the Blessed Isle, islands are at first large and common, but they grow smaller and less frequent the further west one travels. Past a certain point, there are no more islands, only a horizon where the sea and sky come together. This horizon can be distinguished only at sunrise and sunset. Even experienced sailors find it maddening to sail too far out, for what is there to find save more ocean stretching out unto the end of time?

The West is the least populous of the directions, as there is simply less land mass for humans to live on. The lack of arable land makes vegetables in the islands other than cultivated kelp a luxury. In the Southwest and the Northwest, stretches of temperate land allow for widespread cultivation, before the mountains and deserts of the true South or the frozen wastes of the North make such farming a losing proposition.

Political units in the true West are based on the island, with each island or archipelago forming its own independent nation. While not everyone is a sailor, pirate, shipwright or fishermen, the sea cannot be ignored. A child who cannot sail a boat by the age of six is a child poorly raised. Many nations entertain the pirate trade, though only Wavecrest and the Neck allow non-aligned pirates to openly enter port. (They and the outright pirate nation of the Lintha, that is with its secret port of Bluehaven, whose location is said to constantly change.)

In the Southwest and Northwest are coastal nations rather than islands, which range from Realm-affiliated principalities to petty kingdoms or republics ruled by Dynastic Dragon-Blooded offshoots. Such nations become more agriculturally oriented the farther south one goes. War between island- or land-based nations is a permanent condition in the West, even if many of the nations are tributaries of the Realm to some degree. Human raids aside, the Fair Folk and water spirits are a permanent menace to the nations of the West, moving more easily than humans through the seas and the Wyld to seek fresh prey to quench their constant hungers.

In the First Age, huge warships of orichalcum and jade drove across the waves, propelled by elementals of wind and fire, and lost sorceries built magical gates between distant islands or grew crops from the dry coral. When the Solars fell, their distant laboratories were lost or destroyed with them. The few that survive were taken over by the Dragon-Blooded, but they no longer operate at their full capacity. As crop capacities and shipping degraded, nations were forced to turn to piracy and preying upon each other to survive, and many once-placid archipelagoes became multiple groups of small islands struggling separately.

The average Westerner is bronze-skinned, with those from the Far West or the Southwest having an almost golden skin tone. Those from the central West have hair tones in sea

shades—green, blue and dark gray—while those from farther north or south have darker shades, primarily purple and black. Clothing is oriented toward practical shipboard wear. Westerners give offerings to the sea spirits, the bow spirits of their ships, the spirits of wind and weather and good fortune and any other spirits who may have a bearing on the situation. Western culture is frequently patriarchal, with women's roles in the community being well defined if not actually confining. Visiting women from outside a particular island are often treated as honorary males for the duration of their visit to minimize the cultural impact, but they are encouraged to remain in the foreigners' quarter of town rather than test local hospitality.

The Neck is what many people think of when they imagine the Western islands—a peaceful and innocent collection of tiny islands, where most inhabitants survive by finding and gathering kelp. It is a tributary to the Realm, but it pays only in cowry shells and coral beads, for the inhabitants have nothing else to give. The Neck is ruled by its elders, who appoint one of their number as spokesman for their islands. It has frequent contact with ocean spirits and water elementals, and many inhabitants bear the telltale signs of descent from spirit or divine parents.

Less idealistic and more warlike is the Coral Archipelago, the second-largest nation in the West. Coral is a militant dictatorship bent on dominating its neighbors, and it considers its southerly neighbor Wavecrest to be first on its list. The Coral Archipelago consists of almost two dozen islands, with a total population of more than 200,000. Since it is little more than a series of coral atolls, none larger than 150 square miles, the archipelago has little arable land, so the inhabitants depend on the sea for their livelihood. This area of the ocean has distinct seasons, and Coral suffers chill winds and cold rain for much of the year.

The Coral Archipelago's economy is built on booty and conquest. While the islands are ruled by a dictator known as the Sea Lord, he commands a military bureaucracy and is advised by the wealthiest inhabitants of the atolls. These forces sometimes work against each other, but most commonly combine against the rest of Creation, ripping wealth and slaves from those who cannot defend themselves.

With the exception of that afforded to the Sea Lord and the military, status in Coral is based purely on wealth. Those who achieve great wealth are considered blessed by the Ocean Father, a powerful god revered by all Coral islanders. Women are legally lesser beings, they may not vote, and they are under the authority of the male members of their families. Justice is also based on money, and all criminals are fined or must become indentured servants, working out crippling labor or serving on suicidal naval missions.

While Coral's navy is notorious and feared, Coral's pirates are dreaded even more. The Sea Lord sells letters of marque to pirates who will swear never to interfere with Coral's ships or her current allies and then provides safe havens for them and markets for their booty. Similarly, merchants who frequently trade with Coral can buy certificates of safe passage that give them immunity from Coral's pirates for a month. This open tolerance of pirates, among other things, makes Coral an enemy of the Realm. Fortunately for Coral, it has little that the Realm wants and, unless it becomes drastically expansionistic, will not attract any direct retribution. Coral is also famous for its gambling halls, slave trade, drug dens and brothels. Inhabitants of Coral might look down on foreigners, but they are eager to take their jade or to enlist them in their plans for piracy and conquest.

Further south is the Wavecrest Archipelago, a three-island group that forms the largest single Western state, with a population of over 250,000. Its largest island, Abalone, is the biggest island in the West, and all three islands have wide tracts of arable land and a mild, verdant climate. As such, they are not forced to depend on the sea's bounty to survive, and Wavecrest is the breadbasket of the Western Ocean. The islands are also studded with a number of volcanoes—the largest of which is Hamoji, on Abalone—and these are often surrounded by Wyld zones. Wavecrest is a satrapy of the Realm, so Anathema are unwelcome there.

A visitor to Wavecrest is likely to note the large number of women on the islands. The Wavecrest islanders believe that women are superior at land-based industries, so women make up the majority of blacksmiths, farmers, merchants and so on, while men are generally sailors and fishermen. The archipelago supports a small navy, sufficient to deal with pirates and raiders. The greatest current dangers come from Wyld beasts wandering in from the islands' Wyld regions and enormous sea beasts and deadly water elementals rising from the ocean near the archipelago's volcanic islets.

Wavecrest is ruled by an elected president known as the Feathered One. He's named thus for the ancient cape of office he wears, which confers wisdom, honesty and forethought on all who wear it according to legend. Aided by a council of priestesses and the mayors of the archipelago's various cities and towns, his most important duties are preserving general harmony and appeasing the volcano gods. If the volcanoes

grow active, then any convicts currently in the jails are hurled into the lava regardless of their crimes. Should this fail to appease the deities, the Feathered One himself is the ultimate sacrifice. As a result, the justice system of Wavecrest is extremely harsh, punishing any crime stronger than public rudeness with imprisonment.

Further north lies the Skullstone Archipelago, which centers on Darkmist Island, capital of the Skullstone nation and site of the West's largest and most infamous shadowland. A volcanic island of gray rock with beaches of fine black sand, its jagged expanse is pocked by small and frigid lakes, and it supports little life other than a few species of blighted moss and corpse-pale lichen. Along the coast lie port towns where the living and the dead mix freely. Built of unmortared stone, with narrow streets and tall buildings, these ports are chilly and dark even on the brightest summer days. At the center of the island lies the necropolis of Onyx, carved from the naked rock of a long-extinct volcano. The other four islands of this archipelago lie on the bordermarches of the shadowland. Bats and flightless birds live in the islands' pale trees and dark brush, and there are more living souls than dead in the cities.

The local Deathlord, the Bodhisattva Anointed by Dark Water (more commonly known as the Silver Prince), holds power of life and death over the 100,000 living people in this archipelago. He and his deathknights are the absolute rulers of these islands, and both the living and the dead obey their orders. While one or more deathknights appear at all public functions, the Silver Prince shows himself only at the yearly festival held in his honor. He does occasionally hold private audiences with distinguished or powerful visitors, though.

Citizenship of Skullstone extends beyond death. The deathknights judge all citizens of this dread land after death, and while some citizens are raised as mere zombies or skeletons, others are brought back as ghosts to comprise Skullstone's nobles and courtiers. Black ships are constantly carrying the dead and dying to Darkmist, and many choose to commit suicide there in hopes of gaining immortality as a ghost. The living can gain wealth and prestige, but noble rank and its privileges come only after death. Skullstone is a wealthy state through its use of undead labor. Zombies and skeletons perform most menial tasks, toiling ceaselessly for the Deathlord and for any citizen with the means to rent them. Much of the archipelago's wealth comes from the fact that undead divers can harvest the sea's bounty, undead oarsmen can row galleons without pausing and undead guards protect the cities. Undead servants are an indicator of wealth, and undead experiments fill necromantic laboratories, while undead courtesans partner customers at local brothels. Skullstone does not forbid visitors, and merchants are welcome, but few care to leave the travelers' quarters near the docks.

Somewhere near the southwest coast of the Inland Sea, at the heart of a vast patch of sargasso seaweed, lies Bluehaven, lair of the dreaded Lintha Family. These pirates are the scourge of the sea, and stories of their depredations go back to the First Age. Bluehaven itself is formed from a living island and the hulls of countless ships, some dating to the First Age, the Lintha have linked with a network of walkways to construct their nest at the sargasso's center. Supporting a population of thousands, it lies amid thickly twining tangles of sargasso seaweed on the ocean's surface, which traps all ships whose captains do not know the few secret paths.

The Lintha Family has been marked by millennia of breeding with spirits, Wyld barbarians or darker things, and it has been twisted by the Wyld energies that pervade the region. Many of the Lintha have blue or green skin, gills or other deformities, and they display them proudly on their raids, exulting in the terror they cause. The Lintha can command giant sea-monsters to serve their will, and between their bloodthirsty weapons and the unwholesome magics that their sorcerers and priests use, few can stand against them in battle.

Because many Lintha are wholly comfortable underwater, they are adept at stealthily attacking anchored vessels or small coastal villages. Alternatively, many Lintha pirates use water shoes that allow them to walk on water, permitting them to approach targets freely in calm waters or over the surface of the sargasso field. The Lintha preference is usually to slaughter all opponents and take both vessel and loot. Mercy is a foreign concept to them.

The Lintha Family not only engages in piracy, but also forms a vast criminal syndicate stretching from the West through the South. This syndicate fences stolen goods in coastal cities and deals extensively in smuggling and the slave trade. It is easy to join the Family, requiring only small pledges or petty oaths at first, but it's nearly impossible to leave it. Any member who betrays the Family or flees from it is invariably found dead.

On the southwest coast of the Inland Sea lie the Principalities of An-Teng, running from the Western seashore to the Fire Mountains of the South. The land itself varies from arid and dry near the coast to temperate and forested in the middle regions to harsh and brisk in the mineral-rich mountains. An-Teng supplies the Realm with rice and other foodstuffs, and it serves as a vacation spot for Dragon-Blooded. In the First Age, An-Teng was the home to many Solars and their Lunar spouses. During the Usurpation, it became a battleground. Its royal family was slaughtered, and new royalty was set in its place by the victorious Terrestrial Exalted. The country was so thoroughly pacified that it has remained humbled and bowed ever since, with the new royalty glad to obey the Empress's wishes, and the populace slavishly obedient to any visiting Dragon-Blooded. Yet fragments of the old royal family have formed part of a Yozi-worshiping cult, the people begin to chafe under the yoke of the Realm, and ancient manses and First Age tombs wait to have their secrets revealed. The land is ripe for change.

The people of An-Teng worship two local deities—the Golden Lord and the Pale Mistress—but they also pay due reverence to the Immaculate faith, to local spirits and to any deities who could prove useful. The matriarchal family unit is the foundation of society, and traditions of respect for age and social standing do a large part to keep the country stable. In case of war, An-Teng can muster armies, including thousands of elephants, but its true strength lies in guerilla warfare, when all the local spirits turn against invaders as well as the human inhabitants. In An-Teng, an ancient dragon chained beneath a mountain turns and grumbles in his sleep, while the corpse-eating *kaleyi* dance and gibber to the sound of iron gongs and the hidden manses of Solar Exalted are stirred by winds that whisper of their masters' and mistresses' return.

## The South

The South is a harsh land, with gentle seasons and more habitable places few and far between—and fewer yet as one approaches

the endless burning deserts that mark the barrier to the Elemental Pole of Fire. Beyond the arable coastal strip, the landscape swiftly becomes dry and barren—a cruel and unforgiving region frequently matched by its people. The folk of the cities and farmlands are no less tough-minded, despite their kinder surroundings. The brutality of the barren lands has left its mark on the entire region, and outlanders would do well to remember that.

Near the sea, the climate blends slowly into tropical forest in the east, and rain is frequent. Further south, the olive trees and grass give way to scrub and nimbleweeds, then to ravines scoured by flash floods, and then to sand and stone outcroppings and scarce oases. The Southeast is predominantly grasslands, rising to jungle as one approaches the East proper, and hyenas and tyrant lizards roam the plains where the natives herd their cattle and make war on each other's tribal nations.

The South thrives on trade, especially the lucrative commerce in gemstones, firedust, drugs and slaves, which centers in the cities of Gem, Paragon and Chiaroscuro. These metropolises, the three largest cities in the South, each support a million or more residents, nearly all of whom depend in some way on trade for their livelihood. They are supported by the brutally oppressed farming underclass beyond their walls, which grows the food for the cities and also produces sugar, tobacco, silk, cotton and marijuana for export. Farther south are nomadic tribes that feud and steal from one another to survive, traveling from oasis to oasis on horses or camels or stranger beasts. Beyond them lie the burning sands where gems and firedust blow on the wind.

When the First Age ended, many of the glorious cities in the South fell or were destroyed, as the great magics that protected them from drought and sandstorms failed or the Dragon-Blooded clashed with the remaining Solars. The invasions of the Fair Folk around the time of the Great Contagion was more destructive still, as the Fair Folk had no need for mortal comforts or food. When arable land was devastated or oases blasted and supplies destroyed, there was no way for the mortals who had dwelt there to repair the damage. League by league, the habitable parts of the South shrank, and the desert rose to take what was left. The desert tribes swelled as they absorbed desperate refugees as either slaves or full tribesmen. The cities that were still standing became dictatorships or acquired strange new rulers as they struggled to retain their power and fend off invaders.

The average Southerner is dark-skinned, with blond, black or red hair. Many of them wear their hair as short as possible, with shaven heads and well-trimmed beards being the rule in the wilderness. Carefully styled hair is the norm among the wealthy in the cities, and a long beard is a sign of self-deprivation—and usually holiness and madness. Those who can afford it wear silk, and the rest wear cotton. Only the poorest nomad wears wool, and wearing leather is considered an invitation to bad luck. Southerners tend to be extremely superstitious, taking great stock in signs and portents, and any Southerner can calculate his own horoscope. They usually make many small sacrifices daily, to ancestors, to lucky spirits, to the patron of their city or tribe and so on. Family structure is patriarchal, and marriage is a contractual affair of great legal complexity.

Deep in the Southern desert dwell the nomadic tribes, traveling between oases on horses or camels. Each tribe has its own customs, though one law is understood by all: Fouling an oasis or poisoning its waters is punishable by death. Some of the tribes in the farthest South have interbred with Wyld barbarians, and they go veiled when they ride near other tribes so as not to show their deformities and poxes. In the shadowlands of the South, such as the Arroyo of the Ebon Veil, ghosts and the undead ride the paths that they took when they were still living, the odor of their rotting flesh carried before them on the desert winds.

Far to the west of the other city-states, on the other side of the Fire Mountains from An-Teng, sits the Lap. The Lap gains its name from its location: The mountain itself is carved into the shape of a hermit meditating in a cross-legged posture, and the city lies in its "lap." It is an agricultural center, producing mainly maize and squash, and it exports a large part of its grain harvest to the Blessed Isle. The Lap is a tributary of the Realm, ruled by an elected council of elders. The proximity of the forces of the Deathlord known as the First and Forsaken Lion (forces that riddle the Fire Mountains like maggots in an aging corpse) does nothing to comfort the Lap or the Realm.

To the south—indeed, the furthest south of the three biggest cities of the South—lies Gem, a center for the mining trade, which is ruled by Rankar VII, the hereditary Despot. Rankar maintains a royal monopoly on all trade in gemstones. In this city, all carvers, appraisers and sellers of gemstones are royal slaves, and all business in gemstones must be conducted through them. Anyone attempting to buy or sell stones privately is fined, enslaved or executed, depending on the offender's status and the value of the stones involved. The city lies far enough south to be largely free of domination by the Realm. It is currently engaged in a bitter trade war with the more northerly city-state of Paragon, which has recently been expanding its own gem-mining operations.

Gem itself is built into the side of an extinct volcano. While this protects it from direct sunlight for much of the year, it cannot block the sweltering heat in the height of summer. Therefore, the entire city sleeps during the peak daylight hours and rises again at sunset. Lava tubes have been transformed into subterranean streets, markets and luxurious apartments for the rich; the poor swelter in crowded tenements. The most famous market in Gem is its celebrated sunken bazaar, open day and night, lit by locally mined orange and yellow glowstones and large mirrors. The market is constantly packed with merchants and traders, and it houses the true heart of Gem, the pavilions of the Despot's jewel merchants. Situated under vast canopies of bright translucent silk, the Despot's merchant-slaves buy and sell precious stones from throughout the South. They even offer such rarities as yasal crystal, all five colors of jade, and the rare dream opal, which can record the dreams of any sleeper it touches.

While the gemstone monopoly has made the Despot fantastically rich, the city's noble houses subsist on less plentiful sources of wealth. Each house has been granted a monopoly on a certain popular good or service. The Arbani family controls the local manufacture of firewands. The House of Sahlak controls the city's dream parlors and brothels. House Iblan dominates the gold and silver trade. The Circla family runs the gladiatorial arena and training facilities. Trasti House runs the gambling houses and the public banks.

Besides precious stones, Gem is also the site of the largest mercenary hiring market in the South. The Despot is eager for ready access to the mercenary troops he uses to maintain power, and he strongly supports this commerce in soldiers-for-hire. Now that the trade war with Paragon is worsening, he is hiring yet more and is considering both freeing the city's gladiators and discreetly hiring Exalted.

Eastward, on the shore of the Inland Sea, lies the well-ordered city-state of Paragon. Paragon was built on the ruins of a destroyed First Realm metropolis and is ruled by an ageless god-king known as the Perfect. His rule is absolute, and he is worshiped and obeyed by all Paragon's citizens, on pain of an agonizing death. The city itself is laid out on a strict grid, with the Perfect's palace at the exact center. It is orderly but stark, built of shining white marble and green-black basalt, and all but a few of the people wear dull, muted shades. Only the Perfect and his magistrate-nobles are permitted to wear gold or cloth of bright colors.

All commoners in Paragon, and every newcomer who becomes a citizen, must undergo the ritual of subservience, where they grasp the Perfect's royal scepter and swear allegiance to the throne. Everyone who takes the oath of loyalty receives a mark on his or her palm—an eye-shaped sigil blazoned in softly glowing scarlet ink—which remains visible for the rest of the individual's life. Not only does this sorcery allow the Perfect to see through the eyes and hear through the ears of any citizen wherever he or she may be, but it also forces the citizen to obey the oath of loyalty or die in agony. All commoners must swear to obey all commands issued by the Perfect or his magistrates; never to attempt to harm the magistrates, the nobles or the Perfect; and to abide by all the laws of the city. Citizens may petition to leave Paragon, and are allowed to do so, but the oath still binds them.

Paragon is firmly allied with the Realm, as the immortal Perfect values stability and wishes to avoid disruption or change. He maintains few ties with ordinary human rulers, but he is jealous of Gem's wealth and views Chiaroscuro's Tri-Khan and the Varang nobles with disdain. He particularly distrusts the Celestial Exalted, and any Solar Exalted discovered within the bounds of Paragon will be brought to the Paragon and forced to swear loyalty. Citizenship is given freely to all who ask, but the city itself is quiet and lacks joy, with the Perfect's subjects living under a rule of constant fear.

Further east, in the fertile coastal belt along the Inland Sea is Chiaroscuro, the largest and oldest city in the South. During the First Age, it was the South's largest and most prosperous port. It was built entirely of magically crafted glass, with brilliantly colored towers of more than two dozen stories looking down on vermilion glass streets. Now, almost all of its magnificent towers lie in ruins, rubble fills many streets, and mundane caravans (rather than floating magical carriages) travel down the three great crimson roads that lead to the city. But the First Age breakwaters of blue glass still protect the harbor, dozens of ships leave and dock every day, and nearly a million people live in and around the city. Amid the ruined splendor of the First Age, tens of thousands come to seek their fortune, and the city is a trade hub for the entire South.

The old center of the city is the wealthiest portion of modern Chiaroscuro. It suffered the least destruction, and most buildings there contain at least some habitable portions. Many residents also live in the enormous new city, built on the outskirts and in the ruined parts of the original. The city's poorest denizens survive in ragged hovels cobbled together from the shining glass rubble of the ruins. The large foreigners' quarter is a vast sea of tents and impermanent structures, where some come to trade, and others to seek work. Many join the endless stream of caravans and trading expeditions that regularly depart Chiaroscuro for all corners of the South.

Chiaroscuro is ruled by the Tri-Khan, the hereditary leader of the nomadic Delzahn nomads who first resettled the city after the end of the First Age. Delzahn tribesmen make up more than a quarter of the local population, and Delzahn rule remains unquestioned in Chiaroscuro for the moment.

The Tri-Khan plays the Dragon-Blooded Great Houses against each other in order to maintain Chiaroscuro's independence, and he has close ties with the Guild as well. Currently Chiaroscuro is an open city, where anyone may come to buy or sell whatever she wishes. Taxes and tariffs are kept equitable by the fact that each merchant or ship captain can chose *which* tax collector to pay her fees to, resulting in bargaining and moderate taxation. Celestial Exalted are publicly forbidden to enter the city. In practice, as long as they keep themselves intelligently hidden or prove themselves of value to the Tri-Khan, they will not be overly restricted. Discreet folks of all natures, from spirits and outcastes to even the Fair Folk, are welcome to settle in Chiaroscuro.

To the southeast, amid fertile river valleys, lies the fourth major power in the South, the Varang City-States. They rule a narrow strip from the shore of the Inland Sea to the farthest reaches of the South, and they control the overland trade between the Far South and the Southeast. Each of the seven major Varangian cities has a population between 50,000 and 250,000. While individually smaller than their rivals, the

Varang Confederacy as a whole is as wealthy and populous as the larger Southern metropolises. The exceptionally fertile plain on which the cities lie, combined with the vast mineral wealth of the South, make Varang and its capital city, Yane, a favored nexus for trade. Varang is allied with the Realm, which helps it maintain its independence in the South.

The Varangian calendar is the most accurate and complex in the Threshold. Its astrology, mixing solar, lunar and stellar cycles, is similarly advanced. These two disciplines determine the status in life of virtually every Varangian citizen. Enormous clock towers toll the hours in every city, wealthy citizens carry ornate spring-driven pocket watches, and local astrologers use intricate horoscopes to determine the caste and subcaste of almost every individual born in the region. An individual's place in society depends on the castes of her parents and the exact hour and minute of her birth. Each hour is given to a specific set of professions, but the caste of a person's parents and the order of birth decide where that person falls in the profession's hierarchy.

The Varangians believe that knowing and accepting one's place in the world allows each individual to perfect his inner nature. To prevent social awkwardness and promote harmony, citizens have an elaborate dress code that allows precise identification of a person's social status. Fortunately, most Varangians are forgiving of foreigners' mistakes in recognizing such distinctions. Yet foreigners often disturb proper Varang citizens by the fact that they can and do wear anything and do anything. Varang cities are also laid out to illustrate fundamental principles of cosmological order, and Varang buildings proclaim their function with brightly colored paint or trim rather than signs. Visitors can always hire guides.

Foreigners, those born at an uncertain time (or to an uncertain caste), and other outcasts have a very special role in Varangian society. While generally scorned, or at best tolerated, they can be hired to perform tasks that cross caste boundaries or that right-thinking Varangians would find reprehensible. Such tasks can involve assassination, theft, spying and other forms of crime. Known Varangian outcasts may wear only shades of gray or black and cannot legally hold any proper caste job.

Two weeks to the east of the Varang city of Talt, in the foothills of the Summer mountain range and the veldt below, lies the warlike nation of Harborhead. It is allied with the Realm but constantly feuds with the Varang City-States and is about to launch a war against them. Harborhead is also attempting to expand southeastward and has recently launched a series of prolonged campaigns against nearby jungle tribes.

Besides the normal trophies of land and cattle, the Harborhead armies take their defeated enemies as slaves, and these slaves make up almost a quarter of Harborhead's population. Only criminals or battle captives and their children can be lawfully enslaved, but a constant stream of them goes to the slave markets in the capital city of Kirighast—and from there to the Realm or across the South and East. In the cities, slaves are the servants of the wealthy and middle classes. On the vast farmsteads and cattle ranches, they perform all the necessary menial tasks.

This practice frees the people of Harborhead to train for war, and every native learns from childhood how to use weapons and to fight. While both men and women can join the armies, the Royal Guard is an all-female elite military force that accepts only the strongest, fastest and fiercest young virgins in Harborhead. Any young woman who meets the Guard's exacting physical standards may join, but she must swear to neither marry nor take lovers outside the Guard while she is a member. For the duration of their service, Guardswomen are considered the sacred brides of Ahlat, Southern God of War and Cattle. Breaking their vow of chastity with anyone outside the Royal Guard is punishable by death. The Guardswomen act as the king's special shock troops, train ceaselessly and drink the blood of their enemies.

## The East

As one progresses farther east from the Inland Sea, the Eastern forests become gradually thicker and more silent and more hostile. The trees grow taller, the beasts of the wood larger and fiercer, and the almost-sentient, almost-malicious presence one sometimes feels in an unfamiliar forest grows ever stronger. Finally, progress is blocked by a seemingly unending wall of deadfalls, widowmakers and harsh terrain. It is said that if one goes far enough east, the ground becomes invisible under the undergrowth and tree roots, and the traveler sees only an endless cathedral of trees, stretching up and down, from zenith to nadir, a holy green perfection of leaves and still air—the Elemental Pole of Wood. Barbarian tribes live their lives in the Far East in a world that is bounded by trees, where they never see the sky for leaves or the ground for roots.

In the Southeast, the forest becomes more tropical in character, while in the Northeast, pine and ash choke out the oak and maple. All areas of the forest are rich in useful plants. Not only do edibles and useful vegetation grow in abundance, but the woods bristle with a wide range of medicinal and recreational herbs. The woods also provide an array of deadly plant toxins, some so lethal as to cause the heart to stop a few seconds after skin contact. Only the most daring explorers or most driven merchants risk the deep woods in search of the rarest plants. Strange spirits roam deep in the forest, and the trees themselves can rise in anger against intruders.

In the First Age, gold and diamond cities gleamed among the trees: beautiful Rathess, where the Dragon Kings ruled; proud Malessa of the Eleven Towers; Sperimin, the abode of sorcerers; and lost Samiaren in the Northeast, where the snow fell on amber bridges among the pine trees, but the inhabitants could walk freely in thin silks, even in the depths of winter. With the decline of the Dragon-Blooded Shogunate, the Wyld and Fair Folk reached out to attack those cities deep in the Eastern forests. Some resisted, and some remain, having been lost to all current knowledge. Others were overrun by the forests, so that the inhabitants had to flee west for their lives and souls. Swamps cover their once-beautiful streets while trees grow through the crystal dwellings.

The average inhabitant of the East has brown skin, ranging from light tan to an almost bark-like brown in the Far East. Blond, red and brown are all common hair colors, and hair is usually straight rather than curly. The typical Easterner is tall, with even women standing nearly six feet. Eastern families tend to be matriarchies, centered around a female and successive generations of female offspring. Male children are raised by their mother's brothers, and marriage is uncommon but not unheard of. Everyone honors the spirits of the forest. In some places, greater local deities are revered, while even

the lesser spirits receive prayers and offerings in others. The East is dangerous, but it offers so many profits to traders and adventurers that an endless stream of caravans travels there in search of lost treasures or present fortunes.

Deep in the Southeast lies Rathess, one of the gems of the First Age. Tropical vines hang from exotic hardwoods in the jungles that surround it, and jungle tribes hunt there, having long since lost any traces of the civilization of the past. Legends tell that the vast metropolis was once ruled by the Dragon Kings, who worshiped the Unconquered Sun with strange and bloody rites. Now, the streets are cracked and broken, the buildings overgrown, and bestial lizardlike creatures that relish the taste of human flesh roam the underways beneath it. From time to time, adventurers risk the area's harsh rivers, its savage tribes and the poisonous blossoms that fill the city itself. Occasionally, some return.

Further east lies Mahalanka, the City of a Thousand Golden Delights, once named Sperimin in the First Age, when it was renowned as an abode and training ground for sorcerers. Now, it is ruled by Raksi, Queen of Fangs, a Lunar who has survived from the First Age and who has bred a thousand apemen children to serve her. The city teems with these children and with the degenerate barbarian tribes who worship her as a goddess. While they only raid for what is necessary, and those human tribes who avoid her realm are safe, Raksi is far from satisfied.

Also in this area are found great wastes of swampland, uninteresting to the beastmen and barely habitable for the farmers who eke out a living raising meager crops there. While Raksi's beastmen pose no threat, the animals of those lands have begun to plot and scheme among themselves, led by ancient spirits of water and wood and malice. They go abroad by night and slay humans and rip off their skins, then walk abroad in these flayed and flapping pelts. Some of them speak of enslaving all humans within the jungle, while others wait for a promised savior who will spread the marshes as far as the Inland Sea.

North again lies the Republic of Chaya, bordering the Scavenger Lands, three weeks south of Nexus and a week's journey inland from the coast. Foreigners visiting Chaya marvel at the land's idyllic peace and harmony. Chaya is one of the East's most fertile and prosperous regions—a country of gentle rains, lush vegetation and abundant crops, along the border between deep forest and rolling fields. The republic numbers more than 180,000 inhabitants, scattered among several walled towns. The largest settlement is Larjyn, and the elected representatives of each Chayan town must spend half the year living there. Otherwise, it differs little from all the other towns in the country.

Chaya's principal exports are woodcarvings and local cloth, and its hardwood jewelry in particular is much prized in many lands. Chayan buildings are mostly wooden and stand less than four stories tall, built with a regard for the dangers of fire. Fruit trees line the wide streets, and the inhabitants are peaceful and responsible. Anger, brawls and violence are rare, and the country does not even trouble to maintain a standing army.

Every summer, however, the land of Chaya undergoes a frightful transformation when the fire trees bloom. These medium-sized deciduous trees that line every city street and grow near every house bear large numbers of scarlet blossoms a few weeks after the height of Resplendent Fire. The scent of the flowers is intoxicating to all who smell it. For outsiders, it acts as a mild euphoric, lowering inhibitions. Natives, however, respond much more strongly. For the entire month during which the fire trees bloom, locals lose all inhibitions, becoming wildly passionate, prone to emotional outbursts and fits of crazed excitement. They consider this to be divine influence, with the gods becoming

### The Cult of the Illuminated

Not all the Sidereals supported the Usurpation. Some argued against it and remained convinced that the Bronze Faction had made a mistake. With the Empress missing and the Solar Exalted returning in large numbers, these Gold Faction Sidereals seized their chance and infiltrated a minor cult—the so-called "Cult of the Illuminated." The followers of this cult believed that powerful entities called the Shining Ones would soon appear to make the world a place of peace and harmony.

The Sidereals quickly assumed leadership of the cult and instituted a secret program of searching for and sheltering reborn Solars. Since then, they have saved a number of Solars from the Wyld Hunt and taught others to control their powers. While the Sidereals have their own agenda, the Cult is a vital ally to young Solars on their own with no friends or training. Some Solars have even accepted the Cult's doctrines and believe they truly are the promised divine saviors.

incarnate in the population. Outsiders—especially outsiders who manage to resist the scent's effects—are often hunted down as unnatural and torn to pieces in wild orgies of violence. The surrounding principalities have a superstitious dread of the Chayans and are reluctant to speak of them, but most people will warn polite travelers not to remain in Chaya in the height of summer. After the season has ended, the inhabitants remember little of what has happened. Fire trees do not grow well outside Chaya, and native Chayans deprived of the blossom's scent for more than a few years gradually go mad.

The Linowan dwell in the Northeast, where the meadows and deciduous trees lap against the deep forests of pines and giant redwoods. The Linowans are in a state of eternal war with the Haltans who dwell in the deep forest, constantly trying to expand their meadows and push back the edge of the forests by cutting down trees and by slaying Haltans whenever they can. While the fields surrounding their cities and towns are fertile, few Linowan till the soil or sow the fields. Instead, they ply the rivers and go to sea in great canoes that can hold up to three dozen warriors, bringing back trout and salmon, whales and kraken. They also play pirate on the seas from time to time, attacking any passing ships that appear to be easy prey. Regular traders are given specially woven flags to fly when sailing near Linowan waters, and those ships are never attacked.

The Linowan people have skin the color of oak leaves in autumn and straight, shiny black hair with green highlights. They dress in skins, bark cloth and wool from the wild sheep and goats that they hunt in the northern hills. They reject the Immaculate Philosophy, though firm allies of the Realm, and worship the Five Maidens, the Unconquered Sun and the spirits of the oceans and rivers. Queen Arkasi rules the Linowan from the capital of Rubylak, and she hopes to persuade the Realm to provide her with warriors and Dragon-Blooded aid to help fight the Haltans.

While the Linowans raid nearby countries from time to time, their true foe is the deep forest and the Haltans who dwell within it. The houses of great Linowan chiefs are built from planks taken from redwoods hewn from the forest, and Haltan captives are occasion for great celebrations before their ritual execution by burning alive. Similar treatment is reserved for any Linowan found to have aided the Haltans or visitors who perpetrate serious crimes. Such visitors are assumed to be in league with the Haltans.

The most famous creations of Linowan shamans are their masks, which are worn by the shamans themselves or given to mighty hunters, warriors, storytellers or anyone else widely acclaimed and judged worthy. These masks are carved in grotesque animal shapes and inlaid with brightly colored stones and cloths. Each one is made for a particular person and will work only for him, and all have some strange power worked into them. How they are made is a closely guarded secret of the Linowan people, taught only to elder shamans.

East of the Linowan, deep in the coniferous forests, live the mysterious Haltans. Like the forest-dwelling barbarians of the Far East, the Haltans live up in the giant trees that cover their land. However, unlike these savages, the Haltan people possess a complex society marked by fine metalwork, tamed vegetation, a unified central government and the intelligent beasts and birds that live among them. Their cities and towns stand on a series of huge wooden platforms in the branches of their prized redwood trees, and their capital city of Chanta is a true work of beauty and a marvel of engineering. Throughout their territory, across the branches of the great trees, the Haltans have built a complicated network of aerial bridges that connects their various settlements. A man can run for 100 miles across the forest and never once touch his foot to the ground.

The Haltans are much like the Linowan physically, save that their hair is a deep, rich green and their toes are slightly longer than the norm. They certainly share the Linowan attitude of eternal hostility. Typical Haltan weapons include swords, spear-throwers and razor-sharp steel war boomerangs. Their pets are frequently weapons in themselves, be they giant wood spiders, lynx-sized tree cats or stranger creatures still. The Haltans revere their trees as holy and treat them with love and respect. They seek to expand their sacred forest, and warriors sometimes go on expeditions to the woodland's edge to plant seedlings and increase its borders. The Haltan are also famed for the strange plants that they cultivate or that they can harvest from the deep wilds of the forest.

In the more remote Haltan cities, some tamed beasts speak and think as humans. These creatures, the distant offspring of Wyld-twisted animals, have many of the rights of citizens. Also in the more distant Haltan cities live Wyld-twisted humans who have developed animal traits. While the Haltans generally abhor the Wyld, they view any mingling of human and animal traits as holy (if somewhat disturbing), and such beings often become priests.

The Haltans have long-established treaties of mutual non-interference with the native Fair Folk. As a result, the Fair Folk will not trouble anyone who is up in the trees. Anyone on the ground, however, be he Haltan or visitor, is fair game. Some Fair Folk even live among the Haltans, exchanging goods and services for the right to feed on dreams or emotions.

Trade with the Republic of Halta usually requires a Haltan escort to take the visitors through the trees to Haltan cities. More often, however, the Haltans send their own merchants to distant lands. Some journey west, taking Haltan hardwoods, rare spices and expensive herbs to Nexus, Gethamane, Chiaroscuro and even farther still. Others go east into the deep woods, to the forest tribes, and bring back unique carvings and plants. Haltan animal trainers also travel with their pets, journeying across Creation and giving fabulous shows.

## The Scavenger Lands

The Scavenger Lands are more than a nest of rebels against the iron-booted Scarlet Empire. They represent a region of diverse nations, dominated by the cities of Nexus and Lookshy, but bound together by the Confederation of Rivers. Internal strife wracks them more than any other region. Kingdom fights kingdom for ideology, for arable land, for access to the rivers, even just to take slaves for the Guild's traders. Yet despite this turmoil, the Scavenger Lands are also a bastion of freedom for anyone who has the strength to take it. Here, a kingdom can truly rule itself, without the Realm's satraps leaning over the king's shoulders. Here, a woman can worship as she wishes, without being burned alive for heresy by the Immaculate Order. A god can even accept that worship without fear of punishment.

The Scavenger Lands have paid their own price to remain free of the Realm. They are militarily dependent on the sheltering might of Lookshy, even if the Confederation of Rivers theoretically gives every nation or state a voice. The economic tendrils of the Guild are wound throughout

the province tightly enough to throttle it should it so desire, making the Guild almost an unspoken ruler of the region. The Scavenger Lands are fiercely independent, however, and they intend to remain that way.

## History

The Scavenger Lands lie to the east of the Realm, across the Inland Sea, covering the area that was once known as the River Province. During the First Age, the River Province was the heartland of the then Realm, famed for its mineral wealth and fertile soil. It was shattered by the Great Contagion and the subsequent invasion of the Fair Folk, which decimated cities, left settled places warped and ruined, destroyed mines and twisted wide swathes of landscape. Shadowlands sprang up where the death toll was highest, and many of the region's great manses succumbed to abandonment and decay.

After the Scarlet Empress drove back the fae, refugees from throughout Creation made their way to the River Province, remembering its fabled wealth and bounty. They found a ruined land, dark battlefields and desperate survivors, but together they worked to rebuild. Fifty years later, envoys from the Realm found fledgling city-states, many of whom saw no need to bend knee to the Empress. Five years later, the legions of the Realm marched on the "upstart nations," and within two years of fighting, only two major powers in the River Province remained free: Sijan and Lookshy. However, the land was easier to take than to hold. Led by the Seventh Legion and by Legion-trained resistance cells, the armies of the River Province eventually forced the Realm's troops back and away.

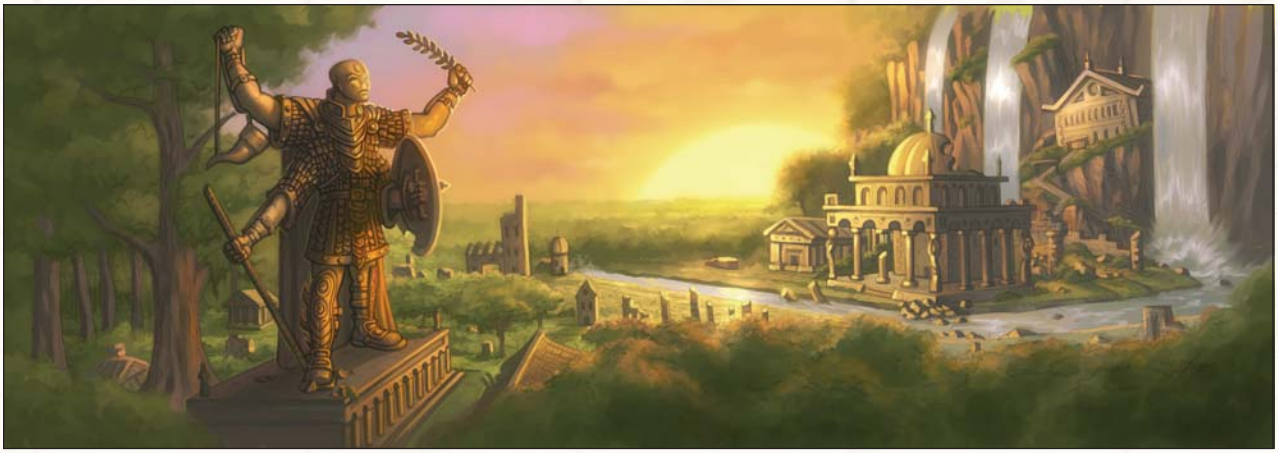
Lookshy solidified the nascent links between states into a full alliance, which was fortunate for the region as two more invasions from the Realm followed and were beaten back (mainly thanks to Lookshy's large stock of First Age weaponry and trained soldiers). The nations of the region formed the League of Many Rivers, and while this arrangement openly embraced regional conflicts and permitted member-states to solve disputes through military force, it gave the region an identity and sent a clear signal to the Realm. For its part, Lookshy established a rigorous military society and training methods, making good use of its First Age weaponry.

The League survived a great deal of internecine warfare, another invasion from the Realm, the Arczeckh barbarian horde's march from the Far East, and a Fair Folk invasion from the Wyld. After the Fair Folk were driven out, primarily by Nexus mercenaries and Lookshy troops, the Confederation of Rivers was formed to establish formal military and political relations between the region's powers. Almost 200 years of peace followed, during which there was no definite threat to the Scavenger Lands' existence.

## Recent History

Over the last two decades, several events have shaken the Scavenger Lands and caused major changes in the River Province's political landscape.

Twenty years ago, the Empress chose to instigate military conflict over the succession of Thorns, a major metropolis and key imperial tributary situated on a number of trade routes and only a few hundred miles from the edge of the Scavenger Lands. The younger son of the previous Autocrat seized power with the assistance of Imperial advisors, commandos and First



Age weapons and then declared war on the Confederation of Rivers. The military of Thorns was ill-prepared when compared with the tough soldiers of the Scavenger Lands, but the Dragon-Blooded buoyed the men's spirits and prevented the new Autocrat from seeing the dire state of affairs.

Fourteen years ago, at the Battle of Mishaka, Confederation forces finally annihilated the army of Thorns and its Dragon-Blooded allies. Popular discontent pushed Thorns to the brink of civil war, and the Autocrat stayed in power only due to his Imperial backing. The Confederation also took heavy losses in the battle. Only 100 men returned from the 3,000 troops Great Forks sent to battle, for example, and other major countries and cities suffered similar losses.

Five years ago, in Realm Year 763, the Scarlet Empress vanished.

Four years ago, armies of the dead serving the Deathlord Mask of Winters invaded Thorns. Weakened by civil unrest and losses to the Confederation, its armies shattered, and its supplies nonexistent, the kingdom fell in a matter of days. Thorns is now the center of a vast and spreading shadowland.

The Scavenger Lands were thrown into turmoil by the conquest of Thorns. Not only was this a huge threat on a military level, but trade alliances, food transport and Guild operations as a whole were disrupted when the coastline around Thorns became impassible.

Most disturbing of all, however, was the sheer terror of having one of the dreaded Deathlords make a move on this scale. People are still frightened, and they are right to be so. Some military alliances have been tightened, but others have begun to fray at the edges, as kingdoms and city-states attempt to make their own private arrangements with the Mask of Winters.

## The Confederation of Rivers

The name "Scavenger Lands" was first bestowed on the region by the Realm as an insult and has become its name to all folk outside its borders. Natives call it the Confederation of Rivers. The Confederation is a loose collection of satrapies, dictatorships, duchies, kingdoms, principalities, republics, democracies, theocracies, city-states and other forms of government. This polyglot collection of cultures has formed its own common language, the patois known as Riverspeak—a debased form of Old Realm, filled with words from every corner of the world and propagated by post-Contagion refugees. Its lifeblood is trade, circulated by the Guild, and pirates and mercenaries follow where the money goes.

The articles of the treaty that binds the Confederation together are strict in some respects, vague in others. The most important parts are the clauses that define military contributions to common defense. The Council of the Concordat that theoretically governs the Confederation is, in fact, a haven for time-wasters, incompetents and dilettantes. Normally, they do nothing of importance, and when matters progress to requiring military intervention, then they hand the reins of responsibility over to the military experts. While the Council does serve as a forum for ideas to be put forward, any actual enforcement of those ideas takes place via bribery, backroom deals and private negotiations between affected states.

The arsenal state of Lookshy regularly hires out thousands of its soldiers as officers or trainers to the Confederation's different countries and city-states. It organizes young officer exchanges as well, gaining a vital influence over military matters in the Confederation. While all the different nations have their own armies and preferred tactics, Lookshy has trained their military leaders, and Lookshy's officers have served with them and know how to coordinate them. Similarly, the Confederation has no formal navy, but every country provides its own ships in the event of trouble, coordinated via Lookshy-trained officers. Pirates—or Realm forces and allies—are a constant threat along the coast, and Lookshy leads the defense of the Confederation by sea as well as by land.

The lack of a heavy Imperial presence makes the Scavenger Land much safer for Solars than the Blessed Isle or the Realm's satrapies. Powerful beings walk the soil of Creation in these lands: Fair Folk, God-Blooded, mortal sorcerers, Dragon-Blooded, and others who the wise fear and the sensible avoid. While the Anathema are still remembered and feared in some quarters (and Lookshy in particular views the returned Solars with a wary eye), one of the Celestial Exalted can enjoy a measure of peace and security in the Confederation of Rivers. In this collection of bandit states and lawless territories, there are no wide-scale laws to be enforced—nor are there the resources necessary to enforce them.

## Lookshy

Built on the ruins of the First Age city of Deheleshen, the city-state of Lookshy is the most powerful state in the Scavenger Lands and the nerve center of Confederation military power. Although several nations in the region can claim armies as large as

Lookshy's in raw numbers, none can equal the training, readiness and iron discipline of Lookshy's forces. Also, and as importantly, not even the Realm can equal Lookshy's supply of First Age tactical weaponry or the training of its Terrestrial Exalted warriors.

Lookshy was founded by the Seventh Legion of the Dragon-Blooded Shogunate after the end of the First Age. Their stocks of First Age weaponry, Dragon-Blooded officers and trained soldiers allowed the Legion to establish a firm base, hold it and plan for a long and complicated future. The city-state is still commanded by the General Staff of the Seventh Legion, a seven-person group of military officers, both human and Dragon-Blooded.

Residents of Lookshy fall into four classes: soldiers, citizens, helots and visitors. Lookshy exists primarily to support its army, and no inhabitant of the city ever forgets that. Citizens are free individuals who can be called up for active service at any time, and they are all trained in weapons use, tactics and military drill. Helots are serfs, not slaves. Most of them work the fields and paddies around Lookshy, while others serve as laborers, craftsmen, scribes and so on. They may change jobs with the permission of their supervisors, and they receive food, shelter, medical care, pay appropriate to their job and care in their old age. Superlative work or military service can cause them to be elevated to full citizen, but most helots live out their lives toiling as serfs. Helots are also drilled in weapons and make up the bulk of Lookshy's infantry. A grant of citizenship for a helot is usually posthumous, but it confers freedom on the helot's spouse and children as well.

Visitors—traders, mercenaries, ambassadors, travelers and suchlike—make up the last category. They are treated politely, but they are less important than anyone on official business and always less important than a soldier on active duty. Visitors are housed in a specific quarter of the city (which is itself laid out from a military standpoint), and their comings and goings are observed.

Ever since the foundation of Lookshy, fertility has been seen as both virtue and social duty among the Dragon-Blooded members of the Seventh Legion. As a result, there is a large number of Dragon-Blooded in Lookshy, and they form the effective aristocracy, serving side by side with un-Exalted officers. The people of Lookshy follow a local variant of the Immaculate Philosophy but do not obey representatives of the Immaculate Order from the Realm or the Mouth of Peace. Instead of social control, Lookshy's faith emphasizes personal responsibility, loyalty to superiors and personal honor as the keys to better living and future Exaltation.

Lookshy's war machines and armies need a constant supply of parts and materials, making trade very important to the city. In return, Lookshy exports weapons, armor, tents, wagons, camp stoves, military trainers and, of course, soldiers. Those merchants who go outside Lookshy understand that they are expected to bring back reports of what they see and hear, and while not precisely spies, they are aware of their civic duty.

Lookshy has closer ties with some Scavenger Land states than others. Staunch admiration and friendship exist between Lookshy and the Marukan Alliance. The relationship between Lookshy and Great Forks is more curious, but the Three who guide Great Forks insist on it remaining allied closely with Lookshy, despite their philosophical differences with Lookshy's Immaculate beliefs. Lookshy's relationship with the Realm is one of guarded hostility and diplomacy at best, with both sides constantly on the watch for political or military advantage.

## Nexus

Nexus has been called the City of a Million Lice, the River Harlot's Legs, the Threshold Jewel, the Bright Sword and the City of Black Snow. It is all of these and more. It is the headquarters of the Guild—a city of wonder and mysteries, crime and vice—and it is the crossroads of the River Province. Every good or service imaginable can be found in Nexus if the price is right, and people from across Creation gather there to seek their fortune. From brilliant First Age palaces and corrupt politicians to filthy slums and cutthroats, Nexus has something for everyone—be it a purse of orichalcum or a whetted blade.

Nexus stands on the remains of the First Age city of Hollow, at the confluence of three rivers: the Yellow and the Gray Rivers, which join at the middle of the city to form the Yanaze River. The mansions of the ruling Council of Entities sit atop the crests of the highest hills, free from the rats, disease, flooding and stink of the poor below. Below them lie the villas and manors of the ruling class, the rich merchants and those who can afford well for themselves. The rivers carry their waste downstream, along with trade, ore-smelting byproducts and the occasional corpse, to the massive markets and slums where the poor live. The water and waste flood downriver into the wide floodplains there, silting and fertilizing the land to produce the "swamp rice" for which Nexus is infamous. It might taste dubious and be resistant to chewing, but it is nonetheless edible.

Nexus has no formal laws. Public and social order depend on the Council of Entities and the Guild. The Council of Entities is not an authority appointed by any sort of law, but it issues public decrees that can take any form—and those decrees must be obeyed. The only constant figure on the Council is the mysterious Emissary, who is supposed to date back to the founding of Nexus. The Council's decrees are archived in the Incunabulum in the Council Tower. If a new decree contradicts an older one, the older one is stricken from the record. Companies of mercenaries exist to enforce the Council's decrees, however strange or unreasonable those decrees might be. The Incunabulum consists of two parts: the Dogma (six pronouncements on which Nexus was founded) and the Civilities (the mass of past and present decrees issued by the Council).

Multiple layers of civil servants interpret the Council's wishes, pass on its decrees and take bribes and favors in return for influence. Otherwise, as long as a citizen pays her taxes and obeys the Dogma and the Civilities, she is able to do whatever she wishes, however violent or self-interested. Of course, other citizens can also do what they wish in response, which is why feuds and vendettas are so common in Nexus and must usually be stopped by the Council eventually.

Nexus still shows many signs of the First Age city that it once was, from the great dams across all three rivers to the many remnants of First Age architecture. It is even home to six tombs of ancient Anathema, dating back to the First Age, which are often used as city landmarks. The newer parts of the city are a triumph of function over form, crisscrossed with canals and waterways, with a system of pulley-cars that go up and down the hills, and the smelting technology that makes Nexus the largest ironworks in Creation. Scholars frequent Nexus, dangerous as it is, keen to take advantage of this juxtaposition of the old and the new.

### The Dogma

No taxes shall be raised, save by the Council.
None shall obstruct trade.
None shall bring an army into Nexus.
No one shall commit wanton violence.
None may falsely claim the Council's name or sanction.
None shall harbor a fugitive from the Council's wrath.

## Great Forks

Often called the City of Temples or the House of Festivals—known simply as Decadence to others—Great Forks is one of the most prosperous and enlightened cities in the Confederation. It is known for tolerance, art and culture and is a favored destination for those seeking self-indulgence and hedonism. Spirits and elementals compose a significant part of Great Forks' population, assisting in everything from military matters to bureaucracy and culture. (The place positively swarms with godlings, spirits, cults and even some Fair Folk.) While the major exports of Great Forks are drugs and medicines, the place is also a center for the slave trade, as thousands of workers are required to maintain the city's marijuana, qat and tobacco fields. It is a place of revelry and festival, but it is founded on a solid working structure that depends on both mortal and divine contributions.

Great Forks was founded in Realm Year 278, when three groups of refugees arrived simultaneously at the confluence of the Rolling and Yellow rivers, each led by a powerful spirit that had protected it during the journey. The spirits were named Spinner of Glorious Tales, Weaver of Dreams of Victory and Shield of a Different Day—generally shortened by mortal tongues to Talespinner, Dreamweaver and Dayshield. As the three groups readied for battle over the land, the spirits entered negotiations. At this time, the nearby shadowland (now known as Walker's Realm) was ruled by the Deathlord Princess Magnificent with Lips of Coral and Robes of Black Feathers. The spirits knew a war between their three peoples would leave the winner too weak to withstand an attack from the Princess.

However, they found that they and their people all had much in common, so they ultimately agreed to share the lands they had all claimed and to make their peoples one. After they had settled their united folk, Talespinner and Dreamweaver crafted a story of a mighty victory over the Deathlord, while Dayshield warded the people and their spirit allies behind walls of illusion. The sorcerous story drove the Princess away in fear of her own annihilation. Within a year and a day, Great Forks arose from what had been plains and beaches, built by the three peoples and by lesser spirits and elementals. Within a decade of its founding, the city had grown prosperous, and it was a charter member of the Confederation of Rivers.

Great Forks is a thriving city of more than a quarter of a million citizens, and nearly twice as many slaves. The Three, as the gods are known collectively, rule the city by decree and example, tending toward leniency and tolerance, and a merit-based human bureaucracy runs the city from day to day. The Three also encourage learning and education among their citizens, and Great Forks is home to some of the River Province's most famous sorcerers and savants. Many of these

individuals vacation or dwell in Great Forks in townhouses subsidized and staffed by the government, in exchange for lecturing at the city's famous university. The city goes to great lengths to maintain good relations with its neighbors and contributes large amounts of logistical assistance, medical drugs and jade to Confederation undertakings. Its military, though still recovering from the devastating losses sustained at the Battle of Mishaka, counts a number of spirits and elementals among its ranks and is backed by the power of the Three.

While Great Forks bases its economy on slave labor, slaves have many rights in the city. They can own property or marry, they may be subjected to only certain forms of punishment, and they may not be cut off from their families. Manumission is possible, at a set price. However, they are ultimately property and the law treats them as such. Killing a slave is a civil rather than a criminal offense, for instance. Most field slaves receive a ration of mete leaf, which acts as a physical stimulant while dulling the mind and memory, keeping them at their tasks and quieting any thoughts of rebellion.

What often troubles visitors—and particularly ones from the Realm—is the sheer number of spirits and elementals in Great Forks. Water elementals bring fish to the city's nets, ifrit guard the palace, wood spirits scout the forests and grasslands around the city, and gods serve alongside mortals in many different capacities. God-Blooded are common in Great Forks, and many inhabitants claim descent from a minor godling or greater elemental. Other God-Blooded, not born there, journey to the city to find a place where they will be accepted. There are even Fair Folk in Great Forks, drawn to a city so devoted to the expression of passions. The Three tolerate these visitors, as long as they do not hurt anyone unconsenting or attempt to extend their influence among the population.

With the city full of godlings and spirits, cults abound, and the Temple District takes up a full third of the city. Hardly a day in Great Forks is not holy to half a dozen different cults or religions, which usually honor it with parades, music and festivals. The Temple District is one of the most crowded parts of the city.

## Sijan

Sijan is an old city, so ancient that no one knows when it was first built. Some of the tombs outside the city walls predate even the First Age. Sijan is dedicated to the dead and to ghosts, providing proper burials for corpses from across the Confederation of Rivers and enacting rites to propitiate angry ghosts. Directed by the Funereal Order of Righteous Morticians and Embalmers (the Morticians' Order), Sijan tends to the dead and undead alike. Her jet black funeral galleys roam the rivers unmolested by brigands or warlords, and members of the Mortician's Order with their silver bracers are a common sight in almost every city of the Confederation of Rivers. The dead are not an abstract concept, ghosts are not myths, and the Sijanese are experts in dealing with both.

Sijan lies between the River of Tears on the west, the Avarice River on the south and the fell forest of Black Chase to the north. Two bridges across the Avarice lead to the Plains of the Dead, as the vast cemeteries of Sijan are called. The Rising, or eastern bridge, is the Bridge of Mortals, and only the living may cross it. The Setting, or western bridge, is the Bridge of the Fallen, and only the dead may cross it. The Plains of the Dead stretch for miles in every direction, leading almost to the horizon. Vast mausoleums rise from the earth, some the size of small towns; some are built for a single hero or ruler, while others hold the population of whole cities. The valley of Sijan was once much deeper and steeper, but millennia of building and overgrowth have stacked tombs, crypts and bones atop each other in such tangled profusion that the valley floor has risen over 100 feet. Many of the underground tombs are maintained by expert morticians, who descend into the hidden crypts to propitiate the buried ghosts. Some areas are lost to time and forgotten, though, and the hungry ghosts there sleep uneasily, if at all.

The city of Sijan itself is a quiet place. No revelers disturb its streets, and no festivals mar the silence save those celebrated for the dead. Mortal revels are held behind closed doors, in feast halls and taverns cut deep in the stone below Sijan, so as not to disturb the dead. Visitors to Sijan who venture out at night are sometimes never seen again or else found dead the next morning. Like any other city, Sijan has its criminals, and not all of Sijan's are living. The roads around Sijan are likewise hazardous at night.

The Morticians' Order is the closest thing to a government that Sijan possesses. They are masters of funeral rites, embalmers, fleshcrafters, ghostspeakers, and exorcists. All members of the Morticians' Order wear heavy gray gowns with thick overshawls, and a given mortician's rank and membership in one of the three Observance that constitute the Order—Funerists, Mortwrights and Deadspeakers—are indicated by the heavy silver bracers he wears. All morticians swear strict oaths regarding conduct, the wishes of the dead, the sanctity of their role as guides to the afterlife and the need for circumspect behavior. Few break them, but those who do can become infamous.

Sijan has little need to worry about war, barbarian raids or bandits—even the Fair Folk avoid this funeral city. The leaders of the Morticians' Order meet once a year to determine any important decisions, but there are few questions that have not already been settled by millennia of tradition. If necessary, they can call on the advice of the dead, and it is said that the wisest savants of the First Age frequently assist in their deliberations. The city has no military, because it needs none. It has a small, black-armored town guard to quell disturbances and present a deterrent to the riotous living and unquiet dead. Its most infamous constituent is the ghostly Black Watch, consisting of nemissaries girded in black plate armor who were themselves victims of grave robbery and now take great pleasure in hunting down tomb raiders.

Although Sijan is a signatory to the Confederation of Rivers, its status is purely diplomatic. Sijan maintains strict and dignified neutrality, burying the corpses of all nations without prejudice. Its appointee to the Council of the Concordat remains silent unless asked his opinion. Sijan otherwise maintains good relations with its neighbors, with the exception of Great Forks. Great Forks is the only city in the Scavenger Lands not to employ Sijan funerists, and no citizens of the City of Temples go to Sijan after their death. Likewise, the black galleys of Sijan never dock in Great Forks. The cause of this coldness is unknown, and both sides refuse to discuss it.

## Greyfalls

Greyfalls is the Realm's last bastion in the Scavenger Lands. Captured by the Realm in RY 88, it was granted to the Realm in RY 91 as part of the peace treaty ending the Realm's third invasion. Over the centuries, the Scarlet Empress has worked hard to maintain this toehold in the Scavenger Lands,

## The Hundred Gods Heresy

The Hundred Gods heresy isn't one faith. Rather, it is a collective term for the cults in the Realm and the Threshold that directly worship the spirits and deities that pervade the land, rather than following the Immaculate rituals and letting the Dragon-Blooded handle any necessary contact with gods. While the Immaculate Order recognizes the existence of these spirits, it considers them to be mere spiritual functionaries who are distracted from their proper duties by worship and prayer. Members of the Order give ritual thanks to the spirits on the appropriate holidays, and this—which is no more and no less than the Dragons decreed proper—is what *should* be given, according to the Order.

Naturally, the gods themselves are in favor of being worshiped. Whatever individual minor gods might say to Immaculate representatives (particularly those with the Charms to affect spirits), no god is ever going to object to prayer and devotion. Prayer is a commodity, and gods want it. Prayer is bribery, and like bribery, it works. If you pay your local gods well, they'll protect you. If you don't give them what they want, they might not go out of their way to harm you, but they won't bother to help your crops, protect your livestock, strengthen your children or perform any other miracles for you.

The Immaculate Order acts as much for secular social reasons as religious ones, whether all its members realize this consciously or not. Theological dissent goes hand in hand with conflict with the Realm. For the preservation of proper social order and stability, the populace must allow the Dragon-Blooded to handle all spiritual contact. This does not mean that all local gods are necessarily good or that the doctrine of the Immaculate Dragons is evil, but it does mean that by enforcing "proper" worship and depriving lesser gods of prayers and rites, the Immaculate Order is supporting the Realm.

which consists of the high-towered city of Greyfalls itself, half a dozen small towns and a large stretch of sparsely populated upland. It is one of only three places in the Scavenger Lands where the Realm keeps an official presence, and the only one where that presence is significant.

Because of its unique status, Greyfalls has become the place where the Scavenger Lands go to transact business with the Realm. Imperial merchant houses that cannot do business on Scavenger Lands soil have holdings in Greyfalls, allowing them to compete with the Guild in trade. All such business is transacted at the Greyfalls dock, rather than at the free port in Lookshy, so that the Realm receives the full import and dock taxes on all goods. It has become a huge transshipment port, dealing particularly in glass, crystal, and paper.

The Realm historically kept a strong military presence in the area, but events on the Blessed Isle in the last five years have reduced that presence to a fraction of its former size. In response, the local officers have begun heavy local recruiting efforts. Previously troops stationed at Greyfalls were incompetent, inept, victims of political intrigue, insubordinate or criminal. Now, however, the Dragon-Blooded officers are starting to forge a real weapon out of their forces.

Politically, the area has a Dragon-Blooded satrap and a bureaucracy that focuses more on taxes and trade duties than on government. Actual rulership of the area—subject to interference by the satrap—is in the hands of the Nuri clan. The Nuri clan is more of a tribal nation than a family. It was an oppressed minority when the Realm first invaded, and the Realm placed its men in positions of power and used it to crush local dissent. While not lickspittles, the Nuri are loyal to the Scarlet Empire, but view current events and the troubles in the Realm with an increasingly troubled eye.

## The Marukan Alliance

The Marukan Alliance is a collection of medium-sized towns. Its only true city is Celeren, centered around the fortress-manse of the same name. The Alliance spreads across the warm savannas and patches of forest that cover the southeastern reaches of the Scavenger Lands, fed by the many small watercourses that ultimately flow into the Grey River. Cargo is moved by wagon trains, and the region is famous for its horses and yeddim.

The people of the Marukan Alliance are riders of horses from birth; a Marukani child can balance on a horse almost before she can walk. Horses are companions and friends, rather than mere beasts of burden or pets. The high point of the Marukani year is the Spring Market, when yearlings are sold and new foals are judged for suitability and training. Buyers come from across the Scavenger Lands, or even further afield, to purchase Marukani horses. The Spring Market is also a time for celebrating the dead in a countrywide wake, marked by drinking, singing and dancing. Revelers recite the accomplishments of those who died in the past year, and huge wagons stuffed with the remains of the most honored dead—both humans and horses—are sent north to Sijan. There, they are interred in mausoleums bought by the Alliance centuries ago.

The Marukan Alliance is governed by a council of elders that meets in the Celeren manse. The council's leading voice is the elder of the Mayhiros clan, the Terrestrial Exalted family that owns the manse. The council generally concerns itself with foreign diplomacy. Local law, together with council decrees, are enforced by the circuit riders, who also carry the mail, watch the borders and scout the wilderness. Trials are held by a jury of local elders and overseen by a circuit rider. However, circuit riders are empowered to take whatever actions they deem necessary against miscreants, and they can hold a trial or pass down summary judgments without benefit of jury. The usual penalties are a heavy fine or death, as Marukani law does not allow slavery or imprisonment.

## The Hundred Kingdoms

The Hundred Kingdoms consist of a collection of small principalities, autocracies, republics, dictatorships and petty kingdoms. They lie from the confluence of the Maruto and Yellow rivers eastward to the edge of the Eastern Forest. Many are no larger than a fortified town and a handful of villages. Though they are a fractious lot, the Hundred Kingdoms are

the breadbasket of the Scavenger Lands, providing much of the grain eaten in the Confederation of Rivers.

Most of the kingdoms rely on agriculture or mining as their primary source of wealth, though kingdoms on the rivers have a third source of income: tolls extracted from upriver and downriver traffic. Castles on the river's edge, equipped with ballistae, archers and even some First Age weapons make sure that most passing boats will stop to be searched and pay a toll.

These kingdoms have existed in a barely controlled state of enmity for centuries, constantly exploding into petty wars and raids—each one generally hostile to most of its neighbors. Occasionally, some would-be ruler or coalition attempts to seize control, but so far, none has succeeded.

## Denandsor

The First Age city of Denandsor, also known as the Empty City, lies two weeks journey from Great Forks, near the southern edge of the Scavenger Lands, in the country of Melekin. During the First Age, it was renowned as a center of learning and trade. The city's merchant kings sponsored trade missions throughout Creation, and the Library of Denandsor attracted savants from the four corners of the world. Today, no merchants ply their wares, no blacksmiths work its foundries, and no children play in its gardens. No one alive knows what catastrophe fell upon the people of Denandsor. Fragmentary records suggest that the city's Dragon-Blooded governor attempted to use a powerful artifact to protect the city's inhabitants from the Great Contagion, but no specific records have survived. The city is deathly silent and empty.

Whatever caused the city's fall, none can stand to remain there now for more than a few hours or a day at most. A sense of dread and unease creeps over those who walk Denandsor's streets, growing stronger the longer a person remains in the city, until it finally becomes unendurable. Those forced to stay longer are either driven into a catatonic state or disappear, never to be seen again. However, because only the strongest-willed can remain in Denandsor for long, large sections of the First Age city remain unplundered, and new treasure-hunting missions are constantly being fitted up.

Even without whatever enchantment shrouds the city in fear, Denandsor would not be safe for explorers. Not only do the usual panoply of magical defenses and complex mechanical traps guard the area, but Denandsor's guardians still wait throughout the city. These guardians are sophisticated automata of brass and silver built before the Contagion to act as civil protectors and police, and many of them are still functional. While they are mostly quiescent when discovered, resting in a kind of mechanical hibernation, they wake if they are disturbed or if the area they were assigned to guard is molested. Their specific actions depend on the last set of instructions they

## The Guild

The Guild is at once an enterprise, an organization and an institution. As a business enterprise, the Guild is a collaborative effort between the most wealthy and influential merchants and artisans in Creation, dedicated to the increase of that wealth and influence. As a trade organization, it is the originator and overseer of standards such as weights, measures, value, supply and demand. As a social institution, the Guild links distant lands, employs thousands and creates a sense of community in a large and hostile world.

The concept of the Guild was born in Realm Year 88, when Great Forks merchant Brem Marst came into contact with a group of merchant-philosophers in the Lap called the Counters. He put the Counters' philosophical teachings to practical use, and within 10 years, he had solidified the basic structure. The Guild itself was founded in Realm Year 99, supported by the recent formation of the League of Many Rivers, but also by merchant houses from Sijan, Nexus and Chaya. Eighteen years later, the Guild established its permanent headquarters in Nexus and formalized the first Directorate, the head of the pyramidal structure that it had become. It worked its trade-route tendrils throughout the Threshold and solidified its structure, just as the Realm itself was stabilizing on and around the Blessed Isle and beginning to spread.

Over the next three centuries, the Guild grew steadily, and local merchant houses and leagues became absorbed into it while nations and city-states became dependent on Guild-delivered goods and news. The constant battles between the Realm and the River League impressed on the Guild the need for military might of its own, and in response, it formed the first affiliated mercenary companies. It established functionally permanent contracts with large standing mercenary companies and became a military power in its own right. The Empress permitted strictly limited trade with the Blessed Isle but restricted the areas in which Guild craftsmen and merchants could operate. She disallowed trade in jade, weapons, armor and rice, and animosity over these restrictions blossomed into a trade war in Realm Year 416. This destructive conflict ended two years later after doing more damage to the surrounding Threshold states and tributaries than to the Guild or the Realm.

The three main branches of the Guild are merchants, craftsmen and laborers. Anyone who joins must enter through one of those branches and must have a Guild sponsor. Good though the other main businesses are, though, the three effective pillars of the Guild in practice are slaves, drugs and mercenaries.

Since the Great Contagion, the slave trade has been an integral factor in rebuilding and maintaining societies across Creation. The Guild buys from warlords and armies, civilized nations and barbarians, shadowlands and Fair Folk, then it moves the living bodies to where they are wanted. One faction that does *not* trade slaves with the Guild, however, is the Imperial Army, as the Empress made it clear that House Cynis was to maintain the monopoly on slave-trading inside the Scarlet Empire. The Guild's willingness to trade slaves to the Fair Folk in order to feed their hunger for souls, even after the Fair Folk launched numerous assaults on Creation, has done nothing for its reputation.

received. Some will attack immediately, while others attempt to discern what the intruders are doing or to apprehend them. The automata themselves would be of great interest to many savants—if only they could be removed from Denandsor.

## Calin

Calin joined the Confederation of Rivers a little over 300 years ago, after centuries as a tributary and ally to the Realm. Many claim that it did so for the economic benefits rather than any sort of ethical or high-minded political reasons. Certainly, Calin is not a progressive state. Its traditional government consists of a weak shogun and a number of powerful daimyos, with little voice for anyone not in the highest ranks. It is a small but placid country, full of rolling hills and fertile fields, with walled towns and manors linked by well-maintained roads.

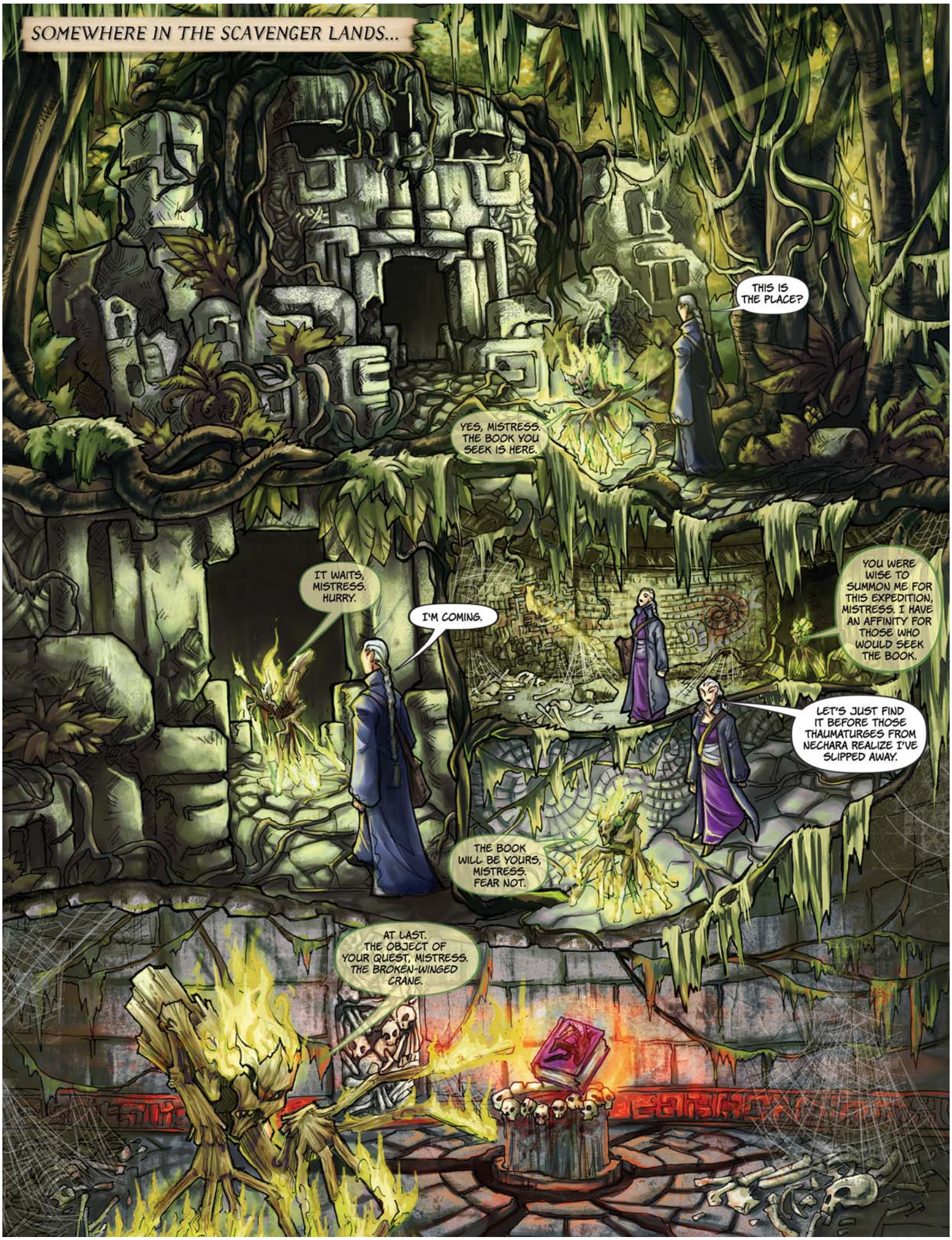
Calin revolves around the house system. No shogun has ever been elected from outside the 14 noble houses, although all citizens of Calin theoretically vote on a new shogun after the old one's death. The kingdom is divided into patronages, granted by the shogun to anyone she wishes *except* for her own family. (The current royal family keeps the patronages they owned upon the shogun's accession but may not receive new ones except under very specific circumstances.) A patronage gives the recipient family almost complete control over its governmental fiefdom, unless the shogun revokes it for some reason. Along with immediate responsibility, the patronages carry great power, substantial wealth and the wherewithal to continue trading favors and debits with the other families.

The patronage system prompts near-constant jockeying for position and influence within the shogun's court. Members of the various houses, influential merchants, Guildmasters, sorcerers, Dragon-Blooded outcastes and others all vie for the shogun's attention. This web of deception and intrigue is commonly known as the Great Game, and it has lasted for centuries. Blackmail, espionage, the dueling code, manipulation of the legal system and even assassination are all tools in the Game. Even though many come to Calin innocently to take advantage of the grain trade, the slave trade (the Guild maintains a heavy presence in Calin), or the fishing industries for which Calin is famous, they are often drawn into the machinations of the noble houses.

### The Ancestor Cult

In many areas of Creation, ancestor worship is a reasonable and common practice. Everyone admits that ghosts exist. Even Immaculate monks or adherents of other religions that argue a swift reincarnation is the best thing that can happen to a dead person don't deny that ghosts exist and watch over their descendants.

Indeed, the sheer common sense of the whole concept is one of the foundation stones of many ancestor cults, with truth being the other. Many of the living pay honor to their ancestors, making offerings to their ghosts, or even going so far as to communicate with them for their advice and protection. The dead are glad to protect their living descendants, and in many parts of Creation, this relationship is a symbiotic one.


SOMEWHERE IN THE SCAVENGER LANDS...
THIS IS THE PLACE?
YES, MISTRESS. THE BOOK YOU SEEK IS HERE.
IT WAITS, MISTRESS. HURRY.
I'M COMING.
YOU WERE WISE TO SUMMON ME FOR THIS EXPEDITION, MISTRESS. I HAVE AN AFFINITY FOR THOSE WHO WOULD SEEK THE BOOK.
LET'S JUST FIND IT BEFORE THOSE THAUMATURGES FROM NECHARA REALIZE I'VE SLIPPED AWAY.
THE BOOK WILL BE YOURS, MISTRESS. FEAR NOT.
AT LAST. THE OBJECT OF YOUR QUEST, MISTRESS. THE BROKEN-WINGED CRANE.

IT'S AUTHENTIC?
AN AUTHENTIC COPY, MISTRESS. THE ORIGINAL WON'T BE WRITTEN FOR YEARS, BUT THIS ONE'S POWER IS QUITE REAL.
AREN'T YOU GOING TO READ IT?
ACTUALLY, I HAVE A BETTER IDEA.
WOOD DRAGON'S CLAW!
!!!
WHAT HAVE YOU DONE?
DID YOU THINK I WANTED THIS BLASPHEMOUS TOME FOR MYSELF, YOU IGNORANT DEMON?
I ONLY WANTED TO KEEP IT OUT OF MORTAL HANDS.
OF COURSE I DID. AND NOW, YOUR USEFULNESS HAS ENDED!
YOU... YOU USED ME!

# CHAPTER TWO
# CHARACTER CREATION

To play **Exalted**, you must create a character, your alter ego for interacting with Creation and the epic you are helping to create. Your character is like a protagonist in a novel or movie, except that when one story is over, you can move on to the next. Your character grows and changes as you play her, possibly becoming something you never expected. All of this is especially true in **Exalted**: You are playing an epic hero like Herakles, Beowulf or Samson. Your character might begin as an escaped galley slave or minor bureaucrat, but she can grow to conquer nations or even challenge the Realm itself.

This chapter shows you how to create such a character. Before you start, talk to your Storyteller about the sort of series he is running and, if possible, talk with the other players about their character concepts. (Playing a brawny barbarian lord is less interesting if everyone else in the series plays the same type of character.) Then, you must translate the concept into numbers to use in the game. These numbers express your character's strengths and weaknesses objectively so that she can be measured against other characters in the story. They also interact with the rules in the next few chapters so you and your Storyteller can both determine if your character performs an action successfully. A character skilled in Bureaucracy, for instance, will be far better at persuading a celestial chamberlain for an audience with an important god.

## The Storyteller's Role in Character Creation

As the Storyteller, you should guide your players through character creation. When your players arrive for the first session, discuss the themes you wish to explore and the basic premise of the game. Try writing down a short description of the sort of series you want to run. You don't want players expecting swashbuckling adventures on the high seas when you want to run court intrigue. If you have a large number of potential players, you can circulate the sheet ahead of the first session, so the people who show up will already know what to expect from the game.

If any players are unfamiliar with **Exalted**, take the beginning of the session to fill them in on the basics. You don't need to explain everything—for most people, playing is the best way to learn the details of character and setting. Make sure they learn enough to get started, though, and keep the first session as simple as possible.

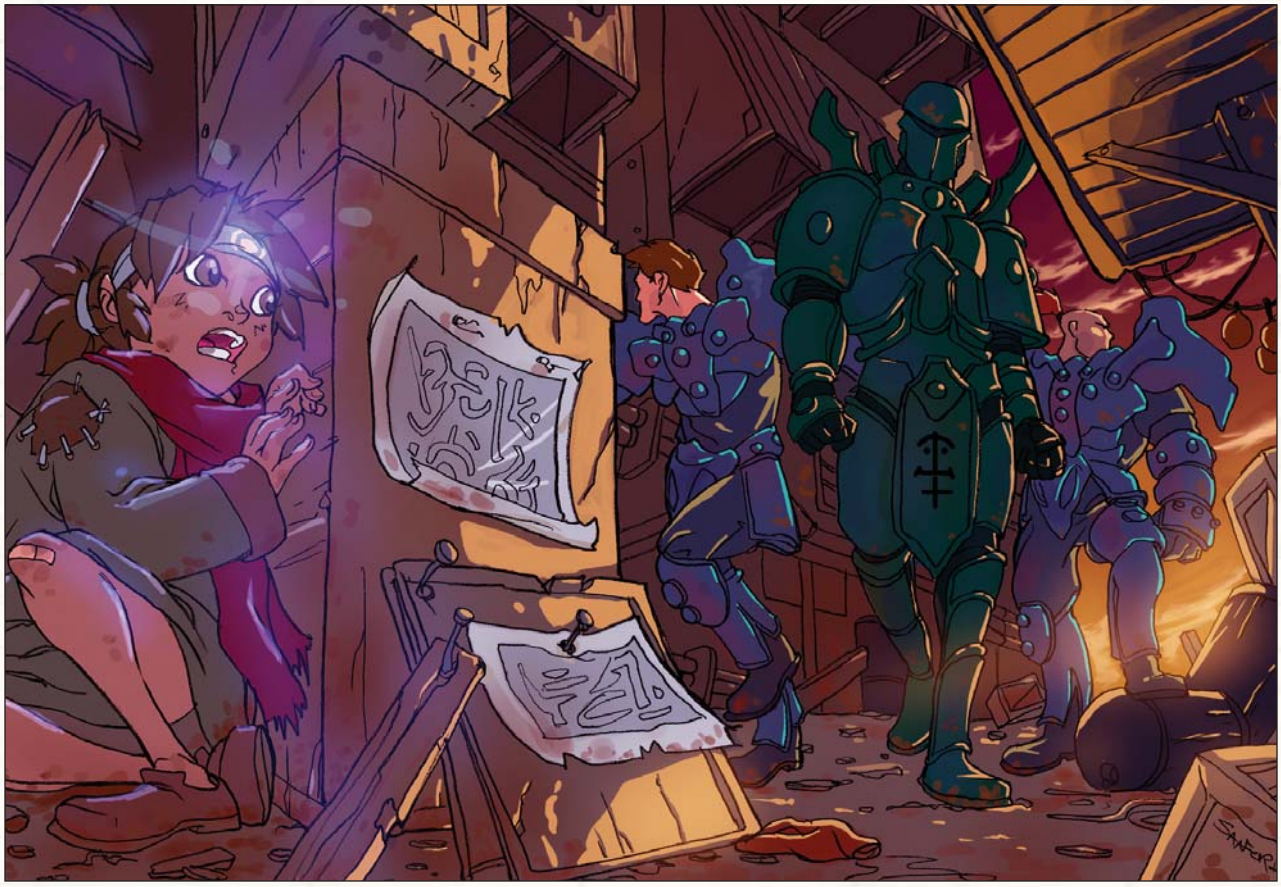
Before you start, give each of the players a character sheet and let them look it over and ask questions. Then, explain the character-creation process systematically. Be sure to describe the traits and how they define a character's abilities.

After that, discuss where the game will be set. Creation is a world larger than and as complex as our own. It's also a pre-modern world, where long journeys take weeks or months and most people live and die within a few hundred miles of their birthplace. Even though they now have the power of demigods, the characters grew up as ordinary mortals in this world.

A series set around the metropolises of the South, focused on politics and the region's interactions with the Realm, completely differs from a series set in the Haslanti League, where the primary opponents are Wyld barbarians, the Fair Folk and the dead. Most characters should come from somewhere relatively near the location of the series, and those from elsewhere will need good reasons to be in this part of the world. In addition, the characters should be appropriate to the themes and types of adventures common in the series. A silver-tongued courtier who plays the lyre with inhuman skill, makes jewelry that mortals will kill to own, and is stealthy as a breeze might not fit a series where the characters regularly fight barbarian hordes and explore the wilderness. Similarly, a barbarian queen dressed in furs who duels anyone who defies her doesn't fit a court intrigue theme.

Deciding the setting and theme is the first step in character creation. As the Storyteller, you can decide what sort of **Exalted** series you want to run and announce this to your prospective players, or you can ask the prospective players what sorts of characters they want to play and use that as the basis for your decision. In either case, you need to discuss the focus with the players before anyone finalizes her character ideas.

Remember that, in running a game of **Exalted**, you are running one set in a particular location, focused on specific themes and types of adventures. There are no generic games of **Exalted**. The characters start as epic heroes with the power to change the world. Where you start determines the course of these adventures. **Exalted** is not a single epic where you must visit every interesting location. It contains the making for 100 different epics filled with conquering heroes and sorcerers who can level cities with a gesture. Being "in the East" is like being "in North and South America." Being in the West is like having the entirety of the Pacific Ocean to explore. The areas detailed here and in various **Exalted** supplements are a small fraction of the entirety of Creation. Some areas the size of India or Western Europe still fall between the cracks of the material. Setting an **Exalted** series in the area bounded by Thorns, Lookshy, Great Forks and Sijan gives the characters access to a region that is half as large as the United States and more than twice as large



as India. Creation is huge, and without access to powerful spells or artifacts, travel is exceedingly slow.

Use an entire session to create characters and discuss the series. Give players time to make complete, flesh-and-blood characters with personalities, goals, hopes and dreams. You don't want people playing undeveloped caricatures or characters incompatible with each other or your setting. After character creation, run preludes for the characters. A prelude is a short session that details pivotal events in the character's life and gives the player an idea of what her character's Exaltation was like. Once you've run individual preludes, run a prelude for the group as a whole—the occasion that brought the characters together and forged a lasting bond between them. More information on preludes comes later.

### Setting and Characters

Until they took their Second Breath, the characters were ordinary mortals who had to walk, ride or sail everywhere they wanted to go. As a result, most characters should come from the series' starting region. Characters from the immediate setting can better understand the people and places with which they interact. They needn't be from the same city, however, or even the same nation. If the game starts in the Northern city of Gethamane, then characters from the Northern cities Icehome and Whitewall are perfectly reasonable. If the game is set in the Scavenger Lands' metropolis of Nexus, then characters from Great Forks, Lookshy and Sijan are all appropriate.

Some players might enjoy playing characters from elsewhere, though. Such characters should not normally make up the majority of the circle, but they can fit into the series. Remember, characters from distant lands need a good reason to live where they currently do. One obvious choice is for them to be traders in the Guild, as these merchants often take land or sea journeys covering thousands of miles. Alternately, the character could be from the Realm: perhaps an exile or someone who worked in the Realm's Foreign Office before her Exaltation. The character could also have been sold as a slave by the Guild, or she might simply be a wandering minstrel. The most important thing is for all characters to have reasons for being in their current location.

The circle should have some unity. A circle where each of the members comes from a different quarter of Creation is far less cohesive than one mostly drawn from a few small neighboring countries. Encouraging this also makes characters who are foreigners and outsiders far more interesting and unique.

## From Concept to Numbers

Once you have discussed the series with your Storyteller, think about the sort of character you wish to play—where she lives, how she grew up, what she loves and hates… These experiences make each character truly alive and unique. When assigning traits, make sure the numbers reflect the kind of character you're describing. If your character is intelligent and a fast thinker, you should assign sufficient dots to Intelligence and Wits. If she's exceptionally beautiful, make sure her Appearance reflects that. You won't have enough points to make your character the best at everything, but that's okay. Every character in a circle should surpass the others at something. That makes the series fun for all of the players.

Traits have numerical values, rated from one to five dots. The only exceptions are Essence and Willpower, which can both have values up to 10. These ratings represent the character's capability in that trait. A character with no dots in an Ability is unskilled, and a character with no dots in an Attribute is crippled and incapable of actions requiring that Attribute. One dot represents something the character is poor at, while a character with five dots in a trait is among the world's best at whatever the trait defines. The other ratings are somewhere between. In general, a character with three dots in an Ability is a skilled professional, and a character with two dots in any Attribute has a completely average Attribute. These ratings add their number of dice to the character's dice pool when she attempts an action requiring that trait (see Chapter Three for specifics).

### Common Languages

The civilized people of Creation all speak one of seven different languages, while the barbarian tribes speak many dozens of different languages. When players create their characters, you must make sure those characters will all be capable of understanding each other. The task is not as daunting as it seems. Representatives of the Realm and the Guild both travel widely, so three trade languages are common all over Creation: Old Realm, High Realm and Riverspeak. Many people in every major city speak all three languages, and at least one person in the smallest rural village will haltingly speak at least one. The players should decide ahead of time which trade language their characters all speak. While natives of Nexus and the Realm speak their native language perfectly, most people cannot speak the widely known trade tongues particularly well. One dot of Linguistics allows for perfect understanding, though. The characters can use these languages to ask locals for directions, to transact commerce and to discuss other relatively simple topics. However, talking complex philosophy or planning elaborate military strategies with most locals is difficult or impossible. That's what taking additional dots in Linguistics is for.

## Getting Started

**Exalted** character creation is based around six basic concepts.

• You can create a character from any nation, of any age, from any cultural background, but your character has only recently—in the past year or so—Exalted. He probably knows very little about his nature as one of the Chosen, unless he has received instruction from a mentor, such as the Cult of the Illuminated, a Sidereal Exalt, a god or some other powerful being.

• Your character can come to life only through your roleplaying. The experience of playing your character through various challenges, and being genuinely challenged by them, is what the game is all about. Your character's history and personality should determine the values that you assign to various traits. Try to keep the character's initial concept foremost in mind as you assign the numbers.

• The **Exalted** character-creation system is point-based—you (the player) receive points to apply to your character's Attributes, Abilities and advantages. After assigning these points, you receive 15 bonus points to personalize and round out your character. Even with bonus points, you probably won't have enough points for everything you want. Your character will gain experience and grow in power as you play her over time.

• A trait rated at one is poor, while a trait rated at five makes your character among the best in her field. If you have one dot in a trait, your character is inexperienced or simply not very proficient. One dot in Strength doesn't make your character useless. Consider the low trait an opportunity to further flesh out your character—a one-dot trait can be as defining as any five-dot trait. Playing a weak but incredibly dexterous spy or a strong but clumsy warrior can be more interesting than playing someone who's moderately strong and dexterous.

• Create a character compatible with the circle. You can't expect the other players to tolerate a character who cannot work with the rest of the group. If your character's behavior is too disruptive, the Storyteller or the other players might ask you to modify how you play her or to create a more suitable character. Although the idea of playing a reclusive loner might appeal to some players, such characters rarely work well with others and are likely to be far more problematic than a character who will rely upon her allies and comrades.

• The most important thing to keep in mind: You are playing a great hero destined for epic adventures. Your character might become a sorcerer who can level a city with a gesture, a warrior who can defeat several hundred mortal soldiers in one battle, or a thief so clever he can steal the peaches of immortality from the sacred gardens of the Celestial City of Yu-Shan. When creating your character, think about what that sort of destiny means and how your character deals with being one of the most powerful beings in Creation. Think about her goals, and think big—Solar Exalted dream of conquering the Realm, slaying Deathlords, or playing music so achingly beautiful that it touches the twisted heart of a demon prince. Your character was Exalted for a reason—she possesses the seeds of true greatness. Your job is to decide upon your character's glorious dreams and play them so that these dreams come true.

# Creating a Character

The following sections detail the process of character creation. Although presented as step-by-step instructions for the player, this process is flexible. Before play starts, nothing's set in stone. If you realize at the very end that you want to alter the way you distributed your Ability dots, just go back and change it. Just make sure to re-compute your Willpower and Essence pools if the traits that govern them change, and keep track of where you spent your bonus points so you don't accidentally spend them twice.

## Step One: Character Concept

Before filling in a single dot on your character sheet, think of a concept. You don't need to know every detail of your character's life right now, you just need a general feel for who she is and her current place in the world. Decide on something you'll enjoy playing for the long haul. As you progress through character creation, you may alter this concept to suit your needs or wants, but it gives you a starting point. An example might be, "My character was kidnapped by bandits as a child and Exalted as a teenager, transforming the bandit gang into the nucleus of her conquering army." Your concept should be unique and interesting, to satisfy you and the Storyteller.

### Caste

A pivotal aspect of any **Exalted** character is his caste. Each of the Solar Exalted is chosen by the Unconquered Sun because they embody a caste's ideals. A character's caste affects the Abilities he shows an affinity toward, the powers he develops and his role in his circle. While members of each caste are often chosen for certain traits and qualities, your individual character may break from the caste's stereotypical image. Every Dawn Caste member is a warrior, but *your* Dawn Caste character could be a sorcerer who excels at spells relating to combat or a general so charismatic that the sound of her voice makes enemy troops turn traitor and join her forces.

### Other Exalted

**Exalted** focuses primarily on the Solar Exalted, and as such, rules for playing the Dragon-Blooded and the other types of Celestial Exalted are not included here. Guidelines for using Lunar, Sidereal, Terrestrial and Abyssal Exalted are in the Antagonists chapter of this book, and further information will be presented in the **Exalted Storyteller's Companion**. Full details and rules for playing these other Exalted are to be found in their specific sourcebooks.

### Motivation

Next, establish your character's Motivation: a sentence describing her driving goal. Obviously, people have various goals, but this goal should be the primary one, defining how your character interacts with the world. See the "Motivation" section on page 88 of the Traits chapter for more information.

## Step Two: Attributes

Once you've defined your concept and selected your caste and Motivation, it's time to assign numbers to various traits. First, assign scores to each Attribute. The Attributes define your character's innate capabilities and aptitudes. How fast

can your character move? Is she unusually attractive? How sharp are her senses? The Attributes objectively answer each of these questions.

First, prioritize your three Attribute categories—Physical, Social and Mental. Decide which category your character excels at (primary), which category is significantly above average (secondary) and which category is merely slightly above average (tertiary). Is she mentally adept, more physically inclined, or a gifted socialite?

• Physical Attributes define your character's physical potential—how fast she runs, how much she can lift and how healthy she is. If your character is primarily action-oriented, then you should make Physical your primary category.

• Social Attributes define your character's ability to interact with, relate to and manipulate others. Social Attributes affect first impressions, your character's ability to inspire or lead people and how attractive she is. If your character is a charmer, deceiver or diplomat, make Social Attributes your primary category.

• Mental Attributes define your character's intellectual capacity—how quickly she thinks, how keen her senses are and how smart she is. Mental Attributes should be primary if your character is a problem-solver, an investigator or a scholar.

Your character concept should guide how you prioritize your Attributes, but don't feel forced into type. Yes, you can play a warrior with Social Attributes as primary (like an exceptionally charismatic general) or a priest with Physical Attributes first (perhaps a monk who meditates through rigorous physical exercise). And you can still modify your basic concept; Attribute priorities might prompt you to alter your focus or intent.

Your character begins with one dot in each Attribute. The priorities you have chosen determine how many additional dots you may place in each category. You have eight dots to divide among the Attributes of your character's primary category, six dots to distribute in her secondary category and four dots to assign in her tertiary category. You are not limited in how many dots you may assign to any one Attribute, except that you may not raise any Attribute above five dots. For explanations of what different levels of the Attributes mean, see the "Attributes" section beginning on page 101 of the Traits chapter.

If you don't have enough points to raise your Attributes to the levels you desire, you can always spend bonus points to increase them later. Also, like every other trait, Attributes can be increased later with experience points.

## Step Three: Abilities

Abilities describe what your character knows and can do, what he's learned rather than his natural potential.

Like Attributes, Abilities are rated from one to five dots. This rating represents your character's competence in that area of expertise. This number is usually added to an Attribute to determine how many dice you roll when your character uses an Ability. All Abilities begin at zero.

Abilities are divided according to which caste best exemplifies them.

• **Dawn Abilities** are those related to physical combat: Archery, Martial Arts, Melee, Thrown and War.

• **Zenith Abilities** are those related to the power of faith, perseverance through great hardship and inspiring and converting others: Integrity, Performance, Presence, Resistance and Survival.

• **Twilight Abilities** are those involving practical application of knowledge and learning: Craft, Investigation, Lore, Medicine and Occult.

• **Night Abilities** are those relating to precision, subterfuge and covert activities: Athletics, Awareness, Dodge, Larceny and Stealth.

• **Eclipse Abilities** are those useful for organization, communication and keeping society functioning: Bureaucracy, Linguistics, Ride, Sail and Socialize.

Every Exalted has a natural affinity with the Abilities exemplified by her caste, making it easier for a character to raise her *Caste Abilities* through bonus and experience points. See the tables on pages 85 and 274 for the bonus point and experience costs of increasing Abilities.

Exalted also have an affinity with certain skills beyond their Caste Abilities, called *Favored Abilities*. Select five Abilities to be your character's Favored Abilities. They receive the same bonus and experience point discounts as her Caste Abilities. You may not choose Caste Abilities as Favored Abilities.

You have 10 Ability dots to assign to your character's Caste and Favored Abilities and another 18 dots to apply toward any Abilities you wish, including Caste and Favored Abilities. Your character needn't have any points placed in Caste Abilities, but you must place at least one dot in *each* Favored Ability. You may not assign more than three dots to any Ability. Instead, you must spend bonus points to raise an Ability to four or five.

### Specialties

Players might wish for their characters to have an area of specialty within a broader Ability. This specialty may be purchased with either bonus or experience points. Your character cannot have more than three specialties for a single Ability. Keep your concept in mind when choosing specialties. (A smooth courtier could choose "Seduction" as a Socialize specialty, whereas a diplomat might choose "Telling Lies.") You don't need to purchase specialties, but they can help to flesh out your character. They're also useful for making a character good at one particular part of an Ability but not all of it or one with superhuman mastery of an Ability.

## Step Four: Advantages

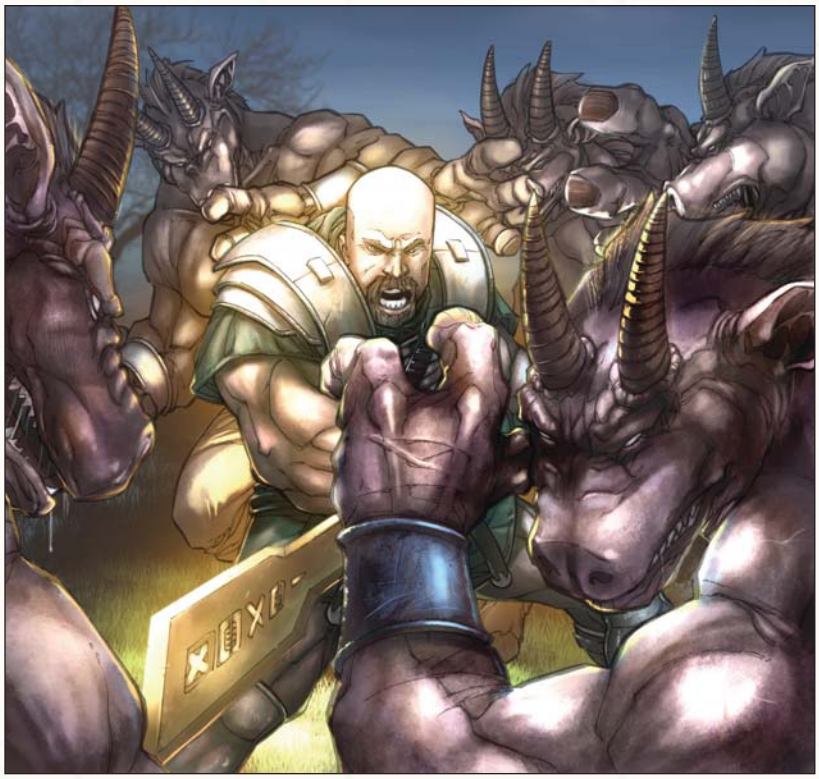
Advantages aren't prioritized or ranked, just given specific values. They can also be increased with bonus points.

### Backgrounds

Backgrounds measure your character's "place" in the world of **Exalted**. They define who your character knows, who knows him and what resources he can draw upon. You receive seven dots to assign among the 11 different Background. Backgrounds should tie into your character concept, as defined in Step One. No Background may be raised above

three dots without the use of bonus points. Buying the fourth and fifth dot of a Background with bonus points costs more than buying the first, second or third dot. For the specifics, see the "Bonus Point Costs" table on page 85.

### Charms



Charms, the Exalted's mystical birthright, allow characters powers and abilities far beyond those of ordinary mortals. And Solar Exalted possess the most powerful Charms in Creation. Charms are divided according to which Ability they augment. Select 10 Charms for your character, at least five which must come from Caste or Favored Abilities. Each Charm needs certain minimum Ability and Essence scores, and many require the mastery of other Charms as well. If you find yourself coming up short of the required traits for a desired Charm, you can always spend bonus points to reach the necessary levels.

Characters who know one or more Sorcery Charms (derived from the Occult Ability) can begin the game knowing spells. Characters can exchange a Charm for a single sorcery spell but may not start the game with Solar Circle spells (spells of the highest level). Characters who wish to purchase spells with bonus points pay the cost for a Charm. Characters receive the in-caste discount on spells if Occult is a Caste or Favored Ability.

### Virtues

Passion and emotion are powerful forces in the world of **Exalted**. Virtues measure how passionately committed a character is to certain types of behavior. There are four Virtue traits, each representing the extremes the soul can reach.

The Virtues are:

• **Compassion**, which measures the character's empathy and forgiveness. Characters with high Compassion have difficulty ignoring the plights of others.

• **Conviction**, which represents the character's resistance to mental and physical hardship. Characters with high Conviction can endure (and inflict) immense pain and suffering and ignore the suffering of others.

• **Temperance**, which measures self-control and clear-headedness. Characters with high Temperance sometimes withdraw from human contact or hold themselves above those less "pure," partly because they can easily ignore temptations to which others yield.

• **Valor**, which represents courage and bravery. Characters with high Valor have difficulty backing down from any challenge, however dangerous or foolhardy, but they can also face daunting foes fearlessly.

Virtues, like Attributes, automatically begin with one dot. You have five additional dots to divide among your character's four Virtue traits. You cannot raise a character's starting Virtue above 4 without spending bonus points.

Choose one Virtue as the root of your character's Virtue Flaw—the expression of the Great Curse. A character who is forced to act contrary to her Virtues too often will suffer a Limit Break and temporarily succumb to her Virtue Flaw. This flaw must be chosen for a Virtue rated 3 or higher. See page 103 of the Traits chapter for rules on Limit Breaks and a list of sample Virtue Flaws.

This Virtue, often linked to the character's Motivation, is a central feature of the Exalt's character. A Solar Exalted whose Motivation is "destroying the Realm" could have Conviction as her highest Virtue, while one who wishes to restore the Solar Deliberative to protect mortals from the dangers of the Age of Sorrows probably has Compassion primary.

## Step Five: Finishing Touches

Here, you determine your character's final traits and finish rounding her out.

### Willpower

Willpower describes your character's self-control and her determination in adverse circumstances. A character's Willpower can partially override an instinctive response (such as those dictated by Virtues), create automatic successes on important dice rolls, resist mental attacks or activate a Virtue. See page 115 of the Traits chapter for more complete rules on Willpower. Add your character's two highest Virtue ratings for her initial Willpower. Willpower may be increased to no higher than 8 with bonus points. Only characters with two Virtues at 4 or higher may begin the game with a Willpower

## Keeping Your Character Alive

It's hard to withstand the lure of making a narrowly focused character with an array of powerful Charms. This extreme focus can lead to very short-lived characters, however. If a character possesses only impressive Archery Charms, she'll die a terrible death when she runs out of ammunition. Similarly, unless you want your Eclipse Caste diplomat always hiding behind the Dawn Caste warrior in your circle, your character should be able to handle himself in combat. The following are some tips for first-time players on designing characters.

**Make Sure Your Character Can Survive:** Don't get lost in all the cool Abilities and forget the meat-and-potatoes Charms that get a character through combat alive.

*Unless you have a very good reason to do otherwise, be sure to take the Resistance Charm Ox-Body Technique at least once*. It's very inexpensive for what it does, and it can extend your character's life span a great deal.

Taking one or more Charms that allow your character to soak or avoid damage is also recommended: at the very least, a reflexive defense such as Dipping Swallow Defense or Shadow Over Water. If you expect your character to fight without armor, be sure to take Durability of Oak Meditation and Iron Skin Concentration, and strongly consider taking Adamant Skin Technique.

If your character's primary combat Ability doesn't have defensive Charms, consider buying Resistance Charms that allow the character to soak more damage from an attack. Alternatively, you can choose Dodge Charms, particularly Shadow Over Water and Reflex Sidestep Technique, that improve your character's evasion. Taking a persistent defense such as Fivefold Bulwark Stance or Flow Like Blood allows for avoiding harm without continually spending Essence. Without a persistent defense, all an opponent needs to do is wait for you character to run out of Essence. Finally, when your character suffers harm, waiting several weeks on recovery can be boring—and deadly, especially if the Wyld Hunt is after her. Unless you have an excellent reason not to, you should take the Resistance Charm *Body-Mending Meditation*, which allows characters to heal from even the most serious injuries in a day or two.

The way the Charm cascades work, plowing later experience into Charms for a given Ability also brings greater and greater payoffs. If you build a solid foundation with your "free" Charms during character creation and stack higher during play, the character will seem to grow and advance more than if you focus narrowly and have to pump experience points into the least rewarding Charms at the base of the cascades. However, don't waste Charms attempting to make your character good at everything. You probably don't need to take both Parry and Dodge Charms, nor should you normally take Charms connected to more than two of the four combat Abilities (Archery, Martial Arts, Melee and Thrown). Your character is not expert at everything. That's why she needs the rest of her circle to accomplish her goals.

**Combat Isn't Everything:** Although combat is a focus, characters should have something to do when they *aren't* fighting. No game of **Exalted** is entirely combat. There is also intrigue, romance, adventure and exploration. If your character is only useful slaying opponents by the dozen, you'll spend a lot of time bored, waiting for something to attack. Also, you'll miss a lot of the game. More than two-thirds of the Charms in **Exalted** aren't combat-related, and they compare well with the combat Charms. Excellencies in Presence or Performance can transform a simple warrior into a commanding general, and powerful Socialize and Performance Charms allow your character to sway others by words as well as strength of arms.

above 8. Remember that even her fellow Exalted will consider such a character unreasonably intense.

## Intimacies

"Intimacies" is a term for things your character cares about enough that it changes how the character acts—though not enough to be a Motivation. Characters start with a number of Intimacies equal to their Compassion.

Intimacies can be anything your character cares about on a meaningful level—a cause, an ideal, a place, a person, a nation. Don't worry if you don't have a good idea for all the Intimacies. Your character can start with less Intimacies than her Compassion if you're not sure what the character cares about. You could just pick some things and try to roleplay them. Intimacies are easy to gain and lose in play, so you'll be able to switch them around easily if you don't like the ones you pick.

Sometimes, Intimacies can be very important, such as when they are the targets of magical effects. If this is the case, characters will generally gain an appropriate Intimacy on the spot if they don't already have one.

Intimacies are governed by Conviction. The higher your character's Conviction, the longer it takes her to gain and lose new Intimacies and the more secure they are against being undermined by social manipulation.

## Essence

Essence measures your character's connection to the mystical energies that permeate the world of **Exalted**. Most mortals have an Essence rating of only 1. Solar Exalted begin with an Essence rating of 2. This value may be increased with bonus points, but characters may not start the game with an Essence above 5. Only characters who are more than a century old can have Essence scores of 6 or higher.

### Essence Pool

Scholars measure Essence in units called *motes*. A character's Essence pool represents how many motes of Essence she can channel toward magic. Essence is of two types: *Personal* and *Peripheral*. When an Exalted spends Essence from her Personal Essence pool, her anima banner remains subdued. When Peripheral Essence is spent, her anima banner flares, exposing her Exalted nature.

To calculate your Personal Essence, multiply your character's Essence trait by three and then add her Willpower. That is, ([Essence x 3] + Willpower).

To calculate Peripheral Essence, multiply your character's Essence trait by seven and then add the sum of Willpower and Virtues. That is, ([Essence x 7] + Willpower + [the sum of Virtues]).

### Health Levels

Health levels track your character's physical condition—like how much damage she's just taken from a deathknight's foul necromantic spell—and the penalty imposed on your character's dice pool for each level of injury sustained. Most humans, including Solar Exalted without the Resistance Charm Ox-Body Technique, have seven health levels, ranging from Bruised to Incapacitated. Unless your character has extras, she has one -0 health level, two -1 health levels, two -2 health levels, one -4 health level and one Incapacitated health level. For more information on health levels see page 150 of the Drama and Systems chapter.

### Bonus Points

As stated previously, you have 15 bonus points available to increase your character's traits. Spend them all now, because you can't keep them past character creation.

## Spark of Life

Some qualities have nothing to do with game mechanics. You're advised to write these down anyway. Think about each one after character creation and during games thereafter. Some will change over time, while others will be reinforced. These things make your character more than a collection of dots on a character sheet.

### Appearance

What does your character look like? How do her traits affect that? Aside from her Appearance score, four dots in Strength means obvious muscles. A high Charisma will translate into how she moves and talks. See how you can use her concept and traits as descriptive hooks. Your choices reflect not only your character's Appearance score, but also how she dresses, acts and speaks. Does she move with confidence and have a steady gaze, or is she hunched over, refusing to look anyone in the eye? Does she prefer casual, rugged clothing, or is she swathed in silks and jewels? "My character has a massive scar across the left side of her face, gained battling Wyld barbarians in the Far North," is far more evocative than, "My character has one dot of Appearance."

### Social Ties

Characters don't live in a vacuum. Think about the people in your character's life. Are her parents still alive? Does she have a spouse? A lover? Children? What about friends and neighbors? Does she own slaves? Or was she a slave before her Exaltation? How have these relationships changed since she's become one of the Chosen? Do her husband and children now shun and fear her as something no longer human? Do her neighbors now expect protection from child-eating hobgoblins and the Realm's tax collectors? In what sort of social milieu does your character live?

#### You Look Like Some Sort of Foreigner

When depicting your character's appearance, behavior and personality, keep her homeland in mind. Both the Realm and the Threshold contain vastly diverse peoples and cultures. A character's homeland has an impact on her appearance, her attitudes and her beliefs. The range of diversity is huge in Creation. In addition to the many colors of skin, eyes and hair found in our world, blue hair is common in the West, green is found in the West and the Haltan Republic, and the diminutive, hairless, panda-spotted Djala people live in the South. Creation's cultures are equally diverse. People from different regions have vastly dissimilar opinions about the Dragon-Blooded's proper role, women's place in society and the appropriate uses of slaves and intoxicants. Take a moment to reread the descriptions of each region's inhabitants and customs from Chapter One.

## The Prelude

The moment of Exaltation, the character's transformation into one of the Unconquered Sun's personal champions, is the defining instant in her life. However, it's difficult to understand what that transformation means without experiencing her previous mortal life.

The prelude depicts the character's mortal life, her Exaltation and her reaction to this momentous event. The player and Storyteller establish important moments of the character's history during this one-on-one storytelling session, compressing many years of life into a sequence of short vignettes highlighting pivotal events in the character's life.

### Storytelling the Prelude

Keep the player focused during the prelude. Players might want a shared prelude if their characters are siblings or longtime friends, but otherwise, run preludes one person at a time. Try to run the prelude between the character-creation session and the first session of play. If it must take place during a session, make sure to focus solely on the player whose prelude you are running.

You can run one or two detailed vignettes, spending as much as an hour on each one, or you can run half a dozen short scenes lasting 15-20 minutes. You and the player should work out which option sounds better before the prelude begins. You needn't run each prelude the same way. Some players prefer a few in-depth scenes, while others want a broad overview.

In either case, your goal is to make the player respond to a variety of situations typical of the character's existence, giving the player a concentrated sense of what the character's life was like and a feel for roleplaying her. The prelude also allows the player to explore the rules and setting. Give her room to do so, but try to avoid combat. If combat does occur, simply describe the outcome. Don't accidentally kill the character before the game starts!

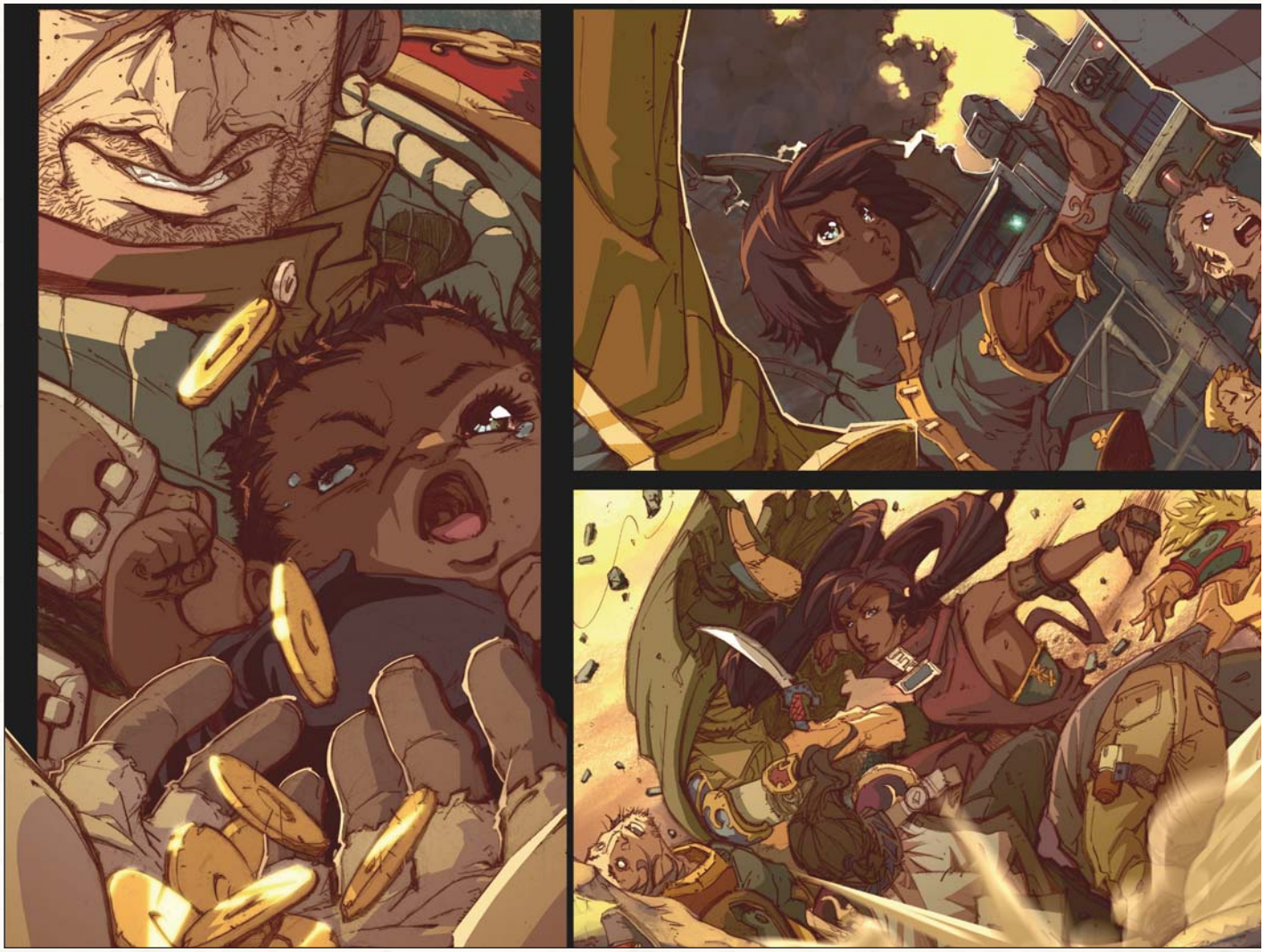
The player might wish for different traits due to decisions made and actions taken during the prelude. If so, let her change some things to better fit her concept, but don't allow players to simply shift traits around to make invincible characters. Explore the character's traits in the prelude. (How did she acquire her artifact or manse?) If she has allies or followers, run a vignette showing how they met.

Allow the player to interrupt and offer input. This is her character, and she should not have to deal with elements she finds intolerable. Finally, give the character's Exaltation all the detail it needs. Evoke the intensity of the moment as the character's newfound power wells up within her and she harnesses it for the first time. Give the character a chance in the prelude to use her fantastic new powers. Make it clear that the character has irrevocably crossed a line and that her life will never be the same.

## Questions and Answers

Keep in mind the following questions before and during the prelude. If you answer any before the prelude, tell your Storyteller the answers so she can work with you. Answering questions about the character's mortal life and about her life after Exaltation are both important in order to fully understanding her.

• **How old are you?** Almost no Chosen go through their Exaltations before puberty, and most change in their mid-20s. Exaltation rarely happens after 35, but it has been recorded as late as 60. Also, the majority of those who are Exalted are in good health and do not have any crippling



injuries or deformities. There are exceptions, but almost all Exalts are suited to serve of the Unconquered Sun both on and off the battlefield.

• **What was your family life like?** Were you raised by both parents? Did one or both of them die? Do you have brothers or sisters? Are you married? To more than one person? Do you have any children? Is anyone else in your family one of the Chosen?

• **Where are you from?** Where your character comes from will have an impact on his appearance, his native language, and many customs and attitudes.

• **How were you Exalted?** Where did it happen? Did others see it? Did you injure—or kill—anyone? Did you find the experience terrifying? Exhilarating? Both? Did the Unconquered Sun appear to you? If so, what did he say?

• **When did you meet your companions?** Do you get along with your companions? How long have you known them? How did you meet? Did you know any of them before Exaltation? Do you share any goals? Do you all work for the same city or organization? Are there rivalries among you?

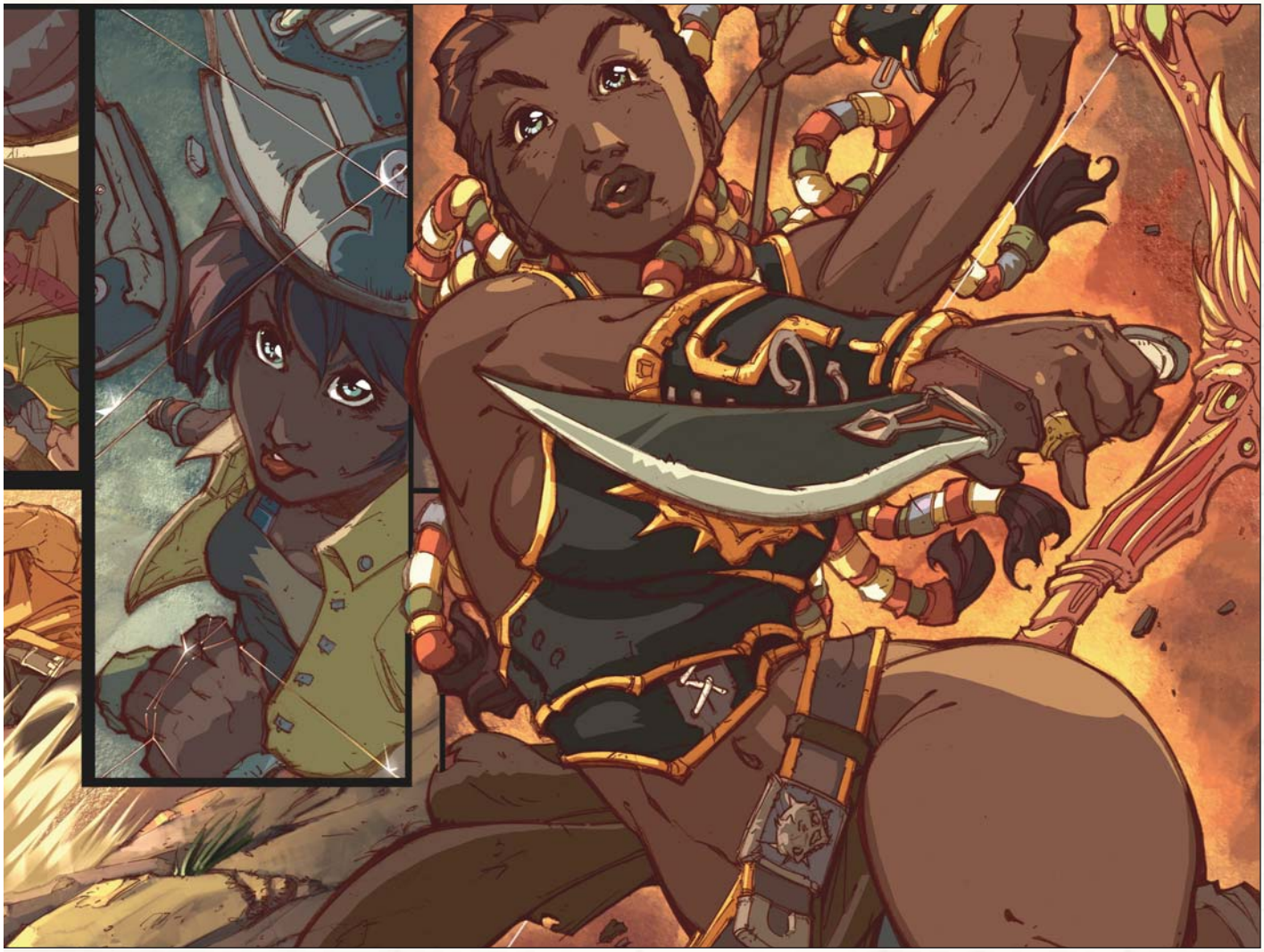
• **How has power changed you?** Your character, born mortal, now commands vast power. How has she reacted? Do you believe your power gives you the right to rule those around you?

• **What do you think of mortals?** Now that you command great power and might live for over a millennium, what do you think of ordinary mortals? Are they less powerful beings under your protection, are they pawns for you to use to further your epic goals, or are you still adjusting to no longer being one?

• **What motivates you to be a hero?** Do you seek riches or undying glory? Do you simply enjoy exercising your impressive powers? Is your agenda based on revenge, social justice or ethnic and religious loyalties?

• **Who or what do you worship?** Has your Exaltation caused you to revere the Unconquered Sun? Do you still hold some previous set of beliefs, or do you believe mortals should worship your godlike power?

• **What would drive you to commit murder?** Do you casually slay anyone who denies your divinity, or is life precious and yours to protect? Is killing an Exalt or a god any more or less acceptable than killing a mortal?



## The Circle

Numbers are an advantage, and no young Solar Exalt excels at everything. To fulfill their destiny and reestablish a just and glorious Solar Deliberative, the Chosen must work together. Ancient manuscripts refer to groups of Solars bound by oaths of loyalty, friendship and blood, their vows sanctified by a witness of the Eclipse Caste. These bands of glorious heroes were once known as circles. A circle's oaths were tested and tried by battles and quests, until peril and struggle forged the companions' bond into an unbreakable brotherhood.

The returning Solars find themselves compelled to seek their kind. In addition to other obvious benefits, only other Solar Exalted can truly understand the wonder and challenges of being suddenly made champions of the Unconquered Sun and charged with rebuilding the world.

During the First Age, a circle including one member of each caste was known as a perfect circle. This type of circle was considered the most auspicious, believed to be blessed by the Unconquered Sun. Today, the Dragon-Blooded consider a perfect circle the most dangerous possible grouping of Anathema.

Unfortunately, the modern Solars are scattered across the world, and it's far from easy to find one member of each caste. Many modern circles lack the numbers or the diversity for a perfect circle. Most don't care, however, as any gathering of Solar Exalted has the potential to completely change Creation.

### Creating the Circle

The circle is the series' center, around which everything else revolves. Characters can join, and they can die, but the circle remains. The players must agree on the sort of circle they want to play, as that directly impacts the direction of the game. If a player decides she doesn't like her character two stories into a series, she can easily switch to a new one. If the players decide they don't like the circle's nature, however, it may be necessary to completely overhaul the series.

The exact nature of the circle is crucial to the series' direction. Some circles are simply bands of Exalts who work well together, while others have specific long-term plans—from truly vast goals such as ridding Creation of shadowlands to more modest ones like conquering and ruling the Southeast. The players and the Storyteller should discuss the sort of circle they want before the series begins.

The players should also discuss their circle's beginnings and perhaps play out their characters' initial meetings and decision to form a circle. The circle prelude should be done after all the individual preludes are finished, perhaps as part of the first session of play. When playing this scene, it is important that the characters all actually end up as members of the circle. If a character or two simply isn't compatible, renegotiate the type of circle, or have their players create characters who are more compatible.

Leadership and decision-making is important within the circle. Some circles work by consensus, but most have a distinct leader. Players can either decide on a leader ahead of time or allow one to emerge naturally once they see how their characters interact. These options can work equally well, as long as the leader's player is fair and avoids having his character take actions that cause the other players to have less fun.

# Character Creation Example

Charles is making a character for Becca's new **Exalted** series. Becca wants to start play in the Southern metropolis of Chiaroscuro and focus on the politics of the South, after the Scarlet Empress's disappearance. Discussing it, the players decide their characters want to free the South from the Realm's control and will attempt to conquer and rule it as a newly reborn Solar Deliberative.

## Step One: Concept

Thinking on the series theme, Charles envisions his character: a diplomat and occasional spy from Chiaroscuro who's spent several years learning to hate the Realm's haughty excesses. Since Chiaroscuro has a slightly *Arabian Nights* feel, he decides to name his character Abu Nuwas, after a character from an Arab folktale. Abu is clever, quick and witty.

Charles must next decide upon a caste. After considering the Eclipse Caste, he decides to emphasize Abu's spy work over his diplomacy and so chooses the Night Caste. Abu used to gather intelligence on the Realm's plans for the Tri-Khan (Chiaroscuro's ruler). As he writes down Abu's anima power, Charles decides that, when iconic, Abu's anima appears as a swift and silent desert owl, ghostly white with eyes that glow an unearthly purple. Charles also decides Abu's Motivation is protecting the common people. Abu, who is from a poor family, wants to defend people from the excesses of the Realm and from others who abuse their power.

## Step Two: Attributes

After deciding upon Abu's basic concept, Charles now assigns his dots. Since Abu is a quick thinker and exceptionally observant, Charles chooses Mental Attributes as Abu's primary category. Because Charles wants Abu to be a bit of a swashbuckler, he makes Physical Attributes secondary, leaving Social Attributes tertiary.

Having eight points for Mental Attributes, Charles assigns three dots to Perception and three to Wits to fit his concept. This leaves two dots for Intelligence—making him somewhat smarter than average. Abu's Mental Attributes are Perception 4, Intelligence 3 and Wits 4.

With six points for Physical Attributes, Charles assigns three to Dexterity. Abu can ghost past guards and slip documents out of a diplomat's pouch without anyone noticing. Since Abu's impoverished upbringing inured him to hardship, Charles assigns two dots to Stamina. This leaves one point for Strength: fine because he sees Abu as slightly built and not particularly strong. Abu's Physical Attributes are Strength 2, Dexterity 4 and Stamina 3.

Finally, Charles knows Abu's looks are undistinguished, excellent for a spy. He assigns one of his four Social dots to Appearance. With three dots left, he decides Abu should be both likeable and devious. He spends four bonus points on a dot of Charisma, allowing him to put two points in

## Grim and Gritty: Playing Humans

Instead of mighty Solar Exalted, your players might wish to play as ordinary mortal residents of Creation. For mortals, Creation is a terrifying and dangerous place, and playing such characters is unlike playing one of the Exalted. To a mortal hero, ordinary bandits can be deadly, and a simple fever can swiftly end a mortal's life. Although the sort of mortal characters described here are above-average heroes, the Solar Exalted are demigods, and the newly Exalted vastly outclass even the most experienced mortal. As a result, every character in a series should be Exalted or every character should be mortal. A mixed series would be vastly unfair to the mortal characters. For mortals, modify character generation as follows.

### Step One: Concept

The concept is key to an interesting, three-dimensional character, mortal or Exalted. Mortals select Motivation as normal, but no caste. Heroic mortals still require heroic Motivations, but not ones as grandiose as those of the Exalted.

### Step Two: Attributes

Prioritize Attributes as normal, but with fewer points than one of the Chosen. Mortals get only six dots to spend in their primary category, four dots in their secondary and three dots in their tertiary. This is a lot for a mortal. While not Exalted, your character is still relatively powerful. Ordinary mortals have four dots in one Attribute category and three dots in the other two.

### Step Three: Abilities

Unlike Exalted, mortals don't have Caste Abilities. Heroic mortals get 25 dots to distribute among their Abilities, while normal mortals get 18.

A heroic mortal may choose one Ability as a Favored Ability, complete with the discount. The character excels in this Ability above all others, but he can never have any other Ability rated higher. The Favored Ability must be equal to or greater than every other Ability he possesses. The Exalted aren't similarly restricted—simply another advantage of the Chosen over mortals.

Mortals may purchase specialties as normal.

### Step Four: Advantages

Mortals select Virtues as normal but lack the Great Curse, so they have no Virtue Flaw or Limit Breaks. Mortals receive five dots for Backgrounds and may not purchase the Artifact or Manse Backgrounds without Storyteller permission. If a mortal controls one of these, it's a plot device, not an object for him to use. Mortals cannot purchase Charms.

### Step Five: Finishing Touches

Mortals calculate Willpower as normal. All mortals have an Essence of 1, not upgradeable with bonus points.

Mortals choose Intimacies equal to their Compassion as normal.

To compensate for the vast gulf between mortals and the Chosen, mortal characters get 21 bonus points. These points may be spent on any traits except Charms and Essence. The Storyteller may impose further restrictions depending on the story she's running.

**Optional Rule:** The Storyteller may have players write up heroic mortal characters and then roleplay through their Exaltations. Unlike a prelude, this story can last several sessions, giving the group a better feel for the characters prior to Exaltation and giving the players a chance to flesh out their characters as people. This makes transition to the ranks of the Exalted even more dramatic.

To transform a heroic mortal into an Exalt, add four dots to Attributes and two to Abilities and Backgrounds; mark down Caste Abilities, select four more Favored Abilities, choose 10 Charms, increase Essence to 2, choose a Virtue Flaw, and adjust the character's health levels accordingly.

both Manipulation and Charisma. Abu's Social Attributes are Charisma 3, Manipulation 3 and Appearance 2.

## Step Three: Abilities

Charles notes Abu's Caste Abilities. For the Night Caste, these are Athletics, Awareness, Dodge, Larceny and Stealth. Charles needn't place points in these, but Abu has a natural affinity with them. Next, Charles selects Favored Abilities. Since Abu is a diplomat, Charles chooses both Socialize and Bureaucracy. Abu grew up accustomed to hardship, so he chooses Resistance. Because Abu is a keen observer, Charles also selects Investigation. Abu can defend himself against

pursuers, so finally Charles selects Thrown. Charles must assign at least one dot to each of these five Abilities. Charles must then place the remaining 23 of his 28 Ability dots, and at least five more must be in Caste or Favored Abilities. Charles concentrates on Caste and Favored Abilities first. He places two dots each in Investigation and Stealth, all necessary for Abu to be a successful diplomat and a good spy. He likewise adds three dots in Awareness and Larceny to show that Abu is good at observation and thievery. He leaves Bureaucracy and Socialize with a single dot, as Abu's diplomacy is mostly paper-pushing. He also leaves Resistance, representing Abu's upbringing, at one dot, as he lives considerably better now. Because Abu skillfully gets into places and can defend himself, he places one dot in Athletics, two dots in Thrown and three in Dodge. Charles has placed 22 dots in Caste and Favored Abilities, well over the minimum 10.

Next, Charles realizes a diplomat should know several languages, so he places three dots in Linguistics. In addition to his native language family of Flametongue (with a Delzahn specialty of +1 as it is the tongue of the people of Chiaroscuro), Abu knows High and Low Realm, as well as Riverspeak (for talking to Guild representatives). Of his remaining three dots, he puts one in Ride (Abu needs to ride for state visits), one in Melee (Abu can defend himself at close quarters), and one in Medicine, because Abu needs to be able to treat his own wounds. Charles decides to spend one bonus point on an Awareness specialty of Listening. Since Awareness is a Caste Ability, Abu gains two dots in this specialty.

## Step Four: Advantages

Charles now selects Abu's Backgrounds. To represent his position in Chiaroscuro's government and the good living he makes from it, Charles takes three dots in Backing and three dots in Resources. He decides Abu should have both an artifact and a hearthstone. Charles thinks orichalcum hearthstone bracers would be useful because they improve Abu's Dodge and compensate for his low Strength, so he places two dots in Artifact. Since he has already spent six of Abu's seven points in Backgrounds, he needs to use one bonus point to make this purchase. To help Abu survive the difficulties he will face, he selects a four-dot manse that produces a gem of adamant skin for five additional bonus points. Charles has spent 11 of Abu's 15 bonus points. Abu's Backgrounds are Artifact 2, Backing 3, Manse 4 and Resources 3.

Next, Charles must purchase Abu's Charms. Of his 10 Charms, at least five must be from Caste or Favored Abilities. Talking to Becca, he realizes this series will contain both court intrigue and fighting, so he first acquires Charms that will keep Abu alive. Charles knows he wants Abu to have the Reflexive Dodge Charm Shadow Over Water, and he also purchases a Dodge Excellency Charm, Second Dodge Excellency. Next, he takes the Resistance Charm Body-Mending Meditation, which (combined with his hearthstone) lets Abu heal from all but the most serious injuries in an hour or two. Finally, because Abu is tough, he takes the Resistance Charm Ox-Body Technique and chooses to give Abu two additional -1 health levels.

To improve upon Abu's already keen senses, Charles takes the Awareness Charms First Awareness Excellency and Keen Hearing and Touch Technique. Since five of the six Charms he has chosen are from Caste or Favored Abilities, he can choose the last four from any desired Ability. To allow Abu to move swiftly and remain unseen during spying expeditions, Charles purchases the Stealth Charm Second Stealth Excellency and the Athletics Charm Graceful Crane Stance. To help Abu with the sort of court intrigues a diplomat and spy will regularly face, Charles takes the Socialize Charm Second Socialize Excellency. Knowing Abu should be able to breach any lock with supernatural ease and steal documents from diplomatic pouches, he chooses the Larceny Charms Lock-Opening Touch and Flawless Pickpocketing Technique. This adds up to 11 Charms, so Charles spends Abu's last four bonus points purchasing Flawless Pickpocketing Technique.

Now Charles assigns Abu's Virtues. For protecting the common people, a primary Virtue of Compassion makes sense, so Charles gives it two dots. Charles decides Abu is moderately brave and rather impulsive, so he assigns one dot to Valor and none to Temperance. Abu is exceedingly passionate about combating oppression, so Charles will place the last two Virtue points into Conviction. Abu Nuwas' Virtues are Compassion 3, Conviction 3, Temperance 1 and Valor 2.

Charles must then give Abu a Virtue Flaw. Since Compassion is Abu's primary Virtue, Charles decides Compassionate Martyrdom suits Abu's character.

## Step Five: Finishing Touches

Charles calculates Abu's Willpower. Abu's two highest Virtues are Compassion and Conviction, at 3 each. Charles adds them together for a total of 6.

Charles also picks three Intimacies for Abu. He chooses Chiaroscuro (Abu's home nation, for which he is a spy), Living the High Life (he secretly enjoys eating and living well), and Hatred of the Realm (he loathes their occupation policies). These are matters about which it is not easy to persuade Abu Nuwas but that also motivate him and could be used as part of a trap or argument.

Abu's starting Essence is 2. Not having any Charms that require Essence of 3 or higher, Charles leaves it alone. If he wanted to raise it, he would need to drop things purchased with bonus points.

Next, Charles calculates Abu's Essence pools. For his Personal Essence pool, Charles multiplies Abu's Essence by three and then adds his Willpower for a total of 12 ([2 x 3] + 6). For his Peripheral Essence pool, Charles multiplies Abu's Essence by seven and then adds his Willpower and the sum of his Virtue ratings for a total of 29 ([2 x 7] + 6 + [3 + 3 + 1 + 2]).

Since Charles purchased Ox-Body Technique, Abu has two -1 health levels in addition to the standard seven health levels all Solars possess. Since he has already spent all 15 bonus points, Charles is done with the mechanics of generating Abu's character.

Now, he works out Abu's description and history. He decides that Abu is exceptionally average looking—average height for the Delzahn, with typical dark olive skin, black hair and dark eyes. Abu, in his mid-20s, has worked for the Tri-Khan for the last six years. He dresses well, but in a completely ordinary manner. Abu ostensibly specialized in working out the minutiae of trade agreements but spent much of his time listening at

doors and sneaking looks at private correspondence. Although he is well spoken and quite engaging when he wishes to be, he is also skilled at remaining unnoticed. Yet Abu can rarely resist the opportunity to peek at a potentially useful document, even if he runs the risk of getting caught. He is rarely found without several exceptional throwing knives on his person, and he wears a short sword when protocol allows.

Abu Nuwas grew up in the slums of Chiaroscuro, but he caught the eye of one of the Tri-Khan's agents at 13 when he picked his pocket with great skill. Impressed with young Abu's talent and daring, the spy offered him the choice of being given over to the magistrates or becoming his apprentice. Abu took the obvious choice. Spying upon the representatives of the Realm, he learned to hate them for the heavy-handed way with which they dealt with the people of the Threshold. His Exaltation came while he was being pursued by the Realm's soldiers, after being caught in a senior trade legate's private chamber. Abu ducked into an ancient passageway and ended up in a series of abandoned tunnels under Chiaroscuro, where he found a First Age manse containing both the hearthstone and the hearthstone bracers he now possesses. He grabbed both and had a brief but overwhelming vision wherein the Unconquered Sun told him he had been chosen for greatness. Afterward, he easily defeated the pursuing guards and hid their bodies. Abu works with the other members of his circle in order to drive the Realm from Chiaroscuro.

# Character Creation Summary

## Character Creation Process

### • Step One: Character Concept

Choose concept, caste, and Motivation.
Note caste's anima powers.

### • Step Two: Attributes

Note that all Attributes start with one dot before you add any.
Prioritize the three categories: Physical, Social, Mental (8/6/4)
Choose Physical Attributes: Strength, Dexterity, Stamina
Choose Social Attributes: Charisma, Manipulation, Appearance
Choose Mental Attributes: Perception, Intelligence, Wits

### • Step Three: Abilities

Note Caste Abilities.
Select Favored Abilities (5; may not be the same as Caste Abilities).
Choose Abilities (28—at least 10 must be from Caste or Favored Abilities; at least one must be in each Favored Ability; none may be higher than 3 without spending bonus points).

### • Step Four: Advantages

Choose Backgrounds (7—none may be higher than 3 without spending bonus points), Charms (10—at least five must be from Caste or Favored Abilities), Virtues (5—none may be higher than 4 without spending bonus points) and Virtue Flaw.

### • Step Five: Finishing Touches

Record Essence (2), Willpower (add the total of two highest Virtues—may not start at higher than 8 unless at least two Virtues are 4 or higher), Personal Essence ([Essence x 3] + Willpower), Peripheral Essence ([Essence x 7] + Willpower + [the sum of character's Virtues]), and health levels (7, plus any gained from Charms).

### • Bonus Points

Bonus points (15) may be spent at any time during character creation.

## Sample Concepts

- **Bureaucrat**—record keeper, tax collector, clerk
- **Craftsman**—carpenter, swordsmith, cobbler
- **Criminal**—bandit lord, pirate, con artist
- **Entertainer**—courtesan, musician, gladiator
- **Merchant**—caravan owner, slave trader, moneylender
- **Priest**—shaman, initiate of the Immaculate Order, Illuminated cultist
- **Savant**—royal historian, healer, engineer
- **Soldier**—city guardsman, mercenary, barbarian warrior
- **Thaumaturge—**potion and charm seller, wandering exorcist, court soothsayer
- **Worker**—farmer, manservant, dock worker

## Castes

- **Dawn:** Masters of all forms of warfare, the Children of the Dawn were once the generals and champions of the Celestial armies. The Unconquered Sun chooses the Dawn Caste from those with a talent for the arts of combat and war.

**Caste Abilities:** Archery, Martial Arts, Melee, Thrown, and War
**Anima Powers:** May use their animas to appear awesome and terrifying for a scene.

- **Zenith:** Once the leaders and priests of the Solar Exalted, the Golden Bulls are priest-kings, prophets and mystics. The Unconquered Sun chooses the Zenith Caste from those who thirst for righteousness and justice, as well as from among the leaders of men.

**Caste Abilities:** Integrity, Performance, Presence, Resistance, and Survival
**Anima Powers:** May use their animas to burn the bodies of the dead and to protect themselves from creatures of darkness.

# Character Creation Summary

- **Twilight:** Scholars, sorcerers and crafters of the Solar Exalted, the Children of Twilight are thinkers and doers. The Unconquered Sun chooses the Twilight Caste from those who use their training and scholarship to transform the world.

**Caste Abilities:** Craft, Investigation, Lore, Medicine, and Occult

**Anima Powers:** May use their animas as protective shields.

- **Night:** Lords of stealth and trickery, the Concealing Shadows once served as the spies and police of the Old Realm. The Unconquered Sun chooses the Night Caste from those who excel at entering places where they are not wanted and finding unconventional solutions to problems.

**Caste Abilities:** Athletics, Awareness, Dodge, Larceny, and Stealth

**Anima Powers:** May use their animas as cloaks against detection, and may mute their animas' display when using Essence.

- **Eclipse:** Diplomats and bureaucrats, the Crowned Suns kept the Old Realm running smoothly. The Unconquered Sun chooses the Eclipse Caste from those who love to travel and who excel at all forms of communication.

**Caste Abilities:** Bureaucracy, Linguistics, Ride, Sail, and Socialize

**Anima Powers:** May use their animas to sanctify oaths and contracts and to provide diplomatic immunity when dealing with spirits, demons and the Fair Folk.

## Motivation

Choose a driving and epic goal for your character.

## Virtues

- **Compassion**—Empathy and forgiveness.
- **Conviction**—Emotional endurance.
- **Temperance**—Self-control and clear-headedness.
- **Valor**—Courage and bravery.

## Backgrounds

- **Allies**—Aides and friends who help in tasks.
- **Artifact**—Wondrous devices of the First Age.
- **Backing**—Standing and rank in an organization of power and influence.
- **Contacts**—Information sources and people in useful places.
- **Cult**—Mortals who worship you.
- **Familiar—**An animal companion.
- **Followers**—Mortals who look to you for leadership.
- **Influence**—Your pull in the world around you.
- **Manse**—A place of power and Essence.
- **Mentor**—A teacher and instructor.
- **Resources**— Material goods and money.

## Bonus Points

| Trait | Cost |
|---|---|
| Attribute | 4 |
| Ability | 2 (1 if a Favored or Caste Ability) |
| Background | 1 (2 if the Background is being raised above 3) |
| Specialty | 1 (2 per 1 if in a Favored or Caste Ability) |
| Virtue | 3 |
| Willpower | 2 |
| Intimacies | 3 to increase starting Intimacies to (Willpower + Compassion). |
| Essence | 7 |
| Charms | 5 (4 if in a Favored or Caste Ability) |

TRAITOR TO SONDOK! DIE!!!
AAAHH!
YOU'LL PAY FOR THAT!
LADY SONDOK WILL HAVE YOUR SOUL!

I DON'T WORK FOR SONDOK ANYMORE...

# CHAPTER THREE
# TRAITS

Traits detail your character's capabilities, strengths and weaknesses. These values give you a good idea of what tasks your character excels at and what feats are difficult or impossible for her to perform. Because focusing on minute and niggling details is antithetical to epic fantasy roleplaying, traits in **Exalted** are quite broad. There are not very many traits, and each one represents aptitude in a wide area or even several similar areas. The last chapter outlined the process of character creation, while this chapter contains descriptions of the many traits you may choose for your character. The exception is magical traits. These are described in Chapter Five: Charms, Combos and Sorcery.

## Motivation

Motivation is a short description of your character's primary goal. It's what drives your character to go out and be a hero, and it is part of the reason the Unconquered Sun chose her for Exaltation. Most mortals have relatively mundane and unexceptional Motivations such as "become wealthy," "marry someone nice and have a happy family," or "live a quiet life on a tropical island." Celestial Exalted are Chosen specifically because they have the seeds of greatness within them. The Chosen of the Sun (and all other Celestial Exalted) cannot have mundane or pedestrian Motivations—by their very nature, Celestial Exalted are epic heroes, and their goals must be similarly epic. Everyone who is Exalted deserves it. Your character might not have been wealthy, powerful or famous, but everyone who is Exalted already had a soul large enough to accept a fragment of divine power.

Possible epic Motivations for one of the Chosen of the Sun include: "restore the Solar Deliberative," "destroy the Realm and slay all of the Dynasts," "make a lasting peace between the Fair Folk and inhabitants of Creation," "become the leader of the Guild and transform it into a tool of the Solar Exalted," "redeem the soul of one of the Abyssal Exalted," "become widely acclaimed as the best thief, musician, assassin or diplomat in all of Creation," "kill a specific powerful deity," "end slavery in Creation," or "protect the inhabitants of my nation from harm." Many other Motivations are possible, and in most series, every character will have a different

Motivation. However, every character's Motivation must be large and must be something that will take many sessions of roleplaying to accomplish. Not only is a goal like killing the mortal mayor of a small town insufficiently epic, it is also far too easy for one of the Chosen of the Sun to accomplish.

When deciding on a Motivation, consider what in your character's history or concept pushes her to redefine the world according to her hopes and dreams. A compelling, dramatic Motivation can give you a lot of mileage for roleplay in any series. Perhaps a squad of Dragon-Blooded soldiers killed your character's family when she Exalted, and every blow she strikes against the Realm's minions is a blow struck for her family. Your character's Motivation must answer the question, "Why does she do the things that become the stuff of legend?"

## Completing a Motivation

In a game of epic heroes able to affect the entirety of Creation, characters can slay gods and Deathlords or eventually conquer and rule any nation (including the mighty Realm itself). Completing such a Herculean task should take many roleplaying sessions and will certainly require much assistance by the other members of the character's circle. Completing a Motivation is an incredibly important event in any character's life and should be as much of a defining moment as the events that caused the character to choose that particular Motivation in the first place.

Completing a long-held Motivation is a sufficiently powerful event that accomplishing it allows the character to increase her Permanent Essence simply by spending the necessary experience points, without having to meditate for several months. (See pp. 273-274 for information about increasing Essence during play.) However, the Storyteller can veto this gain if she feels that the Motivation was insufficiently epic or if completing it was too quick or too easy. At this point, you choose a new Motivation for your character, free of any experience point cost.

This new Motivation is often related to the old one, but characters do sometimes radically switch tracks. After killing a Deathlord, a character might want to slay all of the other Deathlords, or she might avoid anything connected with the Deathlords or the shadowlands again. Instead, she might attempt to bring the worship of the Unconquered Sun to everyone living in the West or to cause the Silver Pact of the Lunar Exalted to ally itself with the newly returned Solar Exalted. Only you can decide which sort of new Motivation makes the most sense for your character.

## Changing Motivations

While some characters gain a new Motivation only after they complete their current one, others eventually learn that their current Motivation is either impractical or in some way fundamentally flawed. For example, a character might become close friends with an outcaste member of the Dragon-Blooded and learn that the Terrestrial Exalted are not all evil monsters who should be slain en masse. Alternatively, a character who wished to make peace between the inhabitants of Creation and the Fair Folk might come to believe that the Fair Folk are actually inherently predatory beings who cannot coexist peacefully with either Creation or those who dwell within it. At this point, the character needs a new Motivation. This Motivation might be an altered version of her previous one (end the rule of the Terrestrial Exalted instead of slaying them all) or antithetical to her previous Motivation (destroy all of the Fair Folk instead of attempting to make peace with them). Alternatively, the new Motivation might be completely unrelated, as most often happens when a character experiences some overwhelming event that completely shifts her priorities. A character who visits Malfeas and discovers the horrors there might decide that the threat demons represent to Creation is far greater than the threat posed by the Guild she had previously vowed to destroy.

### What If My Motivation Isn't Epic Enough?

Many new **Exalted** players are unfamiliar with the epic scale of this game and choose Motivations that are somewhat less grand. Killing the Dragon-Blooded satrap of a Threshold kingdom or protecting a single town from all harm are typical examples of such Motivations. As the player learns what her character can do, and as her character gains experience points, she is likely to realize that she thought too small. At this point, she has two options, she can either choose another Motivation or she can expand on this Motivation. Protecting a town from harm can easily grow to become a desire to become the protector of an entire nation or even an entire quarter of the Threshold, and slaying a single satrap can grow to become the desire to free all of the Northern coastal states from the Realm's control. A player may expand (but not change) her character's Motivation without spending experience points if the Motivation proves to be insufficiently epic. However, each expansion after the first costs two experience points, just like any other change in Motivation.

Changing Motivation is a profound and important alteration in the character's life. It should never be done casually, and it should happen quite rarely. It is such a significant alteration in your character that you must spend 2 experience points every time you wish to change your character's Motivation. Storytellers are also free to veto frivolous or overly rapid Motivation changes.

## Regaining Willpower Using Motivation

Taking a significant action that brings your character closer to completing her Motivation can allow her to regain Willpower. Anytime a character spends an entire scene performing some action that directly brings her closer to completing her Motivation, she regains one point of Willpower. For example, if a character's Motivation is to transform a large nation into a just and fairly run polity, and if she spent a scene judging crimes and administering justice in a city in that nation, she would recover one point of Willpower.

## Intimacies

Characters can have things they are loyal to that are not their primary motivation in life. These secondary motivations are called Intimacies. Intimacies take the form of a noun—it can be a person, place, idea or any other sort of thing—in which the character feels invested. A character can normally have a number of Intimacies equal to her (Willpower + Compassion), but they don't automatically "fall off" if the character has too many.

Instead, the Storyteller can remove whatever one she deems is least important to the character at any point after the character wakes up from a good restful sleep. Over the night, an Intimacy has slipped from the character's unbearable burden. Players should not form and forget several Intimacies a day just to frustrate the Storyteller and give themselves an excuse to roll dice, nor should they take advantage of the system to gain 27 Intimacies in a day and then insist that only one can fall off every night. That is not the point. The point is to be able to say, "My character loves his horse, his sword and his country."

Normally, Intimacies don't mean all that much. Serving them does not gain the character Willpower or Essence, for example. Instead, they are a way to protect certain things the character cares about from socially adept characters (see the Social Combat rules on pp. 169-175), while providing those same socialites with handles they can use to manipulate the character. Intimacies are also often the target of beneficial magic. For example, there is a Solar Charm that prevents the character from betraying an Intimacy to a great ideal or society. These Intimacies are very important, but the average character is going to have some pretty simple and infrequently challenged Intimacies. Only really worry about these in a very social game.

Starting characters normally get a number of starting Intimacies equal to their Compassion. Characters gain and lose Intimacies based on their Conviction. For more information on Intimacies, see pages 173-174 of the Drama chapter and page 201 of the Charms chapter.

# Caste

The Unconquered Sun created five different varieties of Solar Exalted, each with different duties, roles and innate predispositions. Called castes, each variety is named after one of the five states of the sun (Dawn, Zenith, Twilight, Night and Eclipse).

Since the Usurpation, the Immaculate Order has taught that the Solar Exalted are demons called Anathema. The Order has names for the castes of the Anathema, and today, most people only know these names for the five Solar castes. While characters may know themselves to be Zenith Caste from information gleaned from dreams and ancient texts, others will think of them as the Blasphemous.

## Anima Effects

All castes of Solar Exalted can channel Essence directly through their animas to generate magical effects. Every Solar Exalted can use her caste's anima power without special training.

In addition, any Solar Exalt can spend a single mote of Essence to:

- Cause her caste mark to glow brightly for a scene (as if the character has spent 4–7 motes of Peripheral Essence).
- Cause her anima to glow brightly enough to read by for a scene (as if the character had spent 8–10 motes of Peripheral Essence).
- Know the precise time of day for the rest of the scene.

# Dawn Caste

As the light of dawn burns away the dark of night, the warriors of the Dawn Caste destroy the enemies of light. During the First Age, the members of the Dawn Caste were the generals and champions of the Realm. They carried the Unconquered Sun's light to every darkened corner of Creation, guarded the borders of the Realm against the destructive forces of Malfeas and the Wyld and led the armies of the Realm to victory in battles that became legend. During the Usurpation, those few members of the Dawn Caste who survived the Dragon-Blooded's initial ambush fought to the death, slaying dozens or hundreds of their enemies before they finally fell to the weight of superior numbers.

Since their return, the Children of the Dawn are again gaining notice as the greatest warriors in all Creation. Unparalleled masters of every martial discipline, they fight the armies of the enemies of life as well as all who oppose the Solars' return. A warrior of the Dawn Caste can swiftly destroy dozens of lesser foes, while a group can lay waste to entire armies.

Only warriors are chosen to be members of the Dawn Caste. Yet master swordsmen comprise only one possibility. The Unconquered Sun also Exalts to the Dawn Caste brutal gang leaders, hulking gladiators, charismatic generals, swordsmiths of legendary skill, martial thaumaturges who provide combat support for armies and philosopher-monks who spend a lifetime perfecting a single martial art. The Bronze Tigers, as they are also known are most often the defenders of their circles as well as the ones who charges into battle to defeat their circles' enemies.

**Anima Banner:** Dawn Caste Solars are marked by a brilliant golden sunburst in the center of their brow. Their animas tend to be bright white and pale gold, sometimes tinged with red or light violet.

**Anima Effects:** By spending 10 motes of Essence, the character can appear huge and terrifying for the remainder of the scene (or until she chooses to let the effect dissipate). The character appears taller and fiercer, with a terrible visage, burning eyes and a deadly rending grasp. This effect comes into play automatically once the Solar spends 11-15 motes of Peripheral Essence.

Unless a creature has a Valor greater than the Ascending Sun's Essence, he is unable to look directly at the character or strongly oppose her. The Exalt gains +2 to her DV against affected characters. Players of mortals must also make Valor rolls for their characters when they are facing one of the Bronze Tigers. Mortals (and normal animals) that fail flee in terror of the wrathful apparition that confronts them. Golems, automata, the walking dead and other creatures that do not know fear cannot be affected by this anima power.

**Caste Abilities:** Members of the Dawn Caste excel in all forms of combat, armed and otherwise. They have a natural affinity for the Abilities of Archery, Martial Arts, Melee, Thrown and War.

**Associations:** The season of spring, the colors of saffron and lavender, the eastern direction, the element of fire, the full moon and the Maiden of Battles

**Sobriquets:** Ascending Suns, Children of the Dawn, Lightbringers, Bronze Tigers, Swords of Heaven, The Forsaken (derogatory)

**Concepts:** barbarian raider, city guardsman, combat sorcerer, daring young farm boy, famous pit fighter, grizzled veteran, heroic bandit, mercenary prince, swordsmith, warrior-scholar

### The Forsaken

The Realm's histories tell how the Anathema's foul patrons abandoned them. As the remainder of the Anathema fled in terror, these warriors died in hopeless battles against the righteous armies of the Terrestrial Exalted. Because both patrons and fellows abandoned this caste of Anathema in its time of greatest need, the Dragon-Blooded refer to the Dawn Caste as the Forsaken.

I swear by the Unconquered Sun that I will not rest until I have slain the undead monsters who destroyed my city. I will slay the mighty Deathlords themselves so that their servants will never again trouble the living.

# Zenith Caste

The brilliant noonday light of the Unconquered Sun banishes shadows and bathes Creation in its brilliance. Similarly, the Zenith Caste banishes the dark denizens of Malfeas and the Underworld, and the Zeniths' faith and shining example provides comfort and solace to the faithful masses. During the First Age, the Zenith Caste Solars were the priest-kings of the Realm. Its members led the Solar Deliberative, the Realm's original governing body, and served as intermediaries between the people of the Realm and their celestial patron. The populace looked to the Zenith Caste for leadership in both spiritual and temporal matters. During the Usurpation, those Zenith Castes who escaped the Terrestrials' ambush stood against their enemies like mountains, fortified by their unbreakable faith in the Unconquered Sun. Unfortunately, wind and water can wear away even the greatest of mountains—thus did the endless armies of the Terrestrials eventually wear them away to nothing.

Members of the Zenith Caste were the first of the Solars to return. Throughout the Threshold, tough and charismatic men and women arrived in cities and towns. They wandered out of the deserts and mountains or sailed in from the sea, preaching the glory of the Unconquered Sun. Today, the Pillars of the Sun are beginning to lead the people back toward righteousness and greatness and to confront the forces of darkness and corruption with faith, fist and fire.

Members of the Zenith Caste are chosen because they are natural leaders who thirst for righteousness and justice. They are willing to endure great hardship in the name of what they believe in. All members of this caste have been granted a deeply personal vision of the Unconquered Sun, and this vision kindles their passion and faith to new heights. Regardless of what he might currently believe, every member of the Zenith Caste is innately a priest of the Unconquered Sun. The members of the Zenith Caste are often both their circles' leaders and their tireless defenders.

**Anima Banner:** Zenith Caste Solars bear large, bright-gold circular caste marks. Their animas are a brilliant, burning white or a majestic gold.

**Anima Effects:** The Zenith Caste is empowered by the light of the Unconquered Sun himself. With but a touch, the Golden Bulls can burn the bodies of the fallen for one mote of Essence per body, sending the smoke (and soul) to Heaven and preventing the body from rising after death as a zombie or and the lower soul from rising as a hungry ghost. They are protected from and can strike down demons, the undead and

other creatures of darkness. As his action, a Zenith Exalt can channel 10 motes of Essence through his anima. He then glows with the holy fire of the Unconquered Sun and illuminates the area around him as brightly as if it were noon. This illumination extends for (Permanent Essence x 10) yards. For the remainder of the scene (or until he chooses to let the effect dissipate), he gains additional lethal and bashing soak equal to his Essence against attack by all creatures of darkness. In addition, when he has activated his anima power, his player can also add the Zenith's Essence to the minimum number of dice he rolls for any attack made against a creature of darkness (meaning that, in most cases, he will roll a minimum number of dice equal to twice the character's Essence). This effect comes into play automatically once the Solar spends 11-15 motes of Peripheral Essence.

**Caste Abilities:** Members of the Zenith Caste excel at surviving great hardships, both physical and mental. They also possess amazing skills of persuasion and inspiration. Zeniths have a natural affinity for the Abilities of Integrity, Performance, Presence, Resistance and Survival.

**Associations:** The season of summer, the colors of gold and cobalt blue, the southern direction, the element of earth, the half moon and the Maiden of Serenity

**Sobriquets:** Resplendent Suns, Pillars of the Sun, Solar Thunder, Golden Bulls, Hammers of Heaven, The Blasphemous (derogatory)

**Concepts:** Former priest or shaman of another god, brilliant astrologer, two-fisted laborer, wandering tinker, desert hermit, physician, peasant rebel, tax collector, pirate, old man on the mountain, runaway slave

### The Blasphemous

According to the theology of the Realm, these Anathema were unholy priests who forced their subjects to bow down and worship dark powers. The Dragon-Blooded abolished this foul cult and set up the pure faith of the Immaculate Order in its stead. These vile priests are referred to by the faithful as the Blasphemous.

All of Creation is now corrupt. The dead walk among the living, the beasts of the Wyld grow bolder every day, and the cruel Dynasts care nothing for the common people. The world was not always this way. Listen now to a tale of the wondrous First Age, and hear how we can rebuild this glorious era anew.

# Twilight Caste

Just as the evening sun holds back the coming night, the members of the Twilight Caste seek to enlighten the ignorant through all forms of learning, scholarship and craft. During the First Age, the Copper Spiders were the greatest scholars, sorcerers and artisans in the Realm. They created the unparalleled wonders and artifacts that were the foundation of the First Age's glory, and they used their magic and cunning to defend Creation from its enemies. During the Usurpation, the few members of the Twilight Caste who survived the initial betrayal spent their last days hiding their lore and artifacts from the traitorous Dragon-Blooded, so that the Solars might someday come into their power again.

Now that the Solars have returned, the Children of Twilight have again become beacons of knowledge and learning. They now work—and fight—to rebuild the glory of the First Age in this era of chaos and corruption. In addition to crafting artifacts to destroy their enemies, they defend towns and cities with sword and mind, and they teach their skills to anyone willing to learn.

The Unconquered Sun rarely chooses withered scholars who have poured the years of their life into the pages of dusty tomes. Instead, the Arrows of Heaven are scavengers, engineers, healers, detectives, thaumaturges and artisans who use their knowledge to accomplish impressive results. They possess not just a thirst for knowledge, but also a burning desire to use it.

**Anima Banner:** The caste mark of the Twilight Caste Solars is a golden circle, filled in with gold on the top, but having only an empty ring as its bottom half. Their animas tend to the most spectacular colors, containing bright golds as well as bright and dark reds, purples and even blues.

**Anima Effects:** Solar Exalted of the Twilight Caste may channel Essence through their animas as a last-ditch protective act. If after damage has been rolled, a Twilight Exalt will lose health levels, she may instead spend five motes of Essence to strengthen her anima in an attempt to resist the attack. Subtract one health level from the damage for every

dot of Essence she possesses. This effect can turn an otherwise deadly blow or reduce a weak attack to harmlessness. This effect comes into play automatically once the Solar spends 11-15 motes of Peripheral Essence.

**Caste Abilities:** Members of the Twilight Caste excel in the search for knowledge and in the application of that knowledge. They have a natural affinity for the Abilities of Craft, Investigation, Lore, Medicine and Occult.

**Associations:** The season of autumn, the colors of orange and black, the western direction, the element of wood, the crescent moon and the Maiden of Secrets

**Sobriquets:** Descending Suns, Children of Twilight, Solar Lightning, Copper Spiders, Arrows of Heaven, The Unclean (derogatory)

**Concepts:** ambitious courtesan, blacksmith, child prodigy, cunning courtier, destitute student, educated merchant, elderly scholar, insightful tailor, optimistic young scavenger, powerful shaman, traveling healer, village wise woman, warrior-sage

### The Unclean

Some of the Anathema made pacts with evil spirits and the powers of the Underworld to gain power. These warlocks traded the blood of innocent sacrifices, their bodies and their eternal souls to the forces of darkness in exchange for power. Yet, when the righteous armies of the Terrestrial Exalted rose up against them, their evil powers availed them not, and they were put to the sword with their fellows. For their traffic with wicked beings, these Anathema are known as the Unclean.

Look at the ruins around you—so much of the knowledge of the First Age has been lost. Listen to me and learn. I will show you how to sail the skies in vast skyships and ways to avoid both plagues and famine.

# Night Caste

When the Unconquered Sun sets, darkness claims the world. In the night, conspirators, criminals and foul spirits slink forth from their shadowy retreats. Exalted of the Night Caste defend Creation from these enemies and stalk their prey amidst a world of secrecy and lies.

During the First Age, the Night Caste oversaw the safety and security of the Realm and its citizens. The Concealing Shadows brought swift justice to places the armies of the light could not reach. Where brute force failed, the Night Caste prevailed through stealth and trickery. After the Usurpation, the surviving Night Caste melted into the shadows and waged a bloody guerilla war that lasted for centuries. With the Solars' return, the Hidden Suns once again stalk evildoers and silently assassinate Creation's enemies. No wall can keep them at bay, and no treachery escapes their gaze.

Members of the Night Caste are chosen from those who excel in stealth and guile and those who formulate clever solutions to difficult problems. Some are thieves or assassins, others are secretive scholars, clever city constables, master woodsmen, sly courtesans, fast-talking merchants or devious nobles. Anyone who favors skill and cunning over raw power could be Exalted into this caste.

Concealing Shadows frequently become their circles' eyes and ears, gathering information for the good of their groups. When a situation calls for unconventional solutions, it is the Night Caste that a circle often looks to for aid.

**Anima Banner:** Night Caste Solars have an empty golden ring as their caste mark. The animas of these Exalted are ghostly whites and golds, tinged with purple and purple-gray.

**Anima Effects:** The Concealing Shadows have more control over their animas than the average Solar Exalted do. The Hidden Suns can mute their animas, allowing them to exert their powers without the display of power. When a Night Caste Solar expends Peripheral Essence, she may spend additional motes in order to prevent the expenditure from adding to her anima banner. This ability does not allow the character to mute Essence displays caused by the use of sorcery, however. To prevent the motes spent on a Charm that is not Obvious (see p. 183) from adding to her anima banner, the character must add one mote to the cost of the Charm. When using an Obvious Charm, she must spend twice the normal mote cost of the Charm to prevent it from adding to her anima banner.

The Nightbringer may also extend her muted anima like an imperceptible veil around her. This extended anima last for an entire scene and costs 10 motes of Essence to evoke. The anima mutes the senses of those attempting to perceive her, as well as the evidence she leaves behind for those who would follow her trail. Shadows are darker, sounds are muffled, and scent and footprints are both much lighter than normal. This muting increases the difficulty of all rolls to notice or track the Exalted by half the character's Essence (round up), so long as this muted anima effect is active. Once the Solar spends 11-15 motes of Essence, though she is just as obvious as any other Exalt, her features are completely obscured by her anima display. Thus, assuming none of them saw her prior to her anima flaring, witnesses would be aware a Solar had been in their midst, but not her identity.

**Caste Abilities:** Members of the Night Caste excel at noticing that which others miss and in going places where they are not wanted. They have a natural affinity for the Abilities of Athletics, Awareness, Dodge, Larceny and Stealth.

**Associations:** The season of winter, the colors of violet and gray, the northern direction, the element of water, the new moon and the Maiden of Endings

**Sobriquets:** Hidden Suns, Concealing Shadows, Nightbringers, Iron Wolves, Daggers of Heaven, The Wretched (derogatory)

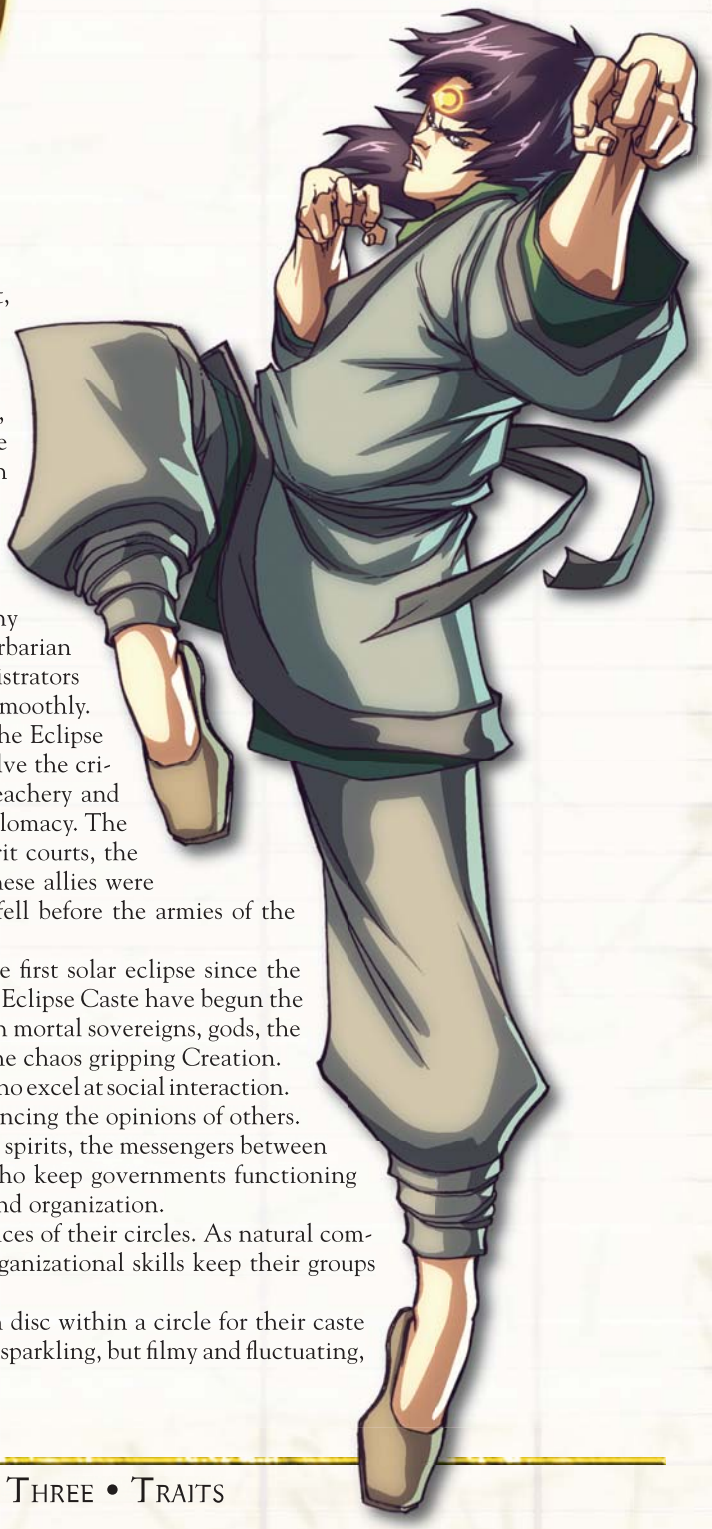
**Concepts:** bounty hunter, escaped fugitive, gang leader, highwayman, king of thieves, neglected youngest sister, nobleman's mistress, political spy, troubleshooter for hire

### The Wretched

Some among the Anathema would walk through the streets at night, listening at windows and peering through shutters. They hunted and killed any who spoke against the Anathema's twisted rule. The Immaculate writings say that these creatures were so hideous that they could not bear the touch of sunlight on their skins. For their unnatural looks and wicked demeanor, these Anathema are known as the Wretched.

Your death would plunge this kingdom into chaos, so you shall have one final chance. Should you ever torture another citizen of this land, you will die. Defy me, and some night you will awaken just as the last of your heart's blood spurts from your slit throat.

# Eclipse Caste



When the sun and the moon are in perfect alignment, the result is a spectacular solar eclipse. Visible all across Creation, it is an exceptionally auspicious event. The Unconquered Sun and Luna become one, and the day dims sufficiently to reveal the Five Maidens. At this moment, the unity of Heaven is visible for all to see. Similarly, the Eclipse Caste brings unity and order, and its members touch all corners of society, crossing boundaries and bringing people together.

During the time of the Solar Deliberative, the Crowned Suns held the Realm together with their diplomacy. They helped to forge consensus between the many Exalts and negotiated treaties between the Realm and barbarian tribes, the spirit courts and even the Fair Folk. As administrators and censors, they kept the gears of the empire running smoothly.

When the Dragon-Blooded instigated their coup, the Eclipse Caste who survived the initial assault attempted to resolve the crisis with diplomacy. Their efforts were met with lies, treachery and murder—the Dragon-Blooded were not interested in diplomacy. The Crowned Suns fled to their allies and called on the spirit courts, the elementals and the princes of the beasts for aid. Yet, these allies were not enough, and one by one, the Quicksilver Falcons fell before the armies of the Dragon-Blooded.

When the Solars returned, the world witnessed the first solar eclipse since the Terrestrial Exalted took power. Now, the members of the Eclipse Caste have begun the difficult process of reunifying the world. Negotiating with mortal sovereigns, gods, the Fair Folk and the dead, they attempt to bring order to the chaos gripping Creation.

Members of the Eclipse Caste are chosen from those who excel at social interaction. They work quietly and move with effortless grace, influencing the opinions of others. They are the shamans who make pacts between men and spirits, the messengers between the lands of the living and the dead and the censors who keep governments functioning honestly. The Crowned Suns excel at communication and organization.

Members of the Eclipse Caste are frequently the voices of their circles. As natural communicators, they turn strangers into allies, and their organizational skills keep their groups running smoothly.

**Anima Banner:** Eclipse Caste Solars have a golden disc within a circle for their caste mark. Their animas are brilliant whites and golds, almost sparkling, but filmy and fluctuating, like the corona of the sun during an eclipse.

**Anima Effects:** When an Eclipse Caste Solar is party or witness to an oath, he may use his anima to sanctify it. The character must shake hands to seal the agreement or touch the hands of those who are party to it. In response, his anima burns brightly, swirling with the words and runes by which Heaven gave him the right to arbitrate such matters. Those who break such an oath (including the Exalt himself) suffer a terrible curse.

The Exalt spends 10 motes of Essence and a point of Willpower to sanctify the oath. Those who break it will suffer terrible luck from their oathbreaking. A number of times equal to the Exalt's Essence at the time he witnesses or agrees to the oath, the oathbreaker will horribly botch a critical action. When this happens is up to the Storyteller, but it is always at the worst possible moment. The Exalted need not even be alive when the curse takes effect—he sanctifies the oath, but Heaven enforces it. This sanctification may be invoked without cost once the Solar spends 11-15 motes of Peripheral Essence.

In addition, Eclipses are protected by ancient pacts with the spirit world, the demon princes and the Fair Folk. Crowned Suns and their companions who are on legitimate business with those beings may not be attacked without just cause (though they may be goaded into attacking and nullifying the oaths). Such creatures must honor the rules of hospitality. Such beings may pretend to be uncompelled, but ultimately, they cannot attack members of an embassy unless they can provoke the characters into breaking the peace.

Finally, the Eclipse Caste Solars are talented generalists. Provided they have a tutor, they may learn the Charms of other types of Exalted, spirits or the Fair Folk. These Charms cost double the normal experience of Favored Charms to learn (usually 16 points). In addition, these Charms cost an additional 2 motes to use. Eclipse Caste characters may not start the game knowing non-Solar Charms without Storyteller permission.

**Caste Abilities:** Members of the Eclipse Caste excel in all forms of communication, organization and travel. They have a natural affinity for the skills of Bureaucracy, Linguistics, Ride, Sail and Socialize.

**Associations:** The period of Calibration, the color silver, the center direction, the element of air, the gibbous moon and the Maiden of Journeys

### The Deceivers

Ancient records speak of Anathema whose voices could drive men mad. They could make the most blatant lie seem real or convince even the wisest man to sell himself into slavery. Fortunately, their lies could not protect them from the forces of righteousness of the Dragon-Blooded. For their perjuries, these Anathema are known as the Deceivers.

**Sobriquets:** Crowned Suns, Harmonious Voices, Solar Winds, Quicksilver Falcons, Quills of Heaven, The Deceivers (derogatory)

**Concepts:** adventurous sailor, ambitious courtier, ambitious young noble, army quartermaster, careful spy, elderly society matron, professional diplomat, professional messenger, trade intermediary, village shaman

You have left me with no choice, and the patience of my companions is at an end. You can either swear an oath to the Unconquered Sun to abide by this treaty, or my fellows will slay you. You have no other options.

# Attributes

Attributes represent your character's innate physical, social and mental capacities. Don't look at the numbers first. Rather, think about what your character can do, then work out her Attributes. Ordinary humans have Attributes ranging from one to four dots, and most people have two or three dots in all of their Attributes. Even before her Exaltation, your character was an extraordinary person. As a result, her Attributes can be as high as 5.

## Physical Attributes

Physical Attributes describe the capabilities of the character's body—how strong, fast, nimble and tough she is.

### Strength

Strength describes physical prowess, including the capacity to lift objects and cause damage. This Attribute is used to resolve jumping, lifting and other actions that draw on raw physical power. Strength is also used to determine the base number of damage dice rolled for successful physical attacks.

**Trait Effects:** Someone with Strength 1 is relatively weak and can lift a large dog (80 lbs.) with difficulty. Someone with Strength 3 is fairly muscular and can lift a muscular warrior (200 lbs.). Someone with Strength 5 is vastly strong and can easily lift a pony or a good-sized donkey (450 lbs.)

### Dexterity

Dexterity measures agility, hand-eye coordination and reflexes. It describes how fast a character runs, how precisely he aims his blows and everything else that relates to physical speed, grace and control. Dexterity is used to determine the base number of dice rolled to hit in combat.

**Trait Effects:** Someone with Dexterity 1 is clumsy and slow. Someone with Dexterity 3 is uncommonly nimble and fast. Someone with Dexterity 5 is almost inhumanly swift and graceful.

### Stamina

Stamina indicates your character's health, her tolerance for pain and how long she can sustain physical exertion. It covers endurance, general health and sheer toughness. Stamina also determines the character's base soak pool.

**Trait Effects:** Someone with Stamina 1 is often in poor health. Someone with Stamina 3 tires slowly and is rarely ill. Someone with Stamina 5 almost never becomes sick and can perform heavy labor from dawn until dusk.

***Note:*** *Bashing soak equals the character's Stamina and lethal soak equals half the character's Stamina (rounded down). Only the Exalted and other supernatural beings can soak lethal damage with their Stamina.*

## Social Attributes

Social Attributes describe the character's looks, how generally likeable he is and the force of his personality.

### Charisma

Charisma measures how innately likeable someone is. It reflects an air of confidence and social grace when dealing with people. People like those with a high Charisma, even if they do not always know why.

**Trait Effects:** Someone with Charisma 1 is either ill-mannered or subtly unlikable. Someone with Charisma 3 is likeable and makes friends with little effort. Someone with Charisma 5 has that rare spark that draws everyone to his cause. Even the wealthy and the powerful will go out of their way to become his friend.

### Manipulation

Manipulation measures your character's innate capacity to purposefully coerce, manipulate, trick and bully others. Manipulation covers everything from leading others to tricking them, from being sly to being domineering.

**Trait Effects:** Someone with Manipulation 1 is either ill-spoken or exceedingly direct and open. Someone with Manipulation 3 has a clever tongue and can convince most people to trust her. Someone with Manipulation 5 might well talk her way into the private pavilions of the Celestial Incarnae.

### Appearance

Appearance is a combination of overall physical attractiveness, how your character carries herself and her typical degree of grooming. It covers her ability to make a good first impression and to generate an instinctive response in others.

**Trait Effects:** Someone with Appearance 1 is either very plain or downright ugly. Someone with Appearance 3 is quite good-looking—many people look at him when he walks down the street. Someone with Appearance 5 is likely the most attractive and desirous individual most people have ever met—even the most jaded sovereigns turn their heads when he enters the room.

## Mental Attributes

Mental Attributes cover a character's perception, mental capacity, imagination and quick thinking. Creative and intellectual individuals have high Mental Attributes.

### Perception

Perception covers both alertness and comprehension. It determines not only how well a character notices the world around him, but also how well he interprets what he sees and hears.

**Trait Effects:** Someone with Perception 1 is always inattentive and distracted. Someone with Perception 3 keeps careful track of what's going on around him and almost always notices pickpockets. Someone with Perception 5 can walk through a masked ball and identify everyone he knows solely by their body language.

### Intelligence

Intelligence covers memory, understanding, reasoning and imagination as well as the ability to correlate information and make deductions. This Attribute is not a measure of how fast your character thinks, but of how clearly and deeply he thinks.

**Trait Effects:** Someone with Intelligence 1 is dull and stupid. Someone with Intelligence 3 is quite bright and might make a good scholar. Someone with Intelligence 5 is likely the most intelligent person in any city he visits. He is a true genius capable of understanding the most subtle secrets of the First Age.

### Wits

Wits describes how quickly your character thinks as well as her cleverness and how well she can react to sudden changes in her environment. This Attribute describes how well your character thinks on the fly and how nimble her mind is. Wits is also used to determine when characters act in combat through the use of the Join Battle action.

**Trait Effects:** Someone with Wits 1 is either dull or perpetually distracted. Someone with Wits 3 is exceedingly clever and almost never loses her cool. Someone with Wits 5 is seldom surprised and knows how to deflect suspicion when guards see her sneaking off with the Perfect of Paragon's enchanted scepter.

## Virtues

Creation is a world of driving passions and dark emotion. Heroes challenge gods and demon lords without fear or hesitation, and lovers journey into the soul-destroying depths of the Wyld in search of their beloved. Priest-kings sacrifice thousands to satisfy their dark gods but are touched by the tears of their children.

Being the natural rulers of Creation, the Solar Exalted are inhumanly passionate and driven. Cursed by the Primordials before history began, the Chosen are sometimes completely overwhelmed by emotion. Some scholars insist that the excesses of the Solar Exalted caused the Dragon-Blooded takeover.

In game terms, there are four Virtues, grouped into two linked pairs: Compassion and Conviction, and Temperance and Valor. These Virtues represent the extremes to which a character's emotions may respond. Virtue ratings range from 1 to 5, and high Virtues do not cancel one another out. A character can have high or low ratings in any or all of his passions.

## The Benefits of Virtues

Virtues measure a character's drive to act in certain ways. This commitment to certain behaviors means that the character gains significant benefits when he invests Willpower in a Virtue-related task.

Once per story for every dot in a particular Virtue, the player may have his character channel a point of temporary Willpower through the Virtue, allowing him to add a number of dice equaling the Virtue rating to his normal dice pool. A point of Willpower expended in this fashion doesn't grant the character the regular automatic success, only the bonus dice. Using a Virtue like this is generally only cost effective with three or more dots in the Virtue.

*Example: Harmonious Jade has a rating of 3 in Valor. Three times per story, her player may spend a temporary Willpower point to add three dice to any pool related to bravery, combat or withstanding horror. But with only one dot in Compassion, her player could add only one die to a dice pool for relieving the needy or defending the weak, and could do so only once per story.*

Higher Virtue scores provide more benefits than low ones, but they are a mixed blessing.

## The Disadvantages of Virtues

A high Virtue score signifies passionate commitment to certain emotions and behaviors. A character with a high rating in a Virtue can find himself unable to resist following his heart, even when doing so unwise.

A character with a Virtue rating of 3 or higher must roll her Virtue rating in a situation where she wishes to act against the Virtue's dictates. Any successes on the roll compel her to either adhere to her Virtue or spend a point of temporary Willpower to override her emotions and act freely for the scene. A Solar Exalt who suppresses his primary Virtue (associated with her Virtue Flaw) automatically adds a point to his Limit (see "The Great Curse" on the following page). Suppressing other Virtues does not add to the Exalt's Limit.

*Example: Elias's primary Virtue is Compassion, with a rating of 3. He's trying to infiltrate the Realm when he sees an old woman being shoved and manhandled by two city guards. The Storyteller asks Phyllis, Elias's player, for his reaction, and she states Elias will simply look away and keep walking. The Storyteller informs her that this denies Elias's Compassion and that she must make a Compassion roll for him not to intervene. Phyllis rolls a 1, a 3 and a 10—two successes. The Storyteller says Elias must do something unless Phyllis spends a point of temporary Willpower. Phyllis grits her teeth, marks off a point of temporary Willpower and increases Elias' Limit by one.*

### Virtues and Motivation

Make sure your character's Virtues work with her Motivation. A Solar Exalt who wishes to slay every member of the Dragon-Blooded should have a high Conviction and a low Compassion. If you later decide to change your character's Motivation, either make sure the new Motivation fits or purchase one or more new dots in Virtues so the Motivation makes sense for the character.

### Compassion

Compassion measures a character's caring for others—how moved he is by injustice and suffering. Having a high Compassion can be painful in a world of barbarism and oppression. However, Compassion inspires characters to fight oppression, to overthrow tyrants and to help those in need. Someone with Compassion 1 has a heart of flint and can calmly eat lavish meals while watching others starve. Someone with Compassion 3 regularly comes to the aid of others in need. Someone with Compassion 5 always spares her enemies' lives and regularly aids those who hate her if they are in serious danger.

**Compassion Aids in:** Protecting or aiding the sick, innocent or oppressed. Fighting for justice. Bringing aid to the needy. Fighting for or engaging in romantic love.

**Characters Must Fail a Compassion Check to:** Slay a defeated foe. Ignore the pleas of the oppressed or impoverished. Ignore the powerful abusing the helpless. Publicly humiliate a friend or lover.

## Conviction

The balancing Virtue to Compassion, Conviction measures how easily the character can endure hardship or inflict suffering upon others. Conviction lets characters persevere against adversity and take draconian measures to achieve important goals. Conviction also helps characters regain temporary Willpower. Characters with high Conviction needn't be sadists, but they are capable of doing terrible things in the name of an important cause. Someone with Conviction 1 can't stomach adversity and finds hard choices difficult. Someone with Conviction 3 rarely breaks under torture and can use drastic measures, given no other choice. Someone with Conviction 5 can endure a century of horrible torment and can unflinchingly inflict the same upon others.

**Conviction Aids in:** Withstanding hardship and torture. Making decisions where all options are horrific. Committing atrocities to accomplish a goal. Regaining Willpower.

**Characters Must Fail a Conviction Check to:** Abandon a committed cause. Give up in the face of hardship or disease. Abandon companions in their time of need.

## Temperance

The Temperance Virtue measures the character's self control. A character can use it to decline the impulse to strike the Dynast who spat on her or to overcome the desire to continue a night of raucous drinking when she knows she is going into battle the next morning. Temperance allows a character to resist temptation and keep a clear head. Someone with Temperance 1 is hotheaded and cannot hold her temper. Someone with Temperance 3 can keep her head in a heated argument or turn down generous bribes. Someone with Temperance 5 is a paragon of self-denial, remaining calm and calculating while being badly beaten or when offered her heart's desire.

**Temperance Aids in:** Resisting temptation. Holding your temper when taunted or struck. Holding your tongue when intoxicated. Overcoming the effects of illusions, drugs, poisons and mind control.

**Characters Must Fail a Temperance Roll to:** Act dishonestly or show bias in a matter of importance. Overindulge in food or intoxicants. Act on thoughtless impulse. Break a sworn oath.

## Valor

Valor measures a character's courage and resolve when facing danger. Valor helps characters resist ordinary and magical fear and also helps characters fight in battle, particularly when facing more powerful opponents. Someone with Valor 1 is a sniveling coward. Someone with Valor 3 can confront a superior opponent without flinching. Someone with Valor 5 is brave enough to face the entire Wyld Hunt without breaking a sweat.

**Valor Aids in:** Heroism in battle. Withstanding magically created terror. Performing feats of daring and taking risks.

**Characters Must Fail a Valor Roll to:** Turn down a duel of honor or a call to single combat. Flee a battle. Receive an insult without seeking retribution. Turn down a dare or challenge.

# The Great Curse

In ancient times, the Exalted formed the armies of the gods against the vastly powerful Primordials. The Solars were the heroes and generals of those armies, and when they slew Creation's previous rulers, their fallen foes used their dying breaths to curse the Exalted who had slain them. By this curse, they would forever be driven to wrath and immoderacy and hounded by treachery not unlike that which the gods had perpetrated upon the Primordials. The enemies of the gods were greater than those gods, and their curse twisted even the divine souls of the Solar Exalted. This curse eventually drove the Dragon-Blooded to usurp the rulership of the Realm, ending the Golden Age. Today, it lives within the heart of every Solar Exalted.

In game terms, the Great Curse inflicts on every Solar Exalted a Virtue Flaw related to her primary Virtue: typically a perversion of the Virtue, which drives the Exalted to rash, ill-considered deeds. Every player must pick a single flaw for his character related to a Virtue with a score of 3 or more.

## Limit Breaks

Every flaw has a Limit Break condition attached to it—a situation that can cause the Exalt to lose control of himself and act out his flaw. Every time this condition is met, the Exalt's player must roll a number of dice equal to the rating of the Virtue associated with the flaw. For every success rolled, the character gains a point of Limit. As usual, rolling a 10 counts as two successes. When the character's Limit reaches 10, he suffers what is known as a Limit Break. Remember that Solar Exalted also gain Limit points by spending Willpower to avoid acting on their primary Virtue. In addition, Solar characters who resist unnatural mental influence receive one point of Limit, up to once per scene.

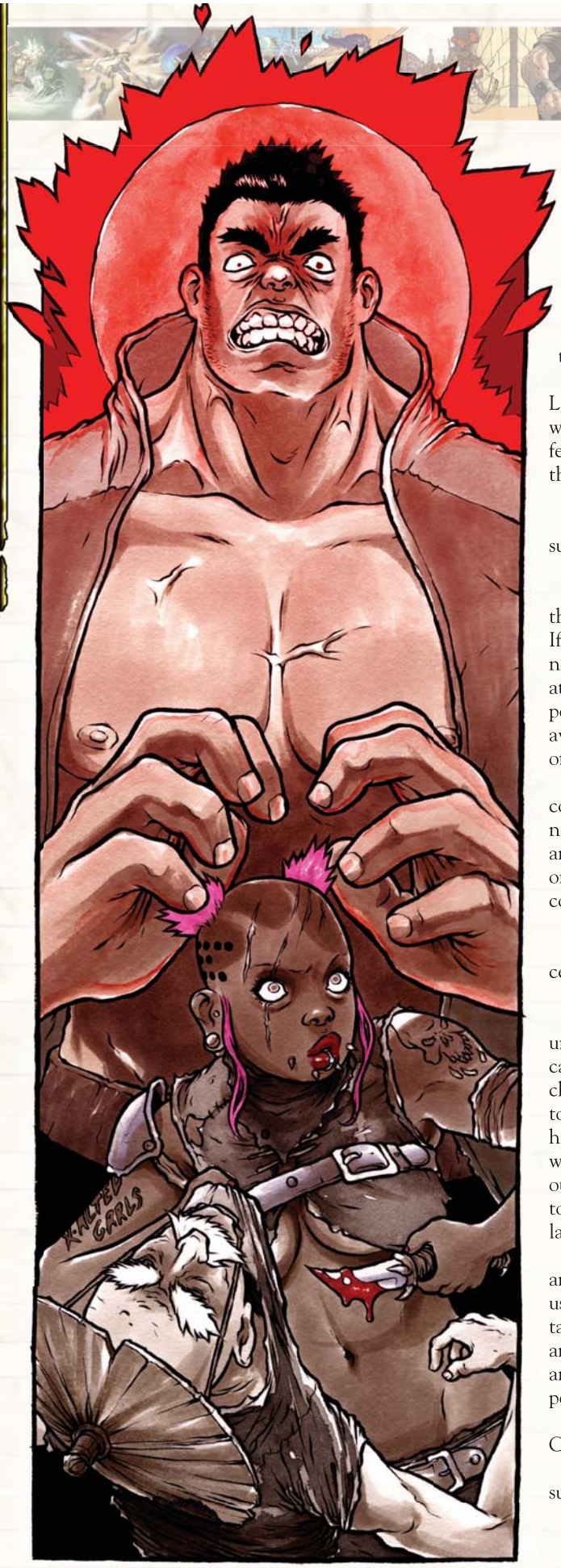
When a character suffers a Limit Break, he immediately reduces his Limit to 0. For a period of time after the Limit Break, the character is ruled by his flaw. He acts as it dictates and can only hope that the episode passes quickly. If the player flinches from acting out the character's loss of control, the Storyteller may take control of the character.

A Limit Break is a tremendously cathartic experience. Undergoing a Limit Break immediately gives the character temporary Willpower points equal to his rating in the flaw's related Virtue, even if this raises his temporary Willpower above his permanent Willpower or even above 10. The character recovers this Willpower only if she does not attempt to control her behavior during the Limit Break, though.

Characters can partially control their actions during a Limit Break, but this strain prevents them from recovering Willpower from the Limit Break (although their Limit is still reset to 0). These effects are listed under "Partial Control" in each flaw's description.

# Sample Flaws

These sample flaws aren't the only ones an Exalt might develop. Storytellers and players may work together to develop their own flaws. However, these flaws are the result of an ancient and terrible curse, so they are never pleasant or useful. Storytellers should make certain that any new flaws are approximately as difficult and problematic as the ones listed here.



## Compassion Flaws

**Compassionate Martyrdom**

Overcome with the need to alleviate the suffering he witnesses, the character throws himself into helping the victims in the most direct and dramatic fashion possible. If the character's Limit Breaks while watching an overseer beat slaves, he stands before the whip, allowing blows meant for others to fall upon him instead. The character will not resort to violence unless he is attacked or is already in combat.

**Partial Control:** If the character attempts to control the Limit Break, he must still immediately and directly aid those who are suffering. However, he can choose to do so more effectively—including by killing the brutal overseer and freeing the slaves in the above example.

**Duration:** One scene in combat or one day otherwise

**Limit Break Condition:** The character witnesses innocents suffering through no fault of their own.

**Heart of Tears**

Overwhelmed with grief at the suffering he has witnessed, the character can only weep at the wretched state of the world. If his Limit Breaks in a stressful situation, the character cannot function for the rest of the scene and attempts to flee if attacked. If he cannot flee, he defends himself at a two-die penalty and seeks to flee at the first opportunity. He can only avoid human contact and perhaps numb himself to the pain of existence with intoxicants.

**Partial Control:** The character takes no initiative and constantly weeps, but he can defend normally and does not need to flee combat. However, he attacks at a two-die penalty and cannot use Social or Mental Abilities or Charms. He can only react to immediate circumstances, not plan or initiate complex actions.

**Duration:** One scene in combat or one day otherwise

**Limit Break Condition:** The character witnesses innocents suffering and cannot ameliorate their pain.

**Red Rage of Compassion**

All the suffering the character has seen fills her with an unquenchable rage. She immediately attacks the most obvious cause, without consideration for herself or the situation. The character's rage overcomes sense and reason. She is unlikely to perform even simple acts such as putting down objects in her hands or drawing a weapon. However, she does not suffer wound penalties while in this state. Characters without obvious targets enter a terrible rage, moving erratically from area to area, smashing objects without consideration for value and lashing out at anyone foolish enough to interfere.

**Partial Control:** The character must immediately attack any source of suffering, but she can apply her rage effectively, using weapons, Charms and spells normally. Without a nearby target, the character seeks out oppressors she has seen before and does not calm down until she finds one. She will also attack anyone who attempts to stop her. She suffers normal wound penalties in this state.

**Duration:** One scene in combat or hours equal to Compassion

**Limit Break Condition:** The character sees innocents suffering and is unable to effectively intervene.

## Conviction Flaws

**Deliberate Cruelty**

The character wholly embraces cruelty. Her conscience vanishes, and she uses terror and cruelty to accomplish her goals, with only contempt for any perceived or exhibited weakness. She casually tortures and mutilates prisoners to sow terror and inspire obedience. This cruelty causes a minimum two-die penalty on all Social interactions not involving fear or intimidation.

**Partial Control:** The character can moderate her cruelty when necessary. She casually intimidates and tortures wherever effective and is incapable of kindness. However, she can show restraint and indifference when cruelty would be less effective. She still suffers from a one-die penalty to other Social interactions.

**Duration:** One full day

**Limit Break Condition:** The character is subjected to severe stress or backed against the wall.

**Heart of Flint**

The character's heart hardens to all emotion. He feels and expresses no emotions: not robotic, but lacking all empathy and feeling. The character considers only efficiency in choosing his course of action, and his reduced tact imposes a two-die penalty on all Social rolls involving face-to-face interactions.

**Partial Control:** The character's emotions are significantly muted but still present. She suffers a two-die penalty to Social rolls involving face-to-face interaction, and her primary motivation is still efficiency, but she will avoid doing anything to which she has a strong emotional aversion.

**Duration:** One full day

**Limit Break Condition:** The character is frustrated by the intemperate or childish nature of the world around him.

## Temperance Flaws

**Ascetic Drive**

After the character's Limit Breaks, she must seek tranquility and purification through withdrawal and meditation. She immediately turns her back on worldly affairs, however pressing. She can defend herself normally and attack anyone who threatens her, but she cares nothing for her previous plans or allies.

The character shaves her head, dresses in sackcloth or shows some similar sign of penitence and retreats somewhere from all worldly concerns. To further withdraw, she might destroy or give away possessions, including artifacts and manses. The character will be uncommunicative if disturbed and will become violent if the disturbance continues.

**Partial Control:** The character needn't retreat from the world or destroy her possessions, but she cannot accept luxuries such as sleeping indoors or dressing in anything other than the most utilitarian clothes (including armor). She also cannot make small talk or discuss trivial matters and takes no actions to increase her own comfort.

**Duration:** One full day

**Limit Break Condition:** The character is confronted by her own inadequacies or human weakness.

**Contempt of the Virtuous**

The character loses respect for the faults of those around him and has to show them a better way of life. The character disdains anyone he has previously witnessed overindulging or acting dishonorably. If he sees anything remotely dishonorable or indulgent, he attempts to intervene—even physically. The character loudly urges those around him toward a more upright way of life, lecturing them to destroy or repudiate their vanities, and he will use Charms and other resources to further his personal crusade.

**Partial Control:** The character must attempt to prevent immoderate or dishonorable behavior among his companions, but he needn't do so with others. He holds intemperate strangers in contempt but only lectures them on their faults if they ask his opinion or invite him to join them.

**Duration:** One full day

**Limit Break Condition:** The character is hindered by the self-indulgent and intemperate nature of others.

**Overindulgence**

The character's self-control completely fails, and she surrenders to all forms of excess. Sex, liquor, drugs and gluttony become equally attractive, and the character will not listen to reason or postpone her debauch. She indulges in all vices at hand, regardless of expense or consequences. If she's penniless or isolated, she'll borrow or steal or travel to a location where she can indulge. Characters in poor health should make a Stamina check to avoid long-term negative consequences from such an episode.

**Partial Control:** The character can be talked into essential duties such as pursuing enemies or leading armies. However, in every spare moment, she indulges in whatever forms of excess are available. She can avoid drinking on duty but not being exceptionally hung over. She automatically says yes whenever offered some intoxicant or other pleasure.

**Duration:** One full day

**Limit Break Condition:** The character must pass a favorite pleasure or vice in order to act in a moral fashion.

## Valor Flaws

**Berserk Anger**

Out of control, the character attacks anything that moves. If it runs, he hunts and slays it. The character starts with the nearest hostile target and, after all hostiles are dead, continues to kill until he is dead or there is no one left to murder. If the character runs out of targets quickly or is not near other living beings, he attacks his surroundings, attempting to smash and ravage everything in reach.

**Partial Control:** The character can avoid attacking allies or anyone he has sworn to protect, and he needn't destroy inanimate objects. Everyone else remains fair game.

**Duration:** One full scene

**Limit Break Condition:** The character is insulted, belittled, demeaned or deliberately frustrated.

**Foolhardy Contempt**

The character knows no fear. She places herself in the forefront of battle, thoughtlessly challenges enemies to single combat, volunteers for all dangerous missions and won't retreat under any circumstances.

**Partial Control:** The character is without fear, but not without sense. She can retreat if tactically advisable and needn't rush heedlessly into combat. However, she leads all charges and does not take personal risk into consideration when making plans.

**Duration:** One full day

**Limit Break Condition:** The character fights against losing odds, is challenged to single combat by a foe or otherwise has an opportunity to prove her bravery.

# Abilities

Unlike Attributes and Virtues, Abilities are traits that a character has deliberately practiced or studied. All Ability scores start at 0 dots. Un-Exalted characters who lack all knowledge of a particular Ability suffer a two-die penalty to all dice pools involving that Ability and, in some cases, (such as an illiterate character attempting to read) cannot even attempt the task. The Exalted and other magical beings are blessed by happenstance and intuition—they suffer no penalties when attempting a task in which they have no Ability, though they still cannot speak languages or command knowledge they have not learned. Abilities are listed according to the caste with which they are associated.

## Dawn Abilities

### Archery

**Trait Description:** *This trait is important in combat.* Archery allows the character to use all manner of bows, from simple wooden self bows to the elaborate composite bows used by many nomads. This skill also allows the character to use Southern firewands, Haslanti crossbows and various First Age siege weapons.

*Specialties:* Long Bows, At Long Range, Firewands, Power Bows, From Horseback, First Age Siege Weapons

**Trait Effects:** Someone with Archery 1 can probably hit the bulls-eye in a stationary target. Someone with Archery 3 can, while running, shoot an apple off someone's head. Someone with Archery 5 can shoot a mouse out of the claws of a hawk flying in high wind, without harming the mouse.

### Martial Arts

**Trait Description:** *This trait is important in combat.* Martial Arts allows the character to fight without weapons or with special martial arts weapons. Martial Arts covers everything from tavern brawling to boxing and various styles of formal martial arts.

*Specialties:* Specific Martial Arts Weapon (Hook Swords, Wind-Fire Wheels…), Fighting Unarmed, Multiple Opponents, Wrestling, Fighting in Armor

**Trait Effects:** Someone with Martial Arts 1 can probably break a board with her bare hands or perform the basic moves flawlessly in an exhibition. Someone with Martial Arts 3 can skillfully fight multiple opponents. Someone with Martial Arts 5 can fight a dozen thugs while simultaneously showing off all of her moves in a precise and beautiful manner.

### Melee

**Trait Description:** *This trait is important in combat.* Melee is the skill of fighting with weapons of all types—swords, axes, polearms, knives, clubs or even broken bottles and chair legs. Melee is the most common combat Ability in Creation, since melee weapons inflict lethal damage and most are relatively easy to make.

*Specialties:* Spears, Daiklaves, Knives, Polearms, In Formation, Single Combat, Fighting With Two Weapons, Improvised Weapons

**Trait Effects:** Someone with Melee 1 can use a sword to fight off a thug with a knife. Someone with Melee 3 can defeat an average solder in single combat. Someone with Melee 5 can defeat a skilled soldier while standing on one foot and blindfolded.

### Thrown

**Trait Description:** *This trait is important in combat.* Thrown allows the character to hurl specially designed weapons at targets. Thrown weapons include throwing knives, chakrams, javelins and boomerangs as well as rocks and other improvised weapons.

*Specialties:* Javelins, Throwing Knives, While Running, At Long Range, Attacking from Cover

**Trait Effects:** Someone with Thrown 1 can probably hit a stationary target with a thrown knife. Someone with Thrown 3 can sever a rope with a chakram while running. Someone with Thrown 5 can throw a knife so as to clip a single tail feather off of a divine firebird in flight.

### War

**Trait Description:** *This trait is important in combat.* War gives a clear understanding of combat and military maneuvers. It covers both immediate tactics and long-range strategies and allows the character to assess the strength of enemy forces and to clearly direct troop movements. This Ability is central to all mass combat—when fighting as part of a unit, characters use the *lower* of the character's combat Abilities or her War.

*Specialties:* Tactics, Strategy, Small Units, Large Armies, Naval Battles, Military Scouting

**Trait Effects:** Someone with War 1 can tell when her squad is outnumbered and outflanked. Someone with War 3 can plan a strategy to lead her squad to victory despite being outnumbered and outflanked. Someone with War 5 can plan a strategy to lead her squad to victory despite being outnumbered and outflanked by an army of the Fair Folk.

## Zenith Abilities

### Integrity

**Trait Description:** *This trait is important in combat.* Integrity allows the character to resist all forms of supernatural mental control as well as helping the character resist believing sale pitches or breaking under torture. Characters skilled in this Ability can resist all attempts to change their mind.

*Specialties:* Charms of a Particular Exalt Type, Spirit Charms, The Fair Folk, Persuasion, Torture

**Trait Effects:** Someone with Integrity 1 can probably see through a well-made sales pitch. Someone with Integrity 3 can resist having her emotions manipulated by horrific tortures or powerful mortal thaumaturgy. Someone with Integrity 5 can laugh off the mind-warping powers of the Fair Folk or the Charms of the Exalted.

### Performance

**Trait Description:** Performance covers all forms of artistic expression, from storytelling and acting to dancing and singing. It also includes the theatrics of making rousing public speeches. Characters with this Ability also know how to perform a wide variety of songs, plays, dances, jokes and stories.

*Specialties:* Improvisation, Playing the Lyre, Singing, Storytelling, Solo Performances, Dance, In a Particular Nation, To Members of a Particular Social Class

**Trait Effects:** Someone with Performance 1 can sing popular tavern songs in a pleasing voice and dance well enough to get invited to the next ball. Someone with Performance 3 can move an audience to tears with a speech or tell stories so engrossing that guards ignore their duties to listen more closely. Someone with Performance 5 can start a riot with a short speech or play a song so beautiful that it will touch the heart of one of the Demon Princes of Malfeas.

### Presence

**Trait Description:** Presence covers the character's skill at leadership and long-term persuasion. A character can lead by being feared, respected or loved, but regardless of how he leads, this Ability represents how well he does so. Presence can be used to convert or intimidate enemies as well as to inspire allies.

*Specialties:* Persuasion, Intimidation, Interrogation, Religious Conversion, Brainwashing, Defying the Established Social Order

**Trait Effects:** Someone with Presence 1 can inspire skilled and disciplined troops before a battle or convince a petty thief to reveal the name of his fence. Someone with Presence 3 can cause the populace of a town to embrace the Unconquered Sun or force one of the dread Lintha pirates to reveal the name of her immediate superior. Someone with Presence 5 can convince a member of the Wyld Hunt to embrace the worship of the Unconquered Sun.

### Resistance

**Trait Description:** *This trait is important in combat.* Resistance allows characters to combat the effects of disease, poison, fatigue, sleep deprivation, pain, extreme temperatures and other harsh or potentially damaging conditions. Characters with this Ability can march carrying heavy loads and swim in ice-cold water.

*Specialties:* Holding Breath, Enduring Pain, Resisting Poison, Resisting Disease, Going Without Sleep, Moving While Encumbered, In Combat, Extreme Temperatures

**Trait Effects:** Someone with Resistance 1 can probably keep her head after a night of heavy drinking. Someone with Resistance 3 can run 10 miles without stopping or easily recover from an infection. Someone with Resistance 5 can easily throw off the effects of a deadly poison or stay awake for a week without impairment.

### Survival

**Trait Description:** Survival allows the character to exist safely and comfortably in the wilderness. A character with this Ability can find food, water and shelter. He can also set traps and snares, track enemies and identify poisonous plants and dangerous animals. He can also tame and train both wild and domestic animals.

*Specialties:* Training Animals, The Far North, At Sea, Other Specific Environments, Finding Shelter, Tracking

**Trait Effects:** Someone with Survival 1 can probably find a decent shelter in the woods or tame a hawk. Someone with Survival 3 can tame a strix or find water in the deserts of the South. Someone with Survival 5 can tame a gryphon or find both food and shelter in the Far North during a blizzard.

## Twilight Abilities

### Craft

**Trait Description:** Craft allows characters to create both useful and beautiful objects. Highly skilled craftspeople can create impressive masterworks, though a character must use Charms if he wishes to create masterworks rapidly or with ordinary or substandard materials. There are five mundane Craft Abilities, each associated with one of the five elements. Several exotic varieties exist as well, such as Craft (Magitech), which applies to the wonders of the First Age, and Craft (Glamour) and Craft (Fate), which are practiced only by supernatural beings. The five ordinary Craft Abilities are:

- **Air:** calligraphy, jewelry-making, creating precision instruments and glassblowing

(making small, decorative or high-precision items)

- **Earth:** masonry, stone cutting, creating earthworks

(creating buildings and large objects with stone or earth)

- **Fire:** blacksmithing, making ceramics

(forging and casting large metal objects and creating objects using fire)

- **Wood:** carpentry, weaving, paper-making, flower arranging

(carving, weaving and manipulating natural materials)

- **Water:** cooking, brewing, leather working, pharmacy and poison-making

(boiling and cooking plants, chemicals and animal materials)

**Note:** All mundane crafts performed by ordinary mortals fit into one of these five categories.

*Specialties:* Specific Individual Crafts—sword-making (Fire), gem-cutting (Air), perfume-making (Water); Evaluating Goods

**Trait Effects:** Someone with Craft (Wood) 1 can probably construct a rude hut. Someone with Craft (Fire) 3 can make an exceptional sword. Someone with Craft (Air) 5 can create pieces of jewelry that vain nobles will literally kill to own.

### Investigation

**Trait Description:** Possessed by both scholars and magistrates, this Ability is required to uncover hidden or obscure information. Investigation can be used to swiftly find information in a library or archive, to reconstruct a crime from the clues present in the room where it occurred, to interview suspects or to search a room for anything hidden within it.

*Specialties:* Library Research, Conducting Interviews, Finding Concealed Objects, Reconstructing Events

**Trait Effects:** Someone with Investigation 1 can locate a well-known book in a modest library or a large dagger hidden under a loose floorboard. Someone with Investigation 3 can reconstruct the details of a crime from small fragments of evidence or locate an obscure passage in a large ill-organized library. Someone with Investigation 5 can accurately describe a criminal based upon seeing only a footprint in the mud and a fragment of clothing caught on a branch. He could also rapidly locate an ancient passage in the unorganized stacks in the back of the vast Imperial Library.

### Lore

**Trait Description:** Many educated people in the First Age knew the secrets of the universe. Today, scholars retain only

fragments of this knowledge. Characters with the Lore Ability have some knowledge of current events, history, geography and the customs of other lands, as well as the magical secrets of First Age technology. Characters must possess as least Lore 1 to be literate.

*Specialties:* The First Age, Geography, Enchanted Devices, Religion, History, The Realm

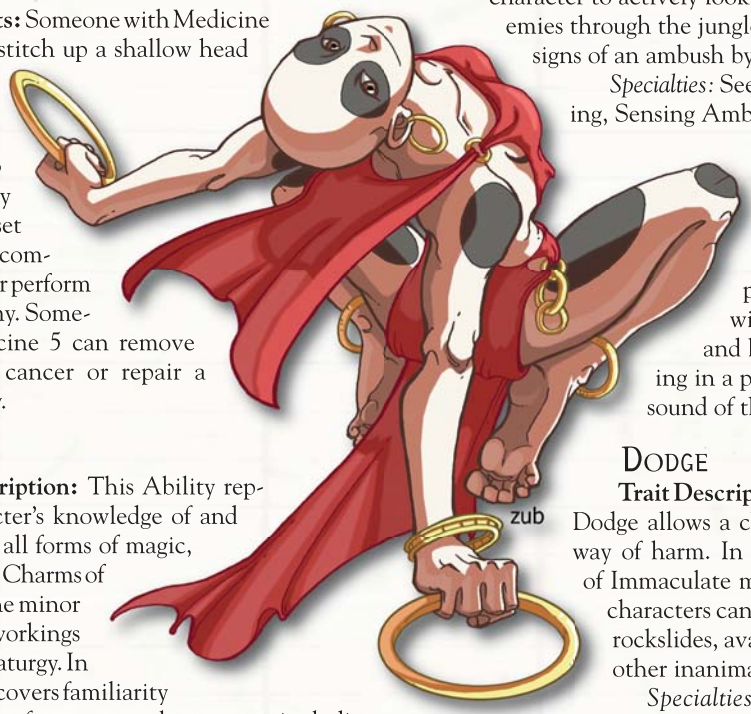
**Trait Effects:** Someone with Lore 1 is literate and can find most large nations on a map of Creation. Someone with Lore 3 knows details of the customs of lands thousands of miles away and can help operate, maintain and service many First Age devices. Someone with Lore 5 knows details of the history of the Shogunate as well as the truth about the mysterious Dragon Kings. In addition, she can maintain and repair the most complex First Age devices, including warstriders.

### Medicine

**Trait Description:** Medicine is the skill of using herbs, acupuncture, medicines, bone saws, sutures and scalpels to treat illness and repair injuries. Without either the Charms of the Exalted or the talismans and alchemical procedures of mortal thaumaturgy, medicine is difficult, bloody and exceedingly uncertain. While the most skilled physicians can treat almost any illness, many doctors simply hack off badly broken limbs or crudely cauterize bleeding wounds.

*Specialties:* Infections, Specific Diseases, Broken Bones, Puncture Wounds

**Trait Effects:** Someone with Medicine 1 can probably stitch up a shallow head wound or set a simple fracture. Someone with Medicine 3 can successfully treat smallpox, set a badly broken compound fracture or perform an appendectomy. Someone with Medicine 5 can remove cataracts, cure cancer or repair a damaged kidney.




### Occult

**Trait Description:** This Ability represents a character's knowledge of and familiarity with all forms of magic, ranging from the Charms of the Exalted to the minor but ubiquitous workings of mortal thaumaturgy. In addition, it also covers familiarity with all manner of supernatural creatures, including ghosts, gods, elementals and the Fair Folk. Characters who are skilled in Occult know both the capabilities of such creatures and how to petition or appease them.

*Specialties:* Supernatural Etiquette, Exotic Cults, Thaumaturgy, Summoning, Ghosts, The Wyld

**Trait Effects:** Someone with Occult 1 can probably appease a minor local spirit or tell that someone is about to cast a spell. Someone with Occult 3 can recognize the difference between real and fake talismans and successfully bargain with moderately powerful gods. Someone with Occult 5 can summon elementals and demons and impress a Fair Folk noble with her knowledge of its etiquette.

## Night Abilities

### Athletics

**Trait Description:** *This trait is important in combat.* Athletics allows a character to move with grace and ease. A character skilled in this Ability can jump wide chasms, climb sheer cliffs, perform daring acrobatics and lift enormous burdens. It coves feats of strength, balance, coordination and reflexes.

*Specialties:* Climbing, Leaping, Lifting Heavy Objects, Running Over Uneven or Slippery Terrain

**Trait Effects:** Someone with Athletics 1 can probably keep her balance while walking on an ice-covered street. Someone with Athletics 3 can work as an acrobat in the circuses of the Realm. Someone with Athletics 5 can scale the glass towers of Chiaroscuro.

### Awareness

**Trait Description:** Awareness measures how well the character keeps track of her surroundings and how well she knows how to use all five of her senses. Awareness allows a character to actively look and listen for danger, track her enemies through the jungles of the South or notice the subtle signs of an ambush by the Wyld Hunt.

*Specialties:* Seeing in Poor Light, Tracking, Listening, Sensing Ambushes

**Trait Effects:** Someone with Awareness 1 can usually overhear a conversation in an otherwise quiet tavern. A sailor with Awareness 3 is usually the first one to notice a pirate ship on the horizon. Someone with Awareness 5 can tell the number and location of a band of assassins waiting in a pitch black room by listening to the sound of their breathing.

### Dodge

**Trait Description:** *This trait is important in combat.* Dodge allows a character to deftly move out of the way of harm. In addition to dodging the daiklaves of Immaculate monks and the claws of behemoths, characters can also use dodge to escape harm from rockslides, avalanches, deadly First Age traps and other inanimate sources of harm.

*Specialties:* Multiple Opponents, Animal Attacks, On Slippery or Unstable Terrain, When Unarmed

**Trait Effects:** Someone with Dodge 1 can usually avoid a street urchin's knife or a boulder rolling downhill. Someone with Dodge 3 can avoid the blows of a highly trained mortal warrior. Someone with Dodge 5 can escape harm when fighting an inhumanly skilled cataphract of the Fair Folk.

### Larceny

**Trait Description:** Larceny allows a character to break into locked treasuries and also to win games of chance in the dives of Nexus. It covers the character's mastery of legerdemain, sleight of hand, gambling, pickpocketing, disguise, lock picking, con games and similar skills mostly known by thieves and other scoundrels who live outside the law. It also includes knowledge of the habits and customs of the criminal underworld.

*Specialties:* Lock Picking, Con Games, A Specific City, Cheating at Gambling, Fencing Stolen Goods, Disguise, Scoring Drugs, Organized Crime

**Trait Effects:** Someone with Larceny 1 can probably get away with pinching a mango from a shopkeeper. Someone with Larceny 3 is an accomplished thief who may run a small criminal gang. Someone with Larceny 5 is a master thief, who could likely steal the rings off the Despot of Gem's jewel-encrusted fingers.

### Stealth

**Trait Description:** Stealth allows a character to avoid notice. She can move quietly down a passage, blend into a crowd, hide from pursuers or deftly sneak past watchful guards. Stealth rolls are normally resisted by an opponent's Awareness rolls.

*Specialties:* In Wilderness Areas, In Cities, Ambush, Camouflage, Moving Silently, Hiding From Pursers

**Trait Effects:** Someone with Stealth 1 can probably avoid pursuit by remaining motionless in a deep shadow. Someone with Stealth 3 can closely follow a well-trained soldier through a crowded city without being noticed. Someone with Stealth 5 can sneak past an ever-watchful demon guarding a crypt in Sijan.

## Eclipse Abilities

### Bureaucracy

**Trait Description:** Bureaucracy covers dealing with commerce, laws and official regulations. It includes everything from a thorough knowledge of paperwork to an expertise with bargaining and making sales pitches. This Ability is essential for anyone who wishes to make his living as a merchant or a government official. However, other Abilities are necessary if the merchant or bureaucrat wishes to evaluate goods or negotiate the social complexities of court life.

*Specialties:* Bribery, Commerce, Bending Rules, Illegal Business, A Particular Nation

**Trait Effects:** Someone with Bureaucracy 1 can probably bribe a slightly corrupt official or sell aging horses at the same price as a young ones. Someone with Bureaucracy 3 can turn a small sum into a large fortune in a season of careful trading or swiftly negotiate her way through a complex and ill-managed bureaucracy. Someone with Bureaucracy 5 could out-compete the Guild in a local market or reform the Realm's bureaucracy.

### Linguistics

**Trait Description:** There are seven major languages spoken in Creation. The inhabitants of each quadrant of the Threshold speak a different language, and the mighty Realm has two official languages. There are also many dozen tribal tongues that are only spoken by small groups of barbarians. In addition, each nation of the Threshold speaks a slightly different dialect of its local language. Although speakers of different dialects can understand one another, speaking a different dialect instantly marks a character as a foreigner. Characters need Lore 1 to read and write all the languages they know.

The major languages in Creation are:

- **High Realm:** The language of the Dragon-Blooded nobles and their servitors and the language used for all official business in the Realm.
- **Low Realm:** The speech of the Realm's commoners.
- **Old Realm:** The language of the Old Realm. This is the language of many oral and written spells, as well as the language of First Age tomes. Characters must have Lore 1 or greater to purchase this language. Old Realm is also the native tongue for spirits, demons and the Fair Folk.
- **Riverspeak:** The language of the Scavenger Lands. Also the common parlance of the Guild. Full of loan words, it is used by almost every trader and merchant in Creation.
- **Skytongue:** A language family spoken in the Threshold regions of the North.
- **Flametongue:** A language family spoken in the Threshold regions of the South.
- **Seatongue:** A language family spoken in the Threshold archipelagoes of the West.
- **Forest-tongue:** A language family spoken in the Threshold region of the East.
- **Guild Cant:** A secret language spoken only by members of the Guild. (Characters must have Backing [Guild] at 2 or higher to know this language.)
- **Tribal Tongues (various):** Languages spoken by groups of barbarians. For each dot of Linguistics purchased, a character may know four tribal tongues.

*Specialties:* Individual Dialects: Haltan, Delzahn, Gethamanese, Haslanti

**Trait Effects:** Each character knows one language family as his native tongue, with an automatic specialty in the dialect spoken in his homeland. Each dot of Linguistics allows the character to understand one additional language family. Someone with Linguistics 1 knows one additional language family, someone with Linguistics 2 knows two additional language families, someone with Linguistics 3 knows three additional language families, someone with Linguistics 4 knows four additional language families, and someone with Linguistics 5 knows five additional language families.

**Note:** Unlike other Abilities, characters may buy an unlimited number of specialties for Linguistics. Each specialty is a different dialect and allows the character to sound like a native speaker of that dialect.

### Ride

**Trait Description:** Ride measures a character's proficiency when riding horses, camels or more exotic mounts such as Metagalapan riding hawks. In addition, it is used when piloting small flying vehicles from the First Age. Ride also serves as a limit on a character's martial prowess when riding in combat. If a character's Ride is lower than the combat Ability she is using, she uses her Ride score to attack instead.

*Specialties:* Simhata, Small First Age Vehicles, In Combat, In Rough Terrain

**Trait Effects:** Someone with Ride 1 can probably jump a low stone wall or break a wild horse. Someone with Ride 3 can ride a simhata in combat or jump a high stone wall at night. Someone with Ride 5 can coax a badly injured horse into jumping a wide chasm, or he could tame and ride a magical beast in a few days.

### Sail

**Trait Description:** Water covers more than a third of Creation. Sail allows characters to pilot ships across seas and along rivers as well as pilot flying vehicles such as Haslanti air boats or large First Age vehicles such as skyships. Sail covers everything from navigation and tying knots to the mechanics of steering and piloting ships through jagged reefs and half-hidden sandbars.

*Specialties:* Open Ocean, Pursuit, Flying Vehicles, Merchant Ships, Haslanti Iceships, On Rivers

**Trait Effects:** Someone with Sail 1 can usually sail past a breakwater during a mild storm or catch a merchant ship with a pirate corsair. Someone with Sail 3 can pilot a Haslanti air boat safely through a blizzard or evade a pursuing pirate ship. Someone with Sail 5 can navigate an uncharted reef in heavy fog or outrun a hurricane in an unfamiliar and barely functional skyship.

### Socialize

**Trait Description:** Socialize is the capacity both to understand the feelings and motives of others and to negotiate the complex network of customs, manners and etiquette found in every culture. While Socialize is used to blackmail someone or to start rumor campaigns, other Abilities, such as Larceny, are necessary to actually acquire blackmail information or to uncover facts that can be used to support such rumors.

*Specialties:* Discern Motivation, A Particular Culture, Interacting with the Upper Class, Lying

**Trait Effects:** Someone with Socialize 1 can probably flatter a vain courtier or arrange an assignation with someone of a lower social class. Someone with Socialize 3 can obtain powerful political favors merely by asking the correct people in the right way or successfully blackmail a noble without evidence. Someone with Socialize 5 can topple a popular ruler by starting rumors of her misdeeds or completely understand the motivations of someone she has just met.

## Backgrounds

Backgrounds are traits that catalog your character's connections, her possessions and her position in the world. Backgrounds are closely tied to your character concept—each is more than just a dot rating. If a character has the Allies, Contacts or Mentor Background, the dots represent individuals with their own lives, personalities and motives. Having Resources means that your character has a ready source of wealth, and your character acquired any artifact or manse in some interesting and unusual manner.

The player and the Storyteller should work together to make sure that your choices make sense and work well with the overall theme of the game. For example, if all of the characters start of as recently escaped slaves, then both Resources and Influence are inappropriate. Backgrounds should complement both the series and the character concept, rather than providing a way to make a powerful character.

If the player or Storyteller is uncertain whether a character's Background rating is sufficient for a given task, the player rolls the character's Background against difficulty 1 to see if it can do what she wants. Such rolls can be used to see if allies can come to the character's aid or if she can afford a new piece of equipment, for example.

However, while this method is simple, it can easily undermine roleplaying. It is often better if the Storyteller ask the player to describe her character's use of the Background clearly and then call for the appropriate (Attribute + Ability) roll when the time comes. The player might roll the character's (Manipulation + Socialize) to talk her allies into helping her or (Charisma + Presence) to see if they come to the character's aid when they know she is in trouble. A character trying to buy something expensive might roll (Intelligence + Bureaucracy) to find a bargain on the open market.

Storytellers should not use such techniques to make the character's Backgrounds less useful. Instead, she should help make Backgrounds into real and concrete things and not just abstract numbers the player rolls whenever she needs someone to rescue her character.

### Allies

Allies are your character's close friends and trusted companions. Unlike followers, allies are never extras. Most are either Exalted (of any type), small gods, Fair Folk or other magical beings that are typically at least as powerful as one of the Terrestrial Exalted. Alternatively, they might be exotic beings such as intelligent animals, or exceptionally skilled and powerful mortals such as masterful thaumaturges, wealthy nobles, crime lords or Guild factors. Characters don't have to buy the Allies Background to represent the rest of their circle—allies are always Storyteller characters. Also, allies are independent people with their own lives and goals. If your character asks for aid but does not provide any in return, her allies will soon desert her. Allies do what they can to help your character, but they won't risk their

lives for any but the most important causes—possibly, not even then. Allies asking for help can make for fun roleplaying.

**Trait Effects:** Each dot in this Background typically represents one ally approximately equal in power to a starting character. More powerful allies require higher ratings. Depending upon both her score in this Background and the power of the allies, your character can have between one and five allies.

## Artifact

In both the First Age and the modern day, Exalts created all manner of items of power, ranging from magical weapons and armor to flying vehicles or enchanted disguises. A character with the Artifact Background possesses one or more such items. Most First Age artifacts were lost or destroyed centuries ago, and much of the knowledge of how to make such items has also been lost. Today, all artifacts are rare and precious.

Consider carefully how your character acquired her artifacts. She might have been powerful or rich enough before her Exaltation to have some trappings of First Age glory. Or perhaps she followed prophetic dreams after her Exaltation and looted the hidden fortress-tomb where the body and weapons of her previous incarnation were buried. Maybe she stole the artifact or took it from the body of one of her foes. Solar Exalted can have artifacts made from any of the five magical materials, but most use artifacts made from golden orichalcum.

**Trait Effects:** Your character can purchase this Background multiple times, once for each artifact she owns. Each artifact has a rating between 1 and 5, and this is the Background cost of that particular artifact. Artifacts with ratings of 4 and 5 are now exceptionally rare and will be greatly coveted by other Exalts and gods. For information on the various artifacts, see Chapter Eight.

## Backing

Your character is an important member of an organization, such as a government, an army, the Guild or a powerful organized crime syndicate such as the Lintha Family. The higher your character's Backing, the higher her rank is in this organization. At your Storyteller's discretion, you may take Backing multiple times for rank in different organizations. However, if your character has high Backing, she is likely to be responsible for decisions involving great numbers of people and resources. And if she neglects her duties, she can expect demotion—or worse.

**Trait Effects:**

- Your character is a lower officer or a minor functionary.
- •• Your character is a mid-level officer, the head of a small department or some similarly intermediate position.
- ••• Your character is moderately powerful and has many people working under her.
- •••• Your character is extremely powerful and typically is only one or two rungs down from the people in charge of her organization.
- ••••• Your character *is* one of the leaders of her organization, a general or admiral, a Guild factor, one of the Lintha Family's fathers or mothers, et cetera.

## Contacts

In addition to having friends and allies, many characters also know people in various sectors of society. Contacts use their talents, information or resources to help your character, but they always expect some sort of favor in return. This favor could be a service, trade or even payment—generally matching the value of the contact's assistance. These associates don't risk themselves as far as a follower or even an ally. They aid your character because of mutual self-interest, not because of love or loyalty.

Each dot in this Background represents both major and minor contacts. Major contacts are individuals with whom your character interacts frequently. They have names, personalities and positions that make them useful to know. A major contact could be a Guild factor, a high-ranking military officer, a powerful courtier, a small god or a Dynast of the Realm. Such a character is always your contact, but he has his own life and problems. He might not be there when you need him. Minor contacts simply represent your character's overall "connectedness." They aren't as knowledgeable or influential as major contacts, but all you need to do to find one is roll a success on your Contacts. Most of these minor contacts do not know your character personally. Minor contacts represent your character's innate ability to sniff out information and people willing to work with her. Just use common sense: Your character isn't going find minor contacts in the middle of a desert.

**Trait Effects:** Each dot of this Background provides one major contact and one additional die for finding minor ones.

## Cult

Gods know that worship gives them power. Your character also learned this lesson and has worshipers who honor her as their patron goddess. It doesn't matter if the character's worshipers love or fear her. What matters is

that they make regular offerings and prayers to her. However, cults based upon love endure far longer when facing oppression or persecution. If you actively aid your worshipers, your cult will grow and spread. However, the Wyld Hunt attempts to destroy all Solar cults.

**Trait Effects:**

- • You have a small but devoted cult. Perhaps a half-dozen full-time priests or nuns tend a few shrines and make offerings to you. Every morning when you awaken, you automatically gain one additional point of temporary Willpower.
- •• The members of one large community or several small ones worship you. Several hundred people make daily prayers and small offerings to you. You gain a point of temporary Willpower every morning and also regain two motes of Essence per hour from worship.
- ••• You are venerated in a large region. Several thousand people daily seek your favor or forbearance. (Characters who are god-kings of a single city have this level of worship.) You may regain one point of temporary Willpower once every 24 hours as a reflexive action. You gain three additional motes of Essence per hour from the power of the cult. The Realm has heard rumors of your worship.
- •••• An entire nation honors you. Tens of thousands revere you as one of their primary deities. Regional festivals in your name draw merchants and traders from surrounding lands. You may have a city sacred to you where you rule either symbolically or in truth. Once every 12 hours, you may gain back a point of temporary Willpower, and your cult gives you four additional Essence motes per hour. The Wyld Hunt certainly knows of you and will soon attempt to destroy you.
- ••••• Many people throughout one of the four quarters of Creation worship you. There, you are the deity of some major sphere of life such as hunting, war or procreation. The people hold seasonal festivals in your honor, children bear your name, and many claim that their actions are done to aid you and your cult. Every six hours, you gain a point of temporary Willpower, and you regain six motes per hour from the constant prayers. The entire Realm will soon mobilize against you, and even the gods grow jealous of your power.

**Note:** No Solar Exalt can start a series with a Cult rating higher than 2.

## Familiar

Creation is filled with exotic beasts, from the intelligent animals of the deep forest, to semi-intelligent Haltan pets and various small gods that take on animal form. In addition, some animals are sensitive to Essence who are drawn to various magical beings like the Exalted. Some are little more than unusually loyal pets, but others share a deep and profound link with the character. In either case, the familiar draws the character's Essence to supplement its own life, and the animal will not age or die until the character does.

**Trait Effects:**

- • The familiar is a small animal, such as a cat or stray dog, which only provides companionship and perhaps some warning of danger.
- •• The character either has an impressive pet, such as a wolf or eagle or a smaller pet that is preternaturally intelligent. The animal communicates with your character (and him alone) through posture and facial expression. It can understand him and perform simple tasks such as fetching or knocking something over.
- ••• The familiar is a powerful or dangerous pet such as a tiger or a dire wolf or an impressive small animal that is as intelligent as a child of eight or nine years. It can fetch items and do chores, but it has no book learning and is easily distracted. The familiar can communicate with you as well as if it were speaking by its noises, postures and expressions. When it is touching your character, it makes an additional five motes of Essence available. This Essence is "stored" in the familiar but is otherwise treated as Personal Essence. It regenerates only after your character has regained all his own Essence. The character can share one of the familiar's senses (at a time) when the familiar is within 100 yards.
- •••• The familiar is a larger pet such as an eagle or wolf that also has the increased intelligence, near-perfect communication, sharing of senses and Essence store of a small Familiar 3 animal.
- ••••• The familiar is a powerful or dangerous pet that has the properties of a small Familiar 3 animal.

## Followers

Your character has one or more loyal assistants, oathbound warriors, devoted acolytes, semi-intelligent Haltan pets or similar companions. These people are exceptionally devoted to her. They might worship her, they might regard her as the best hope to free their homeland from tyranny, or they might simply be willing to follow any strong and powerful leader. Followers are almost always extras. While they can be as competent as an elite soldier (see p. 280), they are never Exalted, small gods or other magical beings.

Regardless of whether they are warriors, skilled crafters or temple acolytes, followers are exceptionally loyal. However, poor treatment or neglect can cause them to question their loyalty, and if it continues, they might leave or revolt. Conversely, if they are treated with care and respect, most will gladly lay down their lives for your character. Part of treating followers well is caring for their needs. Your character needs Resources, Backing or Influence equal to her dots in Followers in order to support them all.

**Trait Effects:**

- • Provides up to 5 followers.
- •• Provides 20 followers.
- ••• Provides a loyal band of 100 followers.
- •••• Provides a small army of 1,000 followers.
- ••••• Provides a mighty force of 10,000 followers.

## Influence

In time, almost every Exalt becomes famous. This Background reflects your character's pull and status in society and her political power. This status could derive from political office, being an entertainer or a religious figure or openly living as one of the Chosen. Regardless of reasons, people pay attention to her words and deeds. Influence can be used to garner favors from others, to promote a personal agenda in public or just to

bask in the glow of fame. This Background doesn't cover rank in any organization—that's Backing.

**Trait Effects:**

- • You have some local fame in your town or in one district of a metropolis.
- •• Your character is well-known in her home city-state or satrapy.
- ••• Your character's fame and power have spread even to neighboring states. The Dragon-Blooded know of her.
- •••• Your character's words carry great weight throughout much of an entire quarter of Creation, and she might rule a town or small city. The Wyld Hunt will soon arrive to destroy her.
- ••••• Your character rules an entire nation or has great pull in several. The Realm will soon gather armies to annihilate her.

## Manse

Dragon lines of Essence run through the entirety of Creation. By attuning themselves to pools where this natural magic gathers, the Exalted can draw upon a vast wellspring of power. These pools are called demesnes if they have not been harnessed by occult architecture. If this power has been focused and controlled by geomantic means, they are known as manses. Weak demesnes are quite common, but the more powerful ones are rare and are usually controlled by powerful magical creatures such as Lunar Exalted, Fair Folk nobles or important gods, who are unwilling to relinquish such a valuable resource.

Characters inside a manse or demesne to which they are attuned regain four times the level of the site per hour in Essence motes. Characters who control a demesne can build a manse to channel the power of the demesne into an object called a hearthstone, a crystal the size and shape of a chicken egg. In addition to allowing the Exalt to recover Essence at twice her level in this Background even when away from the demesne, a hearthstone grants its owner special powers when it's set into a special artifact. Characters can take this Background multiple times if they wish to control more than one demesne or manse. For more details on manses, their construction and the mechanics of how they generate hearthstones, see page 133 of Chapter Four. For sample hearthstones, see pages 382-384 of Chapter Eight.

**Trait Effects:**

- • Your character controls a level-1 manse or a level-2 demesne.
- •• Your character controls a level-2 manse or a level-3 demesne.
- ••• Your character controls a level-3 manse or a level-4 demesne.
- •••• Your character controls a level-4 manse or a level-5 demesne.
- ••••• Your character controls a level-5 manse.

## Mentor

Although most Chosen meet their new life without a guide, your character found one. This mentor is a patron, a teacher, a defender and a friend. Yet although she always acts in what she sees as your character's best interests, your mentor expects your character to obey her (or at least to listen to her). Your character is your mentor's student, ward or apprentice, not her equal. However, this relationship need not be without conflict, and it can be the subject of much in-depth roleplaying.

A mentor can be one of the Exalted, an important prince or Guild Factor or even a god or one of the Fair Folk. In addition to providing advice and assistance, your mentor may also teach Abilities, Charms and possibly even sorcery. Occasionally, she might also save your character from some dire fate. Characters who require such aid too often annoy their mentors and will be disciplined for overly reckless behavior.

**Trait Effects:**

- • Your character's mentor is just a bit more worldly and wise than your character.
- •• Your character's mentor is a figure of some note or an exceedingly important individual who has little time for your character.
- ••• Your character's mentor is wise, influential and considerably more powerful than your character.
- •••• Your character's mentor is an exceedingly important individual whose words and deeds can shape the course of nations.
- ••••• Your character's mentor is exceedingly powerful, and he takes a great interest in your character's welfare. However, he expects both obeisance and greatness from your character, and he likely has powerful enemies who might attack you to get to him.

## Resources

Resources represents your character's wealth. She may own large tracts of fertile land, a pottery factory, a ruby mine, shares in a shipping firm or simply a large horde of gold and jewels. This Background includes such things as property, clothing and basic equipment, and it shows how easily your character can acquire more. While Resources are not entirely liquid assets, all possessions can be sold to gain money (though doing so could take some time depending on what is for sale).

Each dot of Resources conveys an income beyond any gear or wealth your character gains during play. The source of this wealth must be detailed (rents on property, sharecropping, government stipend, interest in a mercantile concern, tax farming), since it may be increased, reduced or cut off entirely depending on events in the series. As with Influence, few Exalted have problems acquiring Resources—through one means or another.

**Trait Effects:**

- • Your character has an apartment or hut and may own a shoddy suit of armor and a notched long knife or spear. He has no riding animal but might own a pet and some smaller domestic animals. If your character supports a family, it often goes hungry. If he lives alone, your character can eat meat once a week.
- •• Your character has a comfortable cottage or apartment and might own a poor quality riding animal. He might own a suit of light armor and a weapon. If your character supports a family, it eats filling, if boring, meals. If he lives alone, your character can eat meat every other day and afford hard liquor as well as beer.
- ••• Your character owns a townhouse or a prosperous farm. He probably has one fine riding animal and another one of lower quality in case the first falls ill. Your character has a suit of any armor and any two weapons. If he lives alone, your character eats well

every night and can regularly afford all manner of entertainments. If he is supporting a family, it never goes hungry, and there are roasts and sweetmeats on feast days. Your character almost certainly has a domestic servant or two.

•••• Your character is exceedingly wealthy. At minimum, he owns both a townhouse and a country estate. Your character bears the finest arms, rides a fine gelding or stallion, and alone or as master of a family, your character and his kin will never know hunger or want for medical attention. He might also own a private yacht and have a dozen or more servants tend to his needs.

••••• Your character is a fabulously wealthy merchant prince, a bandit king, a mercenary lord or a potentate. He has vast riches and either commands an army or could rent one at need. Your character owns at least one excellent ship, and an army of attentive servants eagerly await his every whim.

**Note:** Almost everyone in Creation has at least one dot in this Background. Those who do not are both homeless and destitute.

# Essence

Essence is one of the most important traits in **Exalted**. As an energy, Essence is life, breath, power—the essential, all-pervading animating energy of Creation. As a trait, the Essence rating describes the size of a being's spirit and the magical power of its soul. The higher the trait goes, the more powerful the soul is. In addition, beings who can use their life-energy to perform miracles have more power with which to do so the higher their Essence goes. As it is used by magical beings, Essence is divided into "motes"—logically and magically indivisible units of power used to power effects. A character generally has many more motes of Essence than dots of the Essence trait.

**Trait Effects:** Beings with high Essence scores are hard to affect with magic. The higher the score, the harder it is to affect the being. In addition, while the formula varies slightly, a being's Essence trait is normally central to figuring how many motes of available Essence that being has available to spend.

The average person has an Essence of 1, as do normal animals. Magical beings generally have an Essence of 2 or more. Newly reborn Solar Exalted, for example, have an Essence of 2. An elder Dragon-Blooded might have an Essence of 6 or even 7, and a mature Celestial Exalted over 1,000 years in age probably has an Essence of 7 or 8.

One of the most visible results of the Essence trait is an Exalt's anima banner. When gods perform miracles, the miracle may be obvious or subtle, but the god itself is unchanged by the power. The Exalted, however, are not entirely in tune with their own Essence, given that so much of it is harnessed through the immortal core of power within them.

As a result, the Exalted have two pools of motes from which they can spend Essence: Peripheral and Personal. Personal Essence is Essence over which the character has total mastery. Personal Essence expenditures leave no trace, as long as the character does not use Charms with the Obvious keyword. Peripheral Essence is another matter. Peripheral Essence is controlled imperfectly by the raw power of the character's Exaltation. Exalts who spend Essence from their Peripheral Essence pool quickly develop a temporary halo called their *anima banner*. The more Essence they spend, the brighter the halo glows. Except for the 1–3 and 16+ effects, the halo fades at the rate of one degree per scene, or one level roughly every 20 minutes if the scenes are very long. Solar Exalted have brilliant golden anima banners that reflect the Solar origins of their power. Other Exalted have different sorts of halos. For example, the Lunar Exalted have brilliant, icy silver auras, while the Dragon-Blooded are surrounded by halos of elemental power so intense they can cause injury or death on exposure.

These halo effects occur naturally only when the character uses Peripheral Essence. However, an Exalt using Personal Essence can deliberately allow it to escape into her anima and have the motes expended count toward the number used during that scene. An Exalt typically does so when she has spent all her Peripheral Essence but wishes to stage a showy display.

| Motes of Peripheral Essence | Effect |
|---|---|
| 1–3 | The character's caste mark glitters and is visible from certain angles. The player of anyone seeing the Exalt may make a (Perception + Awareness) roll at standard difficulty for his character to notice the caste mark. The Solar can use the Stealth Ability normally and may still hide behind Stealth Charms and other concealing magic without fear of detection. This effect can persist for as long as an hour after the character has ceased to burn Essence. |
| 4–7 | The character's caste mark burns and will shine through anything placed over it. It is impossible to mistake the character for anything but what she is. Stealth Charms and other such magic, including the Night Caste's ability to mute sensory impressions, fail. A character may use the Stealth Ability to hide in natural cover, but all such attempts incur a +2 difficulty. |
| 8–10 | The character is surrounded by a coruscant aura bright enough to read by, and her caste mark is a burning golden brand on her forehead. Stealth is impossible. |
| 11–15 | The character is engulfed in a brilliant bonfire of Essence that burns from her feet to at least a foot above her head. Objects that come in contact with the aura may be left bleached or faded, as if they had been exposed to the sun for many days. The character is visible for miles. The light produced is bright and steady enough to read by, out to a spearcast's distance. |
| 16+ | The character is surmounted or surrounded by a burning image totemic to her person. A warrior might be surrounded by a great golden bull, a Twilight Caste magician by an incredibly elaborate mandala, and so on. This effect fades during any action the character does not spend Essence, but it leaps back into existence from the solar bonfire of the character's anima if the character again burns Peripheral Essence. |

## Regaining Essence

Once spent, an Exalt's motes return to him only gradually. Therefore, an Exalt has to shepherd his mystical energies carefully, lest he find himself powerless when he's beset by enemies. An Exalt cannot recover any motes if he engages in strenuous activity (combat, most forms of manual labor, hikes or forced marches and so on). If he's at ease, but not completely relaxed (such as when watching an artistic performance, taking a leisurely stroll or debating with a Realm courtier), he recovers spent motes at the rate of four per hour. When he's completely relaxed (for example, sleeping or receiving a massage), he recovers motes at the rate of eight per hour. Characters first regenerate their Personal Essence, regaining motes of their Peripheral Essence only when their Personal Essence pool is full.

In addition, characters who are attuned to manses recover their Essence more quickly, as do those carrying hearthstones or with active cults. See the Manse and Cult Backgrounds for these bonus values.

Players' characters are presumed to begin the game with a full pool of motes.

# Willpower

The Willpower trait measures both determination and emotional stability. Confident, driven and self-motivated characters have high Willpower scores. Willpower has a permanent rating that reflects a character's total strength in the trait (noted by the circles on the character sheet). Whenever a roll is called for, the dice pool is always based on the character's permanent Willpower. Willpower also has a current rating, measured in points, which indicates the character's present reserves. "Spending Willpower" refers to using points from the current rating (noted by the squares on the character sheet).

**Trait Effects:**

| | |
|---|---|
| • | The character is broken and mentally damaged. |
| •• | The character is skittish and timid. |
| ••• | The character is somewhat introverted and overly cautious. |
| •••• | The character is slightly hesitant and uncertain. |
| ••••• | The character is diffident and a little shy. |
| ••••• • | The character is sure and self-confident. |
| ••••• •• | The character is extremely strong-willed and determined. |
| ••••• ••• | The character is unwavering and resolute. |
| ••••• •••• | The character has a will of iron. |
| ••••• ••••• | The character is a paragon of determination and stability. |

## Using Willpower

When a character spends Willpower, he pushes his mind and body beyond their normal limits and attempts to do something extraordinary. A character can spend only one Willpower point in an action to activate one of the effects listed here. Many powerful Charms require the expenditure of Willpower points to activate, but that expenditure does not count against this limit.

**Free Success:** You can spend one of your character's Willpower points to earn an automatic success. This free success is separate from any that you roll, but it counts toward your total for the action. You must declare you're spending Willpower prior to rolling for the action. When Willpower is spent in this fashion, the roll cannot botch.

**Activate a Virtue:** Instead of gaining an automatic success, a character can activate her Virtues to add extra dice to her pool instead. See "Virtues" for details.

**Resist Mental Powers:** A character may spend Willpower to resist Charms and spells that attempt to control her mind or emotions. See Chapter Five: Charms, Combos and Sorcery, pages 179-181, for details.

## Compulsion

Once all of your Willpower points are gone, your character is subject to a compulsion. His Virtues come to the forefront of his personality, and until he recovers at least one point of Willpower, your character cannot willingly go against any of her Virtues rated 3 or higher. For example, a character with a Valor of 3 could not attempt to flee combat or take any other action that requires failing a Valor roll.

## Recovering Willpower

Willpower points are regained whenever your character gets a chance to rest or restore his self-confidence. The Storyteller is always the final arbiter of when and how Willpower is regained. The following methods are entirely optional, and they should encourage roleplaying.

• Each morning when the character awakens, the player may roll his character's Conviction trait. For each success the player rolls, the character regains a point of temporary Willpower.

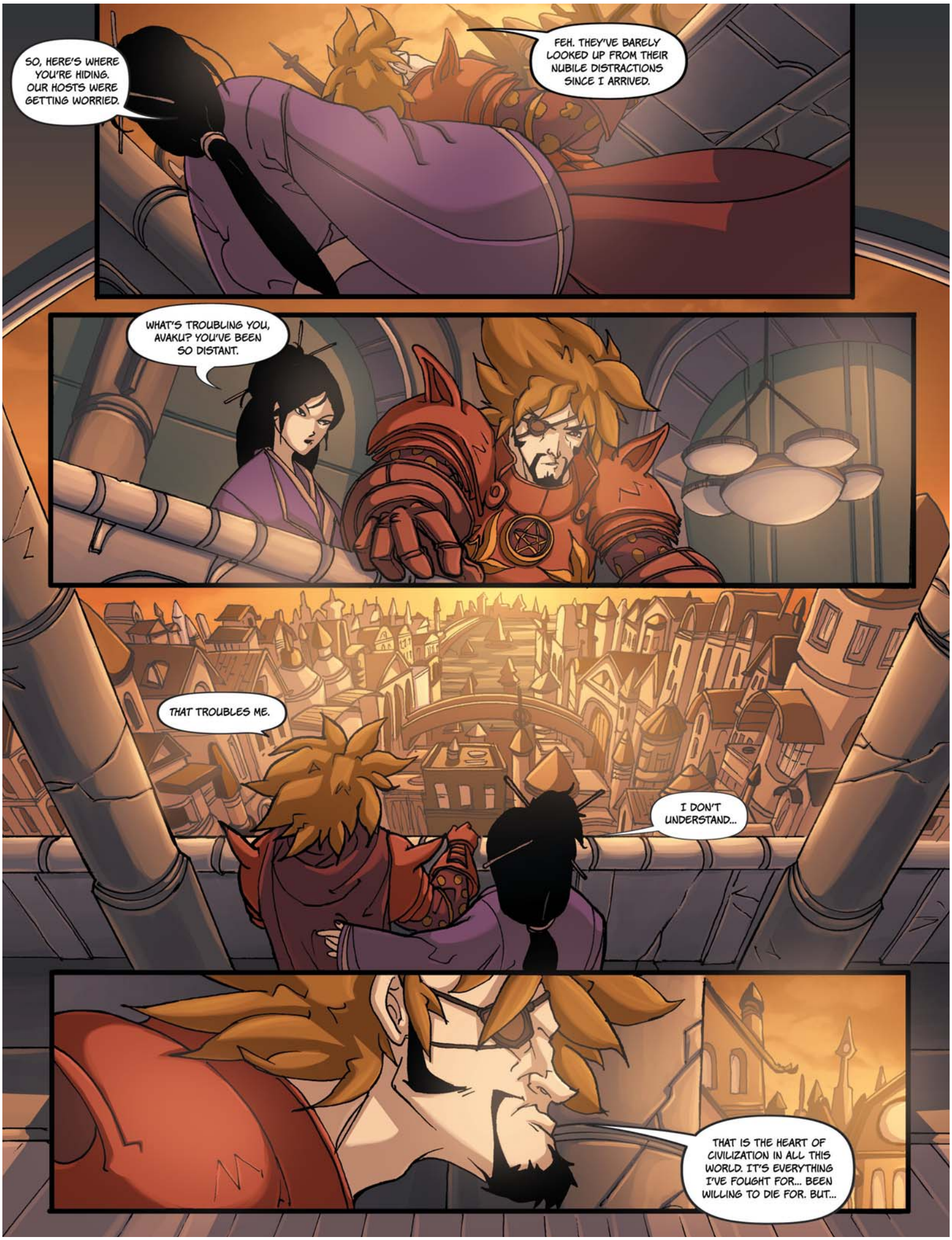
• If your character performs a stunt that furthers her Motivation (see stunts, Chapter Four, p. 123 for details).

• Your character may receive one or more points if she achieves some special success or affirms her capabilities, such as rescuing a friend, discovering a significant plot point, or defeating a hated enemy.

• Rather than receiving motes of Essence for an ordinary two- or three-die stunt, you may, instead, regain a point of Willpower. See page 123 of the Drama and Systems chapter for details.

• Your character gets points equal to her Willpower score at the end of a story (not a single game session). The Storyteller may modify this return somewhat if significant story elements remain unresolved.

• When your character suffers a Limit Break, she gains points of temporary Willpower equal to the rating of the Virtue whence her flaw springs. The character gains the full rating of the Virtue, even if this means her temporary Willpower rises over her permanent Willpower or even over 10. This gain is the only way that a character can ever have a temporary Willpower higher than her permanent Willpower. The character does not recover this Willpower if she partially controls the Limit Break.


SO, HERE'S WHERE YOU'RE HIDING. OUR HOSTS WERE GETTING WORRIED.
FEH. THEY'VE BARELY LOOKED UP FROM THEIR NUBILE DISTRACTIONS SINCE I ARRIVED.
WHAT'S TROUBLING YOU, AVAKU? YOU'VE BEEN SO DISTANT.
THAT TROUBLES ME.
I DON'T UNDERSTAND...
THAT IS THE HEART OF CIVILIZATION IN ALL THIS WORLD. IT'S EVERYTHING I'VE FOUGHT FOR... BEEN WILLING TO DIE FOR. BUT...

BUT DOES IT DESERVE SUCH DEVOTION?
AVAKU! HOW CAN YOU ASK SUCH A QUESTION?
TWO WEEKS AGO, I KILLED A BOY YOUNGER THAN OUR SONS. TO THE PEOPLE OF THAT CITY, THAT MAKES ME A HERO.
BUT YOUR LETTER SAID HE WAS ANATHEMA.
HE WAS A *BOY*, MINATA! HE HAD NO IDEA WHAT HE WAS DOING.
HE WANTED TO KEEP THE SHIPMENT OF OPIUM WE WERE SAFEGUARDING FROM GETTING TO MARKET WHERE HE LIVED. I KILLED HIM TO PROTECT OUR INVESTMENT.
IS THAT WHY THE DRAGONS CHOSE ME? TO PROTECT THIS DECADENT FAMILY'S DRUG MONEY?!?
NO, MY HUSBAND. YOU KNOW IT ISN'T.

# CHAPTER FOUR
# DRAMA AND SYSTEMS

This chapter contains all the core rules required for playing a game of **Exalted**. Those new to storytelling games should realize that the rules do not establish a way to "win" as they would in more traditional sorts of games. Instead, they operate more like the laws of nature. By default, what follows is the underlying way this world works, with formal game terms introduced in italics. Before any discussion of dice or statistics, however, Storytellers should keep two cardinal laws of play in mind:

**Rule 1: Have Fun.** This is a game, and it's supposed to be entertaining for all parties involved. If you aren't having fun, stop and do something else.

**Rule 2: If you don't like it, change it.** This is also known as the Golden Rule. *Nothing* is more important than Rule 2, so players and Storytellers may freely customize the setting and rules for their own games. Players should note that the Storyteller is the final arbiter of all rules.

## Time

The world inside a story does not follow the same clock as the real world. Some events might take an hour to play, yet only encompass a few minutes within the game. Conversely, an uneventful journey of several months can pass by with only the briefest description. Owing to the narrative structure of the game, time is broken down into the following units:

**Series:** This refers to the ongoing game as a whole, a succession of *stories* revolving around the players' characters and their heroic exploits. For particularly long-running series, the cast can change, with only the Storyteller and the established chronology of the world holding constant.

**Story:** A complete narrative arc, usually with a primary goal and the possible inclusion of subplots. Most stories are broken into *episodes*, largely because they are too long to play in a single session or link a set of plot developments.

**Episode:** An independent section of a *story*, either containing its own subplot or categorized as the part of the *story* covered in a single session of play. Each episode strings together a sequence of *scenes*, possibly linked by *downtime*.

**Scene:** A segment of narrative action and events played out as the protagonists interact with the setting and supporting characters of the game. Theatrically, this is the action that

happens "onstage." A scene encompasses the time necessary to play it, which can be a three-minute fight or 10 hours spent mingling at a party.

**Downtime:** The abstract passage of "unimportant" events between scenes or episodes, which isn't actually played. Instead, downtime uses simple narration to explain what happened. Characters use downtime to recuperate or train, or for players to get through "boring" matters so they can get to something more exciting. Theatrically, this is what happens "offstage" or in a voiceover sequence.

**Tick:** Only relevant in combat or similarly tense situations, this is the smallest measurable unit of time in the game, approximately one second long. See page 141 for more information.

## Dice and Props

**Exalted** requires 10-sided dice to simulate the effects of chance, which are available in any game store or sold through White Wolf's online catalog. (See www.white-wolf.com for details.) Players may share dice, but this will slow game-play considerably. Ten dice per player works, but 15 to 20 is better. The Storyteller should definitely have her own set.

Besides dice, players might also wish to obtain small glass beads or some other form of token in at least two colors to keep track of Essence motes and other fluctuating values. White Wolf produces glass beads for just this purpose, available through its catalog.

Otherwise, the only props needed for play include character sheets, pencils, this book and any other **Exalted** products used for reference. The **Exalted Second Edition Screen**, for instance contains many useful tables summarizing key rules from this chapter. The screen also works well for hiding notes and dice rolls.

## Actions

Whenever a player has her character attempt anything, the Storyteller can resolve the action in one of two ways. In the first, he can accept the action and simply allow it to happen as described. This works well for trivial matters, such as walking across a room or changing into an outfit—tasks of such simplicity that there is no reason the character should fail. Similarly, when a character engages in conversation, the player speaks as the character.

In many cases, however, characters aren't assured of success. Uncertainty creates tension, which facilitates the drama that drives stories forward and makes scenes interesting. Properly used, every uncertain action becomes a cliffhanger in miniature. Will the character make it across the narrow bridge over the pit of lava or fall in? Will she rally the ragtag militia against the slavering ghouls shambling from the shadowland, or will her soldiers flee in terror? Wherever the chance of failure exists, traits and dice come into play.

## Traits

Every character has strengths and weaknesses, based in large part on her innate aptitudes, learned skills or the mettle of her soul. Within the game, such qualities are measured using traits, each of which has a name and a numerical rating in dots. Most traits range from 1 to 5, although some can have a rating as low as 0 or even in excess of 5. Players record traits on their character sheet by filling in the appropriate number of dots.

Innate competence is expressed through nine Attributes, grouped into three broad categories. The Physical Attributes of Strength, Dexterity and Stamina govern the power, speed and health of the body, respectively. Social Attributes represent a

character's force of personality, cunning and looks, through the Charisma, Manipulation and Appearance traits. Mental Attributes measure the acumen, discernment and quickness of the mind, using Perception, Intelligence and Wits. A rating of 1 in an Attribute signifies below-average competence, whereas 5 marks the absolute peak of human accomplishment. See pages 101-102 for more information.

A character's learned skills and knowledge form the basis of her Abilities, of which 25 exist. These Abilities are explained in detail on pages 106-110. Without any dots in an Ability, a character has no training in that task. She is not fundamentally deficient without it, but simply ignorant. Even among the greatest gods and Exalted, very few have dots in *every* Ability. Most characters specialize according to their interests and background. With 1 in an Ability, a character is a novice. With 5, he is one of the world's foremost experts in that field—at least among mortals.

The qualities of a character's soul and personality are a function of several traits. First, the four Virtues of Compassion, Conviction, Temperance and Valor establish a character's personality and mores. As with Attributes, 1 marks a character as deficient. At the upper end, 5 is the realm of saints and heroes. In addition, every character has a Willpower rating, expressing the raw force of her mind and passion. Finally, Essence gauges the overall magic of a being and the power of her soul, with non-magical beings having 1 simply for being animate and higher ratings reserved for spirits, the Chosen and the other supernatural beings. Unlike most other traits, Willpower and Essence follow a 1–10 scale instead of 1–5. See pages 102-103 and 114-115 for more details.

Finally, Backgrounds cover a character's social ties, possessions and other unique advantages specific to her upbringing or nature. The degree of privilege and accomplishment follows the usual 1 to 5 scale as explained for the specific Background. See pages 110-114 for more information.

## Pools and Dice

Whenever a character attempts an action where success and failure are both possible, her player rolls a number of dice equal to the dots the character has in the appropriate trait or traits. Most rolls couple an Attribute with an Ability, representing the combination of innate potential and learned skill that best applies to the situation. Unless otherwise stated, no roll pairs two Attributes or two Abilities. The Storyteller selects this combination when he asks for the roll. For instance, crossing a narrow bridge over lava would require a roll of (Dexterity + Athletics). The sum of all the traits used for a roll is called a *dice pool*.

When rolling a dice pool, the player considers each die separately to see if it contributes to the success of the action. By default, every die always has a *target number* of 7. If the number rolled is equal to the target number or greater—7, 8, 9 or 0 (10)—that die adds to the overall success of the roll. Certain rare magical effects can occasionally raise or lower the target number of a roll, changing the likelihood that dice will succeed. For instance, at target number 5, a die succeeds on a roll of 5, 6, 7, 8, 9 or 0. The total number of successes generated on a roll determines the overall success of the action.

## Difficulty and Success

The *difficulty* of a task equals the number of successes required to achieve it. Many tasks have difficulty 1, succeeding if even one die in the dice pool rolls a success. Because this is the norm, difficulty 1 is also called *standard difficulty*. (Rolls without a listed difficulty are always assumed to be difficulty 1.) The harder the task is, the higher the difficulty is. On average, characters have a reasonable chance of success when they have a number of dice in a pool at least double the required difficulty (so two dice for difficulty 1, eight for difficulty 4, etc.). A difficulty above 5 is possible, but such Herculean feats are usually beyond the reach of mere mortals (who seldom have dice pools larger than 10).

Often, the difficulty of a task is immediately evident to the character. In such cases, the Storyteller should provide the difficulty along with the required dice pool for the action. In other situations, the difficulty is not apparent. Perhaps the character is under stress or has never attempted anything remotely like the action in question before. Maybe revealing the difficulty could give too much away (such as alerting players to the presence of something well-hidden by calling for a high-difficulty [Perception + Awareness] roll). In these cases, the Storyteller calls for a roll without providing the difficulty and has the player state the number of successes rolled. He then compares the successes to the secret difficulty. On hidden-difficulty rolls where failure could result in a character's injury or some other unpleasant fate, cautious players can usually take a moment to "look before they leap." Doing so requires a successful roll of (Perception + the Ability used for the task). Obviously, common sense applies. Characters cannot try to look ahead to figure out how far they might have to look ahead (i.e., no guessing the difficulty of basic [Perception + Awareness] checks).

| Difficulty Rating | Degree of Difficulty |
|---|---|
| 1 | Standard |
| 2 | Difficult |
| 3 | Challenging |
| 4 | Nearly Impossible |
| 5+ | Legendary |

If the number of successes generated by a dice pool is less than its difficulty, the action as a whole fails. If the number of successes matches the difficulty, the action succeeds. Should the number of successes exceed the difficulty, the character succeeds in a more thorough or dramatic fashion, with the size of the excess (called the *threshold*) governing the overall impressiveness of the feat. For some tasks, the number of bonus successes has a measurable effect built into the rules of the game. For instance, the more skillfully a character throws a punch, the harder it is to avoid the blow and the more damage inflicted if the strike connects. In other cases, bonus successes are simply cosmetic, rewarding players with better descriptions of their triumph.

## Failure and Botches

If a roll does not generate enough successes to meet its difficulty, the action fails. Depending on the nature of the action, failure can have a wide range of consequences. If a character

| Threshold | Degree of Success |
|---|---|
| 0 | Adequate |
| 1 | Competent |
| 2 | Superior |
| 3 | Remarkable |
| 4 | Astonishing |
| 5+ | Phenomenal |

cannot decipher a set of ancient glyphs, he can always try again later. Of course, if he has to translate those runes to find the secret weakness of the Deathlord advancing on him with her soulsteel grand daiklave, later might not be a luxury he can afford. In a similar vein, some failures have immediate consequences. Failing to climb a cliff probably means the character can't find a handhold, but failing to hold on to the handholds at 100 yards up in the face of a sudden gust of wind means something altogether different.

In most cases, simple failure should not lead to inescapable ruin, at least not for protagonists and major Storyteller characters. If the character falls from a great height, she might only scrape 50 feet down the cliff before receiving another roll to snag a protruding ledge. Real catastrophes are reserved for when none of the dice in a pool show successes and at least die has a result of 1—called a *botch*. While every botch is bad, sadistic Storytellers might opt to increase the severity of a botch according to the number of 1s rolled (much as a threshold determines gradations of success). Storytellers can also make botches worse for characters unskilled at the task at hand, so that a skilled character with an eight-dice pool doesn't theoretically suffer a worse botch than a character with two dice in a pool (who cannot roll more than two 1s).

## The Rule of 10

By luck, divine providence or dogged determination, heroes can sometimes achieve the impossible. Unless specified otherwise, every time a die shows a result of 10, that die counts as two successes rather than one. This benefit applies to all magical beings and to heroic mortals.

## Penalties

In an ideal world, a character would act without any sort of hindrance. If she sought to climb a mountain, it would be a clear, sunny day after she had a good night's sleep and a balanced breakfast to boot. Of course, such conditions seldom manifest in the high-action epic setting of **Exalted**. Heroes climb sheer cliffs in the middle of raging typhoons with lightning exploding around them, chipping handholds with their fingertips while shrugging off the pain of seven critical wounds to reach the summit. In short, adversity allows heroes to prove themselves. From a rules perspective, any circumstance or obstacle that interferes with a character's ability to perform an action is called a *penalty*. Every penalty falls into one of two broad categories based on how it provides a hindrance.

**Internal Penalties:** Anything that directly impairs a character's ability to perform a task is called an *internal penalty*. Most often, these penalties involve some sort of adverse state within the character's own mind or body, caused by pain, fear, drugs, poisons, exhaustion, entropic magic and the like. Lacking appropriate tools also counts.

One common penalty is for acting without the proper Ability. The player of anyone who is not Exalted loses two dice from any roll based on an Ability in which she does not have any dots. Sensory deprivation is always internal regardless of source, so impaired vision qualifies, be it a result of congenital defect, injury, darkness or fog. Internal penalties remove dice from a character's pool before a roll, effectively reducing her competence. The number of dice removed depends on the specific penalty, and most of these conditions stack with one another for cumulative effect. The total penalties afflicting an Exalt or other magical being with Essence 2+ cannot reduce a dice pool below her Essence rating, but this benefit can only offset internal penalties. It does not provide bonus dice in situations where a character's Essence rating exceeds her actual dice pool.

Wound penalties (see page 150) and multiple action penalties (see pages 124-125) are the explicit exceptions to this rule. If a character ever has a dice pool of zero dice or less after applying all bonuses and does not benefit from bonus successes, she cannot even attempt that action.

**External Penalties:** While internal penalties make a character less capable in some fashion, *external penalties* are conditions that make a task more difficult. Most often, these conditions are environmental factors of some kind, such as slick terrain interfering with acrobatics, knee-high muck inhibiting dodges, cover protecting opponents and so on. In other cases, external penalties arise from a deliberate choice of the character. If she wishes to slice her initials into a rival's face with her sword during a duel instead of simply slashing at him, a penalty applies. External penalties do not subtract dice from a character's pool. Instead, they subtract directly from the number of successes generated by a roll.

One notable penalty is the retry penalty. **Every time a character attempts to perform an action at which she has already failed, she generally accrues a -1 success external penalty to the attempt due to frustration, and to simulate the fact that the character has already tried the obvious solutions.**

In some cases, the same condition may create both types of penalty:

*Example: Lorn sits astride his mount as a raging maelstrom buffets him from every side. He hears a roar over the thunder and turns to see a claw strider rise from the grass and charge him. Without hesitation, he draws his bow and fires into the gaping maw of the beast. The winds and rain do not make him any less effective of an archer, but instead, make the task itself more difficult as an external penalty. However, the thick rain also impairs visibility, which counts as an internal penalty. The Storyteller increases the difficulty by one and imposes a -2 penalty.*

Storytellers should remember that keeping the game moving is more important than wasting time agonizing over the nature of a penalty. If a condition could belong to either category, pick one and apply it. Generally, every point of difficulty increase is equivalent to losing two dice.

## Resisted Rolls

Sometimes, two characters compete directly with one another, as in a game, a battle of wits or some form of race. In these cases, both characters' players roll what's called a *resisted*

*roll* at the same difficulty using the dice pool appropriate to the contest (assigned by the Storyteller). The character with the most successes wins the contest, with a threshold equal to the number of successes by which her player's roll exceeded her opponent's. Of course, not all contests are evenly balanced, and each party can suffer different penalties depending on the situation. If a visiting Immaculate monk chases a street urchin pickpocket through the back alleys of Nexus, his unfamiliarity with the area would almost certainly cost him a die or two. Moreover, some resisted rolls involve each character acting at a different difficulty, in which case the thresholds of each roll are compared to determine the victor and the gradation of victory.

## Static Values

Some kinds of resisted rolls are opposed without an actual roll on the target's part. Some condition of the target sets an inherent difficulty. The most common of these are Defense Value (DV) and Mental Defense Value (MDV). In each case, the target character adds a number of traits together and divides the result by two. This is the difficulty of the acting character's roll—usually the roll to hit. Static values are used to speed up the game and protect characters from death via random results.

## Rounding Static Values

Characters often have to round numbers off if they are computing static values or otherwise dividing something in half. **When rounding for static values such as DVs, Exalted and other magic beings round upward, while mortals and heroic mortals round downward.** This does not include dividing Stamina for the purposes of determining base lethal soak, as everyone rounds down for that.

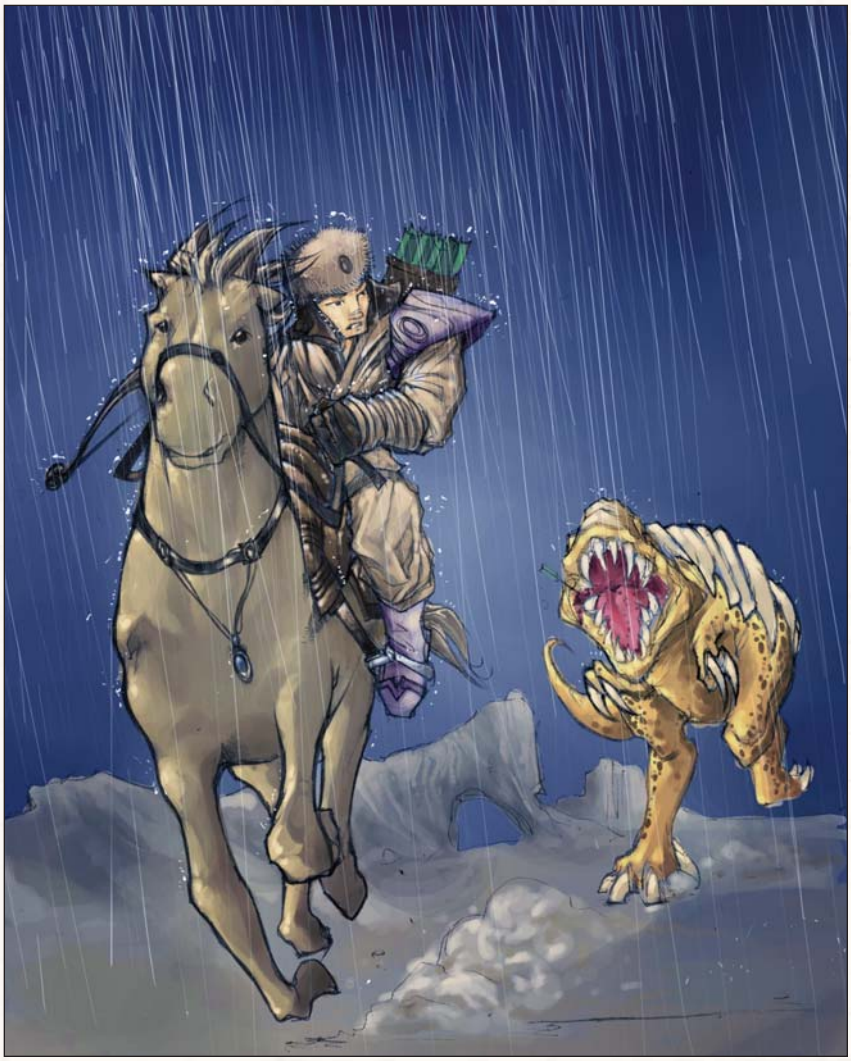
## Extended Rolls

While many actions can be accomplished with a single roll, some tasks are more complicated or require prolonged effort to accomplish. Scrambling up a tree might require only a single (Dexterity + Athletics) roll, but a sheer cliff takes longer to surmount and affords more opportunities for something to go wrong. The Storyteller could certainly reduce the climb to a single roll to speed up play, using a threshold to determine how long it takes the character to ascend and interpreting failure or botch accordingly. Alternatively, however, the Storyteller can define the climb, or any task of this nature, as an *extended roll*. In doing so, he sets a number of total successes the player needs to garner in order to succeed (called the *cumulative difficulty*) and the time that passes in game between each roll (called the *roll interval*). Climbing a cliff might have a cumulative difficulty of 20 and a roll interval of five minutes, meaning that the player rolls (Dexterity + Athletics) once for every five minutes the character spends climbing, and he adds the successes from each roll together. Once the player has amassed 20 successes, the character reaches the top. Like normal actions, an extended roll can also have a difficulty as well as a cumulative difficulty, in which case each roll is made at the appropriate difficulty and only adds the threshold to the amassed total (or one success added for threshold zero).

A failure on any part of an extended roll has no effect beyond contributing nothing to the accumulated successes. A botch, on the other hand, can have a range of unpleasant consequences selected by the Storyteller. Sometimes, a botch costs the player a set number of accumulated successes (or perhaps all accumulated successes). In a worst case scenario, the botch spoils the entire effort, resulting in automatic failure for the action as a whole.

Some rolls may be extended and resisted, with victory going to the player who reaches the cumulative difficulty first:

*Example: Lorn's arrow found its mark, but the claw strider didn't slow down. The Marukani horseman thumps his heels into his horse's flanks, launching forward at a gallop across the plains. If he pulls far enough ahead, the dinosaur won't have a chance of catching him. His player rolls (Charisma + Ride) in an extended, resisted roll against the claw strider's (Strength + Athletics), with a cumulative difficulty of 5 and a roll interval of one minute. With each roll, the*



*threshold of (victor's successes – the successes of the loser) adds to the victor's total. If the claw strider gets to five before Lorn, it will catch him and engage in close combat in an attempt to devour him. If Lorn gets to five, he escapes.*

## Bonuses

Just as conditions can impede a character's actions by imposing various forms of penalties, other conditions can aid a character's efforts by adding additional dice to his pool or even bonus successes. Most such bonuses come from one of the following sources:

**Willpower:** Outside of combat, a player may spend one Willpower point to add one bonus success to a roll (as if an additional die had been rolled and succeeded). Alternatively, the character may spend one Willpower point to channel a Virtue for a particular action. Doing so adds to one roll a number of bonus dice equal to the appropriate Virtue rating. Channeling can aid only those rolls for actions that are, themselves, appropriate to the Virtue in question (see pp. 102-103 for more details). Players cannot use Willpower to provide both benefits to the same roll. In combat, timing rules limit Willpower expenditure.

**Specialties:** Characters with a specialty in an Ability add a bonus die or dice to pertinent rolls (see p. 74). Unless specified otherwise, specialties cannot add more than three dice to a roll.

**Equipment:** Particularly good tools can help with certain rolls, such as lockpicks aiding Larceny or surgical instruments helping Medicine. All weapons have an Accuracy rating, which is almost always positive, indicating the bonus dice granted when wielding them.

**Magic:** Many Charms provide bonus dice, especially Essence Overwhelming (see pp. 183-184).

**Stunts:** The rules of **Exalted** reward players with additional dice for describing their characters' actions in an evocative manner. The out-of-game rationale for a stunt bonus is that well-described actions keep the game interesting for everyone and help the Storyteller set the scene. In game, stunts represent the capacity of epic heroes to be truly spectacular when they take risks and act like heroes.

At the lowest level, one-die stunts require a good description of an action, adjudicated by the Storyteller. In return, the player gains one additional die, and the character may perform feats that border on impossible (such as running across the heads of people in a crowd, deflecting a blade or arrow barehanded and so on).

*Example: Anoria snaps her razor-fan open with a soft click across the guard's throat. She then watches over its bloody edge as he collapses in a gurgling heap at her feet.*

Two-die stunts require that the character interact with the environment in some notable fashion, taking advantage of the scenery that the Storyteller has provided. This can be physical environment or things the character knows about the world, like an enemy's phobias or a lover's favorite flower. The player gets two bonus dice and may perform limited dramatic editing. No detail of the scene may be contradicted, but minor details may be "revealed" in the context of the character's actions. For instance, a character might leap off a parapet to escape a hail of arrows, and the player could use a two-die stunt to reveal a banner fortuitously hung on the wall, which the character grabs to save himself. The Storyteller may veto any editing that he feels strains belief or is otherwise inappropriate (such as an edit that contradicts a major detail he has not yet revealed). Players cannot generally use a stunt to draw a "hidden" weapon from nowhere, although some assassins might well have shuriken or throwing needles hidden all over their person, leaving exact placement vague until a good stunt opportunity arises.

*Anoria watches the two guards charging her from each side, intending to pin her between them. At the last moment, she crouches and flips back against the wall. In the instant she stands horizontal, her fans flash out, catching both men in the face. She then falls through the double arterial spray, landing catlike as her two attackers crash blindly into one another.*

Three-die stunts are singular acts of greatness, stunning bravado and visual poetry, defined by their capacity to leave the other players slack-jawed in astonishment. If any doubt exists as to whether a stunt merits three dice, it isn't a three-die stunt. In addition to providing three bonus dice, these feats allow for the same measure of dramatic editing as two-die stunts.

*The demon swings his burning fist at Anoria, and she leaps straight up in a somersault, balancing in a tentative handstand on his massive hand. Her feet connect with the chandelier above, tilting it to pour oil on top of the spirit's head. As she hoped, the glittering drops burst alight as they land on the creature's superheated flesh. The flames do not hurt him, but distract him long enough for her to release a hand and grab a fan from her belt. Still balanced on the monster's swinging arm, Anoria shoves her folded razor into the demon's mouth, twisting it up through his brain.*

Players should note that the preceding examples set the scene as well as providing the action. In the first, the stunt is the description of the attack as something more than "I hit him." In the second, the stunt is Anoria's use of the wall as a springboard and arranging for her opponents to crash together. In the final, it is her audacity to perform acrobatic feats while perched *on* her enemy as she sets him up to expose his one point of vulnerability. During play, the Storyteller should have already set the scene by the time a character acts, so a stunt does not need to be a five-minute narrative. Without exception, short and flowing is always better than long and clunky. Merely stringing adjectives and adverbs together isn't good enough. The description must be interesting, without interrupting the flow of play.

If the Storyteller deems that a particular stunt also resonates with a character's Motivation (see pp. 88-89) in a particularly obvious and dramatically appropriate manner, she may raise the rating of a stunt by one category. In order for this bonus to apply, the action must already merit a stunt and cannot already be a three-die stunt (which is the absolute maximum classification of stunt). However, a character who performs a three-die stunt in conjunction with his Motivation should almost certainly receive the option to gain an experience point from doing so. Moreover, an action building on Motivation must directly further the character's goals in a way that requires real effort or risk for the character. A powerful Solar might not gain a stunt bonus for confronting back-alley muggers he could dispatch with both eyes closed and his hands tied behind his back, but his commitment to righteousness might net him a superior bonus when he gives a speech adjuring a deathknight to abandon her liege and the side of darkness to join his righteous quest to restore Creation.

If an action enhanced by a stunt succeeds, the character receives a number of motes of Essence equal to twice the stunt's rating. For two- or three-die stunts, the player may choose to have the character recover a point of Willpower instead of Essence. In games where three-die stunts are rare, Storytellers should consider

offering players the choice of receiving one experience point for such feats (as an alternative to recovering Willpower or Essence). This option should be available only if the stunt is a natural three-die stunt, not counting a bonus for fulfilling Motivation.

Heroic mortals receive less benefit from stunts than magical beings do, reducing the bonus and rewards by one rating category (one die for a two-die stunt and two dice for a three-die stunt). Unless they have somehow obtained an Essence pool, mortals cannot regain motes at all, but they may recover one point of Willpower from a successful three-die stunt. If a three-die stunt also resonates with a character's Motivation, the Storyteller may give the player the choice to receive an experience point instead of a Willpower point. Players of mortals can still use stunts to perform dramatic editing or to have their characters defy plausibility.

Important Storyteller characters may use stunts to benefit their actions but they should only do so sparingly since the Storyteller is the final authority on all stunts. Unimportant characters should never gain the advantage of stunts, no matter how well the Storyteller narrates their actions. In gritty games, Storytellers may limit the effects of stunts for all characters.

Stunts can be used to enhance static values like DV. **When stunts aid a static value, treat the bonus dice as if they had been awarded by successes rolled with the First Excellency. That is, add the stunt bonus directly to the character's DV, without dividing by two.** Thus, a character with a Parry DV of 4 who described his defense spectacularly and received the three-die stunt bonus would have a DV of 7. Characters don't have to stunt their dodge for every attack in a flurry. Just have them make one stunt out of their defensive antics and apply the bonus to the DV before the first attack.

## Automatic Success

As stated previously, Storytellers should call for rolls only when a chance of failure exists and the possibility of failure adds to the drama of the scene. Requiring a roll to walk across a room is absurd, though crossing a floor covered in a spilled oil to put out a wobbling lantern before it crashes to the ground and sets the building ablaze is another matter altogether.

In some situations, a task might normally require a roll, but the character is so skilled that failure is almost impossible. *Automatic success* occurs when a character has a sufficient number of dice in her pool (including all bonuses) to make a dice roll moot. Difficulty 1 tasks require dice equal to the target number, then three additional dice are required per difficulty point above one. Therefore, seven dice achieves automatic success on most difficulty 1 rolls, 10 dice at difficulty 2, 13 at difficulty 3, et cetera. Resisted rolls never benefit from automatic success as a result of high dice pools, although rolls made in the context of an extended action might. Any time a character is under great stress (such as in combat), automatic success shouldn't apply.

Furthermore, automatic success shouldn't apply to dramatically critical rolls. Yes, it's phenomenally unlikely that the mighty Solar sorceress Anoria will misunderstand the occult formulae recorded in her spell primer, but if she does fail—or worse yet, botch—such failure could have dramatic consequences for the story when she tries to cast the spell she thinks she has mastered. With the aid of Charms or other magical bonuses, characters might have a sufficient number of dice in their pools to automatically succeed on tasks of difficulty 4+. However, actions of that complexity are often dramatically important enough that Storytellers will actually require a roll. Note that automatic success generates threshold zero—the success is sufficient to the task at hand, but no more. If players desire a higher threshold, they may forfeit automatic success in favor of a roll.

### Order of Modifiers

Many effects can modify a character's dice pool in **Exalted**, and most of these effects are cumulative with one another. Whenever a pool has multiple modifiers applying to it, refer to the following checklist to avoid confusion:

**Step 1: Apply Non-Magical Bonuses:** Add dice granted by stunts, specialties, equipment, Virtue channeling and anything else that applies.

**Step 2: Apply Non-Magical Penalties:** Subtract dice for any internal penalties that apply. If the character has Essence 2+, note the total value of (wound penalties + multiple action penalties) for use in Step 5. This may reduce a pool to zero or even negative dice.

**Step 3: Apply Magical Bonuses:** Add dice granted by Charms (such as Essence Overwhelming) or spells.

**Step 4: Apply Magical Penalties:** Subtract dice removed by Charms or spells, such as the entropic magic of the Abyssal Exalted. This may reduce a pool to zero or even negative dice. If the character has Essence 1, use this pool.

**Step 5: Determine Minimum Dice:** If the character has Essence 2+ *and* the modified pool is less than her Essence rating, the pool has a value of (Essence – the sum of wound penalties and multiple action penalties). This value cannot exceed the original unmodified pool, but it may be zero or negative.

**Step 6: Apply Bonus Successes:** Add any successes gained from Charms, Willpower expenditure or other sources. If no such effects apply and the character has zero or negative dice remaining, the roll automatically fails.

*Example: An Exalt has a unmodified dice pool of 5 and Essence 3. First, her player adds the one stunt die awarded by the Storyteller (dice pool 6). Next, she takes out one die for wounds and another four for fighting blind in pitch darkness (1). She adds no dice with magic (1), nor does she suffer any magical penalties (1). Because she is a magical being, her minimum dice pool is [(Essence 3) – (1 die of wound penalties)], for a final result of two dice.*

## Multiple Actions

In most non-combat scenes, the loose timing of events allows characters to apply their full concentration to every effort. Occasionally, however, events require characters to multitask or to perform a string of actions in extremely close succession. For example, a rider must keep control of his mount at all times in addition to anything else he wishes to do. Or perhaps, a character has to run across a stone bridge over a lava pit, dodging the spatters of molten rock rising from below. Whatever the situation, characters who take multiple actions suffer a special form of internal penalty. The first action loses dice equal to the number of actions attempted, with each successive action

### Dealing with Interruptions

Characters engaged in an extended or dramatic action only "check in" with the plot at their intervals. When a character must spend 15 minutes investigating a murder scene and gathering clues, the success or failure of that investigation isn't apparent until the full 15 minutes are up. For the majority of these actions, the Storyteller can just skip ahead to the resolution rather than playing out the tedium of the task, unless of course the player wants to net a stunt award by describing various bits of the clue-gathering process. On the other hand, some scenes are more complicated. Suppose the sleuth proceeds five minutes into her investigation when the murderer returns and attacks her. Only a third of the way complete, her task is far from done. If she drives the masked murderer off, she can steady herself and resume her investigation where she left off, putting the clues together (or not) in another 10 minutes. If the murderer drives her off instead, she only has her incomplete data to go on. In these cases, the Storyteller may exercise either of the following options based on what best fits the situation:

**Automatic Failure:** Without the requisite effort or time, the character automatically fails in the action. She can always try again, picking up where she left off (if possible) or starting over from scratch. This option can be frustrating for players, however.

**Partial Action:** The Storyteller can allow the action's roll to go forward at some appropriate dice penalty, interpreting success at reduced effect. For example, a character might lose three dice from a six-die pool if she got only halfway through. Then, even if the player succeeds, the character achieves/learns only half as much. For another variant, the player can roll the pool normally without penalty, but the effects of success are proportionately limited to the effort achieved. In the case of an extended action, compare the successes accumulated to the successes required to determine overall progress, so a character interrupted in the middle of scaling a cliff with half the number of needed successes would be halfway up the cliff at the time of the interruption. Storytellers should keep in mind that players can abuse partial actions by intentionally creating distractions for themselves just to roll high pools without actually finishing dramatic actions.

cumulatively increasing the penalty by one die. Therefore, a character taking three actions would be at -3 dice to the first action, -4 to the second and -5 to the third.

In combat, multiple actions are extremely common and known as *flurries*. This is explained in greater detail on page 143.

### Reflexive Actions

Some actions are *reflexive*, meaning they do not require any deliberate attention from the character to perform, nor do they cause or suffer from multiple-action penalties. If a character approaches an ambush, his player could certainly make regular (Perception + Awareness) rolls if the character was feeling paranoid. However, even if the character is not actively looking out for an ambush, he might notice the glint of moonlight on a crouched assassin's knife with just enough time to shout a warning and respond. The latter sort of check would be reflexive. Resisting poison and disease also count as reflexive actions (as do any action where the character has an innate defense that is rolled, rather than modifying the difficulty of a roll as most defenses do). Of particular note, the activation of a reflexive-type Charm is always a reflexive action.

### Diceless Actions

When an action does not require a roll but takes time and effort to perform, it is called a diceless action. The most common example is automatic success, as explained previously. Diceless actions also crop up during combat, representing those tasks too routine for a roll but too important for timing purposes to make reflexive.

### Dramatic Actions

Some actions, such as swinging a sword or leaping a chasm, take only moments to perform. Other actions take considerably longer, such as socializing at a party or roaming a city and pumping contacts for information. If an action operates on a longer time scale, requiring minutes of work and possibly a good deal more, the task is called a *dramatic action*. In many respects, dramatic actions are like extended actions in that they have an interval. However, unlike an extended action, a dramatic action is not a recurring accumulation of effort. Rather, the player cannot even make a roll on behalf of the action until the character has spent the requisite interval of time working.

In some cases, an entire extended effort can be condensed into a dramatic action, abstractly representing a series of possible successes and failures as a single test. Most often, this is done to speed play when the Storyteller deems that the action isn't important enough to require additional time.

### Teamwork

Characters will occasionally cooperate on tasks. Depending on the situation, teamwork provides one of two forms of benefit. Whenever characters can apply their full effort to a task without any redundancy, such as a group trying to lift a portcullis, each player rolls (or applies a rating) for her character, and the group pools the successes. Most of the time, however, characters cannot cooperate perfectly. If two characters wish to perform surgery on a wounded patient, they cannot expect to geometrically increase their chances of success just because they are working together. Similarly, in any roll based on knowing facts, characters typically draw on a common (and thus redundant) education. Regardless, whenever an action doesn't allow for total pooling of effort, but teamwork still provides some benefit, use the following system.

Roll the highest dice pool among the collaborating characters, adding bonus dice equal to the number of characters with at least one dot in the required Ability who are providing aid. The cooperation bonus cannot exceed the Ability rating of the character making the roll. As always, the Storyteller remains the final arbiter of what method of teamwork (if any) applies to a task.

# Dramatic Rules

While Storytellers could certainly extrapolate most rolls from the basic rules provided previously, certain tasks occur with such frequency that they require greater detail. The following rules are grouped by overarching focus: physical, social or mental, with the tasks contained in those categories grouped alphabetically by the listed Ability for the action. Actions associated with multiple Abilities come before those associated with only one.

## Physical

### Fighting (Archery, Dodge, Martial Arts, Melee, Thrown)

These Abilities are explained in combat rules starting on page 141.

### Running and Swimming (Athletics and Resistance)

If it is necessary to know a character's exact speed relative to the events playing out around her, the Storyteller should force the scene into combat time (see p. 141) and track the movement in the passage of ticks. The same applies equally for sprinting and swimming, with the rules for unsteady terrain applying as appropriate to both forms of locomotion. In standard narrative time, characters have however long they need to reach their destination, making the issue of speed a moot point. Movement rolls based on quickness use (Dexterity + Athletics).

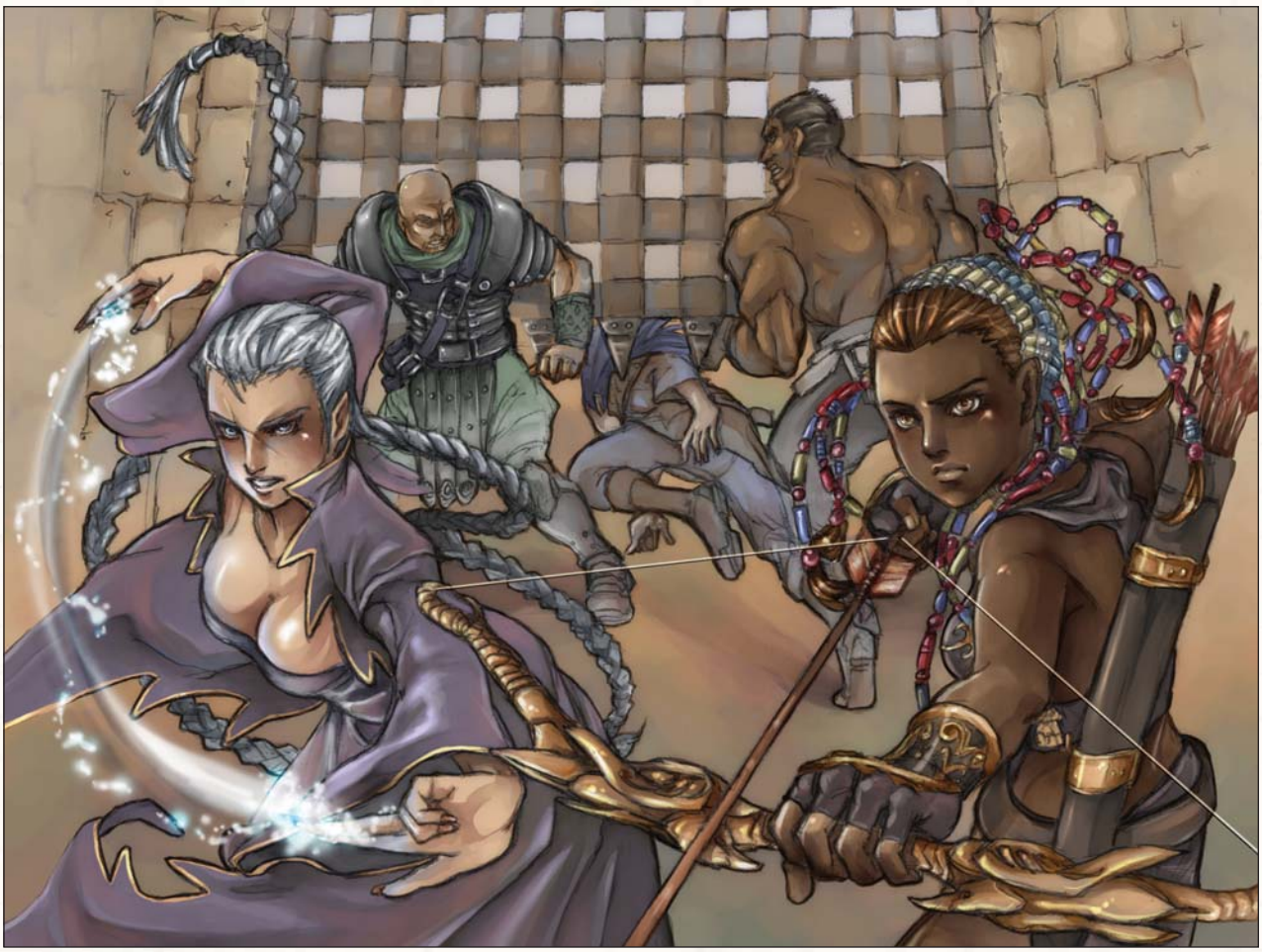
In contrast, long-distance running and swimming is a matter of endurance rather than speed, using a pool of (Stamina + Resistance). This is handled like any other strenuous activity.

### Climbing (Athletics)

Ascending a slope may be completed with a single (Dexterity + Athletics) roll at a difficulty based on the incline of the slope and the frequency of handholds. Success means the character climbs without incident, while failure means the character cannot find purchase and must start over. A botch indicates a fall, with the severity of the botch determining where in the ascent the character lost his grip. Storytellers can also choose to break a climb into an extended check for added drama. They can even use combat time (see p. 141) to represent a high-stakes race between two or more characters. If a character is belayed, she shouldn't fall except in the worst possible botch.

### Falling (Athletics)

Characters who fall onto a hard surface suffer levels of bashing damage (see pp. 148-149) equal to half the number of



yards fallen, rounded down. This damage is considered piercing, though terminal velocity prevents damage from rising above 25B. Falling damage can be soaked normally, but a character soaks it completely, the minimum damage is simply reduced to one die rather than one level. Falling onto spikes, jagged surfaces and the like converts the damage from bashing to lethal. If the terrain is particularly soft or yielding, such as falling into deep water, halve the damage or (if the character is particularly lucky) assign no damage at all besides cosmetic bruising.

Players of heroic characters should receive a reflexive (Wits + Athletics) roll when their characters fall to save them from certain doom, typically by them grabbing onto the edge of a cliff or pit or snagging some outlying rock or flagpole on the way down. For a particularly long fall, a successful roll might mean the character bounces off the side of a wall and takes standard damage for falling that far but doesn't continue falling any farther. If it is absolutely impossible for a character to grab hold of anything mid-plummet, every success on the roll provides an additional point of soak as the character tumbles and rolls to absorb the shock of impact. Minor characters seldom receive such protection.

## Feats of Strength (Athletics)

Characters can heroically exert themselves to lift or break objects as a diceless action, comparing their (Strength + Athletics + appropriate specialty) total to the listed chart. Feats of strength involving breaking something take approximately a minute to perform or set up, so they cannot be done in the scope of normal combat time. Instead, characters who wish to break an inanimate object in battle must attack it (see pp. 153-154). Characters can lift, pull or push objects as a miscellaneous action in combat (see pp. 143-145), enabling all manner of battlefield heroism.

Throwing a heavy object as a feat of strength requires a (Strength + Athletics) total five dots higher than is necessary to lift the object, and doing so sends the object hurtling a number of yards equal to the character's (Strength + Athletics). This action requires a Speed 5 (Dexterity + Thrown) attack roll to toss the lifted object, at a three-die Accuracy penalty. Penalties for throwing beyond range accrue normally (see p. 148). The base damage of a large improvised throwing weapon is the (Strength + Athletics) total in bashing dice needed to throw it, plus the attack's successes. This damage is considered piercing, as it crushes through armor. Animate objects cannot be lifted or thrown this way in combat unless they do not resist. Those who struggle must be clinched and then thrown (see pp. 157-158).

If the character uses a stunt or channels a Virtue, add the bonus directly to the total. Channeling a Virtue adds its rating directly to the total. Spending a Willpower point for an automatic success allows the player to roll Willpower and add successes to the total. Cooperation provides a limited bonus, with every assistant adding one point to the total (to a maximum of the leader's Athletics rating). All such bonuses affect only a single Strength check. In particularly gritty games, especially those involving mortal protagonists, halve the feats possible for a particular (Strength + Athletics) total, rounded up. Doing so profoundly alters the feel of the game, so Storytellers should carefully consider whether to alter the default epic tone.

## Jumping (Athletics)

Heroic characters often find themselves needing to leap great distances in a single bound, whether to cross a yawning chasm, to jump between ships at sea or to snag a swooping opponent as she ascends to apparent safety. Without the aid of magic, characters can jump straight up a maximum number of yards equal to their

### Feats of Strength

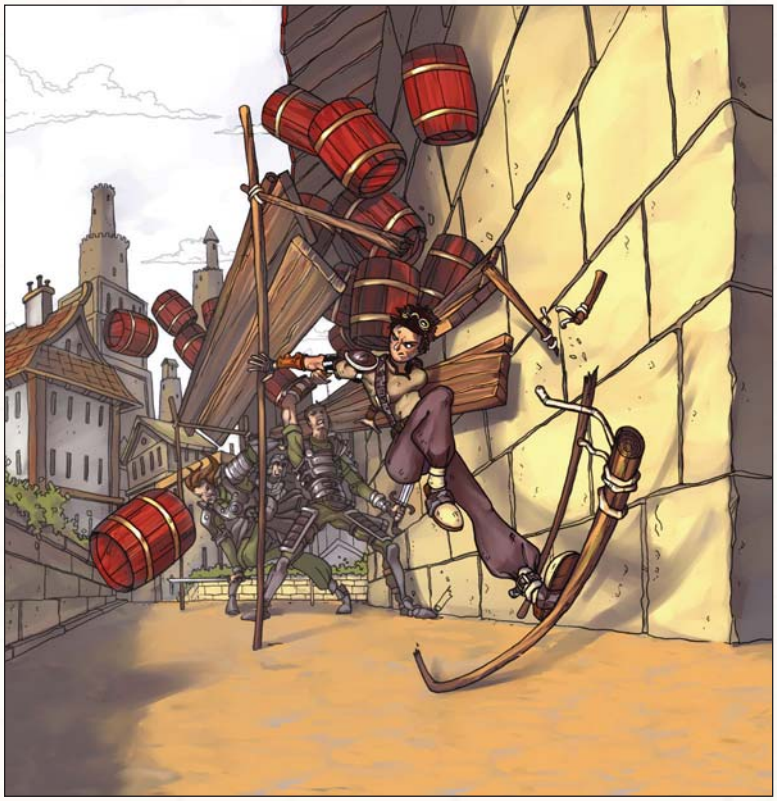
| (Strength + Athletics) | Lift (lbs.) | Sample Feat |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | 80 | Lift an anvil or suit of heavy armor. |
| 2 | 160 | Lift a full-grown man; break a wooden plank with a kick. |
| 3 | 250 | Punch a fist through a wooden door. |
| 4 | 350 | Lift a pony; carry a cotton bale on one shoulder; break a sword over one knee. |
| 5 | 450 | Lift a donkey; kick a wooden door to flinders. |
| 6 | 550 | Punch a fist through a heavy wooden door (i.e., oak) |
| 7 | 650 | Bend an iron bar with both hands. |
| 8 | 800 | Lift a horse; bend a horseshoe into a pretzel. |
| 9 | 1,000 | Pull a fully laden wagon. |
| 10 | 1,200 | Lift a camel. |
| 11 | 1,400 | Lift an unlocked portcullis; break down a brick wall over a half hour. |
| 12 | 1,600 | Kick a heavy wooden door to flinders; pull down a wooden bridge. |
| 13 | 1,800 | Lift a yeddim; punch a fist through an iron-shod door. |
| 14 | 2,000 | Snap iron manacles; rip a stone out of a castle wall. |
| 15 | 2,200 | Punch a fist through a stone wall; shatter an iron-shod door to flinders. |
| 16 | 2,500 | Lift a locked portcullis; smash any lock apart with a kick. |
| 17 | 3,000 | Punch a fist through a metal door; pull down heavy stone pillars. |
| 18 | 3,500 | Rip iron bars out of stone with one hand; tip over a loaded wagon. |
| 19 | 4,000 | Tear apart welded steel, such as the grating of a portcullis. |
| 20 | 4,500 | Lift a hippopotamus; punch a hole through a heavily armored fortress gate. |

(Strength + Athletics) total. Spending a point of Willpower adds an additional two yards, while stunts or Virtue channeling add yards equal to the bonus dice normally added. Wound penalties and mobility penalties from armor both directly subtract yards from a character's jumping distance. The distance a character can leap horizontally is double the vertical range. In gritty games, halve the number of yards characters can jump, rounded up.

## Disguise (Larceny)

Appearing as another character or masking one's identity requires a successful (Intelligence + Larceny) roll. This is generally a dramatic action, requiring several minutes of applying costuming and perhaps prosthetics and makeup. The difficulty of the task ranges from 1 to look like someone else of the same gender, racial background, and body type (but not a specific person). Add one for each of those criteria the character tries to surpass, so looking like a specific person (+1), who is notably taller (+1), and is a different gender (+1) has a difficulty of 4. Hurrying also adds to the difficulty. Add two if the character is working without effective props and/or trying to mimic a specific person without several weeks of direct observation of the subject. For every additional month of work preparing a disguise beyond what is necessary, reduce the difficulty of the roll by one (to a minimum of difficulty 1). Players should note that mundane disguises cannot actually raise Appearance by more than one dot (to a maximum of 5 for humans), although disguises can temporarily reduce Appearance as far as to 0. If a character impersonates someone more attractive than herself (Appearance + 1), the disguise might be nearly flawless, but she cannot actually use this attractiveness as well as someone who actually has it. Spending protracted time "dressed up" in a disguise makes a perfect justification as training time to raise Appearance.

Whenever characters first encounter a disguised character, their players should roll (Perception + Awareness). If the threshold of this roll exceeds the threshold of the disguise, the observer realizes that the character is an imposter. If the Awareness check fails, the inquiring character may not reroll unless the disguised character does something unexpected or out of character (calling a lover by the wrong name, declaring a new heir, etc.). Therefore, loved ones and close friends will receive many more rechecks than acquaintances. If the character is caught without the disguise/props on, the ruse is automatically pierced.



## Picking Locks (Larceny)

Opening a lock without the proper key requires a successful (Dexterity + Larceny) roll. The difficulty varies from 1-5 depending on the sophistication of the lock, and the character must have lockpicks of some kind. (Add one to the difficulty when using improvised tools.) First Age locks must be picked with First Age lockpicks or a stunt, and most First Age adaptive lockpicks are not mutable enough to mate with the crude wards of the Second Age. Characters caught with lockpicks on their person will have a lot of explaining to do. Players should remember that brute force often works as well as any lockpick for situations that do not call for stealth or subtlety.

## Picking Pockets/Shoplifting/ Prestidigitation (Larceny)

If one character attempts to filch items off another character's person without his knowledge, doing so requires an opposed roll of (Dexterity + Larceny) against the (Wits + Awareness, difficulty 1) of the target. The difficulty for the thief depends on how securely the item is kept: 1 for back pockets and pouches, 2 for front pockets and 3 for breast pockets/objects against the skin. Add one if the pouch/pocket is secured against theft and one if the character lacks a sharp knife for the task. If the thief obtains successes equal to the difficulty, the theft is successful. The target notices the theft immediately, however, if this threshold beats the thief's threshold. If the thief is unsuccessful and the target gets a single success, the failed attempt is automatically detected.

This system can also be used when a character grabs items from a merchant's stall or otherwise attempts to shoplift. Small objects on a shelf are difficulty 1, objects under direct observation are difficulty 2 and objects under direct observation within reach of the merchant are difficulty 3. Detection works exactly as described previously.

Finally, use this system whenever a character attempts to perform stage magic such as palming coins, shell games and whatnot. The difficulty is typically 2, but possibly higher for outlandish tricks. If observers gain a higher threshold than the prestidigitator, they see the trick for what it is.

## Avoiding/Overcoming Disease (Resistance, Medicine)

In the world of **Exalted**, plague is a horrifying prospect. The Chosen might be virtually immune to sickness, but mortals have no such protection. Statistics for sample illnesses start on page 350, with rules for infected wounds found later in this chapter on pages 151-152. In addition, characters can also become diseased from a magical effect with a Sickness effect keyword. These diseases are sometimes conventional and sometimes sorcerous ailments with their own idiosyncratic rules. Characters who are immune to all illness ignore both natural ailments and those caused by Sickness effects, even if the Charm uses its own rules. Characters who are immune to natural ailments ignore only those diseases that use these following rules.

When a character is first exposed to a disease through its usual vector, roll her (Stamina + Resistance) against a base difficulty of the *Virulence* of that disease. Reduce this difficulty by as much as two if the contact is brief, or increase the difficulty by as much as two if the vector is practically unavoidable (like the stinking miasma of festering rot in a plague-wracked ruin). If the roll succeeds, the character avoids catching the disease. On a failure, she contracts the sickness.

Once a character has caught a disease, she has a period of time equal to its *Incubation* before it threatens her life. (She may develop symptoms much sooner, putting her at -1 or -2 internal penalty to all actions from discomfort.) Once this period is up, reroll (Stamina + Resistance) every day against a difficulty of the illness's *Untreated Morbidity*. If the character receives medical attention from a healer before the Incubation period elapses, the difficulty is the disease's *Treated Morbidity* instead. With a success, the character's symptoms never worsen. They fade over a day as her immune system overcomes the malady.

Mortals and animals whose players fail this roll spend a number of days equal to their Stamina rating dying (during which they are at -4 to all actions from pain and exhaustion rather than the usual -2). Exalted and other similarly hardy magical beings are at -2 to all actions as a result of failure, but their players may recheck each day until the characters throw off the disease and have their full health restored. As long as the Chosen carry a sickness, they could be contagious, so they must be careful when they encounter a serious malady that they do not accidentally spread it to others. Spirits and Fair Folk are completely immune to normal disease—they resist magical diseases as Exalted. Only the Great Contagion has ever proved an exception, slaying 90 percent of the world's population regardless of Exaltation, leaving only spirits and the Fair Folk untouched.

Treating a sick character requires an (Intelligence + Medicine) roll with a difficulty rather unsurprisingly based on the disease's *Difficulty to Treat*. If the disease's difficulty to treat is unknown, it equals the (Essence of the character who caused the Sickness effect + 1). Physicians cannot treat a disease until they have diagnosed it (see p. 137).

Treating illness is a dramatic action, requiring a minimum of a full hour to administer poultices, herbs and/or other curative regimens (the necessary ingredients of which normally have a materials cost of Resources 1, but may be higher for rare diseases). Village healers and witches often gather their herbs and drugs rather than purchase them, requiring a successful (Perception + Survival) roll (difficulty 2-3) assuming proper ingredients can be found in the area.

For dramatic purposes, Storytellers should allow ingredient substitution so this roll has a chance unless finding a rare and exotic ingredient is a plot point. In such a case, characters might be forced to journey to strange lands or to seek magical assistance from spirits, the Exalted or even stranger beings in order to administer a cure.

If a physician actually spends a full day regularly checking in on a patient, the healer's player gains an additional die on the roll. This bonus increases to two dice if the healer does virtually nothing else but administer treatment throughout the day. Giving treatment to a character who is dying from disease after receiving no aid allows the victim's player a reroll at the disease's Untreated Morbidity. If successful, the character recovers. On a failure, the character continues dying and without magical assistance will expire. Characters suffering from Sickness effects with no stated Untreated Morbidity automatically shake them off, without a roll, when they successfully receive treatment.

## Enduring Hardship (Resistance)

Most living beings require certain basic essentials to remain healthy: air, sustenance and sleep foremost among them. The need for air is addressed in "Holding Breath" (the next entry).

Characters can go a number of days without food equal to half their (Stamina + Resistance) total without penalty, rounded up. For every day that passes thereafter, characters suffer a cumulative -1 to all actions. When the total penalty exceeds a character's (Stamina + Resistance), she dies. Characters who imbibe insufficient nourishment starve more slowly, treating two (or even three) days as one for the purposes of assessing penalties. Eating a full meal removes -1 from the penalty, but characters accrue penalties automatically for periods of nutritional deprivation until they have eaten sufficient meals to reduce the penalty to zero.

Thirst can kill even quicker than hunger. For each day without water past the first, a character is at a cumulative -1 to dice pools. When the penalty exceeds (Stamina + Resistance), the character dies. Drinking proper fluids for a day removes all thirst penalties.

Compared with starvation, sleep deprivation is a mere nuisance. For every day that a character goes without sleep beyond the first, she is at a cumulative one-die internal penalty to all pools. This penalty cannot exceed three dice. Furthermore, players of characters suffering any penalties from sleep deprivation must roll (Stamina + Resistance) at standard difficulty whenever their characters are left alone without anything to do. Failure indicates the character falls asleep for eight hours or until awoken. Once a character sleeps eight hours, all penalties from sleep deprivation fade.

Characters track penalties from all forms of deprivation separately, but only the highest of the three penalties actually applies.

In place of deprivation, a final hardship condition of note is pregnancy. Mortal pregnancies last three seasons, imposing a Dexterity-based dice pool penalty of two during the second season and four during the third. Exalted pregnancies last a full year, with the characters not even showing until the fifth month or penalized at one die until the 13th. In the final month, Exalted increase the penalty to two. When mortals give birth, roll (Stamina + Resistance), difficulty 1. On a botch, the mother dies. Exalted are immune to death from childbirth.

## Holding Breath (Resistance)

Characters can safely hold their breath for (Stamina x 30) seconds, plus an additional 30 seconds per success on a (Stamina + Resistance) roll. The difficulty of this roll is normally 1, but it may increase as high as 3 for swimming in cold water or if the character didn't have a chance to draw a deep breath. Once a character passes the safety limit, she must breathe or she begins asphyxiating, suffering one level of unsoakable bashing damage (see pp. 148-149) every 30 seconds. This damage cannot be healed by any means until the character is breathing normally again.

## Strenuous Activity (Resistance)

Characters can perform continuous heavy exertion for a number of hours equal to their (Stamina + Resistance + pertinent specialty). Such exertion includes running, swimming, sex or any other athletic activity. For each subsequent hour of activity after that, characters suffer a cumulative one-die internal penalty to all actions from fatigue. Spending a Willpower point negates all fatigue for one action and reduces total fatigue by one. Channeling a point of Conviction negates fatigue for the next minute and reduces fatigue by a character's Conviction rating. When the fatigue penalty exceeds a character's (Stamina + Resistance), the character passes out and remains unconscious until she has slept for at least one hour (which removes one die of penalty). Every additional hour of sleep or three hours of rest removes another one die until the penalty is removed. Until the penalty is completely gone, the character automatically begins accruing more penalty dice for doing anything strenuous. Characters who are treading water will drown unless they have a buoyant object to keep them afloat while they rest.

Particularly extreme conditions of temperature (in either direction) can penalize a character's effective (Stamina + Resistance) total for the purposes of determining resistance to fatigue. Generally, such conditions do not impose a penalty greater than -3.

## Withstanding Poisons/Environmental Damage (Resistance)

Although the bodies of the Chosen are supernaturally resilient, they are not completely immune to the dangers of poison and epic overindulgence. For mortals, most toxins of any severity mean certain death unless they can find immediate medical treatment from a skilled herbalist or alchemist.

In **Exalted**, poisons have a number of statistics. First, they have a Damage value separated from a time interval by a slash. The initial value in this pair indicates the maximum damage a single dose of the poison can inflict, while the second value indicates the interval at which the poison inflicts one damage die. In combat time, an interval of one second means that damage is applied every tick. An interval of "action" indicates the poison inflicts damage every five seconds of narrative time or the beginning of every tick that a character acts on during combat time. Therefore, a poison with 5L/1 hour would inflict one die of lethal damage when it first entered a character's system and an additional one die every hour until damage had been rolled five times. (See p. 150 for a detailed explanation of how damage works in **Exalted.**)

Multiple doses of the same poison stack their Damage ratings, effectively prolonging the duration rather than increasing the damage suffered at every interval. The countdown is always made at an interval from the current damage, so two doses of a 5L poison would become 10L and would need to roll damage 10 times from receiving the second dose in order for the poison to fully run its course. Poison damage cannot be soaked, but it may be fought at each damage interval with a reflexive (Stamina + Resistance) roll at a difficulty determined by the listed Toxicity rating of the poison (or the number of doses the character has consumed, if higher). Mortals add two to the Toxicity of all poisons unless the Toxicity is marked with an "M" tag. Willpower cannot be spent on this roll for an automatic success.

If this roll succeeds, the damage type is reduced by one level, so aggravated becomes lethal, lethal becomes bashing, and bashing toxins inflict no damage. With double the number of successes required, the damage type decreases two categories. Some extremely deadly venoms have an "L" tag beside their Toxicity, indicating that they normally inflict levels of damage rather than dice. With such toxins, a successful Resistance roll first removes this tag, while double successes drop the damage type one category. The next poison statistic is its Tolerance, which indicates how many doses of the substance a character can safely have in her system before she starts risking damage. This statistic is attached to a time interval indicating how long it takes for the character's body to purge itself of each dose.

If the intervals of damage and dose reduction sync, the dose fades before the Resistance roll. A dash in place of the interval indicates the drug runs its course until it inflicts all damage, and then, it is completely flushed out of the system. The last statistic is the poison's Penalty, which indicates the internal penalty imposed as a result of pain, hallucination or some other effect as long as the character has more doses of the drug in his system than the substance's Tolerance rating allows. (The penalty equals the number of doses taken, if greater than the usual penalty.) Penalties from poisons do not apply to Resistance rolls against them. If a player successfully makes the Resistance roll for an interval, the Penalty is halved, rounded down. Although not technically a statistic of the poison, each toxin has an associated Resources cost to obtain a dose.

Putting all this together, alcohol has the following traits: (2B/1 hour, 3M, Stamina + Resistance/1 hour, -1). For the purposes of these rules, a dose of alcohol is one drink, which translates roughly to a large beer, a glass of grape wine, several glasses of rice wine or a shot of harder liquor. Because alcohol has a Tolerance equal to the drinker's Stamina, a character with Stamina 2, Resistance 1 could safely hold three drinks in her body without noticeable effect. Each dose fades after an hour, so as long as she doesn't drink more than a glass per hour, she'll be fine. If she unwisely imbibes a row of eight shots in quick succession, this is five doses above her tolerance, changing the statistics of the alcohol within her to (10B/1 hour, 5M, Stamina + Resistance/1 hour, -5). Her player immediately rolls (Stamina + Resistance) at difficulty 5. (If she fails, the character suffers one die of unsoakable bashing damage.) After an hour, her body purges one dose, reducing the statistics to (8B/1 hour, 4M, Stamina + Resistance/hour, -4); another failed resistance roll would result in another die of bashing damage. This repeats each hour until her body finally purges the last excess drink. She is then sober but still at her limit until another three hours cleanses the remaining drinks from her body.

Some rare poisons do not inflict conventional damage, but instead cause some other deleterious effect on a failed Resistance roll. Some inflict no form of damage at all, but still have a Damage statistic to help determine how long they last. Many recreational drugs fall into this category.

### Poisons

| Name | Damage | Toxicity | Tolerance | Penalty | Resources |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Alcohol | 2B/1 hour | 3M | (Stamina + Resistance)/1 hour | -1 | 1-3 |
| Arrow Frog Venom | 8L | 4 | —/— | -4 | 3 |
| Arsenic | 2L/1 day | 3 | (Stamina)/1 month | -0 | 2 |
| Coral Snake Venom | 6L | 3 | —/— | -5 | 1 |
| Marijuana | 4*/hour | 2M | —/— | -2 | 1 |
| Yozi Venom | 10A/minute | 5L | —/— | -5 | 5 (when available at all) |

* No actual damage.

Some Charms cause effects with the keyword Poison. These often use the rules for poison as outlined here but may also have more arcane effects. The rules in individual Charms supercede the rules in this section. Characters who are immune to all poisons ignore both those that use this rules section and Charms with the Poison keyword. Characters who are immune to natural toxins are immune to only those poisons that use this section of the rules and those Charms that state that their effects are the result of a natural toxin.

A variation of the preceding rules also handles conditions inimical to life, ranging from temperature extremes to acid baths. Environmental effects substitute *Trauma* for Toxicity and do not have a Tolerance, Penalty or associated Resources cost. By default, mortals roll at the same difficulty as Exalted, so the "M" tag is assumed. Moreover, damage is not always inflicted one die at a time, so the listed damage indicates the actual damage inflicted at every interval of exposure. Exalted characters who do take damage subtract their natural lethal soak as normal (to a minimum of one die).

*Example: A bonfire has a Damage of 4L/action and a Trauma of 3. The player of a character unwisely standing in the middle of a bonfire would need to make a reflexive difficulty 3 (Stamina + Resistance) roll every five seconds of narrative time or at the beginning of every tick in which she acted. The Resistance roll would reoccur at this interval for as long as the character remained in the flames. On a success, the damage would be 4B; on a failure, 4L. In either case, the character could reduce this damage with natural soak to a minimum of one die.*

### Environmental Effects

| Name | Damage | Trauma |
|---|---|---|
| Acid Bath | 5L/action | 5 |
| Blistering Heat/ Numbing Cold | 1B/hour | 1 |
| Bonfire | 4L/action | 3 |
| Severe Sandstorm | 1L/minute | 2 |
| Supernatural Ice Storm | 2L/minute | 2 |
| The Silent Wind of Malfeas | 6A/action | 5L |

## Sneaking/Hiding (Stealth)

Assassins and thieves will often wish to creep up on their targets or set ambushes without being detected. The combat applications of doing so are explained on pages 155-156. Outside of combat, avoiding detection requires an opposed roll of (Dexterity + Stealth) as a standard action against the observer's (Perception + Awareness) as a reflexive action. Poor conditions might impose an external penalty on the Stealth roll, such as well-lit open areas without many spaces to hide. Conversely, good conditions such as darkness and/or dense cover provide bonus dice. In general, the difficulty should not increase by more than two, nor should any bonus rise above three. If the Stealth roll wins, the character remains undetected. If the Awareness roll wins, the observer notices the character. Organized search parties or sentries gain the advantage of limited cooperation, but otherwise every observer independently compares her successes to the hiding character's. Anyone who succeeds may raise an alarm. Highly alert individuals such as those who have heard an alarm are at +2 difficulty to sneak up on. Once a character has failed a reflexive Awareness roll to notice a hidden character, he does not receive a reroll unless the concealed character does something that risks drawing attention to himself.

# Social

Virtually all social actions fall under the aegis of social combat (see p. 169). Exceptions include:

## Reading Motivation (Investigation)

After several minutes of interaction or observation, a character can try to glean the truth of a subject's mood or personality with a successful (Perception + [Investigation or Socialize]) roll made by the player, using whichever Ability has a higher rating. The difficulty is equal to half the target's (Manipulation + Socialize), rounded up. If successful, the observer knows the other character's most dominant emotion and can place that emotion in the context of the current scene, if applicable. With twice the required number of successes, the observer can learn one current Intimacy that the other character has demonstrated in the scene or establish whether any Intimacy to another selected character in the scene exists. If a relationship exists, the observer also gleans whether the relationship is positive or rooted in animosity.

Characters can also evaluate motivation with (Perception + Investigation) at the listed difficulty as a standard dice action when they suspect another character in the scene has just lied. Success discovers whether the statement was a lie or significantly deceptive omission, though the character does not discern the truth.

*Example: Anoria is at a party talking to a local politician and his wife. After her player rolls twice the difficulty in successes, the Exalt discerns that the politician is bored and feels no particular loyalty to his wife. He'll probably excuse himself with the first girl to proposition him. She files this information away for later use.*

### Prayer (Performance)

Creation is an animistic world in which gods exist for every facet of life and every force in the universe. At the bottom, half-aware least gods hold sway over specific objects, such as individual weapons or tools or rocks. At the top, the Incarnae govern the journey of heavenly bodies through the firmament and hold sway over the Celestial Bureaucracy that ostensibly governs all gods. Anyone can pray to a deity, making an offering to get its attention so that it actually listens to the prayer rather than simply consuming the petition's meager Essence. The dramatic action to secure a god's attention is a (Charisma + Performance) roll at a difficulty of (7 – the Resources value of the sacrifice). Players of priests (those who live a full-time life of worship and commune) subtract one from the difficulty of all prayer rolls. Among the Exalted, the Zenith, Midnight and No Moon Castes are all priests regardless of vocation, as are all Sidereals. Praying can take anywhere from a moment for extremely simple requests to involved ceremonies lasting days at a time (the elaborate exercise of which typically qualifies as a stunt). For bloodier gods, a sacrifice of sentient beings has an effective Resources value equal to the combined permanent Essence of all the victims.

A successful prayer means that the deity understands the request/message and is inclined to provide aid, although such aid will usually be subtle and seldom immediate. Greater divinities might send guiding portents or good luck, the exact effects of which are left to Storytellers to implement. Terrestrial deities might intervene directly with Charms if doing so serves their purpose, but they are also comparatively weaker and can provide less aid. Botching a prayer means the deity is offended and requires an offering with a Resources value equal to its permanent Essence (maximum 5) before it will listen to any further requests.

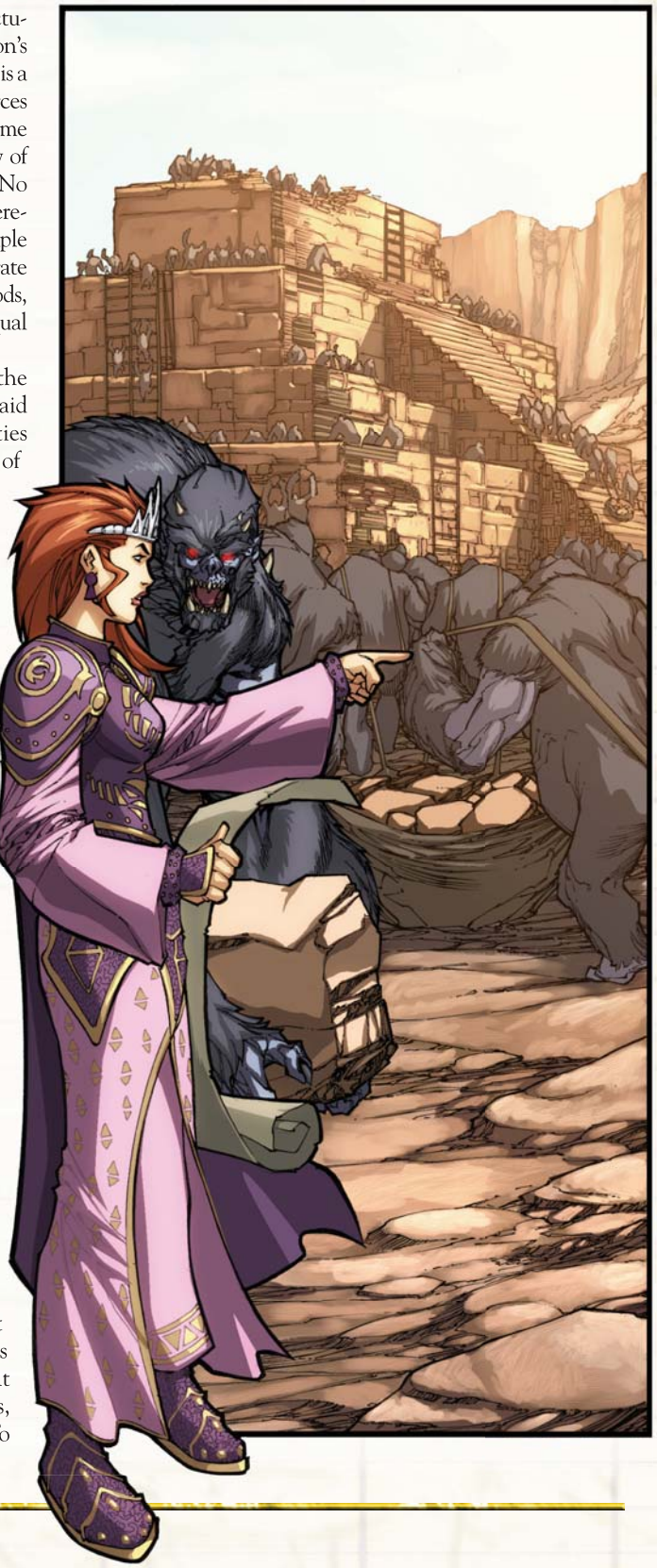
Demons can also be targeted with prayers, the serpentine Essence of which winds it way through cracks in the world to whisper in the hearts of those banished to the Yozi Realm. Unfortunately for their infernalist slaves—though fortunately for the world—demons have no power to intervene in the world unless they are within its borders. Even then, the bindings of summoning often shackle their response.

The collective worship of many beings generates and focuses Essence almost like a manse does, as explained in the Cult Background on page 111. Unlike spirits, Exalted cannot hear the prayers of those who worship them, though they can benefit from Essence granted by any cults large enough to produce such.

## Mental

### Academic Knowledge (Craft, Lore, Medicine, Occult, War)

Whenever characters are called upon to know information that they have learned in the course of their experience and education, an (Intelligence + Ability) roll is required. The Ability in question depends on the subject at hand. For most conventional academic subjects, such as mathematics, history, geography and the like, use Lore. Occult governs mystical knowledge, especially pertaining to spirits, Fair Folk, the Exalted and actual Charms and artifacts. To know how something is constructed and understand the arcane trivia of forge temperatures, gem-cutting techniques, or what have you, use Craft. Medicine covers the workings of the body in health, sickness and trauma, as well as the assorted remedies for both disease and injury. War commands the strategies and tools of warfare, from the deployment of siege engines to types



of formations to actual training regimens. Other Abilities can come into play for knowledge checks when characters draw upon the formal details of their expertise. For example, identifying a fighter's style from her kata requires a successful (Intelligence + Martial Arts) check.

The difficulty of an academic knowledge check depends on the obscurity of the fact, with difficulty 0 indicating that any character with a dot of this Ability automatically knows the information without a roll and difficulty 1-5 for most checks. Difficulties above 6 are possible, but such esoteric insights are generally beyond mortal understanding. These rolls and difficulties assume the character has several minutes in which to think. Characters who try to recall details and facts on the fly substitute Wits for Intelligence and add two to the difficulty.

## Build/Attune Manse (Craft, Lore, Occult)

As explained on page 113, Essence does not flow evenly through Creation, it gathers in eddies and wellsprings of power known as demesnes. Each of these sites has an aspect, defining the type of power that resonates there. Possibilities include, Sidereal, Lunar, Solar, Abyssal or any of the five elements. Magical beings capable of channeling Essence may attune themselves to these locations through a simple meditative ritual (Intelligence + Lore), difficulty 1. This attunement is a dramatic action requiring a number of hours equal to the site's rating. If the demesne already has beings attuned to it, they mystically feel the ritual regardless of their current location, but they do not know who is attempting to attune to the demesne unless they are physically present. Unless every owner gives consent, the attunement automatically fails. With a successful ritual (and consent, if necessary), a character becomes the new owner or a co-owner of the demesne and may automatically draw (the site's rating x 4) motes of Essence from the location whenever he is present.

While useful, demesnes are not portable, and their untamed energies can gradually mutate beings dwelling in close proximity like the touch of the Wyld does. For these reasons, Exalted raise manses atop demesnes they control whenever possible. Doing so is an enormously costly undertaking, both in terms of the resources required and the labor that goes into raising one of these arcane citadels. Characters must have at least 12 Ability dots divided among their ratings in Craft, Lore and Occult to design such a structure, and then, only for manses rated 1 to 3. Appropriate specialties count toward these totals. The total number of required Ability dots rises to 15 for level-4 manses and 20 for level 5. Characters cannot design a manse with a rating greater than the rating of the demesne it is intended to cap.

Designing a manse is a dramatic action requiring a month of in-game work, followed by a roll of (Intelligence + [the architect's lowest rating in Craft, Lore or Occult]) at a difficulty of the manse's intended rating. Other characters with sufficient Ability totals to build the manse may check the results, providing limited cooperation. If the roll fails, the character finds flaws in the blueprint and must start over from scratch. If the roll succeeds, actual construction may begin. In the event of a botch, the character's designs include fatal flaws that will make the manse collapse or even explode within a month of its construction.

The construction materials and pay for 100 workers costs Resources 3 per month for level-1 through level-3 manses. Level-4 and level-5 manses cost Resources 4 per month (or Resources 3 for materials, assuming unpaid slave labor). The entire construction project takes a number of years equal to twice the manse's rating. Adjust this time proportionally to the labor pool available, so 200 workers take half as long, while a lone, maddened Exalt hauling stones into place would take 200 years of grueling daily effort to build a level-1 manse. Using supernatural labor also speeds the process, with every such being counting as multiple mortals. For instance, most First Circle demons are worth five laborers. If a completed manse has a lower rating than the demesne it caps, the excess energies produce dramatic but largely useless special effects around the manse.

Once the manse is completed, all attunements to the demesne immediately break. In the central hearthroom of the structure, a hearthstone will grow over the course of a month. The specific stone produced must correlate to the aspect of the manse, but it may be whatever one the architect planned. (See pp. 382-384 for examples.) Characters can attune to a manse as if it were a demesne and gain additional Essence at the same rate when present at the site. Altering or defacing a manse's hearthroom in any substantial way disrupts the manse, breaking all existing attunements. The manse must be repaired before anyone can re-attune, which requires labor and materials equivalent to a month of construction. A character attuned to a manse may take the hearthstone and carry it against his skin, using the jewel as a conduit to the site. Doing so restores (the manse's rating x 2) motes per hour to the character. If it is socketed in a dedicated artifact made from one or more of the five magical materials, the stone also provides an additional enchantment according to its specific type.

## Create Item/Artifact (Craft, Lore, Occult)

**Mundane Items:** Characters use the Craft Ability to design and execute creative projects as a dramatic action using a dice pool of ([the character's lowest rating in Dexterity, Perception or Intelligence] + Craft) for small items that are personally assembled by hand or ([the lower of Perception or Intelligence] + Craft) for larger works. The difficulty is equal to the Resources value of the object. Such projects take an appropriate length of time to complete, as set by the Storyteller. Generally, this interval is in days equal to the difficulty for small items, though extremely simple trinkets worth Resources 1 might take only a few hours to make. Larger or higher-complexity items push the interval from days to weeks, as with most forged goods. Massive projects such as the construction of houses and ships take an interval of months and possibly years for larger structures such as palaces. Truly monumental tasks could theoretically take even longer, although the Storyteller is encouraged to break such enterprises into smaller, independently resolved tasks.

Characters cannot create items with a Resources value in excess of (their Craft + appropriate specialty) without a Charm or stunt. Furthermore, they must have appropriate raw materials and tools, which have their own Resources cost—typically one dot less than the value of the intended project. In the case of large projects, this cost also includes hiring the many laborers necessary to construct the item. The Storyteller should grant exceptions based on common sense. A set of paintbrushes is still Resources 1, even if an artist intends to paint a masterpiece. Any physical item may be built using these rules, whether the process employed is carving,

sculpting, forging, painting, jewelry making or anything else. If successful, the project goes as planned. For every success by which the roll failed to meet the difficulty, the final Resources value of the project decreases accordingly. If the final value could purchase an inferior-quality version of the desired item type, the project is completed according to such specifications. Therefore, an artist who sought to paint a masterpiece worth Resources 4 but whose ended up rolling a single success would produce a Resources 1 painting—pretty enough in an amateurish and trivial way. If no lower-cost counterpart for the desired item exists (large estates could be Resources 4 or 5, but not less), the project fails. The craftsman can try again over a new interval, but he requires the same Resources cost in tools and materials as if he were starting over. Fortunately, his player adds a number of bonus dice to his Craft roll equal to the dice that came up as successes in the previous attempt. He may repeat this as many times as desired, but dice bonuses are not cumulative; they reference only the last attempt. Botching a project at any point spoils it and negates any possibility of continued retry, though Storytellers can always rule that the craftsman made a worthless item that he vainly imagines to be a work of genius.

The threshold obtained on a creation attempt determines the overall quality of the work relative to the difficulty. An exceptional straight sword is worth Resources 3, and a blacksmith who obtains three successes for a threshold of 0 still makes an exceptional sword. However, if he obtains a threshold of 3-4, his work is observably better, with superior balance and elegance. Such items are called *fine* equipment. If a buyer has a choice between a fine blade and a threshold 0 blade, he will prefer the former and will pay more for it (though not enough to raise the Resources cost of the item).

If a character obtains a threshold of 5 on a project, the superb craftsmanship improves the final Resources value by one dot (to a maximum of 5), automatically making the item *exceptional*. If possible, this quality improves the utility of the item accordingly. For example, a normal straight sword is Resources 2 and requires two successes. With seven successes, the extraordinary quality makes it a Resources 3 exceptional weapon. Because three successes would also be enough to make the weapon exceptional if the character had planned to do so all along, taking three weeks and spending Resources 2 on materials, the chief advantage of producing an unexpected masterpiece is the ability to do so cheaper, more quickly and possibly with less training.

*Perfect* goods, the ultimate expression of what is possible in a given craft without magic, have a difficulty and creation time equal to (the Resources cost of an average item + 5) and a cost in materials equal to (the cost of an average version of the item + two dots, maximum Resources 5). Therefore, a perfect straight sword would cost Resources 4 in materials and take seven weeks to make at a difficulty of 7.

**Artifacts:** In addition to making mundane goods, magical beings may use the five magical materials and other exotic ingredients to produce artifacts that are nearly indestructible and imbued with enchantments (see pp. 380-381 and 385-392 for examples). Building an artifact requires that characters have a Craft, Lore and Occult each rated at 3+ for artifacts rated 1 to 3. For greater wonders, the minimum Ability rating required is (the Artifact rating + 2), meaning that characters cannot build level-5 artifacts without superhuman prowess. Artifacts are not built as normal goods, but instead require an extended roll of the same dice pool at a difficulty of (the artifact's intended rating + 2). Exalted who craft magical materials different from the one that resonates with their kind (such as Solars working with jade) suffer a -2 internal penalty. The interval is one season, and the number of cumulative successes required depends on the rating of the artifact: 1 (10 successes), 2 (30 successes), 3 (60 successes), 4 (100 successes) and 5 (250 successes). A botch at any time halves the accumulated successes, rounded down.

Artifacts require mundane ingredients costing (their rating + 1)—maximum 5—as well as access to workshops costing Resources 4 to properly stock (or Resources 5 for workshops capable of producing level 4-5 artifacts). If characters do not have adequate tools at their disposal, they suffer a -2 internal penalty. In addition to mundane costs, every artifact requires a number of exotic ingredients equal to its rating, each of which must pertain to the function of the device. For instance, a basic daiklave could be built using the bones of a legendary warrior and steel refined in an elemental's fire. Exotic ingredients need not be expensive, but they should require effort to obtain (making excellent fodder for stories).

When determining the rating of a player or Storyteller-created artifact, keep the following guidelines in mind. Level-1 artifacts are useful but have only one minor supernatural power of a utilitarian nature. They are comparable to perfect equipment with no overtly supernatural powers (such as a quill that never runs out of ink or a jewel that glows as bright as a torch when commanded). Level-2 artifacts are moderately useful. However, these relics have little effect on stories and providing enchantments that an Exalt could approximate using a Charm two or three steps into a Charm tree. (Most "basic" magic weapons such as daiklaves fall into this category.) Level-3 artifacts are powerful, greatly expanding an Exalt's capability in one area or providing a number of weaker powers. Large artifacts might fall into this ranking if they require regular upkeep, external power provided by hearthstones, or other such drawbacks. Grand daiklaves, Essence cannons and the giant mechanized suits of armor called warstriders are all examples of level-3 artifacts, despite their differences in power. Level-4 artifacts are rare and wondrous things, such as cloaks that turn into wings and the advanced power armor manufactured in the Shogunate Era. Characters with such devices will have a sizable advantage against those without, although level-4 artifacts are not quite game-defining. Level-5 artifacts are almost exclusively relics of the First Age, such as skyships, automatons programmed as both perfect servants and deadly bodyguards, and daiklaves that drink souls. These are game-defining devices.

## Predict Weather (Sail, Survival)

Only the Celestial Incarnae know the plan of weather to come, and even these designs may be altered by the rituals of thaumaturges, the spells of the Exalted, and the Charms of rogue spirits. Still, in the absence of such phenomena, enough patterns exist that knowledgeable characters can attempt crude weather predictions. Roll (Perception + Ability), with a difficulty of 2 in stable climates (i.e., Southern deserts are universally dry and hot) and 3–5 as appropriate to more tempestuous and unstable

climes. The threshold on this roll indicates the number of days forward that the character can predict overall trends: clear skies, precipitation (light, heavy or torrential), overall temperature (freezing, cold, chilly, temperate, warm, balmy, sweltering) and similarly sweeping trends. Add one to the difficulty if the character uses Sail to make predictions on land or Survival to make predictions at sea. The base difficulty assumes the character uses the Ability best suited to the environment.

## Noticing Details (Awareness)

One of the most useful functions of the Awareness Ability is to counter the Stealth of others, as explained earlier on page 131 and later in regard to combat ambushes on pages 155-156. However, Awareness also enables characters to perceive their environment.

By its nature, **Exalted** ordains the Storyteller as the eyes and ears of the players, making her responsible for narrating every detail of the world. Without basic narration, players have nothing for their characters to react to. From a rules perspective, all such details qualify as reflexive diceless (Perception + Awareness) checks at difficulty 0, meaning that characters automatically succeed unless they lack a particular sense with which to receive that information. If the Storyteller has additional details in the scene that she wishes to restrict to those who are more observant, she should call for everyone to make actual reflexive (Perception + Awareness) rolls at standard difficulty, establishing the successes necessary for each detail. Characters can also deliberately attempt to take in their surroundings if they believe they might have missed something. Using Awareness thus reflects situations where a sharp-eyed character notices the distant speck of a rider on the horizon and points it out to those less observant.

## Vision (Awareness)

In broad daylight under optimal weather conditions, sufficiently observant characters can spot objects when they are merely specks on the horizon. However, many conditions can interfere with visibility. **Exalted** handles such conditions by labeling poor visibility as a -1 external penalty and no visibility as a -2 penalty. For every condition, characters face two associated values measured in yards of radius. The smaller value is the distance at which clear vision ends. Any attack or other physical action intended to affect a target beyond this radius suffers the poor visibility penalty. The second, larger radius is the distance at which murky vision ends. Targets outside this range are effectively invisible, imposing the penalty for no visibility. Without the assistance of Charms or stunts, characters cannot make any ranged attacks to a distance greater than twice the "murky vision ends" radius, unless their targets are individually illuminated (such as by carrying a torch).

Torches and other light sources supplant the regular illumination within their radius, granting sufficient illumination to read inside the clear vision area. Unfortunately, torches and other open flames are visible for several miles, alerting anyone hiding in the darkness to the location of the torchbearer and permitting ranged attacks against these highlighted targets as if they were in poor lighting.

While truly invisible characters also impose a -2 external penalty to hit them, vision penalties do *not* apply to blind characters. Instead, characters who cannot see clearly suffer a -2 internal penalty, while true blindness increases the penalty to -4. Functionally, blindness affords the same approximate hindrance as true darkness, but the nature of the penalty is different because darkness is an external obstacle whereas blindness impairs a character's ability to function.

## Evaluating Goods (Bureaucracy)

Although the Bureaucracy Ability largely concerns itself with managing governments bureaus, businesses, criminal syndicates and other organizations, it also measures a character's overall familiarity with the values of assorted merchandise. The Resources system in **Exalted** deliberately abstracts prices, with each greater dot encompassing a progressively wider span than those below. Therefore, the actual cost of one Resources 4 item might be as much as Resources 3 *more* than another Resources 4 item. Because of this increasing abstraction, characters can determine the overall Resources rating of an item with a successful (Intelligence + Bureaucracy) roll at standard difficulty. Yet knowing the *exact* fair market value of an item in its current condition raises the difficulty to the object's Resources value. Besides any

### Sample Visibility Conditions

| Condition | Clear Vision Ends | Murky Vision Ends |
|---|---|---|
| Bonfire* | 10 | 20 |
| Fog, Day | 10 | 30 |
| Fog, Night | 0 | 3 |
| Full Moon, City or Forest | 0 | 3 |
| Full Moon, Grass or Leafless Forest | 25 | 50 |
| Full Moon, Snowy Ground or Desert | 50 | 100 |
| Heavy Snow, Day | 0 | 20 |
| Heavy Snow, Night | 0 | 0 |
| No Moon, City or Forest | 0 | 0 |
| No Moon, Grass or Leafless Forest | 0 | 3 |
| No Moon, Snowy Ground or Desert | 5 | 25 |
| Torchlight* | 3 | 5 |

* Indicates a light source that supplants visibility within its radius.

narrative benefits, knowing the exact value of something makes haggling easier, providing one extra success if the other party is honest, and three extra successes if the other party attempts to rip the character off. For more details, see page 174. Pricing goods may be achieved instantly for most smaller products, though large quantities that waver with (or change) the local economy might require hours or even days of research.

## Examine Scene/Conceal Evidence (Investigation)

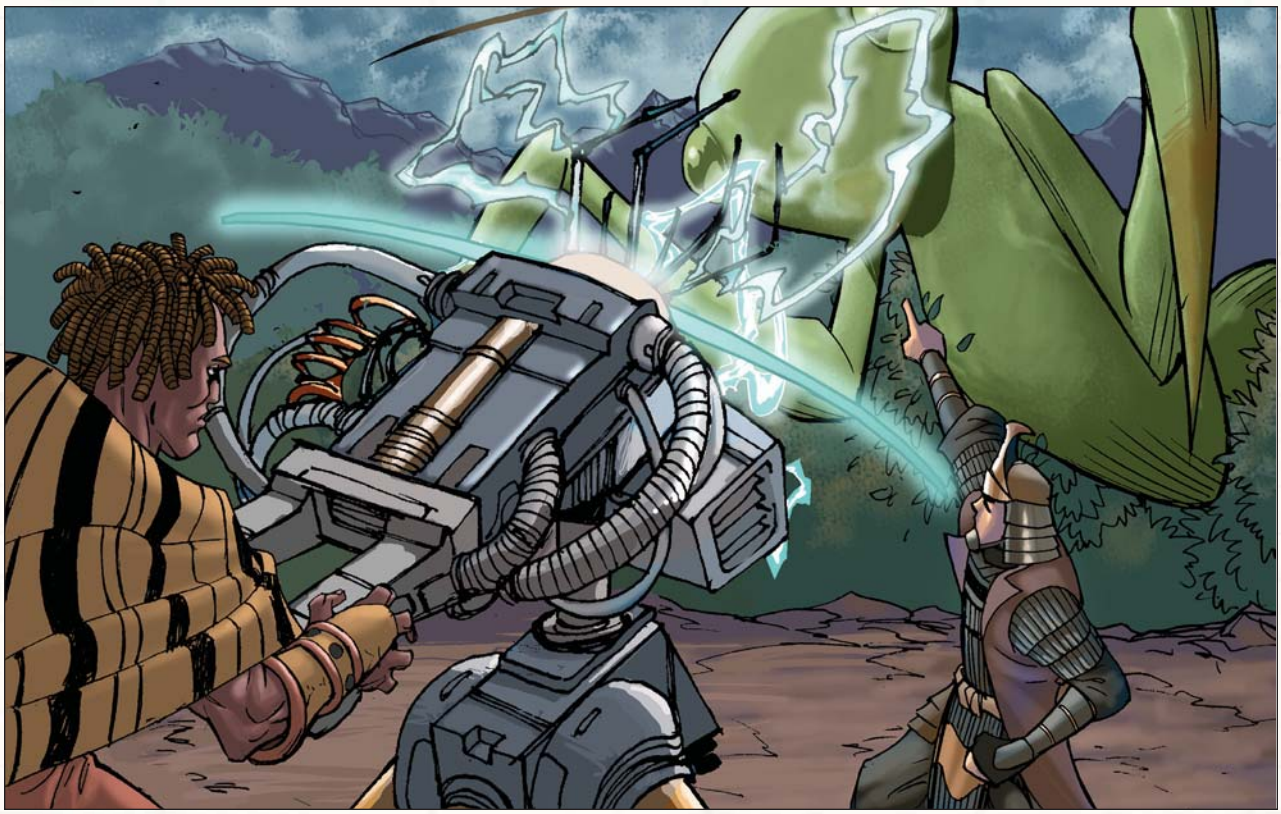
Whereas the Awareness Ability focuses on observing sensory details at the immediate level, Investigation operates on a dramatic time scale to actively hunt for clues and draw conclusions over the course of a scene. Characters must spend at least 15 minutes actively searching a location as a dramatic action in order for their players to make a single roll of (Perception + Investigation). The difficulty of the roll depends on whether anyone has attempted to deliberately tamper with or conceal evidence. If not, the difficulty is 1-5 as assigned by the Storyteller based on the subtlety of the crime scene and the scarcity of clues. For every success, the character uncovers one detail that is most plausibly relevant to the subject of his search (or one that is most unusual, if he's searching without a particular purpose in mind). These clues could be red herrings, though the Storyteller should make at least half the uncovered clues legitimate. If the character is reconstructing the events of a crime, rather than looking for contraband or incriminating possessions in someone's house, the Storyteller should also provide the most plausible explanation based on the evidence available. The player may also designate that an investigator is considering outlandish theories, in which case the Storyteller should suggest several to spark creativity, none of which need have the slightest bearing on the truth.

By default, these rules assume that a character is ransacking a scene, pulling out drawers, overturning mattresses, moving bodies and generally making a mess. If a character wishes to be subtle, she suffers an internal penalty of -4, but the players of characters who enter the scene later must make successful (Perception + Awareness) rolls against a difficulty of the searcher's Wits to notice anything amiss.

Concealing or tampering with evidence requires a (Wits + Investigation) roll at standard difficulty and takes as long to perform as a search. The successes on this roll replace the difficulty to search the scene if they are better. Each subsequent tampering beyond the first is at a cumulative +1 difficulty. Apply the highest number of successes or the natural difficulty of the scene as the difficulty, whatever is highest.

## Operate Technology/Artifacts (Lore)

In the First Age, Exalted sorcerers and artificers built wonders that dwarf the achievements of modern craftsmen, from fleets of skyships and towering warstriders to advanced infrastructures capable of regulating local weather or maximizing crop yields. Precious few of these wonders survived the Usurpation of the Solar Exalted and the scourge of the Great Contagion, leaving broken and dormant ruins scattered across Creation. Characters who come upon such wonders can attempt to reactivate them, but in the absence of instruction manuals, the sophisticated controls of most complex artifacts require a high level of education to discern. Roll the character's (Intelligence + Lore) as a dramatic action with a difficulty based on



the complexity of the device. Personal weapons such as plasma tongue repeaters or minor utilitarian devices such as memory crystals are difficulty 1–2. Sophisticated devices such as flying machines and geomantic artillery emplacements are difficulty 4, and the most elaborate machines such as the Realm Defense Grid are difficulty 6 or higher. Storytellers can easy interpolate intermediary difficulties as necessary. Simple artifacts such as daiklaves or suits of basic magical materials armor do not need such rolls. Their function is innately intuitive. Having a tutor or manual obviates the need for a roll, but the character knows how to make the artifact do only what the manual teaches.

Once a character knows how to work a device, she must still take time to familiarize herself with the controls. Doing so generally takes (the Artifact rating of the device – the character's Lore rating) hours and does not require further rolls. Until this familiarization process is complete (which might not be possible for weapons with limited ammunition or dangerous machines where the slightest mistake can prove catastrophic), characters require a standard (Wits + Lore) roll to use the device (difficulty 1–2). Botching such rolls yields consequences as dire as the object's function allows. A priceless memory crystal might "only" lose its recorded contents, while Essence munitions might detonate.

If the Storyteller generously determines that a character has a chance to operate a device despite the fact that she does not comprehend its controls, roll one die. If the result is less than the Artifact rating of the machine (Artifact N/A devices are the equivalent of Artifact 6 to 9 as appropriate), the character automatically botches. Otherwise, her player may roll the character's (Wits + Lore) for her to use the artifact at a difficulty of its rating. Once a character has made a device perform a particular function once through sheer luck, she may thereafter do so using the normal rules. Making the artifact do something new requires a new luck check, making trial and error a *very* dangerous way to learn.

### Diagnose Patient (Medicine)

When a physician examines a patient to detect and/or gauge the seriousness of wounds or illnesses, roll the physician's (Perception + Medicine). This is a dramatic action requiring five minutes of poking, prodding and taking note of symptoms. In the case of injuries, the difficulty is only 1 for external wounds and 2 for internal injuries (such as broken bones or internal bleeding).

Success allows the healer's player to know how many levels of each type of injury the patient currently suffers, which the character interprets in an appropriate in-game context. For example, a patient suffering three levels of bashing device and a single level of lethal damage might prompt the physician to say, "It looks worse than it really is. Mostly, you're just banged up. Get some rest, and stay off that leg for a few days, and you'll be fine."

Illnesses are more variable, with a diagnosis difficulty based on the distinctiveness of the symptoms rather than the severity of the disease. For instance, the common cold, infected wounds and bubonic plague are all difficulty 1. Other examples include cholera and smallpox (difficulty 2) and yellow fever (difficulty 3). Only extremely rare and/or magical illnesses should have a diagnosis difficulty greater than 3. If it is a Sickness effect without a stated difficulty to diagnose, the difficulty is the Essence of the character who caused the effect.

Without knowing what ails a patient, physicians cannot administer treatment, so quick and accurate diagnosis is critical. Players should keep in mind that physicians risk contracting communicable diseases they encounter. Taking precautions, such as maintaining strict hygiene, can provide bonuses to avoid catching illnesses, but these might not be sufficient, particularly where such horrific maladies as plague are concerned. For all their compassion, doctors often impose quarantine where they suspect a possibility of severe contagious disease rather than get close enough to risk personal exposure.

### Treat Wounds (Medicine)

Without powerful magical drugs, mortal physicians can do relatively little to speed the healing of wounds besides convincing overenthusiastic heroes to take their injuries seriously and rest. However, healers can help prevent or treat complications associated with injuries, including bleeding (see p. 151), infection (see pp. 151-152) and disabling wounds (see p. 152). The rules for helping with each condition may be found in the respective write-up for those states.

Actual internal surgery (such as to remove tumors or growing parasites) is beyond the skill and resources of all but the most skilled physicians. The difficulty of such feats is *at least* 5 and climbs rapidly with increasing procedural complexity. Moreover, such surgery takes at least three hours per point of difficulty to perform and inflicts a number of unsoakable dice of lethal damage on the patient equal to the procedure's difficulty. Only the Exalted can reliably perform such wondrous feats of medicine.

Crippling injuries, meaning those inflicted by a Charm with the Crippling descriptor, must first be diagnosed to be treated. If not stated in the Charm, the difficulty to diagnose is the Essence of the character who used the Charm. The difficulty to treat it is the (Essence + governing Ability of the Charm that caused it).

### Thaumaturgy (Occult)

Through their Charms and spells, the Exalted wield power that mortals can never hope to match. Even so, mortal savants, scientists, holy men and shamans can learn minor miracles that set them above their peers. Collectively, such magic is called thaumaturgy in the texts of the First Age, and it is unique among magical disciplines in that its rituals draw upon arcane truths embedded in the natural laws and principles of Creation. Where Charms impose new states and events through Essence, thaumaturgical rituals coax the existing Essence patterns of the world to do something they are naturally prone to do, obviating the need for personal Essence expenditure. Thaumaturgy fails utterly before the spells of the Exalted, though, so any form of sorcerous or necromantic countermagic completely destroys any form of lingering thaumaturgical effect or enchantment without any backlash of scattered Essence.

The study of thaumaturgy is broken down into *Arts*, which are Occult specialties that deviate slightly from the usual specialty rules. A character can study as many different Arts as he wants, purchasing the same art up to three times. In order of tiered ascendance, each purchase is called a *Degree*: Initiate (+1), Adept (+2) and Master (+3). Learning each Degree demands a commensurately higher Occult rating, so Initiate requires Occult 1, Adept requires 3, and Master requires 5. Every ritual possible with an Art has a listed Degree requirement from 0-3. Tasks with a Degree requirement of 0 are called Apprentice-level and require only that a character have at least one dot of Occult to

attempt the action. Characters cannot ever apply more than +3 specialty dice to an Occult roll no matter how many Arts they study, nor may they add Degrees to Occult rolls not pertaining to thaumaturgy (such as for a Charm or sorcery spell). Conversely, Occult specialties that are not Degrees do not add dice to Thaumaturgy-based rolls.

As an alternative to learning a full Degree, characters can learn a single *Procedure*, a ritual that the character has memorized by rote without understanding the underlying theory of its magic. Each Procedure costs one experience point (or three Procedures for a single bonus point during character creation). For example, a character might normally need an Adept Degree in Demon Summoning to call any species of First Circle demon from Malfeas. If the character learned a ritual exclusively for summoning blood apes, it would be a Procedure: Summon Erymanthoi. Characters can learn Procedures for any task possible with any Degree of an Art, but must have Occult 1 to learn Adept-ranked Procedures and Occult 3 to learn Master-rank Procedures. Unlike a full Degree, learning a Procedure awards no bonus dice to perform the magic. When a character wishes to learn a Degree for which he already knows subsidiary Procedures, he loses the Procedures and receives an equal number of experience points. So, a budding infernalist who has been taught to summon erymanthoi and neomah through Procedures would regain two experience points upon learning the Adept degree of Demon Summoning.

Degrees in the Arts of thaumaturgy do not have the same cost or training time as normal Occult specialties. Instead, they cost 10 experience points or 5 bonus points each. (For characters with Occult as a Caste or Favored Ability, the cost is reduced to 8 experience points or 4 bonus points.) An Initiate Degree takes one month to learn, Adept two months and Master three months. (Characters for whom Occult is a Caste or Favored Ability drop the interval to weeks rather than months.) Procedures require one week to learn (or one day if Occult is Caste or Favored.) Characters cannot learn a Degree without a tutor or an instruction manual unless they have Occult 5, in which case the training interval extends to years.

Whenever a character uses an Art, the ritual requires exotic occult ingredients that are consumed, destroyed or otherwise made useless as part of the magic. The Resources cost of such ingredients is typically 0 for Apprentice effects, 0 to 1 for Initiate, 2 to 3 for Adept or 4 to 5 for Master. Reduce these costs by 1 if a character has access to a major metropolis where such goods may be obtained or if the ingredients in question are native to the area. Increase the required Resources cost of a ritual by 1 (to a maximum of 5) if the ingredient can be found only in the opposite direction of Creation (such as when a Southern thaumaturge performs a ritual requiring rare glacier lichens that grow only in the Far North). Using superior or unique ingredients, such as those that would qualify as exotic ingredients for the purposes of artifact creation (see p. 133) add one to three bonus dice to a ritual casting (depending on their appropriateness). Characters must also have a laboratory, workshop or sanctum full of reusable tools in order to practice thaumaturgy reliably, with a Resources cost of 1 for Apprentice rituals, 2 for Initiate, 3 for Adept and 4 for Master.

Exalted and other Essence users have a distinct advantage when wielding thaumaturgy, as they can directly power rituals with their own spirit instead of coaxing motes from bizarre formulae, blood and reagents. For every two motes spent, reduce the total Resources cost of a ritual by one dot. Such expenditure does not obviate the need for ritual behavior, just ritual ingredients and tools. For example, an Adept-level ritual with a disposable Resources cost of 2 and reusable Resources cost of 3 would cost an Exalt 10 motes to eschew those materials entirely. Furthermore, every ritual requires that a thaumaturge spend one Willpower point at the final moment of casting. Exalted cannot substitute Essence for this cost. When multiple thaumaturges trained in a Degree or Procedure work together to cast a ritual, use the limited cooperation rules rather than full cooperation.

The following sample Arts list a number of sample rituals according to the following format: *Name* (Minimum Degree, Attribute, Difficulty, Casting Time): Effect.

When casting rituals, thaumaturges spend the casting time in uninterrupted work, after which their players roll (Attribute + Occult + Degree known) against the listed difficulty. If successful, the ritual's Effect takes place. A failure wastes the effort and components, while a botch imposes some mishap related to the intended effect. The minimum degree indicates the degree a character must possess in that Art to cast the ritual without knowing a specific Procedure to do so.

Storytellers should feel free to create additional Arts and additional rituals for each Art using these examples as guidelines.

**The Art of Astrology:**

*Compile Chart* (0, Wits, 2, one hour): This ritual requires access to star charts (Resources 2) and detailed personal information about the subject, or it automatically fails. Pertinent information may be obtained freely or uncovered through investigation. Success creates an astrological profile necessary for greater astrological rituals.

*Lesser Divination* (1, Intelligence, 4, three hours): By observing the night sky using star charts and a target's astrological profile, the thaumaturge makes a prediction about the target's future, splitting successes between duration and accuracy. Duration: 1 (one month), 2+ (one season). Accuracy generates predictions that are extremely vague (1) or vague (2+). Botches result in false predictions. (Targeting a Primordial or a native of the Wyld, Malfeas or the Underworld results in an automatic botch.) The Storyteller creates the prediction, assuming no interference from Heaven or beings that trigger automatic botches. Such interference spoils predictions.

*Divination* (2, Intelligence, 4, three hours): As Lesser Divination, but more successes may be applied to Duration: 3 (half a year) or 4+ (one year), or Accuracy: 3 (woefully incomplete but enlightening) or 4+ (somewhat accurate).

*Greater Divination* (3, Intelligence, 4, three hours): As Divination, but more successes may be applied to Accuracy: 5 (mostly accurate with details) or 6+ (accurate with details).

**The Art of Demon Summoning:**

*Demonsight* (1, Perception, 3, five minutes): Her closed eyes anointed with blood, the thaumaturge opens them to perceive immaterial demons with all senses for the rest of the scene.

*Summon [Species]* (2, Intelligence, 5, six hours): A First Circle demon of the desired species crawls through a crack in the Demon Realm and appears in a flash of green fire before the caster. Thaumaturges have no power to command summoned demons, but they may try to threaten, bribe or cajole them to do some task they are naturally inclined to do instead of imme-

diately attacking (e.g., erymanthoi hunger for bones to crunch and flesh to rend). This ritual must be conducted entirely at night, and it involves blood sacrifice.

**The Art of Enchantment:**

*[Least Wonder]* (1, Intelligence, 3, 50 hours): This ritual may be interrupted and resumed without automatically failing, so long as the caster spends at least five hours per day working on it. The caster must have the target object on hand and own it, and the item cannot have Resources value greater that the thaumaturge's Occult rating. Each success gives the item the properties of being exceptional (see p. 365) for one decade. Each individual item that a character could categorize requires a separate Procedure, if the ritual is learned as such (e.g., swords, plate armor, blacksmithing tools, etc.).

*[Lesser Wonder]* (2, Intelligence, 4, 100 hours): As [Least Wonder], but an exceptional item (including an item already enchanted with [Least Wonder]) can be made perfect for one decade per success (see p. 366).

*[Talisman]* (3, Intelligence, 5, 200 hours): Before beginning this ritual, the character physically builds an artifact with a rating of 1, using one more exotic ingredient than usual. See page 133 for artifact-creation rules. Because the item is not made from one of the magical materials, it cannot socket hearthstones, nor is it indestructible. This ritual provides the magic that powers the artifact, lasting one decade per success. Such artifacts are called talismans, and they lose all magical power if they are targeted with a countermagic spell or if the item itself is significantly damaged. Every different artifact must be learned as a separate Procedure, if learned as a Procedure rather than through Degrees.

**The Art of Geomancy:**

*Essence Sense* (0, Perception, 1, one minute): Needing no materials, nor required to spend Willpower, the thaumaturge handles or stares at a target object or being in rapt concentration. If the successes equal (11 – [the number of motes spent on Charms and/or spells currently affecting the target]), the thaumaturge senses the presence of Essence, but not its strength or source. Three or more successes also detect the presence of any thaumaturgical effects on the target.

*Blessing* (2, Intelligence, 3, three hours): The thaumaturge names a target within one mile, a sample of whose hair, blood or some other body part is part of the expended materials. Her player picks one Attribute, one Ability and one specialty for that Ability. The next time the target botches a roll of those traits in the context of that specialty, the botch is converted to a simple failure. This blessing cannot offset magically induced botches, and a character can benefit from only one geomantic blessing at a time.

*Curse* (2, Intelligence, 3, three hours): As Blessing, but the next failed roll for the target in the context of the named Attribute, Ability and specialty becomes a botch. A character can suffer from only one geomantic curse at a time.

## Endure Wilderness (Survival)

While Resistance staves off injury from extreme environmental conditions, not all environments are so hostile that they actually inflict damage. However, just because a barren tundra isn't cold enough to inflict immediate frostbite doesn't mean that unprepared travelers can survive there. Away from civilization, characters must hunt or gather their own food, find or erect shelter and keep themselves protected from the elements. Characters with at least one dot of Survival can perform these tasks without any roll, assuming they only intend to procure sustenance and shelter for themselves. Obtaining food for others for a day requires one threshold success per character on an (Intelligence + Survival) roll (difficulty 1 for verdant forests, jungles and swamps, 2 for grasslands, 3 for dry savannas, 4 for deserts and tundra and 5 for blasted wastelands). Hunting/foraging is a dramatic action taking (the difficulty – the hunter's Survival rating) hours, minimum of one hour. Characters lacking proper tools and/or weapons are at a -2 internal penalty to checks. Players should remember that characters who do not receive sufficient nutrition will starve (see p. 129).

Finding shelter and generally staying alive in the wilderness is much easier and does not require a roll under most conditions provided characters have the proper equipment (insulated garments for cold weather, extra water skins for arid climates, etc.). Without such tools, make an (Intelligence + Survival) roll—difficulty by terrain, as previously listed. In extreme climates (those that qualify as difficulty 4-5), even players whose characters have the right equipment must make the roll at -3 standard difficulty. Only one person in a group need make this roll, provided the rest follow her directions. Success means the characters stay alive. Failure indicates

that extras (see p. 156) perish and heroic characters suffer whatever damage the Storyteller feels is appropriate for the severity of exposure.

### Tracking/Evasion (Survival)

Although the Stealth Ability governs the actual techniques of hiding and sneaking, characters who wish to travel long distances without leaving traces of their passing must use Survival instead. This requirement applies regardless of the terrain the character passes through, be it urban or wilderness. Similarly, characters use their Survival knowledge to track down others.

Contests between trackers and fugitives are resolved as an extended, opposed roll of the pursuer's (Perception + Survival) against the target's (Wits + Survival). Roll twice for each day, once in the morning and once in the afternoon. Tracking at night requires the aid of dogs (or similarly keen senses such as Charms may provide) and grants a third roll, if appropriate. In most cases, neither party will continue at night. During any period of time in which characters do not keep moving, they forfeit the next closest roll. If one party is notably faster than the other, her player receives an additional success on each roll as the character catches up or pulls away. If the fugitive has a substantial lead, this should be represented by additional successes on the first roll. The pursuer's player may gain bonus dice on each roll (between two and five) if the character is using hounds or other tracking creatures to help. If the pursuer is notably slower, she will not catch her quarry unless she closes the distance by journeying while the fugitive rests or is waylaid by obstacles. If she wins, it simply means that she can follow without impediment and will eventually catch up. The Storyteller remains the final arbiter and interpreter of how tracking chases play out.

Whichever party in a tracking contest gains a threshold of three successes over the other wins. For the fugitive, this means slipping away so that pursuit cannot continue to follow. For the tracker, this means the character gets close enough to have an actual encounter (combat or otherwise) or simply holds the trail and gradually closes the distance as quickly as circumstances allow.

## Combat

Battle is an inevitable facet of **Exalted**. The Time of Tumult has arrived, with the Realm tottering on the brink of civil war in the absence of its Empress and the Deathlords mobilizing invasions against the living. Across the world, the Solar Exalted have returned, casting down the corrupt orders of old to rebuild anew. Epic battles between epic heroes are a hallmark of the setting. The following rules show how to conduct combat scenes during game play.

### Keeping Track of Time

Players and Storytellers can track the flow of time in any way they deem easiest. The following methods are only suggestions:

**Dice:** This method takes some of the burden of tracking actions off the Storyteller. Players make a note of the tick of their next action, and the Storyteller declares the advancing tick count normally. After taking First Actions, players set aside a die (or two, if necessary) showing the Speed rating of that action. At the beginning of every tick following, the player reduces this number by one. When the number reaches zero, the character may act that tick and reset the die accordingly. This process repeats as long as combat continues. The Storyteller can do the same for each combatant she controls, but this will quickly get cumbersome and use a lot of dice if she must do this for many characters. Players should be careful that they do not leave their Speed die where it might accidentally get mixed in with a dice roll.

**Paper:** The Storyteller places a piece of lined paper on the table where it is visible to everyone. On this paper, she logs tick numbers in a descending column down the left side, starting with the first tick on which combat begins. Across the top, she spaces initials or some other distinctive symbols to represent each combatant. As each character takes his First Action, the Storyteller writes an X at the appropriate intersection of column and row. She makes a second X a number of tick rows down equal to the Speed rating of the action. When the tick count reaches that row later in combat, the Storyteller directs the player that the character may act. After this action, the Storyteller writes in the next placeholder X, repeating the process as long as combat continues (and spilling onto other pages as needed). See the example sketch below. This method is very reliable, but may use a lot of paper over the course of a long combat, especially in a battle involving many combatants.

| | JC | BG | LL | DC |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | | X | | |
| 2 | X | | | X |
| 3 | | | X | |
| 4 | | | | |
| 5 | | | | |
| 6 | X | X | | X |
| 7 | | | | |
| 8 | | | | |
| 9 | | | X | |
| 10 | X | | | |
| 11 | | X | | |
| 12 | | | | X |

JC=Reaper Daiklave (Speed 4)
BG=God-Kicking Boot (Speed 5)
LL=Grimscythe (Speed 6)
DC=Serpent-Sting Staff (Speed 5)

**Counters:** This method functions similar to the dice method, in that characters take their first actions on the appropriate tick. Upon doing so, each player sets aside a pile of tokens near her character sheet equal to the Speed rating of that action. These tokens may be anything small and uniform, from the glass Essence beads sold by White Wolf to pennies. At the beginning of every tick, the player removes a token from the pile and sets it aside. When the pile empties, the character may act again. The process repeats as long as combat continues. As with using dice, the Storyteller may find it cumbersome to maintain a token pile for each character he controls, so he may wish to use the paper method even if the players use counters.

## Step One: First Actions

During most scenes, time flows abstractly. Events happen in their narrated order without too much attention being paid to the moment-by-moment chronology. In contrast, tense situations such as combat require that the players and the Storyteller know exactly when each character acts relative to one another. Combat time passes in abstract increments called *ticks*, each of which is approximately one second long by default, but may vary slightly depending on what happens during the tick. Combat always advances from tick 0 forward one tick at a time until the end of battle.

Whenever a character wishes to take an action that would precipitate or require combat time, her player declares a Join Battle action. Doing so projects hostility or at least intense physical readiness, generally drawing immediate attention from everyone who can perceive her and allowing all such witnesses to perform Join Battle actions as well. Not every Storyteller character must join battle simply because they can. For the sake of expediency, assume that any uninvolved and/or unimportant bystanders do not do so.

If the initiator is hidden or wishes to conceal her intent, this is handled as an unexpected attack, requiring a contested roll between the initiator's player and the players of everyone present who might possibly notice the character (see pp. 155-156 for full details). Resolve this surprise check before rolling for Join Battle. Only those who beat the initiator may perform a Join Battle action unless someone who succeeds calls out a warning (in which case anyone who hears the shout may Join Battle in response to the attacker's blown cover). Those attacked before their first action have their normal DV, but characters attacked by surprise have a Parry and Dodge DV of 0 and can use only those defenses that indicate they are effective against attacks of which the character isn't aware. For more information on unexpected attacks, see pages 155-156.

A Join Battle action is a roll of (Wits + Awareness) at standard difficulty. This is a reflexive roll and may benefit normally from Charms, stunts and other bonuses. The *reaction count* for the combat scene is a value equal to the highest number of successes rolled by anyone who simultaneously joins at the start of combat. If no one notices a hidden or covert assailant, he still performs a Join Battle action normally, with his successes establishing the reaction count. The *First Action* of each character equals (reaction count – successes), to a maximum value of 6. Any character who botches a Join Battle roll automatically has a First Action of 6. The fastest character (or characters, in the event of tied rolls generating multiple First Actions on 0) takes his first actual actions in battle immediately, whether attacking or doing some other task (see "Action Options," p. 142).

## Step Two: Actions

Characters act for the first time in combat when the tick count reaches the point where they have their First Action (see "Join Battle," on p. 143), and they may take any action desired, but they must act. Doing nothing is itself an action, whether a character is waiting in a guard position or paralyzed. At the beginning of combat, characters start with their full DV, subject to any modifiers that apply. Once a character takes her first action in combat, she must wait a number of ticks equal to the *Speed* rating of her action before she acts again. This delay resets with the Speed of each new action and forms the basic cycling structure of combat. In addition to Speed, most actions also have a *defense penalty*, determining how much the action reduces the character's Defense Value (see p. 146) until her next action refreshes this trait.

### Action Options Summary

**Activate Charm/Combo/Power (Varies/Varies):** Use a Charm, Charm Combo or other magical power. Rules depend on the effect used. See page 142.
**Aim (3/-1):** Prepare an attack against a target, increasing Accuracy proportional to the time spent aiming.
**Attack (Varies/-1):** Assault a single target, either unarmed or using a weapon.
**Dash (3/-2):** Sprint at top speed.
**Flurry (Varies/Varies):** Take multiple actions in a quick cascade. May be attacks or miscellaneous actions.
**Guard (3/None):** Optimized defensive stance.
**Inactive (5/Special):** Do nothing. This action is not voluntarily, but it may be forced on a character through immobility or hostile magic.
**Miscellaneous Action (5/Varies):** Perform some task unrelated (or perhaps tangentially connected) to combat.
**Move (0/None):** Sprint short distance. Reflexive.

### Simultaneous Actions

When multiple characters act on the same tick, their actions occur simultaneously. Nothing actually happens until every action is rolled and the tick is concluded, so actions disregard the effects of "previous" rolls made in the same tick. Therefore, two combatants can strike and even kill one another on the same tick. Ideally, players will not abuse out-of-game knowledge to adjust actions based on what they know another character is doing. However, if the Storyteller feels that players can't help themselves, or if he simply wishes to remove the temptation, he can have players declare and roll actions in any arbitrary order, switching around from tick to tick so that uncertainty prevails. Alternatively, the Storyteller can decide to give faster characters the edge in simultaneous contests by having characters declare actions in order of lowest (Wits + Awareness) and working up. Finally, the Storyteller can go to the other extreme and freely allow players to metagame for the best cinematic results, playing off one another's choices in a cooperative manner. However the Storyteller decides to resolve simultaneous actions, he should discuss the matter with players in advance so that everyone understands what to expect.

## Action Options

The following list of actions encompasses virtually everything a character might do in battle. Each option has its associated Speed rating and defense penalty listed in parentheses at the beginning, separated by a slash. Actions designated as reflexive (including move and the activation of reflexive Charms) may have a defense penalty, but they are Speed 0 because they can be performed on any tick (even if the character does not or cannot take any other actions). Reflexive actions do not refresh a character's DV, nor do they count as true actions for the purposes of effects that last until a character's next action.

## Activate Charm/Power/Combo (Varies/Varies)

Most supernatural beings in **Exalted** define their magical capabilities in the context of Charms, whether they are Chosen, spirits or even Fair Folk. Even with the vast range of powers that exist in Creation and beyond, all Charms and powers follow certain rules for combat timing depending on their listed type.

**Permanent:** These Charms automatically activate when learned and remain active thereafter.

**Reflexive:** Magical beings may activate a reflexive Charm on any tick, whether or not they have an action that tick. They may use the same Charm multiple times on the same tick if circumstances permit (for instance, repeatedly activating a defensive Charm in response to every attack made against them), but they cannot use the same Charm more than once in response to the same action or event.

Characters may not use a reflexive Charm unless they have not activated any other Charms since before the tick when they last took an action. For example, a Solar cannot use Heavenly Guardian Defense (see p. 193) if he used Seven Shadow Evasion (see p. 227) on or since his last action, though he could repeatedly deploy Seven Shadow Evasion. **Terrestrial Exalted are the sole exception to this rule, capable of activating any reflexive Charm at any time, regardless of what other Charms they have recently used.**

**Supplemental:** Characters may use supplemental Charms only during a tick in which they take an action. This type of Charm always enhances an action in some way. The same supplemental Charm may be activated multiple times on the tick if the character flurries, but no more times than the number of actions in the flurry that the Charm can enhance. Characters cannot use a supplemental Charm if they activate any other Charms during a tick.

**Extra Action:** This type of Charm provides a magical flurry, granting a cascade of separate actions that occur in rapid succession on a single tick (usually without imposing multiple action penalties). Characters may only use an extra action Charm on a tick in which they act, and they cannot activate the Charm more than once in the tick. Furthermore, characters cannot use an extra action Charm if they activate any other Charms during the tick, nor may they take any non-reflexive actions except those granted by the Charm (including actions performed as a non-magical flurry).

**Simple:** This type of Charm constitutes an action unto itself, so characters can activate only such magic as their sole action on a tick when they are permitted to act. **Unless a simple Charm has a Speed rating listed in parentheses beside its type, it has a Speed of 6 by default.** Characters cannot activate a simple Charm multiple times on the same tick, nor may they perform any other non-reflexive actions.

**Combos:** Through the use of a Combo, a magical being may link multiple Charms together and activate them on the same tick. The rules for building Combos and using them in combat timing are found on page 244.

## Aim (3/-1)

The character concentrates on a particular target (declared when the action is selected). Against an animate opponent, such concentration helps him to strike a vulnerable area at the most opportune moment. Against inanimate targets, he scrutinizes points of structural weakness. The character can abort the aim and attack his studied opponent on any tick after the first, adding one die to the attack roll for every tick spent aiming. Aborting to any other action is impossible. Aborting an aim is also like aborting a guard in that the attack does not refresh DV, even though it counts as a normal action in all other respects. Instead, the character must wait for the Speed of the attack to pass before his DV refreshes. If the character aborts DV to do anything besides attack his scrutinized target, he loses two dice from the action as an internal penalty from his divided attention.

If the character completes a full aim cycle, he still does *not* refresh DV, but he may use the new action to attack the studied target with three bonus dice. Alternatively, he can enter a new aiming cycle with the action. In this case, DV does not decrease further and neither does the character add more bonus dice. However, the full bonus stays "banked" through as many aim cycles as desired until used (by attacking the target) or forfeited (by using an action to do anything else). This is used to simulate a character "covering" targets. Aim cannot be part of a flurry.

## Attack (Varies/-1)

The character launches a single attack at a target, either unarmed or using a weapon. Because attacking is the most complicated action possible in **Exalted**, this chapter provides

the rules for resolving attacks after this list of all possible combat actions, starting on page 141. The Speed of an attack is the Speed of the weapon or attack maneuver used.

## Dash (3/-2)

The character runs flat out, sprinting at speeds up to (Dexterity + 6 – current wound penalties – armor mobility penalty) yards per tick. The minimum rate of a dash is two yards per tick. Unlike a basic move, dashing is not reflexive, and it sharply penalizes defense. Characters suffer a DV penalty of -2 during the tick and cannot parry at all without a stunt or magical assistance.

Dashing is normally accomplished without a roll, but it may require a (Dexterity + Athletics) roll in order to cross treacherous terrain to avoid mishap, at Storyteller discretion.

If the terrain or the character's capabilities allow, a dash may involve another mode of locomotion besides running, such as swimming or climbing (both at Dexterity yards per tick, and both modes generally require rolls to accomplish) or flying (rate dependent on the means of flight).

## Flurry (Varies/Varies)

The character launches a quick series of blows or otherwise performs multiple actions rolled on a single tick. Characters can draw their weapon at the beginning of a flurry of attacks, subject to the -1 DV penalty for their miscellaneous action.

Barring the aid of magic, this option imposes normal multiple action penalties (see pp. 124-125) on all rolls. The Speed rating of a *flurry* equals the highest Speed rating of any action taken as part of the cascade. Each action in the flurry imposes its own defense penalty as normal for that action. In the case of attacks, a weapon cannot be used to attack more times in a flurry than its rate. (See the tables beginning on p. 366 for rates of common weapons.)

Certain actions are barred from being part of a flurry, as stated in their descriptions. If, when his player declares the flurry, the character chooses an action that later becomes invalid (for example, killing a target on the first blow of a series), he may choose to abort the flurry rather than carry out the invalid action. The flurry ends with the aborted action—characters cannot pick and choose among actions in a flurry when one becomes invalid. The flurry remains as long as it was when the character chose to undertake it (even if the longest action is one of those dropped), but the character takes the DV penalty for only those actions he actually undertook.

## Guard (3/None)

The character focuses entirely on avoiding attacks made against her, dodging or blocking as best suits her training. This action does not reduce a character's Defense Value. On any tick in which a character is guarding, her player can abort the defense and take any other action desired except to aim or to perform another guard. This new action does not refresh DV but is a normal action in all other ways. Therefore, the character must wait for a number of ticks to pass according to the Speed of the new action to refresh DV and act again. Guard cannot be part of a flurry.

## Inactive (5/Special)

The character is unconscious, paralyzed, helpless or otherwise unable to decide her own actions. Players cannot choose for their characters to be inactive, except perhaps by arranging for some form of incapacitation. The state of inactivity automatically happens whenever the appropriate conditions arise. This means that a character who is grabbed during the interval before her next action immediately aborts that action state to enter inactive. Likewise, the state of inactivity ends as abruptly as it begins, as soon as the conditions causing it withdraw. On the next available tick, the character may act normally with refreshed DV and a full range of options. Characters who are inactive cannot defend themselves; they start the action at DV 0.

## Miscellaneous Action (5/Varies)

The character uses her action to do something that doesn't fit neatly into any of the other options, such as picking a lock in a hurry or trying to decipher the controls of a complicated First Age weapon in time to save her friends. Storytellers should keep in mind that a tick is a very short span of time, approximately one second. Even if a character focuses on the chosen task until her next action to the exclusion of everything else, this probably won't give her more than about five seconds in which to work. If the task will take much longer than that, the Storyteller should try to break the task into smaller pieces that the character can accomplish in such an interval.

The DV penalty for performing a non-combat action depends on whether the character wishes to focus completely on the task at hand without paying attention to the battle raging around her or whether she tries to keep one eye out for danger. In the former case, the character's intense concentration forfeits all DV if the character has a positive DV (negative DV ratings are not increased to zero, but are still treated as zero). In the latter case, the character generally suffers a -1 penalty to DV (the number can vary with the action), but her distraction also subtracts two dice from any roll made to accomplish her task. Miscellaneous actions of the second variety *can* be part of a flurry as long as the sequence of actions makes sense (Storyteller discretion). In that case, the character suffers the appropriate multiple action dice penalty to the miscellaneous action roll instead of the usual -2. Common examples of miscellaneous actions include:

**Join Battle (-0 DV):** Most often, a battle ends with fewer participants than it started, whether through death, incapacitation or retreat. However, it is also possible for characters to join a battle already in progress. So long as a bystander does nothing that has any impact on any of the combatants, the Storyteller can wait until combat ends for the fighters to learn what the bystander did while they fought. In effect, bystanders do not functionally exist within the context of a battle (except possibly as mobile scenery) until they actually *do* something requiring notice (or until one of the combatants deliberately notices them through an action). In the former case, a character can enter combat on any tick by declaring this miscellaneous action, which has a Speed equal to (the reaction count established at the beginning of combat – successes on a [Wits + Awareness roll]). The Speed has a maximum of 6 and a minimum of 0. In the case of a zero Speed,

the character proceeds immediately to declare another action for that tick as if Join Battle was a reflexive action. Otherwise, the character must wait until her next action to do anything.

Alternatively, a character enters battle as she is acted upon (typically as the target of an attack). During the tick when the first action affects her, the bystander automatically performs the Join Battle action. In many cases, attacking someone who does not have a reason to expect that she will be brought into a battle qualifies as a surprise attack (see pp. 155-156), but the Storyteller must adjudicate such situations on a case-by-case basis.

**Coordinating Attacks:** In a horde, combatants concern themselves with only their own targets, trusting companions to fight their own battles. Yet disciplined fighting units often concentrate attacks against powerful opponents in order to overcome their opponents' defenses. In particular, Dragon-Blooded members of the Wyld Hunt rely on "pack tactics" to defeat the individually superior Celestial Exalted.

Coordinating a group of attackers to assault a single target has the usual Speed 5 for a miscellaneous action and requires a (Charisma + War) roll from the player of the group's commander. The difficulty is half the number of participants in the group, rounded down. Should the commander wish to benefit from the coordination for his own attacks, his player must include the character into the group when determining difficulty. If the roll fails, the coordination attempt fails, so wise commanders do not overextend their organizational skill. If the roll succeeds, the coordination opens a "window of opportunity" on the tick when the commander next acts. Every member of the group who attacks the designated target on that tick reduces the target's DV (see p. 146) by the number of successes rolled on the coordination roll. This penalty cannot exceed the number of attackers in the group. For example, if the commander wants to link six archers into a firing squad, his player rolls (Charisma + War) at difficulty 3. With two or fewer successes, the attempt fails. With three successes, the DV penalty suffered by the target against the squad's attacks is -3. With six or more successes, the penalty increases to its maximum value of -6. Synchronizing a barrage of attacks generally requires the participants to aim and/or guard so that they can abort and attack on the appropriate tick.

**Drawing and Readying Weapons (-1 DV):** In many cases, combat begins at the point in which characters draw weapons. In other situations, a character might find herself ambushed or she might wish to trade out one weapon for another. A character may use a miscellaneous action to unsheathe, draw or otherwise ready as many weapons as she has hands and weapons available (grabbing a sledge in both hands, unsheathing a short sword in each hand, grabbing a fistful of shuriken in each hand, etc.).

Characters who have their hands or feet free do not need to take an action to use natural punch or kick attacks. Usually, drawing any other weapon is a diceless action. Only the most extreme conditions warrant a roll (a character half-dead from frostbite pulling his sword free with his numb and shaking hands), in which case use (Dexterity + appropriate combat Ability) at difficulty 1.

Even though readying is automatic, it still factors into multiple action penalties if performed as part of a flurry. Therefore, a character who draws her sword to behead an opponent in one motion is at -3 to the attack roll.

Finally, a flurry that only involves a character drawing a weapon and using it for attacks uses the Speed of the weapon, even if the Speed is less than 5. This is an exception to the usual rules for determining flurry Speed.

**Rising from Prone (-1 DV):** If a character is knocked to the ground or otherwise loses her footing, she will certainly wish to get up as quickly as possible because she is at -1 external penalty to all non-reflexive physical actions as long as she remains supine. Like readying a weapon, rising is normally an automatic action that succeeds without a roll. Extreme conditions such as trying to stand in the middle of an earthquake or on the pitching deck of a tempest-tossed ship might require a (Dexterity + Athletics) roll, though. Even when rising is automatic, it still factors into multiple action penalties if characters wish to take additional actions as a flurry.

**Jumping (-1 DV):** The rules for jumping may be found on pages 127-128. In combat, a jump is a miscellaneous action with a -1 DV penalty that can be placed in a flurry as normal. However, a character can make only one jump in a flurry or on its own, so characters cannot take multiple actions to quickly leapfrog across a battlefield. Characters may move normally on a tick in which they jump, enabling such feats as running leaps or pouncing and tumbling into a short dash. Epic battles inherently involve acrobatics, so characters can take short jumps that do not vault obstacles within a standard move action, provided they do not use jumping to travel farther than a move allows. Characters need only declare an actual jump to pounce, cross chasms and the like.

### Move (0/None)

The character sprints up to (Dexterity) yards per tick over land. Wound penalties (see p. 150) subtract from this speed, as does the mobility penalty (see p. 374) of any armor worn. The value cannot drop below a speed of one yard per tick. Unlike most actions, move is reflexive and does not normally require a roll, unless the terrain is particularly treacherous or slick. The only restriction on movement is that a character can either move or dash on the same tick, but not both (as the dash maneuver replaces and supersedes lesser movement).

A character's base movement rate increases or decreases depending on any number of factors, including Charms and terrain. Characters who are swimming or climbing halve their base movement rate (rounded down) and usually require a successful reflexive (Dexterity + Athletics) roll to move freely without mishap. Those who are flying by means of some enchantment, natural capability or device will have their base movement rate for flight listed.

## Attacking

Much like combat as a whole, every attack involves a number of discrete steps that must be resolved in the proper order.

### Step One: Declaration of Attack

The attacker's player states that her character is using an available action to attack. At this time, the player also declares any Charms or other magic that will improve the attack. This includes most supplemental, extra action and simple Charms, as well as any reflexive Charm that directly benefits the attack. Charms that are exempt from this declaration explicitly state so in their description. If the attack bypasses dodges or parries, the declaration must include this information.

### Step Two: Declaration of Defense

Targets who are unaware of an attack cannot defend against it without the aid of magic. Similarly, a defender can always

### Order of Attack Events

**1) Declaration of Attack:** The attacker's player states that the character is attacking and what Charms (if any) he will activate to enhance the attack, excepting reroll effects. If the attack cannot be stopped by a particular mode of defense (dodge or parry), the attacker's player must include this information in the declaration.

**2) Defender Declares Response:** The defender's player decides how the character responds: A) Do nothing and accept the attack, generally resulting in severe injury, or B) Defend using best option of parry or dodge. The defender's player must declare the use of any defensive Charms not based on a reroll.

**3) Attack Roll:** The attacker's player rolls (Dexterity + the Ability that governs the method of attack used—Archery, Martial Arts, Melee or Thrown) at difficulty 1, subject to the usual order of modifiers (see table on p. 124).

**4) Attack Reroll:** Attackers with access to reroll effects or Charms such as Essence Resurgent may use them if the player does not like the attack roll results. No die may be rerolled multiple times, and the best result is final. Characters who have already used another Excellency Charm to augment their attack may not use Essence Resurgent. If a reroll and the original roll both result in failure, the attack misses.

**5) Subtract External Penalties/Apply Special Defenses:** Remove successes for any external penalties that apply to the attack roll, ending with the defender's DV. Roll the dice granted by stunts, Charms such as Essence Overwhelming and other transient dice bonuses, adding the successes to DV. Other defensive effects requiring a dice roll also occur during this step, except those involving a reroll. If no successes remain, the attack misses or the defender successfully deflects it.

**6) Defense Reroll:** Defenders with access to reroll Charms or like effects may use them if their DV is insufficient to completely stop the attack. In the case of Essence Resurgent, defenders can only use this Charm if they have not previously used another Excellency Charm to enhance DV against the attack.

**7) Calculate Raw Damage:** If the attack hits, it has a raw damage equal to its base damage (usually Strength + a fixed value for most weapons and unarmed attacks), plus a number of extra dice equal to the successes remaining after step 5. Effects modifying the raw damage of an attack apply accordingly.

**8) Apply Hardness and Soak, Roll Damage:** If the victim has a Hardness rating against the attack's damage type, compare the Hardness with the raw damage. If Hardness is equal or greater, the defense absorbs the attack without effect. Otherwise, the damage ignores the defender's Hardness. Next, remove the target's appropriate soak rating from the damage of the attack. If the post-soak damage is less than the attack's innate minimum damage (assume 1 unless otherwise listed) *or* the attacker's Essence, the raw damage has a final value equal to the greater of these two values. This cannot result in a greater raw damage than its original calculated value. Apply any effects that increase or decrease post-soak damage to the final value.

Roll dice equal to the final damage of the attack, applying successes as health levels of the appropriate type of damage to the defender. The Twilight Caste anima effect resolves during this step after damage is rolled but before it is applied.

**9) Counterattacks:** If the victim retaliates using a counterattack (most commonly obtained through use of Charms), apply steps 1-8 to that attack.

**10) Apply Results:** Any non-damage effects of the attack also occur at this stage, as does the damage and effects from any counterattack launched by the defender.

gamble on the opponent missing or not inflicting much damage (conserving defenses for more powerful adversaries or attacks). However, in most cases, defenders who perceive an incoming attack use the most effective means at their disposal to avoid injury. Unless she opts otherwise, the defender automatically falls back on whichever mode of defense has a better rating. In addition to declaring the type of defense, the defender's player must also declare the use of any defensive Charms not based on a reroll, unless the magic explicitly allows the defender to wait for the results of the attack roll before being activated.

**Dodge DV:** The first Defense Value is *Dodge DV*, which measures a character's capacity to get out of the way of incoming attacks. This trait equals the character's ([Dexterity + Dodge (+ Essence, if Essence is rated at 2+)] ÷ 2). Exalted and other divine beings round up, mortals and heroic mortals round down. For example, a mortal soldier with Dexterity 2, Dodge 3 and Essence 1 would have a Dodge DV of 2, while Anoria, the glorious Solar martial artist with Dexterity 4, Dodge 4 and Essence 5 would have a Dodge DV of 7.

**Parry DV:** The second DV is the *Parry DV*, which measures a character's ability to deflect incoming attacks by interposing a weapon or even a limb in the path of the attack. This value equals ([Dexterity + (Ability used to wield the currently equipped weapon with the highest Defense, almost invariably Martial Arts or Melee) + (the Defense of said weapon)] ÷2). Exalted and other divine beings round up, mortals and heroic mortals round down. For example, an Immaculate monk with Dexterity 3 and Martial Arts 4 finds himself accosted by brigands. He only has the natural weapons of his body to protect himself, of which his fist has the highest Defense (+2). His Parry DV is 5. Were he equipped with a seven-section staff (Defense +3) he would still have a DV of 5, because he rounded up for his fist. Characters cannot use a hand for parrying if they are holding a weapon in it, so anyone wielding an extremely slow and ungainly two-handed weapon such as a sledge (Defense -3) must accept the negative impact this weapon choice has on Parry DV.

**Inapplicable Defense:** Whenever a particular mode of defense is prohibited by an attack, this condition lowers the appropriate DV to 0. A character who chooses not to defend has both Dodge DV and Parry DV at 0. A magical attack that is explicitly unblockable drops Parry DV to 0, but not Dodge DV. Of particular note, even the Exalted cannot parry attacks that inflict lethal or aggravated damage and/or ranged attacks if they are not armed, unless they augment their block with a stunt or magic enabling such defense. Without such conditions, Parry DV drops to 0. Tougher creatures (especially those with natural full body armor) are exempt from this limitation. Keep in mind that bonuses and penalties apply to inapplicable DVs after the reduction to zero, so a character huddled behind a rock may still benefit from its cover, and so on.

**DV Bonuses:** Characters have a number of ways to improve DVs, all of which are cumulative. Carrying a shield (see p. 377) adds its appropriate Defense rating directly to both base ratings, as does the concealment afforded by cover (see table). Shields and cover are not cumulative with one another, however, only the greater bonus applies. Opponents who are mounted or otherwise have the advantage of height add a modifier to both DVs based on the slope or

lift against close-combat attacks (see table), unless their opponents are armed with weapons that have the reach tag. DV bonuses for characters mounted on an inclined surface stack with one another. Both height and cover counts as a form of external penalty. Dice awarded for stunts can temporarily inflate one of the two DVs against a specific attack, in which case the defender's player rolls the stunt dice separately and adds any successes to the character's DV. Stunts to aid defense occur immediately after the attack roll, but before determining whether the attack actually hit. Reflexive Charms may also increase or adjust DV. In particular, the three Excellencies (see pp. 183-185) have special effects when used to aid a defense. When Essence Overwhelming aids DV, the player rolls the dice granted by the Charm and adds successes to the DV like a stunt. Essence Triumphant adds its successes directly as points of DV. Essence Resurgent allows players to add half the Ability to the dice pool from which the DV was derived.

**DV Penalties:** Many factors can reduce a character's DVs, either both kinds or singly. Such penalties are cumulative with one another. The most common such penalty comes from taking actions, as noted previously. For instance, each attack the character makes reduces both DVs by one. This penalty disappears on the tick the character is next permitted to act. Wound penalties (see p. 150) also subtract directly from both DVs. If a character is attacked multiple times by the same opponent, each attack cumulatively imposes an additional -1 penalty to both DVs (called an *onslaught penalty*). Therefore, a sufficiently savage cascade of blows can batter through the best defenses. Onslaught penalties apply only when defending against the character that imposed them and only against the attacks of an individual flurry. If an attacker acts a second time before the defender's DV refreshes, the onslaught penalty is reset to 0 at the start of the second series of attacks.

Coordinated attacks are another matter entirely, as explained on page 144. Most armor impedes any sudden movement such as dodging, subtracting its mobility penalty (see p. 374) from a character's Dodge DV while worn. Terrain such as loose pebbles or marsh muck may likewise impede Dodge DV, generally between -1 for bad conditions and -3 for extreme environments. Conditions worse than a -3 simply make dodging inapplicable. Dodge also becomes inapplicable for characters who are unable or unwilling to give ground, such as those fighting in close-ranked formations or in a narrow crevasse. Characters who are unarmed may not use their Parry DV against attacks that inflict lethal or aggravated damage (see p. 149). Any such mundane inapplicability may be circumvented by a stunt or Charm. However, certain magical attacks directly specify that they cannot be blocked or dodged (and some horrific few exclude both modes of defense). If a description of a magical effect states that an attack cannot be dodged, it *cannot* be dodged, even with the aid of a stunt. The same goes for magically unblockable attacks.

**Negative DV:** In particularly unfortunate circumstances, it is possible for a character to have both DVs lowered so much that the highest value of the two is actually negative. Treat negative DVs as DV 0—the enemy may still miss if she rolls no successes on her attack. However, track the character's negative DV if there is any possibility that DV-enhancing effects might be applied, as the true DV is still negative.

**Automatic Defense:** Finally, a sufficiently high DV can impart a limited form of automatic success. If a character's DV is

### Shields and Cover DV Bonuses

| Type | Hand-to-Hand Cover | Ranged Cover |
|---|---|---|
| Buckler | +1 | None |
| Target Shield | +1 | +1 |
| Tower Shield | +1 | +2 |
| 25% Hard Cover (Shoulder and leg protected) | None | +1 |
| 50% Hard Cover (Half body protected) | +1 | +2 |
| 75% Hard Cover (All but shoulder, arm and face protected) | +1 | +3 |
| 90% Hard Cover (All but eyes protected) | +2 | +4 |

### Defense Value Modifiers

| Situation | Modifier |
|---|---|
| Taking Actions | -(Varies) |
| Wound Penalties | -(1–4) |
| Wearing Armor* | -(Varies)* |
| Onslaught Penalty | -1 per successful attack** |
| Unstable Terrain | -(1–3) |
| Shield | +(Defense) |
| Steps/Gentle Slope/Mounted | +1*** |
| Steep Slope/Riding in Howdah | +2*** |
| Too Steep to Climb Without Hands/Scaling Ladder | +3*** |

* Reduces only Dodge DV.

** Applies only against a single attacker, unless a group makes a coordinated attack.

*** Height modifier applies in close combat only and may be negated by attacks with long weapons. Apply as a DV penalty to characters with lower height in the designated situation.

higher than the Accuracy dice pool of an opponent's attack and the opponent is an extra (see p. 156), the attack automatically misses without a roll. This automatic miss still counts toward imposing the onslaught penalty, but this is almost a moot point since an opponent who lacks sufficient dice to pierce a character's defenses with his first attack will only degrade in effectiveness if he launches a flurry.

**Putting it All Together:** When confronted with an attack, establish the base values for Dodge DV and Parry DV. Most often, these will be positive numbers, but if the particular mode of defense is prohibited, then the value is 0. Next, add any applicable bonuses to each value, followed by applicable penalties. With all calculations complete, the highest of these two numbers is the DV used (unless the player wants to use the inferior defense for some reason). If positive, the DV will cancel attack successes.

## Step Three: Attack Roll

The attacker's player rolls (Dexterity + the Ability that governs the method of attack). This roll has a difficulty of 1 and is subject to the usual order of modifiers (see table on p. 124). Most weapons grant an Accuracy bonus or penalty to this roll, and many Exalted also fortify their attacks with stunts and/or Charms. Barring the use of Charms or other rare effects, characters may use only the following Abilities to attack others: Archery (wielding bows or other "point and shoot" weapons such as firewands), Martial Arts (unarmed attacks or those made wielding weapons specifically designed for use with a formal martial art style or wielding weapons that enhance natural attacks such as a cestus), Melee (wielding a close-combat weapon) or Thrown (hurling a missile at range). Each weapon specifies the Ability (or Abilities) that may be used to wield it.

**Botched Attacks:** Failing an attack roll indicates a miss. A botch is invariably much worse. At minimum, the attacker throws himself off balance, imposing an additional -2 DV penalty in addition to the normal DV penalty of the attack. If any bystanders stand in the general path of the attack, the Storyteller may also rule that the attack hits one of them instead of the intended target with a number of "successes" equal to the 1s rolled.

**Off Hand:** By default, characters have a primary hand and an off hand. Those wielding a weapon in their off hand lose one die from all attacks with that weapon. This does not apply to unarmed fighting maneuvers, but it may apply to non-combat activities requiring high manual dexterity (such as calligraphy), at Storyteller discretion.

## Step Four: Attack Reroll

This step only applies if the attacker has access to magic or other effects that permit the rerolling of dice (such as an appropriate Essence Resurgent Excellency). If so, and if the attacker's player is unsatisfied with the attack roll result (particularly in light of the target's DV), she may use these effects normally. Each die may be rerolled only once, with characters benefiting from the better of the two rolls. Characters who have already used another Excellency Charm to augment their attack may not use Essence Resurgent to do so. In the case of a complete reroll, all bonuses and penalties apply to each attempt. If a roll and reroll both end in failure, the attack misses.

## Step Five: Subtract External Penalties/ Apply Special Defenses

At this point in attack resolution, the attacker's player applies valid external penalties to the roll. **The target's DV is always the last of these.** If the defender is blocking or dodging, apply her highest DV as the last of these penalties. The defender's player may attempt to describe the defense in order to obtain a stunt bonus, generating a dice pool whose successes directly add to DV. Similarly, Charms such as Essence Overwhelming may provide dice to the same effect. Any other defensive effects that require a dice roll also occur during this step, except those involving a reroll. If the attacker has no successes remaining, the attack misses or the defender manages to deflect it, as appropriate.

**Range Penalties:** When making ranged attacks, characters may fire or throw a weapon out to its *Range* rating without penalty. They may fire out to twice this distance with a -1 external penalty, or between two and three times listed range at -2 successes. Accurate shooting beyond this range is impossible without the aid of magic.

## Step Six: Defense Reroll

Defenders with access to reroll Charms or other such effects may use them if their DV is insufficient to completely stop an attack. Defenders may not use Essence Resurgent if they have already used another Excellency Charm to improve DV against the attack. For Solars, this Charm adds a bonus to DV equal to one half the Ability rating in the pool, rounded down. Other reroll powers describe how they interface with DV, since DV is not rolled.

## Step Seven: Calculate Raw Damage

If the attack hits, the attacker's player must figure out how deadly it is. First, take the *base damage* of the weapon (usually Strength + some value, although some exotic weapons such as crossbows and firewands do not rely on physical might for power). Weapon tables listing base damage may be found beginning on page 366. Next add the number of successes from the attack roll. The sum of base damage and accuracy successes is called *raw damage*. Effects that modify the raw damage calculation of an attack apply as written. Finally, establish which of the three types of damage the attack inflicts (this will be specified by a single letter abbreviation listed with the base damage of the weapon). If the attacker has a Charm that explicitly allows him to wait until after the opponent's defense to activate it, the Charm must be declared and activated at this stage.

**Bashing:** Bashing damage is caused by bludgeoning or crushing attacks and other blunt trauma. The unarmed attacks of humans inflict bashing damage by default, although equipment or magic can modify this. Characters who are beaten below their Incapacitated health level with bashing damage (see p. 150) pass out. Bashing damage heals relatively quickly: one level per 12 hours of rest for mortals or one level per three hours of rest for Exalted and beings of similar resilience. Furthermore, even the comparatively frail bodies of mortals can take a degree of pummeling without suffering substantial damage. As such, all characters have a *natural soak* (innate ability to absorb damage without injury, see p. 101) equal to their Stamina unless otherwise noted. This said, bashing damage isn't always trivial.

A sufficiently forceful blunt impact can crush a skull like a melon, to say nothing of the mess left behind when a victim falls from great height onto a hard surface.

**Lethal:** This category of damage is exactly as its name suggests, injury intended to maim or kill. Piercing or cutting wounds cause most lethal damage, be it from the claws and teeth of beasts or the blades of men. Characters reduced below Incapacitated with lethal damage begin dying and soon expire unless some form of magical healing stabilizes them. Mortal bodies have no natural soak against lethal damage, so such characters must rely solely on armor for protection. Exalted, spirits and the like have a natural lethal soak equal to half their Stamina (rounded down). Levels of lethal damage take a variable amount of time to heal based upon their associated wound penalty: -0 (one day of rest or two days of normal activity for mortals; six hours of rest or 12 hours of activity for Exalted), -1 (one week of rest or two weeks of normal activity for mortals; two days of rest or four of normal activity for Exalted), -2 (two weeks of rest or four weeks of normal activity for mortals; four days of rest or eight of normal activity for Exalted), -4 and Incapacitated (one month of rest for mortals, cannot heal without rest; one week of rest or two weeks of normal activity for Exalted, though even an Exalt won't be able to do anything *but* rest if he's lying on death's door at Incapacitated).

**Aggravated:** Wounds classified as aggravated are innately supernatural, caused only by the most horrific magic or by exploiting the banes of a magical being (such as iron against the Fair Folk). A number of Solar Charms exist that allow them to inflict aggravated damage against creatures of darkness such as demons, ghosts and the walking dead. Abyssal Exalted have magic that does the same to mortals and denizens of the Wyld. Lesser types of Exalted have so little or sporadic access to aggravated damage that their effects cannot be classified along such broad lines. Unless otherwise stated, no being has a natural soak against aggravated wounds, and only the strongest healing magic can mend such grievous injuries swiftly. Fortunately, armor provides an aggravated soak equal to its lethal soak. This type of injury heals naturally at the same rate as lethal damage.

## Step Eight: Apply Hardness and Soak

Unless the victim of an attack is very fragile (such as mortal flesh against blades), the target will reduce the amount of raw damage using a derived trait called *soak*. Before worrying about soak, however, the attacker's player should compare the raw damage of the attack to any *Hardness* rating the victim possesses. Hardness is a rare form of protection granted by certain forms of heavy artifact armor and powerful protective magic, measured with a value for each damage type against which the Hardness applies. (For instance, the spell Invulnerable Skin of Bronze, found on p. 254, grants sorcerers a Hardness of 6L/12B, meaning it has a Hardness of 6 against lethal damage and a Hardness of 12 against bashing damage.) If a character has multiple effects granting Hardness, only the highest rating for each damage type applies. The function of Hardness is to exclude minor injuries altogether. If an attack does not have a raw damage greater than the victim's Hardness, the attack is utterly ineffective and automatically fails to inflict any damage. If the raw damage exceeds Hardness or if the target has no Hardness rating, proceed to the next step in damage resolution: soak.

The *soak* rating of a target is denoted in the same fashion, so 4B/2L means a soak rating of 4 against bashing damage and 2 against lethal. A character's total soak is calculated as the sum of *natural soak* (granted by Stamina, as well as innate adaptations of some mutants and nonhuman species and most soak-boosting Charms) and *armored soak* (granted by some form of armor, with a rating dependent on the protection worn; see pp. 374-376 for statistics of common armor types). Three differences separate the subcategories. First, armor has an aggravated soak equal to its lethal soak rating, while natural soak does not. Conversely, effects that bypass armor (in full or part) only pierce armored soak and do not reduce the protection afforded by natural soak in any way. The most common armor-bypassing effect is called *piercing damage*, a special tag used by some weapons (such as target arrows). Piercing weapons halve the armored soak of the target before applying it against the attack (rounded down). As a final soak consideration, many Charms (particularly those based on formal styles of martial arts) prohibit the use of armor, forcing characters who rely on such magic to find ways of enhancing their natural soak or avoiding injury through active modes of defense.

Provided that Hardness does not eliminate the possibility of injury, subtract the defender's soak from the raw damage. In most cases, this is the final damage of the attack. Certain large weapons have a *minimum damage* denoted in their statistics.

Characters wielding such attacks use this value or their permanent Essence rating (whichever is greater) as the minimum damage of each attack. Characters using smaller weapons that lack their own minimum damage rating simply use permanent Essence for minimum damage. If (raw damage – defender soak) is less than the minimum damage of the attack, the final damage equals minimum damage. In the unlikely event that final damage exceeds the original raw damage (such as a weak attack delivered by a high Essence being), the attack has a maximum damage of its raw damage. In short, Essence can overcome soak, but it cannot generate damage where it does not exist. Apply any effects that increase or reduce post-soak damage to the final value after factoring in minimum and maximum damage as necessary.

## Step Nine: Counterattacks

Some defenders have artifacts, Charms or other magic granting them access to *counterattacks*. A counterattack is resolved at this stage as if it were a normal attack launched by the victim against the aggressor. A counterattack hits simultaneously with the attack that triggered it and follows the usual steps 1-8 of the attack-resolution process. However, characters may not use one counterattack to retaliate against another counterattack.

## Step Ten: Roll Damage/Apply Results

The attacker's player rolls a number of dice equal to the remaining damage of the attack. Apply the number of successes as health levels of the appropriate type of damage against the victim. Unlike most rolls, this cannot be botched, nor do 10s count double. If the attack has other effects (as from a Charm or magical weapon), resolve these along with damage. If the target responded with a counterattack, apply the effects and damage of the counterattack at this time as well.

Players record injuries on the health section of the character sheet, marking a number of boxes equal to the levels of damage sustained. Each type of damage uses its own mark: slash (/) for bashing, X for lethal and asterisk (*) for aggravated. When marking a health track, start with the top health levels and fill down. Health levels are grouped in tiered blocks according to their associated wound penalty (an internal penalty). Characters who suffer injuries experience increasing dice penalties and other debilitation depending on what tier their lowest level of damage occupies. Greater damage always displaces lesser damage, pushing the minor injuries further down in the chart. When converting damage in a health box from a lesser type to a more serious type, it is not necessary to erase first, as a second slash (\) converts bashing to lethal and (|) makes lethal aggravated.

*Example: Despite his master horsemanship, Lorn couldn't escape the dinosaur bearing down on him. The claw strider catches the mount's flank in its jaws and jerks its head, sending the Exalted warrior tumbling from his saddle. He sustains two levels of bashing damage from the fall (see Figure 1), bringing him to a -1 wound penalty.*

*Distracted by its grisly feast of Lorn's mount, the dinosaur does not pay any attention as the warrior rises and draws his bow, firing an arrow point blank into the beast's eye. It bellows and falls thunderously from its mortal wound. Victorious but exhausted, Lorn limps across the plains toward a distant plume of smoke, hoping to find a settlement where he can rest and obtain a new mount.*

*Instead, Lorn discovers a burning village overrun with zombies commanded by a black-armored deathknight of the Mask of Winters. Although the zombies fear the righteous fury of the Solar and withdraw from his anima, the deathknight strikes the warrior with her moaning daiklave, using a horrific Charm that fills her blade with necrotic power. Thankfully, the Abyssal lands only a glancing blow, inflicting a single level of aggravated damage (see Figure 2). Much to the deathknight's surprise, Lorn answers by smashing her in the face with his fist and pummeling her savagely. He does not stop until one of her zombies sneaks up behind him and bites into his shoulder, inflicting three levels of lethal damage (see Figure 3). Realizing he's no weakling, the Abyssal takes this opportunity to slip away and mount her skeletal warhorse, ignoring the shouted threats by Lorn vowing to hunt her down. He has no trouble dispatching the handful of zombies, before sinking down against the blood-spattered wall of a barn to recover.*

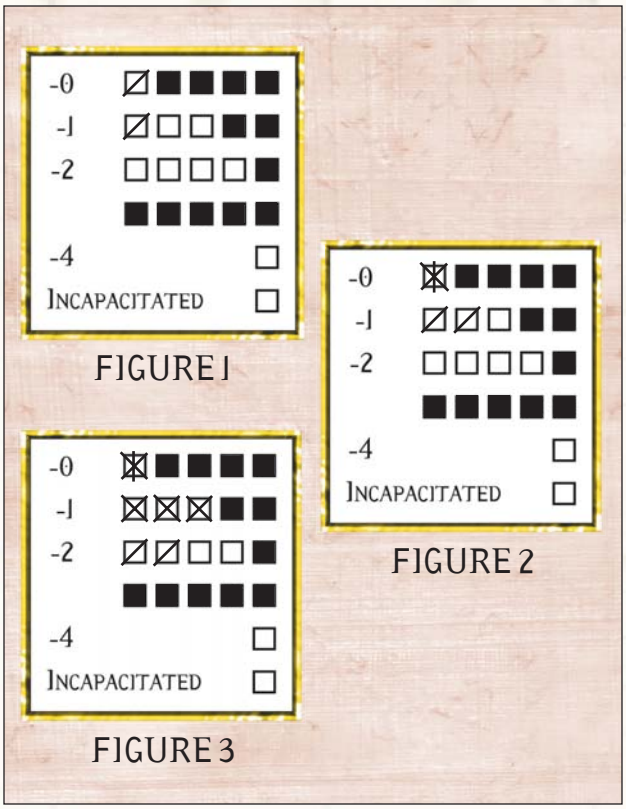


FIGURE 1



FIGURE 2



FIGURE 3

## Incapacitation and Death

When a character's Incapacitated level fills with bashing damage, she immediately passes out and remains unconscious until that level heals. In combat, she immediately enters the inactive state, repeating that "action" as long as the incapacitation persists. A character may cling to consciousness long enough to deliver a final retort to her enemies or exhortation to her allies before collapsing, if the Storyteller deems such would be dramatically appropriate.

If she suffers additional bashing damage while Incapacitated, her highest bashing level of injury converts into a lethal wound. This process continues until she has no more levels of bashing damage remaining. If the character suffers any lethal damage, this "pushes" the remaining levels of bashing down below Incapacitated, where they cycle back to convert the top remaining bashing injuries into lethal. The same applies to aggravated levels

sustained while bashing levels remain. Once a character fills his Incapacitated level with lethal or aggravated wounds, he hovers at the brink of death. He has a number of Dying levels below Incapacitated equal to his Stamina rating. Any additional bashing or lethal damage pushes him over that edge, spilling over into the Dying levels as lethal damage. Aggravated wounds push into Dying levels as they are. A mortally wounded character remains inactive with each combat action, but at each such interval, she also suffers an additional level of unsoakable lethal damage. When she has no more health levels remaining, she perishes. Major characters should not die without getting some chance for a parting soliloquy or a chance to see their lives flash by in a stirring montage, but they certainly cannot continue to fight or do anything more than dramatically expire.

With advanced medical tools (costing Resources 4), legendary skill and a good deal of luck, physicians can occasionally stabilize dying patients through emergency surgery. Doing so requires a (Wits + Medicine) roll at difficulty (5 + the current number of the patient's Dying levels filled with injury). On a success, the patient heals all Dying levels and hangs onto life at Incapacitated. On a failure, the patient immediately dies. Charms or other magic that directly restore health levels automatically stabilize a dying character without requiring a roll.

In **Exalted**, death is permanent. Resurrection is impossible, even to the miracles of Solar Circle sorcery and the Charms of the greatest gods. While the dark arts of necromancy may call a ghost from the Underworld and even bind that spirit to a corpse, the creature never partakes of life again. Only in the cleansing release of reincarnation and new birth may souls return to life.

## Injury Complications

As noted, the most basic consequence of injury is an agonizing continuum from discomfort to death. However, not all injuries are so simple. What follows are the additional effects wounds may impose:

**Bleeding:** Characters suffering from lethal or aggravated damage continue to deteriorate as a result of hemorrhaging until they stanch their wounds. Exalted and beings of similar resilience may draw their wounds closed with a successful reflexive (Stamina + Resistance) roll (difficulty 2) on the part of their players, and they may attempt this feat in combat on any tick in which they may act. Outside of combat, characters can try this every five seconds. Furthermore, bleeding stops as soon as anyone with Medicine 1+ takes an action to treat the wounds.

Mortals are not so lucky as the Chosen. Stanching a wound requires a successful (Wits + Medicine) roll at a difficulty equal to the number of lethal or aggravated health levels associated with that injury. This is a standard miscellaneous action in combat. For instance, a character who was stabbed twice in the belly for two and then three level health levels would need to succeed at two separate stanching attempts, one at difficulty 2 and one at 3, respectively. Stanching requires bandaging materials, but these materials can be improvised under duress from any torn strip of cloth. Any strenuous activity, including combat and anything requiring Athletics rolls, will reopen a mortal's stanched wounds, but the Exalted and other magical beings with an innate lethal soak are immune to the dangers of reopened wounds.

As long as a character suffers from bleeding wounds, she suffers one level of unsoakable lethal damage every increment of (Stamina) minutes. Mortals who do not receive prompt medical attention can and will bleed to death.

**Infection:** In addition to bleeding, any character who suffers lethal or aggravated damage runs the risk of those wounds festering with disease. Infection uses the same overall statistics as other ailments (see p. 350)—**Virulence:** 3 (normal battlefield conditions) or 4+ (tropical climate, dirty weapons, putrid undead claws, etc.), **Untreated Morbidity:** 1 (cumulatively increases by one per day after the first), **Treated Morbidity:** Special (As Untreated Morbidity, but stops increasing once successfully treated), **Difficulty to Treat:** (same as Treated Morbidity). As long as a wound receives swift treatment and remains bandaged until it heals, characters need check against the Virulence only once. Otherwise, new rolls must be made every time the character exposes the wound to possible contagion. If a wound is sterilized with alcohol within an hour after it is received, Virulence drops to 2. If it's cauterized within an hour, no Virulence check is required, but the character suffers one level of unsoakable bashing damage from the minor burn. Success avoids infection.

If the character fails the Virulence check, the daily roll to overcome the infection starts at difficulty 1 and increases by one each day. Once the victim's player botches or the difficulty exceeds the character's (Stamina + Resistance), she succumbs to fever and spends the next (Stamina) days painfully dying at a -4 internal penalty, unless she receives magical assistance. Treating an infected character requires a daily (Intelligence + Medicine) roll at a difficulty of the current Morbidity. Success keeps the Morbidity from rising any higher and negates the need for further checks as long as the healer continues to administer daily care. If treatment ceases, the infection rages out of control again, increasing in Morbidity as normal. A treatment regimen against infection generally requires drugs costing Resources 2 or a successful (Perception + Survival) roll at difficulty 3 to gather the required plants in climates that support a broad range of vegetation. Otherwise, treatment is impossible without magic. Once the victim successfully beats the Morbidity of an infection, it leaves her body completely. Note that wound penalties *do* subtract from Resistance rolls against infection, so severe wounds are more likely to become septic by dint of weakened constitution. While fighting an active infection, mortals suffer a -2 internal penalty to all non-reflexive actions as a result of fever and discomfort.

Exalted and other supernaturally hardy magical beings susceptible to disease subtract two from the Virulence of any infection. The Morbidity starts at 1 and does not increase, even without treatment. Once the character beats the Morbidity, she throws off the infection. Until then, she suffers the usual internal penalty for carrying an infection. Like most diseases, infections can only inconvenience the Chosen.

**Disabling:** Most injuries take the form of lacerations, contusions and broken bones, with the occasional burn thrown in for good measure. The normal system of recording injuries models such wounds easily. Yet particularly grievous injuries can pulp, mangle or outright amputate tissue in ways that don't allow for re-growth as health levels return. Within play, such crippling can happen as a result of several possible situations.

Mortals who suffer 4+ health levels of lethal or aggravated damage from a single injury suffer a disabling wound. This condition should be recorded on the character sheet by drawing a light circle around a number of health boxes equal to the number of damage levels sustained, starting with the topmost. The character heals normally, but the phantom injuries generate wound penalties and restricted movement as if he remained injured. Removing a crippling wound requires agonizing surgery involving an (Intelligence + Medicine) roll with a difficulty based on the number of health levels in the injury. This surgery also inflicts a number of unsoakable levels of lethal damage equal to the levels in the crippling wound, which run the usual risk of infection but heal normally. When these wounds heal, the handicap is gone. If a character suffers enough crippling health levels to take her to -4 or Incapacitated, the only way to get rid of the handicap is through major tissue removal and amputation appropriate to the location and nature of the original injury. The surgery to re-break and properly set crippling damage takes two hours per health level.

Characters armed with heavy crushing weapons or bladed melee weapons may elect to maim victims with a coup de grace. (Through the use of Charms or a vicious stunt, characters can maim their enemies with other weapons or even barehanded.) Making a coupe de grace imposes -1 external penalty to the attack roll for aiming carefully. If the blow successfully kills the target with the damage roll, the attacker's player may instead decide to inflict as many levels of lethal damage as desired by mangling/amputating a selected part of the victim's body. Alternatively, the character can decide to strike a killing blow after all. Maiming injuries bleed profusely according to normal rules. Striking additional maiming wounds against a freshly crippled victim without reducing her health below Incapacitated is possible, but blood loss will quickly finish her off if someone does not stanch her wounds. The Storyteller may also rule that any extra (see p. 156) who is reduced to Incapacitated by lethal damage is crippled in some spectacularly gruesome way, particularly if doing so illustrates the devastating combat prowess of the Exalted. Should a mortal survive maiming, time will not heal the lost body part.

Fortified by their Essence, the bodies of the Chosen never suffer disabling wounds from sustaining massive injuries. Attacks specifically intended to maim can do so, but Exalted will recover as soon as they heal their injuries. Even mangled limbs and pulped bones grow back straight without anything more than the faintest scarring. Only aggravated damage leaves lasting scars, though even these typically fade with time. Severing a body part is the only way to prevent Exalted from healing it back naturally.

This is considered to be a natural effect with the Crippling keyword. For information on treating injuries with the Crippling keyword caused by Charms, see page 152 of this chapter. For information on the Crippling keyword, see page 183.

**Sample Amputation Effects**

*Arm/Hand:* Obviously cannot use arm or hand for tasks; remaining hand (if any) becomes primary after one month of regular use. Victim suffers -2 internal penalty to Athletics checks from poor balance, which can be offset with weighted garments or some other clever means. Loss of both arms makes any task of manual dexterity impossible without a remarkable stunt. Loss of just one hand makes two-handed tasks impossible but imposes no Athletics penalty. Loss of both hands makes tasks of fine dexterity impossible without hooks or other prosthetics (and these at -1 die penalty).

*Disfigurement:* A brutal injury can leave a character either merely scarred or a ruined wretch that children run from in abject terror. Such maiming inflicts an Appearance penalty of -1 or greater, reducing the character's effective rating in the Attribute to a minimum of 0. If the wound is magically healed, the penalty goes away, and the character regains her former Appearance. Exalted heal away one dot of disfigurement penalty per day. If a character's actual Appearance is low, this is *not* disfigurement and cannot be magically healed away as a substitute for raising the Attribute with experience points.

*Eye:* If missing one eye, -2 internal penalty to Awareness rolls involving distance vision or peripheral vision on the maimed side, and -1 external penalty to ranged attacks. Loss of both eyes causes blindness, resulting in a -4 external penalty to all attacks and other tasks involving vision; attacks beyond 100 yards are impossible.

*Leg:* Can move at half speed with a crutch or peg leg; -3 internal penalty to footwork-based Athletics checks. If both legs are missing, automatic failure on all footwork-based Athletics rolls. Paraplegics cannot walk, but they may crawl at 1/10 speed by painfully dragging themselves across the ground.

**Knockdown:** If an attack inflicts more raw damage than a defender's (Stamina + Resistance), the force of impact hurls her to the ground unless her player makes a successful reflexive ([Dexterity or Stamina] + [Athletics or Resistance]) roll, difficulty 2. Rising from prone requires an action (see p. 144).

Deliberately tackling someone prompts an immediate knockdown check for both parties if the attack connects. Even if the target's player makes this roll, the character is stunned. Sweeping a target with a chain, kick, staff or any appropriate weapon reduces the Accuracy of the attack by -2, but if it hits (whether or not it inflicts damage), the victim must check for knockdown.

**Knockback:** As a more cinematic alternative to basic knockdown, a character may be hurled back one yard for every three dice of raw damage inflicted by the attack, skidding to a halt prone. If she strikes a particularly solid object, this arrests her flight painfully, though she crashes through any fragile objects. In no case does knockback cause extra damage, as it is purely intended to spice up a fight scene. Rising from prone requires an action.

**Stunned:** Characters who suffer a greater number of actual health levels of damage than their Stamina rating might find themselves shaken and disoriented from the trauma. Reflexively roll (Stamina + Resistance) at a difficulty of (damage – Stamina). Failure leaves the victim at -2 dice to all non-reflexive rolls until the tick when the attacker next acts.

## Inanimate Targets

Characters may choose to assault an inanimate object rather than other characters or creatures. Doing so uses slightly different rules. Most inanimate objects aren't noted for dodging or parrying, so unless some extraordinary exception exists, assume that they have no DV with which to defend themselves. Moreover, if an attack on an animate target actually hits, it does *not* have a minimum damage. This means that all objects effectively have a Hardness rating equal to their soak. However, the corollary to this added protection is that damage against objects is not rolled. Instead, every die that penetrates soak generates one success and inflicts one level of damage. Objects do have health levels, but they do not suffer any form of wound penalty (obviously). Instead, objects have two health values separated by a slash: Damaged/Destroyed. Damaged indicated the number of health levels necessary to functionally impair the object. For a statue, this might mean

| Sample Object | Soak (L/B) | Health Levels (Damaged/Destroyed) |
|---|---|---|
| House Door | 1/3 | 3/10 |
| Oak Door | 3/5 | 10/20 |
| Fortress Gate | 8/10 | 20/40 |
| Wood Wall | 3/5 | 8/12 |
| Brick Wall | 6/10 | 24/40 |
| Stone Wall | 12/18 | 40/80 |
| Wood Statue | 2/4 | 3/16 |
| Stone Statue | 4/8 | 4/28 |
| Iron Statue | 6/12 | 6/50 |

that limbs are severed rather than the stone being scratched on the surface. For a door or wall, a state of damaged means that a small hole exists—wide enough to attack through (though targets on the other side benefit from 75% cover). Breaking a door down completely or opening a section of wall wide enough for characters to pass requires the object to be destroyed.

Note that some powerful magical objects might deviate from these rules in a variety of ways. An enchanted stone wall of Shogunate Era design might require that damage be rolled against it rather than applying the value that beats its soak, while a First Age counterpart might require rolled damage and be completely immune to attacks that are not made using magical weapons or enhanced with Charms. Also note that it is possible to break objects outside of combat through sheer strength, but doing so takes time and is outside the scope of combat rules.

## Environment

Outside of gladiatorial arenas, most battles do not take place on an open, empty field or in a 10' x 10' featureless room. Terrain and unit placement has a substantial effect on combat's outcome, whether it's a personal brawl or a clash of armies. Moreover, many aspects of the environment are dynamic or timing related, such as surprise or being surrounded.

### Flight

Through Charms, sorcery or wondrous artifacts, some Exalted can take to the skies in the course of battle. Likewise, some creatures, such as mospids and hybrocs, naturally attack from the air, descending upon prey to rake it with their talons. Flying targets may be attacked normally with ranged weapons (provided they are within range, of course). However, ground-based opponents can attack them in close combat only on the actual tick in which they dive to attack someone on the ground. The actual target of a fly-by makes such attacks at no penalty, but any allies must be close enough to strike and do so at a -2 external penalty (or -1 if using spears or other long weapons). As a rule, defenders must assume a guard stance, waiting to abort that defensive posture with an attack as soon as the opportunity presents itself, giving fliers an enormous tactical advantage.

### Mounted Combat

Providing superior height, speed and the ability to trample infantry opponents, battle-worthy steeds offer considerable advantage to their masters. However, mounted characters must split their attention to keep the animals under control. While mounted, characters recalculate all attack pools and Defense Values such that they use the lower of the Ability in question or their Ride rating. For example, characters with Ride 3 and Melee 4 have an effective Melee of only 3 while mounted. Conversely, a master horseman with Melee 3 and Ride 5 uses her full Melee.

In addition, every mount has a control rating, as indicated:

| Control Rating | Examples |
|---|---|
| 0 | Automata, Artifact Vehicles, Undead |
| 1 | Simhata (ridden by Exalted), Marukani Finest |
| 2 | Trained Warhorse |
| 3 | Horse, Mule, Yeddim, other conventional mounts |
| 4 | Wild/Unbroken Horse |
| 5 | Simhata (ridden by un-Exalted), Domesticated Claw Strider, other predators |
| 6+ | Tyrant Lizard, other super-predators |

If a character's Ride matches or exceeds the control rating of a mount, it obeys her without any particular effort on her part. Otherwise, she cannot reliably command it. Instead, she must either devote full attention to riding her mount (represented by a Ride roll as a miscellaneous action) or flurry to take other actions following this roll. The difficulty is the control rating of the mount. If the Ride roll fails, the mount acts as it pleases, preventing any additional actions the character may have planned for a flurry. Herbivores generally panic and try to leave combat, but they do not try to buck their riders unless the control roll botches. Carnivores generally pick prey of their own choosing and lunge toward it or buck and attack their riders on a botch. Passengers on a mount do not need to make control rolls, but they suffer the usual cap of their Ride rating to use combat Abilities.

Mounts big enough to carry a howdah use slightly different rules. The driver must control the beast as normal, but other passengers may use combat Abilities without suffering a Ride cap. Instead, those with dots in Ride act without penalty, while those who lack Ride suffer a -1 external penalty. In the event that the mount panics, passengers can jump and roll to freedom with a successful reflexive (Dexterity + Dodge) roll or stay on the howdah despite the bucking with a successful reflexive (Wits + Ride) roll. Both rolls are made at a difficulty of the beast's control rating.

As noted previously, mounted opponents add one to their DV against close combat attacks, while those in a howdah add two (and may only be attacked using close combat weapons with the reach tag, such as spears). Characters attacking from a howdah may

use only those close-combat weapons that have reach to attack opponents on the ground. These bonuses also apply to the mount itself. Opponents on the ground subtract these values from their own DV versus close combat attacks from cavalry.

## Unstable Footing

Characters might find themselves in situations where they must struggle just to stand upright, let alone fight. Such situations are handled using the same general rules as for controlling a mount, except that characters use Athletics in place of Ride and the situation's instability rating replaces a mount's control rating. This means characters must have a sufficient Athletics rating to keep their balance, or else, they must combine an Athletics check into a flurry to do anything else. Failing the (Dexterity + Athletics) roll means the character struggles to avoid falling and cannot take any other actions she might have planned as part of a flurry. A botch (or a failure if the difficulty is twice the number of successes rolled) means the character falls prone (at best), although truly precarious situations (such as fighting on a narrow bridge over a chasm) may result in worse falls. Characters struck by an attack require a new Athletics check at the usual difficulty, but this roll is reflexive, so it uses the character's full dice pool. Guiding a mount over unstable terrain changes its control rating to the instability rating of the setting or (control rating + 1), whichever is greater, but the controlling Ability remains Ride rather than Athletics.

The instability rating of terrain depends on a range of cumulative factors: slickness (+1 for frost or puddles; up to +3 for oil-coated floors or smooth ice), narrowness (+1 for a parapet or bridge to +4 for a tightrope), wind/buffeting force (+1 for a gale through +3 for a hurricane), moving ground (+1 for a pitching deck of a ship in rough seas; up to +3 for a major earthquake) and any other pertinent modifiers the Storyteller assigns. For example, a fight on a thin, swaying, iced rope bridge in the middle of an arctic squall would be difficulty 7, throwing all but the most nimble combatants to their doom.

## Water or Muck

Characters standing in liquid shallower than ankle depth act without any penalty. Those in liquid up to knee depth or mud/slime up to mid-calf make appropriate Dexterity or movement based rolls at -1 external penalty and can walk or run at only half speed. This penalty increases to -2 for liquid up to waist height or mud up to the knees, and it drops Speed to 1/4 of normal. Characters who are swimming do not suffer these penalties, but they might treat the liquid as unstable terrain if they are trying to stay on the surface during especially choppy conditions (difficulty 1 for rough seas up to difficulty 5+ for staying afloat in a whirlpool or hurricane-tossed waves). In such conditions, Athletics caps combat Abilities, and characters must flurry to swim while doing anything else. Failure causes the character to flounder, forfeiting any actions she had planned as part of a flurry. A botch (or a failure if the difficulty is twice the number of successes rolled) means the character sinks and starts to drown as normal (see p. 130).

Characters swimming underwater must hold their breath unless they have gills or magic that allows for breathing underwater. However, they can simply move and act without flurrying to stay afloat (though flurrying may be necessary to fight strong currents). While underwater, characters suffer a -2 external penalty to appropriate Dexterity or movement-based rolls unless they are aquatic or amphibious by nature. Certain weapons such as bows and wide bludgeoning instruments do not work underwater because of resistance, as determined by the Storyteller.

## Multiple Opponents

In open terrain, a human-sized character can be attacked in close combat by only five human-sized opponents. Even if a larger group coordinates (see p. 144), they simply don't have the room to cluster any tighter. In cramped quarters such as a hallway, stairwell or doorway, the maximum number of opponents that may engage a character in close combat drops to three (or even less at Storyteller discretion). This number increases proportionally for smaller attackers, so characters run a real risk of being torn apart by a mob of frenzied hatra or a school of razor fish. Conversely, large opponents such as buck ogres or tyrant lizards can flank only one to each side at most, even in the most open terrain. Anyone who is pressed inside a maximum permitted cluster of combatants has no room to maneuver and cannot choose to move or dash away using an action. Furthermore, such a character also suffers a -2 Dodge DV penalty unless she uses a stunt or magic to somehow evade without giving ground. Worst of all, if she cannot maneuver (either from being ganged up on by a maximum cluster of opponents or because of the terrain), one of her opponents gains the benefits of an unexpected attack. The player of the character trapped in a group chooses which opponent she exposes her back to. No restrictions limit the number of opponents that may attack a character with ranged attacks, making a concentrated archer volley the best means of ganging up on a single adversary.

## Unexpected Attacks

Characters might not always perceive every attack made against them, whether as a result of ambush or a treacherous knife in the back. Unless a character has a magical means of detecting unexpected attacks (such as Surprise Anticipation Method, on p. 226) or a magical defense that guards against unperceived attacks (as most defensive Charms do), the attack is unblockable and undodgeable. That is, the character has a Dodge and Parry DV of 0 automatically, but matters such as cover can improve the value.

In the case of ambush or an opening attack by an invisible opponent, roll the attacker's (Dexterity + Stealth) against the victim's (Wits + Awareness). If the victim is distracted by conversation or focused on some other activity rather than casually looking around (or if the attacker is completely outside the field of her senses, as by being directly behind), the victim suffers a -2 internal penalty to this roll. Conversely, add one die if she is actively wary and suspects danger.

Setting up an ambush from plain view is also possible (such as in the case of an assassin who wishes to throw a knife at someone during a peaceful banquet without telegraphing her aggressive intentions in advance), but doing so adds two to the difficulty of the Stealth roll and requires that the scene is not currently in combat. Make this roll immediately before rolling (Wits + Awareness) as part of a Join Battle action, as noted on page 141. If the defender wins, she notices the attack in time to respond to it normally with a block or dodge. Her DV still drops normally if faced with an invisible opponent, but she *can* defend, which beats the alternative. If the attacker wins, the defender suffers from an unexpected attack and must rely on passive defenses or magical defenses that work against surprise.

Players of Exalted characters should keep in mind that Melee Charms require that an Exalt be armed with a ready weapon to use them. As such, characters whose magical defenses focus on evasion will have an advantage against ambush unless the parry expert expects trouble enough to unsheathe her blade.

**Reestablishing Surprise:** Unexpected attacks normally open hostilities but are not often a factor once fighting is underway. Once a traitor stabs his master in the back or an assassin shoots a blowdart from his concealed perch, everyone present reacts by initiating a Join Battle action. Regaining the considerable advantage of surprise is not easy. The character must try to hide while alert opponents do everything in their power to track his movements. Even invisibility does not guarantee a new surprise attack, although it certainly helps.

Whenever a character wishes to hide, doing so is a miscellaneous action that may be part of a flurry as normal. Roll the attacker's (Dexterity + Stealth), and make independent reflexive opposed rolls of (Wits + Awareness + 2) for all witnesses. If the hiding character is invisible or similarly obscured from senses, add two bonus successes to the Stealth roll. Using a distraction, movement, or some aspect of the environment to aid in hiding is a stunt, adding bonus dice as normal. If the environment affords no hiding spots and the character cannot hide or cloak himself magically, he cannot attempt concealment. Any witness who loses the contested roll loses track of the character entirely and cannot continue to attack or interact with him until he reveals himself—or until someone else who still sees him points or calls out the general location or direction. The hidden attacker may launch new surprise attacks against anyone who doesn't know his present location, granting the full benefits of surprise.

Once the character launches a new surprise attack, he gives away his location to everyone until he can hide again. Until then, any character can take a miscellaneous action to try to find the character (potentially as part of a flurry), rolling a (Perception + Awareness) check against a difficulty of the successes on the roll to hide. Those who find him can immediately shout out to others (subtract two successes from the Stealth roll for alerted searchers) or keep the knowledge to themselves.

## Extras

As a cinematic high-action game, **Exalted** assumes that protagonists and major supporting characters will scythe through legions of minions and flunkies with comparative ease. Within the combat rules, the concept of *extras* reinforces this idea. Simply put, an extra is a nameless, faceless adversary of no particular consequence, dangerous only in mass numbers. From a narrative sense, extras serve several functions. First, they provide animate scenery upon which protagonists can show off their phenomenal skill and powers. On the reverse side, they slow down the Chosen and/or force them to waste precious Essence before they can face the "real" enemies. The following rules define the extra template:

**Reduced Health:** Extras have only three health levels of damage. They can be Unhurt, -1, -3, Incapacitated or Dead, with their -3 level treated as -4 for the purpose of impaired movement. Extras usually die as soon as lethal damage reduces them below Incapacitated rather than spending a period of time dying. However, the Storyteller may relax this rule for dramatic purposes so a mortally wounded soldier can deliver a final report or an enemy can gloat how his master will destroy the heroes, et cetera. If a creature already has three or fewer health levels before being classified as an extra, use those instead.

**Automatic Damage:** Damage is not rolled against extras. Instead, divide the final raw damage after soak by three, rounded up. Apply the result as levels of the appropriate damage type. This does mean that any attack that hits an extra will inflict at least one level of damage.

**Not Heroic:** Extras do not count 10s as two successes, nor are they normally capable of stunts. If a scene requires a measure of drama that qualifies as a stunt, the Storyteller may relax this limitation on a rare case-by-case situation. Extras do not spend Willpower for bonus successes or to channel Virtues except in defense of their Motivation.

**Profile Statistics:** Most extra profiles have full statistics, if only because they may serve another role in the story. However, every member of that profile uses the same statistics, allowing the Storyteller to keep notes for "Generic Zombie" or "Varangian Militia" or "Veteran Mercenary" as needed for encounters. Sample profiles for a variety of basic character types may be found in Chapter Seven.

## Morale

As any good commander knows, psychological warfare plays a significant role in determining the outcome of a battle. When hostilities first begin, players of characters who perceive their enemies to be a real threat need to make Valor checks for them unless their Valor exceeds the difficulty of the roll. If a character perceives that the opposition is more dangerous than he originally thought, a new roll must be made. If the situation improves, players make new checks and use their results if they are better than what the last check resulted in. Note that the difficulty of a morale check is based on perception of threat rather than actual threat. Brigands assaulting an unknown Solar Exalt might initially believe that their numbers will prevail. Only after the Chosen reveals his prowess will they reconsider their odds.

If they are confronted with an unknown but obviously supernatural opponent, mortals will normally assume the being is more dangerous than she actually is. To have a character delib-

| Difficulty | Opposition/Example* |
|---|---|
| 1 | Adversary of roughly equal perceived strength (or an equivalently threatening group of lesser opponents)/other militia |
| 2 | Enemy of slightly superior combat strength (or equivalently dangerous band of weaker enemies)/veteran soldiers, barbarian warriors |
| 3 | Blatantly superior enemy or daunting numbers of weaker opponents/elite soldiers, undead, hobgoblins, Wyld mutants |
| 4 | Overwhelming superior opponent or equivalent/Dragon-Blooded, lesser demons and gods, Fair Folk cataphractoi |
| 5 | Enemy seems invincible; fighting is suicide/Celestial Exalted, greater spirits |

* Examples assume that an average mortal soldier faces the listed opponent.

erately appear to be more dangerous than she actually is requires a ([Charisma or Manipulation] + Presence) roll, with the number of successes over the witnesses' Valor determining the maximum effective threat level of the bluff. Of course, as soon as the character does not evince the prowess she alleges, a new check will allow opponents to recover from their initial fear. Success on a morale check means the character acts without penalty. Failing a morale check results in a -2 internal penalty from fear. A botch means the character flees the scene or may drop weapons and cower as appropriate. When applying morale to groups of extras, the Storyteller should probably divide the group into smaller pieces and roll for each piece to cut down on the number of rolls. This does not apply to actual military units (see p. 159). If a character's Valor rating is greater than the difficulty of a Morale check, she automatically succeeds without a roll.

Non-extras may elect to substitute another Virtue for Valor when making morale checks, provided the Virtue is appropriate to the situation. For instance, a mother protecting her child may use Compassion, while an Immaculate monk might use Conviction to challenge a demon. Given their status as the champions of the highest gods, the Exalted are exempt from Morale checks. Only magic can rout the Chosen.

## Special Attacks

Combatants attack to wound and kill by default, but sometimes, they wish to use more specialized techniques.

### Grappling

Seizing an opponent in a clinch or pinning him down requires a grapple attack using ([Strength or Dexterity] + Martial Arts). The maneuver has Speed 6, Accuracy +0 and Rate 1. This attack can be dodged or parried normally, and it inflicts no damage if it hits. Clinching can be part of a flurry, and with a stunt or magic, it is possible to try holding two or more opponents at once by repeatedly flurrying with every new clinch roll (see p. 370). If the attack does not hit, the attacker's ineffectual pawing accomplishes nothing. If the attacker hits, he seizes the opponent in a clinch and controls it. The victim's action shifts immediately to inactive. The aggressor may do any of the following tasks with that control:

**Break Hold:** This can involve throwing the opponent a number of yards back equal to the aggressor's Strength (possibly resulting in a knockback dramatic effect as appropriate and definitely prompting an immediate knockdown check to avoid going prone). Alternatively, the aggressor can hurl the opponent to the ground, leaving him automatically prone. Finally, the aggressor can simply release the opponent without further violence.

**Crush:** The aggressor inflicts bashing damage equal to Strength plus the remaining successes on the clinch roll. This is a piercing attack.

**Hold:** The aggressor pins the opponent motionless without inflicting injury.

For as long as a character maintains a clinch, he can do nothing else without a flurry, and he must use every subsequent action to renew the clinch. Without a stunt or magic, he cannot block or dodge. The held opponent cannot block or dodge either, as per the inactive action, but she *may* use reflexive Charms or actions, as well as other Charms designed to function while held in a clinch. When renewing a clinch, reroll the ([Strength or

Dexterity] + Martial Arts) of the aggressor, reflexively resisted by the victim's same pool. The winner controls the clinch and may perform any of the clinch tasks listed, adding net successes to damage if electing to crush. If a character held in a clinch turns the tables on his opponent, then his action immediately switches to attacking and the former aggressor switches to inactive, resetting the appropriate speed of each from that tick.

When multiple opponents "dogpile" onto a single victim, handle this action as limited teamwork (see p. 125) with each helper adding a bonus die to the lead aggressor's clinch roll. Because a clinched victim is helpless to resist, anyone wishing to join in the clinch needs only a single success on the initial attack roll. If successful, she adds her bonus die to the lead character's next clinch roll for as long as she holds on. She does not make a clinch roll, but simply attacks without a roll to contribute the bonus or lets go at any time. Should a victim break free, he breaks free of everyone holding him except the leader, whom he can damage, throw or hold normally.

### Called Shots

Whenever a character directs an attack more precisely than normal, the attack uses the following rules. Each variation of these techniques imposes an external penalty as noted in parenthesis and must be declared along with an attack. As external penalties, these are applied during step 5 of the order of attack events (see p. 145).

**Pulling Blows (-1):** By striking with the flat of the blade or applying less force than usual, a close combat attack that normally inflicts lethal or aggravated damage can be made to inflict bashing damage instead. With the aid of a stunt or magic, thrown weapons can also be pulled (like hurling a dagger so the pommel strikes). Arrows cannot be pulled, though most bows can fire blunt-tipped fowling arrows that inflict bashing damage. Directing a coup de grace to inflict maiming is also a form of pulling a blow (see p. 152).

**Showing Off (-1 to -4):** Characters may attack small targets for dramatic purposes, like cleaving a rope with an arrow or cutting fruit in half with a sword as it falls. In a similar vein, characters may decide to graze opponents in a way that marks them without inflicting sufficient injury to qualify for levels of damage. If a marking attack successfully hits and could inflict minimum damage or better (i.e., penetrates Hardness and similar defenses), the attack leaves the desired mark. Marking someone's clothing does not even require that the attack overcome Hardness. The Storyteller should assign the penalty for showing off based on the complexity of the task.

**Disarming (-2 or -4):** Knocking a weapon out of someone's hand has a -2 external penalty with a close combat attack or -4 using ranged. If the attack hits, it inflicts no damage, but the victim's player must reflexively roll (Wits + the appropriate wielding Ability) against a difficulty of the net successes on the attack roll. For every success by which the victim fails to meet the difficulty, her weapon flies one foot away from her grasp. Retrieving a dropped weapon is a difficulty 1 (Dexterity + wielding Ability) roll and is only possible if a character can feasibly do so. Duels fought over looming chasms or aboard a ship might not afford such a luxury. Note that characters cannot be disarmed of their natural weapons (fists, feet, claws, fangs, etc.), nor can they have weapons taken from them that are actually strapped to the body such as a cestus or tiger claws. If players regularly take advantage of disarming as a prelude to executing a helpless victim (instead of using the maneuver for dramatic purposes), the Storyteller should feel free to raise the penalty imposed by the technique. With a flurry, it is possible for an attacker to disarm and then use a retrieval action to take the weapon for himself, provided he has hands free to take it. Doing so almost always involves a stunt.

**Fierce Blows (-1):** A character may strike in fury, sacrificing accuracy for a slight increase in damage (+2L/A or +3B, depending on the type of damage the attack inflicts).

### Adjusting Tone

The various penalties and bonuses associated with conditions ranging from terrain to cover to called shots strike a delicate balance between epic high action and gritty realism. In almost every case, the Exalted hold innumerable advantages over mere mortals without making them so invincible that they become boring to play. However, some Storytellers might wish to dispense with the complexity of stacked modifiers in favor of a more freeform high-action approach, toning "up" the cinematic quality of battle. Such games can gloss over details such as height bonuses and the external penalty for pulling a blow, allowing the flexibility of stunts to govern the degree to which characters use their environment to their advantage. Conversely, games focused on mortal protagonists might need to tone down some of the more extreme rules for the sake of believability, dispensing with the concept of extras and halving the lifting/breaking feats possible with a particular (Strength + Athletics) score. Storytellers should always inform their players what rules they plan to ignore or change, so that everyone knows exactly what to expect before starting a series.

## Mass Combat

Although it is theoretically possible to run a combat with dozens or even hundreds of active participants, such battles last interminably and quickly stop being fun. As a result, **Exalted** uses the following rules to abstract mass combat into the existing system by making battle a clash of *units* rather than individual characters. Units do not fight in the standard one-tick increments of individual battle. Instead, they track time with *long ticks* that last approximately one minute each. Storytellers should keep in mind that these rules aren't appropriate to every engagement, particularly if the clash of armies only serves as a dramatic backdrop to smaller-scale personal combat. Once protagonists become involved in the direction of mass combat or the Storyteller wishes to leave a battle's outcome to dice rolls and strategy rather than a plot device, use these rules. Moreover, mass combat in **Exalted** assumes that unit leaders fight at the vanguard, leading from the front rather than the safety of the rear. Those who wish to direct a battle from the rear are not unit leaders. Instead, they take the role of generals, using relays and standard bearers to communicate orders to the unit leaders under their command. Therefore, a distant general can direct an entire force but cannot personally rally troops to victory through her own prowess.

## Units

Every unit on a battlefield falls into one of two broad categories. First, there are *solo units*, who are individual characters that are not part of any group. However, most units are *complementary units*, made up of a commander and all those who directly follow her orders. Statistically, a complementary unit is its commander, with trait bonuses awarded according to the numbers, equipment and training of her troops. The special traits of complementary units include:

**Magnitude:** The size of a unit.

**Drill:** The trained discipline of a unit.

**Endurance:** The physical reserves of a unit's members. *Solo units also have this trait.*

**Might:** The overall mystical power of a unit, factoring in magical equipment.

**Close Combat/Ranged Attack Rating:** The skill of the unit members at attacking.

**Close Combat/Ranged Attack Damage:** The lethality of unit members when attacking.

**Armor:** The average protection provided by unit members' armor.

**Morale:** The overall bravery of a unit.

**Special Characters:** A non-numerical listing of important characters within a unit's ranks.

**Formation:** A non-numerical trait that describes a unit's current tactical arrangement.

### Magnitude

The Magnitude of a unit is a direct assessment of the number of characters that are part of it. High Magnitude confers the advantages one would expect; such units inflict more damage and can take more damage (as expressed through casualties). However, large units have trouble executing orders with any speed. Consequently, most professional militaries strike a balance, breaking their forces into manageable unit sizes, each led by a different commander. The following table assumes that a given unit is made entirely of extras (apart from the commander). If this is not the case, then the appropriate number of health levels indicates how many standard combatants a character type qualifies for. For example, heroic mortals have seven health levels instead of three. This means that every heroic mortal is worth a little more than two unit members.

| Magnitude | Members | Equivalent |
|---|---|---|
| 0 | 1 | Solo |
| 1 | 2-10 | Fang |
| 2 | 11-75 | Scale(s) |
| 3 | 76-150 | Talon |
| 4 | 151-300 | Wing |
| 5 | 301-650 | Dragon |
| 6 | 651-1,250 | — |
| 7 | 1,251-2,500 | — |
| 8 | 2,501-5,000 | Legion |
| 9 | 5,001-10,000 | First Age Legion |

## Magnitude and Choice

Normally, Magnitude of units fielded in the Second Age is determined by available officers, concerns of command logistics and mission. Relays and unit leaders require training and drill that few armies in the world of **Exalted** can afford in abundance. In addition, managing combat assets is challenging for a general once there are too many units in the field.

It would be more efficient to field much smaller units, but the communication and combat-space imaging resources of the Second Age don't permit effective management of armies that consist of dozens of Magnitude 2 units. The upshot is that few armies will take the field divided into more than 10 units, and very few take the field divided into more than six subunits. Troops are generally divided into units equipped with one type of armor and weapon. Large groups of troops forming the main body of an army will generally be broken into two to four subunits, while support units will be grouped in one or two units per troop type.

Therefore, a well-officered infantry army might include four infantry units, two units of light cavalry, two units of archers and a unit of engineers, for a total of nine units. If the troops were poorer quality, there would probably be three infantry units, one cavalry unit, one unit of missile troops and one unit of engineers. Note that the specialty of the army, infantry, maintains a relatively large number of subunits while the specialist troops are handled less and less adroitly. This is the general pattern of Second Age armies, to concentrate scarce leadership resources in the primary combat arm. (Armies with developed specialist arms are signs of a rich or culturally militarized state.)

Picked units under the command of the heroes are a staple of the genre, and the Storyteller shouldn't restrict them. At the same time, though, armies without powerful First Age battlefield-management technologies are going to divide into a handful of units.

Since heroes have a substantial advantage, Magnitude rounds up to a factor of 3. Exalted and other magical beings might qualify for substantially higher factors. Each Magnitude value over 9 has a maximum member size double to the previous rating.

## Drill

While sheer numbers can win a battle, disciplined training is what separates an angry mob or a howling barbarian horde from professional soldiers. The Drill trait represents the degree to which rigid military discipline, marching and formation practice and individual combativeness have been instilled into the unit. Drill provides flexibility, allowing units to rapidly change formation as needed to respond to threats. It also enhances the survivability of troops, keeping them together and their formation dressed even in the press of battle.

Drill is not a function of average personal prowess, but rather, a cooperative spirit ingrained through intense training. As such, the trait cannot be precisely calculated based on the average statistics of unit members. To determine this value, consult the following table for reference examples.

| Drill | Description | Example |
|---|---|---|
| 0 | Undrilled | Solo units; mobs, throngs, rabbles, warbands, thugs in uniform |
| 1 | Barely Disciplined | Poor village militia, gendarmes, low quality troops |
| 2 | Disciplined | Good militia, mediocre troops, Imperial peltasts, Lintha pirates |
| 3 | Crisp | Excellent militia, good troops, Imperial medium foot, Seventh Legion reservists |
| 4 | Crack | Excellent troops, Imperial heavy foot, Seventh Legion line troops, Immaculate monks, Mountain Folk warriors |
| 5 | Flawless | Superb troops, the Legion of Silence, tiger warriors, Seventh Legion veterans, brass legionnaires, brides of Ahlat, veteran Mountain Folk warriors |

## Endurance

Although units composed of automata or the walking dead might be functionally tireless, mortals cannot march and fight indefinitely. Therefore, every complementary unit has an Endurance rating equal to its (Drill + Stamina). For solo units, Endurance equals (Stamina + Resistance). This trait decreases precipitously over the course of a battle. If Endurance drops to 0, the unit is at -2 on all actions from fatigue effects.

If unit members have not rested for several hours before a battle, subtract the fatigue value of the troops' armor from their starting Endurance.

## Might

Instead of figuring out every power that supernatural forces bring to the battlefield and trying to figure out the complex interactions thereof, **Exalted** mass combat abstracts such capability into a single rating. To figure out a unit's Might, use the following table, adding the best equipment bonus (if any) that applies. Keep in mind that the following numbers assume that the overwhelming majority of unit members possess the listed powers and/or equipment. A handful of Exalted scattered among a throng of their followers do not impart Might to the whole. Instead, such individuals qualify as special characters (see pp. 161-162). Few units outside of the Army of Heaven qualify for Might greater than 3 in the Second Age.

## Close Combat/Ranged Attack Rating

Every complementary unit has a *Close Combat* and *Ranged Attack* Rating, representing the overall skill of its members. To derive the values, take the average (Dexterity + appropriate combat Ability) for all unit members and halve this pool, rounded down. A unit has access to its Close Combat Rating only when

| Might | Unit Composition |
|---|---|
| 0 | No supernatural abilities; strictly mortal troops. |
| 1 | God-Blooded, trained thaumaturges, young Dragon Kings, average ghosts, Mountain Folk warriors. |
| 2 | Younger Terrestrial Exalted, neomah and other non-combative First Circle demons, weak gods and elementals, ghost warriors, young faerie nobles, elite Mountain Folk warriors. |
| 3 | Older Terrestrials or younger Terrestrials with numerous Charms for enhancing one another, Immaculate monks, young Celestial Exalted, erymanthoi and combative First Circle demons, lesser combative deities such as lion dogs and scarab guardians, veteran nemissaries or war ghosts, experienced faerie nobles |
| 4 | Experienced Celestial Exalted or very old Terrestrial Exalted, Immaculate masters, Second Circle demons, Dragon King elders, warlike divinities such as celestial lions. |
| 5 | Lesser elemental dragons, elder Celestial Exalted (Essence 6+). |
| **Bonuses** | **Equipment** |
| +1 | Thaumaturgical talismans and alchemical potions. |
| +2 | Basic magical armor and weapons, powerful thaumaturgical artifacts such as gunzosha armor. |
| +3 | Essence-discharge weapons, magical power armor such as warstriders or dragon armor. |
| +4 | Powerful First Age artifacts or divine weapons. |

equipped with appropriate weaponry. Even though a regiment of archers could theoretically punch and kick their opponents in close combat, the fact that they are carrying bows means that they can use only their ranged attack. If every member of a unit carries the same weapon (which is generally the case), the Accuracy of that weapon factors into the attack pools before halving them. Therefore, a squad of elite soldiers (Dexterity 3, Melee 4) equipped with chopping swords (Accuracy +1) would have a Close Combat Rating of 4.

### Close Combat/Ranged Attack Damage

These traits measure the amount of injury that units can inflict with their close combat and ranged attacks, respectively. To derive these values, average the damage of the primary weapons carried by the unit members. (This is just the weapon damage if they all have the same weapon.) Then, divide (Strength + weapon damage) by three, rounded up. Do not factor in the effects of any Charms or non-constant bonuses/supernatural effects. For example, the aforementioned elite infantry (Strength 3) with their chopping swords (+5L) have Close Combat Damage 3.

### Armor

This trait measures the resilience of armor worn by unit members. Divide the full lethal soak of the troops by three, rounded up. The mobility penalty for a unit equals the average mobility penalty of its members, rather than that of its commander. Hardness ratings for a unit equal the average Hardness and require that all members have at least that rating or better as a result of innate powers, magic or equipment.

### You Wear Them

The metaphor of the rules is that the military apparatus of mass combat is merely an enhancement to the commander. Troops comprise a bonus for their leader, adding to his traits. In addition, troops marching in formation possess the ability to force their context on individuals they engage. Characters who come into contact with aggressive units of troops will be forced to fight them as solo stacks in mass combat, not as heroes facing a large number of individuals in normal combat. This is a part of the nature of Creation, and Storytellers shouldn't let characters fight individual members of units once the unit is gathered together in the field.

It's worth noting that units in mass combat are rarely destroyed through sheer damage unless they are set upon by a truly ferocious supernatural power. More often, units are rendered ineffective by exhaustion and gradual loss of Magnitude by failed morale checks, until their commanders stand alone and unaccompanied on the battlefield.

### Morale

As every wise commander soon learns, high morale can lead weaker units to victory over larger and better-equipped units. Conversely, low morale saps the effectiveness of the best units. The Morale of a unit equals the lower of either its members' average Valor or the Valor rating of its commander. In the case of mounted units, Morale uses the average Valor of the steeds if that is less than the soldiers' normal Morale. Units comprised chiefly of walking dead and automata have perfect Morale even if their commander does not, indicating they automatically succeed on any Morale check (and therefore do not bother making them). Assorted battle magic can temporarily confer perfect Morale or an equivalent bonus on other units.

### Special Characters

In the most basic unit formations, the commander is the only person of importance and guides his followers through heroic example and prowess. In practice, however, such a simplistic model carries numerous weaknesses. First, a warband led by a champion risks falling apart entirely if that champion falls in battle. Therefore, it is advisable to have lesser officers on hand who can assume command if the worst comes to pass. Second, commanders cannot efficiently manage large units on their own, so they require aides to repeat and carry orders through the unit. Finally, a commander/followers model fails to take advantage of other distinguished combatants within the horde who can contribute unique skills or powers to the success of a unit.

A complementary unit may have a maximum number of special characters equal to (Magnitude x 2). These can be freely mixed and matched from the three options that follow, and unit commanders do *not* count against this limitation. However, unless they are directly targeted (see pp. 166-167), all special characters in a unit always survive until the unit loses its last dot of Magnitude, when they sacrifice their lives at the last to protect their commander.

At the end of a battle, or whenever a unit regains points of Magnitude during a battle, all special characters in excess of the unit's normal Magnitude limit must leave the unit.

**Hero:** These characters are subofficers who are capable of assuming command if their unit commander dies. Furthermore, heroes may attack other units in close combat as if they were solo units, effectively giving their unit additional (but weaker) attacks. Finally, heroes can break away entirely and take part of a unit with them, transforming the breakaway group into a new unit under their own command. A hero can lend her Close Combat Rating to her unit, using her trait rather than the unit leader's, but this trait is limited as normal by the commander's War.

**Sorcerer:** These characters might be actual sorcerers, skilled archers or neutral observers embedded deeply in the ranks for their own protection, but First Age tactical manuals such as *The Thousand Correct Actions of the Upright Soldier* use the designation "sorcerer" for all such individuals. Sorcerers can lead the unit in missile fire, lending their rating in the place of the unit's. This is limited by the commander's War rating, as normal. In addition, sorcerers have the capability to make ranged attacks independently of their unit, but they cannot assume command or lead troops to break away into new units as heroes can.

**Relay:** Possibly the most important special characters to organized military units, relays are the assorted drummers, buglers, standard bearers and signalmen who carry the commander's orders through the ranks. Units with a Magnitude of 3+ must have at least one relay for every dot of Magnitude, or else, they suffer *communication failure*. This means the unit can only assume the unordered formation and it suffers a penalty of -2 to its effective Drill. Besides passively maintaining order and communication, relays can stand in for the commander when the unit hesitates and tests for rout, and in other situations when commands are vital.

## Formation

Trained military units can assume any of four basic formations as best suits changing battlefield conditions. Because these formations measure the density of large units rather than describing the actual geometric structure of their deployment, commanders can order any particular configuration that fits in the listed strictures. The denser a formation's structure is, the higher the Drill rating necessary to execute it.

**Unordered (Drill 0):** This "formation" is a total absence of such—a loose band of like-minded combatants rallied behind a charismatic leader. Unordered units can win battles by sheer dint of numbers, but they fight at a distinct disadvantage against better-organized units. Only barbarians field their forces in such a chaotic manner by choice, although professional units may be forced into unordered drill if directed attacks take out the relays necessary to maintain order.

**Skirmish (Drill 1):** In this formation, unit members stand far enough apart that they could barely reach one another with a long staff. This increases mobility and minimizes the casualties imposed by arrow volleys and other ranged attacks, but it leaves the formation more vulnerable in close combat against units that can rush into the gaps in the ranks.

**Relaxed (Drill 1):** This is the default formation, spacing unit members wide enough apart that they can each touch the nearest soldier's fingertips if they spread both arms wide. Relaxed formation takes a middle road between skirmish and close, gaining no advantages nor suffering any of the drawbacks of the others.

### War and Combat Abilities

Characters, even characters fighting alone on the battlefield as Magnitude 0 solo units, must possess the War Ability to fight effectively. War is the measure of the character's understanding of the art of organized conflict, which includes fighting in and against formations and attacking militarily significant targets rather than simply fighting random foes. Characters engaged in mass combat have their combat Abilities limited by their War. This means that characters in mass combat cannot utilize a rating higher than their War in Archery, Dodge, Martial Arts, Melee or Thrown. If their Abilities are higher than their War, then substitute War for the higher Ability score. The exception to this rule is those fighting as heroes or sorcerer special characters in a unit. These characters can use their commander's War or their own, as they prefer, when making attacks. In this way, skilled fighters with no especial leadership ability are often used as the unit's cutting edge and can make a contribution to the battle as aides to a tactically competent but physically inferior leader.

**Close (Drill 2):** In this compact arrangement, soldiers stand shoulder to shoulder without any gaps for enemy troops to press through. Close formation ranks fight with maximum synergistic efficiency, gaining bonuses to their defenses and morale. However, their tight spacing leaves them more vulnerable to area-effect attacks from siege weapons, sorcery, First Age Essence discharge weapons and the like. On modern Second Age battlefields, such weapons are less common, so professional forces usually engage enemies in close formation.

## Other Unit Rules

Although mass combat rules abstractly represent complementary units as characters, they remain groups of individuals. This situation confers a range of special rules modifications:

**Targeting:** Any magic or effect that specifically targets one character must be directed at the commander or a special character within the unit, rather than at the unit as a whole. Effects that extend to multiple targets must be capable of affecting a number of individuals equal to the unit's Magnitude to affect the unit. Effects that target an area rather than individual targets must reach most of a unit in order to affect that unit. Effects that extend to every target in sight work if the majority of the unit is within line of sight.

Note that a commander *may* use reflexive and/or supplemental Charms to benefit his own unit's actions regardless of the unit's Magnitude. In this case, the Charm activation does not actually represent a single Charm use, but rather, a repeated and dramatic use during the action ticks that is reinforced by the unit's own action. For example, an Archery Excellency could add dice to the attack of a 300-man wing, which translates to a particularly effective archery volley rallied by the example of the commander's own skilled archery. Adamant Skin Technique does not actually grant every member of a unit invulnerability, but rather, represents a unit failing to lose enough soldiers to translate into a lost health level. For a particularly small unit, this might mean the leader threw himself into the path of the enemy like a mother bear guarding her young. In a larger unit, his example

of heroism inspired the unit to greatness so that only a handful died or deserted. Obviously, not every Charm translates into such a rationalized context, so the Storyteller will have to adjudicate every new Charm use to see if it possibly makes sense (vetoing those that do not). That said, Storytellers should be lenient when it comes to interpreting unit-supported Charm uses, erring on the side of drama and coolness whenever in doubt.

**Immunities:** Complementary units do not suffer wound penalties or any other internal penalties not universal to all members. Similarly, groups cannot suffer knockback or knockdown—magical or otherwise—unless the effect encompasses every member of the unit (such as an earthquake). If a unit is successfully knocked back or down, it must check immediately for rout (see p. 169). Units may not be grappled; the closest equivalent to a mass combat grapple is an Envelop attack (see p. 166). Crippling effects must be able to simultaneously affect every member of a unit in an identical fashion to have any effect at all.

# Order of Battle

## Declaration of War

Small-scale battles begin when a character uses the Join Battle action to switch the scene from narrative time to combat time. Large battles follow the same general process, switching from narrative time to war time when a unit commander initiates the Join War action. Apart from name and scope, Join War is almost exactly like Join Battle (see p. 141), prompting all units who see the initiator's aggression to reflexively Join Battle as well in response. The roll to determine the characters' first action for Join War uses ([Wits + War] – Magnitude). Solo units use (Wits + Awareness) as normal, as do any heroes or sorcerers who wish to independently calculate their initial action in order to act separately from their units.

Unexpected attacks in mass combat are resolved similarly to normal surprise attacks (see pp. 155-156) but require actual concealed ambush to enact. A unit cannot spring at another unit in a peaceful situation and take them by surprise, since a unit that is in sight will betray its intentions too soon for any possible bonus. The roll to conceal a unit is ([Dexterity + Stealth] – Magnitude) but otherwise follows the same rules and is resisted by the highest (Perception + Awareness) of the commander or any special characters in any unit that has a chance to spot the ambush.

## Action Options

The actions possible in mass combat parallel the actions available in standard combat (see p. 141 for quick reference chart). Similarly, each action has a Speed that determines how many long ticks the unit must wait before acting again, as well as a DV penalty indicating how much the action impairs defense. The following changes apply:

### Move

Units move at *X* times their normal movement rate per long tick, where *X* is a Speed modifier based on the formation of the unit (see the accompanying table). For solo units, apply this multiplier after subtracting any penalties from wounds or armor. Unlike many tasks, the movement rate of a complementary unit is not based on its commander's statistics, but rather, on the average Dexterity of unit members (minus the average mobility penalty of the armor with which the unit is equipped).

| Formation | Speed Multiplier |
|---|---|
| None (Solo) | x100 |
| Unordered | x30 |
| Skirmish | x100 |
| Relaxed | x70 |
| Close | x40 |

**Terrain Effects:** Although terrain can certainly play a role in personal combat, the small scale of such conflicts lessens the tactical significance. In mass combat, terrain is extremely significant. Units gain the usual DV bonuses for cover and height as explained on page 147, using the following guidelines to determine the cover afforded by a particular condition: tall grass (25% cover); heavy terrain such as boulder fields and forests (50%); makeshift field fortifications, siege lines, dense jungle or bamboo groves (75%); bunkered in prepared stone fortifications (90%). If multiple conditions apply, only the most advantageous determines the cover afforded.

In addition to providing cover, terrain also affects movement options:

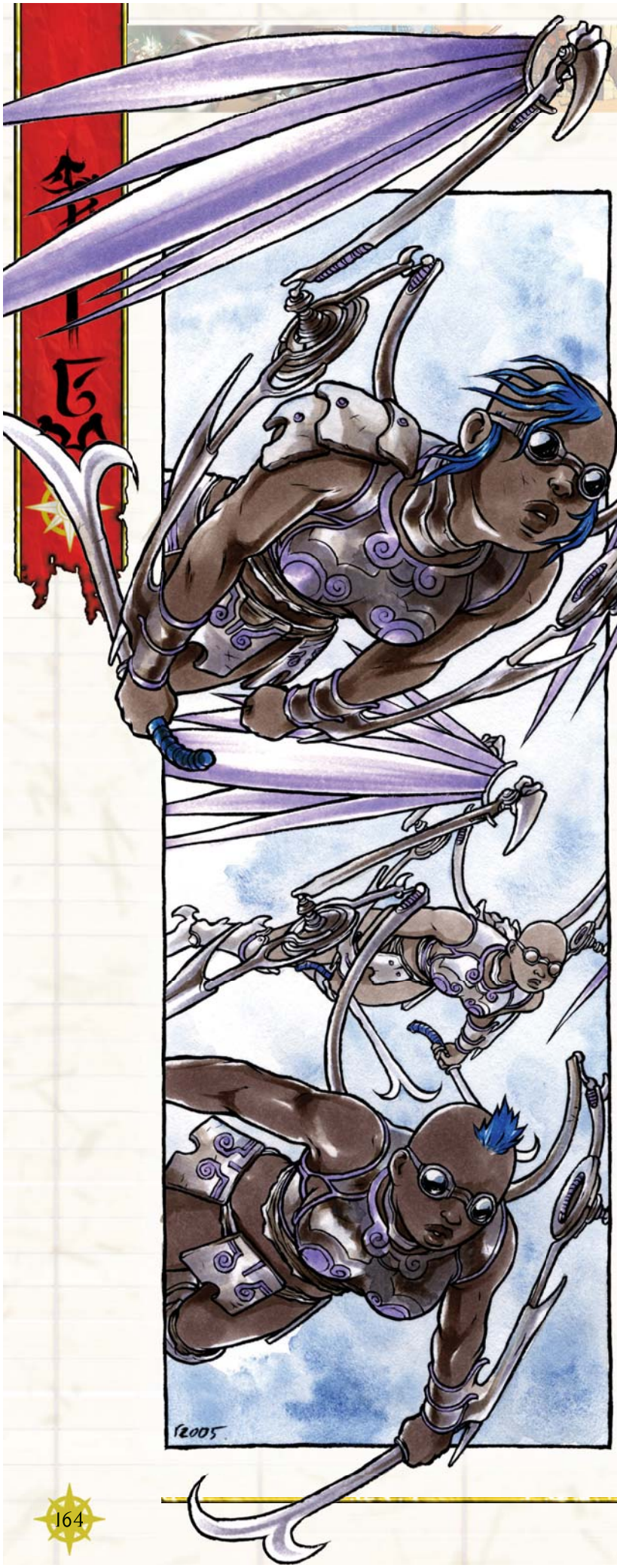
*Open:* Terrain is considered open if it provides a maximum of 25% cover and both mounts and humans can run through it without difficulty or risk of serious injury. Any unit can move freely through open terrain.

*Difficult:* This terrain allows infantry to pass with normal movement (but not with a dash). However, the land is dense or unstable enough that horse-sized mounts move across at half speed (after all modifiers) and chariots, wagons and limbered artillery cannot pass through at all. Examples include forests and other conditions affording a maximum of 50% cover.

*Extreme:* This terrain is all but impassable. Infantry moves through at half speed, and anything larger cannot pass. Examples include abatis, thick underbrush, marsh and the like. When actual barricades are the source of extreme terrain, they may be attacked as if they were an oak door, with each destroyed section opening a path wide enough for a unit to pass and deep enough to move a full move action through.

**Cavalry:** In order for a unit to receive the usual benefits of being mounted (see pp. 154-155), every member must sit astride a comparably sized steed. More importantly, every rider must have a Ride rating equal or better than the control rating of their mount. For larger mounts, passengers in a howdah do not need to meet this requirement. Otherwise, the only battlefield consideration associated with cavalry is that such units have a Morale based on the average Valor of the steed type if that value is less than the average rating of the riders. The following table assumes average values. Therefore, some horses will be faster than others, especially those of superior breeding such as the herds of the Marukani.

| Mount | Speed/Long Tick | Valor |
|---|---|---|
| Horse | 200 yards | 2-3 |
| Simhata | 400 yards | 4 |
| Elephant/ Mammoth/Yeddim | 100 yards | 3 |
| Chariot | 2/3 speed of team | team average |
| Drawn Artillery | 1/2 speed of team | team average |



**Flight:** In order for a unit to receive the standard benefits of flight (see p. 154), all members of the unit must be able to fly, whether by their own power or through some artificial conveyance. Flying units do not occupy the same space as units below them unless they land (at which time they cease to be flying units).

### Dash

In mass combat, a dash is called a charge or a forced march and has the same Speed multiplier for formation order as a basic move. For mounted units, a dash action doubles their listed Speed for the duration of the action. This rate is calculated assuming average unit statistics. Solo units can dash normally without a roll, but complementary units require greater coordination. To execute this maneuver, the unit must be in a formation other than unordered, and the commander's player must roll (Charisma + War) at difficulty (the unit's Magnitude – Drill)—minimum difficulty 1. The Endurance of any unit that makes a charge immediately decreases a number of points equal to the average fatigue value of the armor worn by unit members.

### Guard

Units following this order focus on defense, an advisable tactic for steadily advancing units under fire from ranged volleys.

### Inactive

The inactive action remains in mass combat to accommodate units prevented from doing anything. However, since a unit cannot be knocked unconscious or grappled, such circumstances rarely come up in play. A spell that induces sleep across a wide area is an example of what would be required to make a complementary unit inactive. Of course, solo units could become inactive far more easily.

### Miscellaneous Action

Besides the aforementioned Join War action replacing Join Battle, a number of additional miscellaneous actions are possible and often necessary within the scope of mass combat. Note that multiple units cannot coordinate attacks, since coordination of combat effort is implicit in the unit structure. If multiple solo units wish to band together, they must take the Merge Units action for each to fold into the group, designating a unit leader and any special characters. Quite often, it is better for such characters to remain solo than to band into such a weak unit where the rank-and-file assume a disproportionate risk of dying.

**Change Formation (Speed 5, -1 DV):** By giving this order, a commander can rearrange a unit's configuration for maximum tactical advantage. The unit must have sufficient Drill to assume the desired formation, and the commander's player must successfully roll (Charisma + War) at a difficulty of (the unit's Magnitude – Drill)—minimum difficulty 1. If any relay in the unit has a better (Charisma + War) than the commander, use her pool instead. If the unit was attacked since its last action, add one to the difficulty. If that unit is currently engaged with an enemy unit, add two instead. The benefits and drawbacks of a new formation go into effect immediately, making the Change

Formation action ideal for pulling a spread-out unit into a tight-ranked close order to hit an enemy's lines with a flurry. Units can wait to take their usual afforded move on a tick until after completing this maneuver.

In addition to changing formations as a normal action, commanders can also order their units to spread out when they come under missile fire. Resolve the incoming attack completely, including damage, and then make the usual command roll to switch. If successful, the unit immediately assumes Skirmish formation before the next tick, but the commander must also test for rout at increased difficulty for the formation (see p. 169 for more details).

**Disengage (Speed 0, -0 DV):** Once a complementary unit attacks another complementary unit in close combat, the two units are considered engaged. In order for either group to move away from the other, it must first perform a successful Disengage as an automatic reflexive action. Doing so requires a successful roll of ([Wits + War + Drill] – Magnitude) against a difficulty of (the opposing unit's Drill + 3). Disengaging is not necessary to take any other actions except retreating.

**Turn (Speed 3, -1 DV):** Although individuals can whirl to face their adversaries on all sides, large units lack such flexibility. Complementary units may reflexively shift the direction they face by less than 90 degrees on any long tick in which they take another standard action. Turning more than 90 degrees requires this miscellaneous action to achieve. Roll the (Charisma + War) of the commander or the best relay at a difficulty of (the unit's Magnitude – Drill)—minimum difficulty 1.

If a unit suffers an attack aimed from directly behind it, this attack imposes the usual advantages of an unexpected attack. (See pp. 155-156 for more information.)

**Split Unit (Speed 3, -1 DV):** Events over the course of a battle might make it necessary for part of one unit to break away and become a new unit. Doing so with this action is automatic, provided that the parent unit can spare a hero to become the commander of that unit. Calculate the Magnitude of the new unit based on the numbers allocated to it and recalculate the Magnitude of the parent unit based on the losses. Even if the breakaway group is small enough that the loss does not constitute a full point of Magnitude loss, the parent loses a minimum of one Magnitude dot (representing the disruption caused by an immediate restructuring of the command chain). As many special characters as the new unit's Magnitude can hold may be ordered to follow the unit as it splits away.

If a new unit lacks sufficient relays (and it often will), the new unit cannot assume a formation besides unordered. Furthermore, both the original and the new unit risk suffering hesitation (see p. 169) and becoming automatically unordered as a result of the maneuver. To prevent this, roll the (Charisma + War) of the commander or the best relay in each unit at a difficulty of (the unit's Magnitude – Drill)—minimum difficulty 1. Add two to the difficulty if the original unit was engaged with another unit at the time of the split.

Expelling a single special character from a unit to become a solo unit is far easier and may be done as a Speed 0, -0 DV reflexive action on any tick. The character cannot resist, although it is always possible that she may turn around and challenge her former commander to a duel (see p. 167).

**Merge Units (Speed 3, -1 DV):** If two allied units take significant casualties, they may join together to form a whole and stronger unit. When this happens, one of the two must use this action to successfully absorb/assimilate into the other. Doing so triggers both commanders' players to make a reflexive (Charisma + War) roll at a difficulty of (their own unit's Magnitude – Drill)—minimum difficulty 1. If either fails, the merge fails, and the unit (or units) that failed hesitates (see p. 169). If successful, the larger unit adds the numbers of the smaller to its own and recalculates Magnitude, while the smaller unit ceases to exist. Either commander may assume control of the merged unit, but if there is a dispute, the commander of the larger unit retains control. Similarly, all special characters from the smaller unit may fill vacancies in the merged unit, but any characters in excess of the unit's limits must either leave and immediately become solo units or fade into the rank and file (from which they may not be retrieved for the remainder of the battle).

Far less dramatically, two friendly units may exchange or transfer special characters, provided that the units are adjacent. This is also a form of Merge Units action, but the difficulty for both commanders to succeed is only 1. Failure merely delays the transfer until they can try again. This also happens if a heroic solo unit wishes to enter ranks and join as a special character and the unit has space for another such character, save that the joining character's player does not need to make a War roll.

**Signal Units (Speed 3, -0 DV):** While every unit follows the dictates of its commander, each unit commander reports back to a central general that guides them all toward victory. A unit may use this action to send a signal across the battlefield to a maximum number of units equal to the number of relays the sender has in its ranks. Such messages are usually coded or not intended to be private, such as an order to charge.

**Rally (Speed 4, -1 DV):** Effective commanders know that passion and personal charisma can lead a unit to victory. Performing a rally requires that the commander step out from the ranks and address the troops, after which the commander's player should roll (Charisma + [War or Performance]) at a difficulty of (the complementary unit's Magnitude – Drill)—minimum difficulty 1. A relay can stand in for a commander in this. The effects of a successful rally depend on the speaker's objectives:

*Organization:* Success promotes one rank-and-file character to take the role of relay. Units cannot surpass their usual limit of (Magnitude x 2) special characters, so a unit cannot rally endless extra relays as a preemptive measure against relay casualties or future growth.

*Numbers:* Success draws scattered allies to the unit's banner, increasing its Magnitude by 1. Assume that the unit has the minimum personnel necessary for that new Magnitude. Should the unit not have sufficient relays to accommodate its new Magnitude, it immediately becomes unordered until such time as the commander appoints new relays with another rally. Commanders can rally for numbers *only* if another allied unit with a greater Magnitude lost a dot of Magnitude earlier in the same battle. A unit *can* rally to recover its own panicked deserters in the event that it loses Magnitude. Rallying for numbers is not a miracle and does not resurrect the dead or create soldiers out of thin air, so the Storyteller can veto this use of rallying if no reinforcements are available.

*Second Wind:* Success restores a number of Endurance points equal to the unit's Drill rating (minimum 1). This cannot increase an Endurance rating above the unit's Magnitude.

## Flurry

Note that a unit can attack only one other unit with an action, even with the aid of a flurry. However, a flurry is an excellent means of attacking the same unit repeatedly.

## Activate Charm/Combo/Power

During mass combat, commanders, solo units and special characters within a complementary unit may use Charms or Combos as appropriate to standard timing rules, substituting long ticks for standard ticks. Such characters may use *any* reflexive Charm at *any* point in any long tick, regardless of what Charms they have used prior in the tick or recently. Spells are a slightly different matter. Characters permitted to use Charms may fully cast one spell of any level as a Speed 5, -2 DV action. If a unit leader does this, the casting consumes the action of the unit, as they provide support and cover. It is far more tactically efficient, however, to leave spells to designated sorcerers (as in the special characters of that designation). Spells that take longer than five minutes to cast may *not* be cast more quickly, instead requiring the appropriate preparatory period before the sorcerer uses a single casting action to complete the magic.

The normal members of a unit may not use individual Charms or spells at any time during mass combat, as their magical prowess (such as it is) is a function of the Might trait. Note that Charms with a scene duration last for a full battle regardless of how long that battle lasts.

## Attack

Within mass combat, attacks resolve in the same overall sequence. However, the assorted bonuses granted by a complementary unit to its commander modify pertinent rolls. Moreover, such units do not keep track of health levels in the usual fashion. Most importantly, an attack by one unit against another is not a single attack, but rather a sustained volley of missiles or clash of ranks.

**Unit Bonuses:** For the most part, a complementary unit has the same statistics as its leader. It uses her personal traits, such as Virtues, Willpower and Essence. Whenever a commander has her unit take any action, she uses the standard Ability rating or her War rating (whichever is less) for the dice pool. This means that her War rating acts as a cap for her other Abilities in mass combat, so a commander with Dexterity 3, Melee 5 and War 4 has an effective Melee of only 4 and a seven-die pool for Melee. A unit leader adds her unit's Close Combat Rating and her unit's Ranged Combat Rating as bonus successes to close and ranged attacks, respectively, applying this bonus immediately after the attack roll. The number of bonus successes added from unit attack ratings cannot exceed the commander's War rating, before applying modifications from formation. For example, a character with War 3 commands a unit with a Close Combat Rating of 4. Ordinarily this means the character would only add three successes (the limit of her War rating), but in close formation, a unit's Close Combat Rating and maximum bonus from Close Combat doubles (i.e., six successes). After establishing the bonus successes added by a unit's combat skills, add an additional number of successes equal to the unit's Might. So, a crack unit of young Dragon-Blooded archers with Ranged Combat 5 and Might 2 commanded by a character with War 4 would add six successes to ranged attack rolls.

Magnitude can also play a roll in the success of actions. If one unit attacks another and those units do not have the same Magnitude rating, the larger unit applies the difference in bonus successes to its attacks or subtracts the difference from the successes of attacks by the smaller unit. This bonus/external penalty cannot exceed +/-3. Besides improving attacks, Might also adds to the commander's Essence rating to determine if particular effects can target the unit and/or to help him defend against the effects of hostile Charms. A unit's Close Combat/Ranged Damage Ratings each add to the raw damage of close and ranged attacks, respectively, while a unit's Armor adds to its commander's natural bashing, lethal and aggravated soak. One half a unit's Close Combat Rating adds to the commander's Parry DV.

Formation Modifiers:

*Close formation* doubles the unit's Close Combat Rating, as well as doubling the DV bonuses awarded by shields and cover against close combat attacks. However, enemy units attacking a unit arranged in Close formation double their own Magnitude for the purposes of ranged attack bonuses. Finally, units in Close formation subtract two difficulty from all hesitation rolls (see p. 169).

*Relaxed formation* doubles shield and cover bonuses against ranged attacks.

*Skirmish formation* doubles shield and cover bonuses against all attacks and adds an additional +3 DV against ranged attacks. Enemy units who attack a unit in skirmish formation with a close combat attack double their Magnitude for the purposes of calculating attack bonuses. If the attacker is arranged in Close formation, the attacking unit's Magnitude triples. Units in skirmish formation add two to the difficulty of hesitation rolls.

*Unordered units* add two to the difficulty of hesitation rolls.

**Ranged Attacks:** Because every attack with ranged weapons represents a volley, every "shot" consumes three ammunition rather than one. This means that most troops only have four shots for bows if they are mobile or seven if they have taken up a fortified position from a prepared emplacement. Sorcerer-type unit members using bows or other ranged weapons consume three times the normal ammo with each shot as well. Additionally, the range increments of a unit's volley assume the equipment of the unit rather than the commander, so a squad of archers led by an Exalt armed with a powerbow would not benefit from the superior range of the powerbow. Weapons wielded by sorcerers are *not* bound by this limitation, allowing them to serve as snipers.

**Enveloping:** Designated a close combat attack as enveloping imposes a -2 external penalty and requires that the attacker's Magnitude be at least 1 higher than the target's. If successful, the larger unit spreads out and flanks the smaller from both sides, trapping the smaller unit in the center. If the trapped unit attempts to Disengage, add three to the difficulty. If the larger unit attempts to disengage, add one. Until one of the two disengages, the effects of enveloping remain.

**Attacking Commanders and Special Characters:** Killing a commander can cripple or outright dissolve a unit, making assassination the ideal means of defeating a larger force. However, such a "called shot" is seldom easy. The attacker suffers an external penalty to the attack equal to half the Drill or Magnitude of the target unit (rounded up). If the target unit is presently unordered, use the lower of Drill or Magnitude. Otherwise, use the larger. Furthermore, an attack against a unit commander must be done with ranged weapons, or else the attacker's unit

must have engaged the intended victim's unit on a previous long tick. The victim may defend normally. Should any attack successes penetrate the victim's defenses, levels of damage subtract directly from the commander's health levels rather than those of the unit he commands. If slain, a hero in the unit can and must take his place, or else the unit begins to dissolve (see the "Mob Rule" sidebar). This same system resolves attacks against special characters within a unit, but sorcerers double the Magnitude of their unit when determining its defensive bonus.

**Initiate Duel**: When armies clash, many hundreds or thousands die. In the world of **Exalted**, compassionate heroes and champions might valiantly step out of their ranks to face one another while their units pull back and watch. Indeed, many battles in Creation merely serve as a prelude to such duels.

Initiating a duel requires that two units be engaged in combat. Either the commander or a hero designated by the commander must step forward as a champion. If a hero wishes to engage in a duel without her commander's permission, she must first hijack her unit's action. If the target character does not wish to accept the challenge, then the challenger makes a standard attack roll without unit bonuses as a called shot. If successful, no damage is dealt, but the target is forced into a duel. If the target voluntarily accepts the challenge, no roll is necessary. Regardless, initiating a duel counts as an attack for purposes of action speed and DV penalty.

Once a duel begins, both participants step outside of war time. The passage of long ticks temporarily halts in breathless anticipation. In the midst of the battle, both combatants automatically perform Join Battle actions and start a normal personal combat against one another, with any scene-length Charms still active from fighting in the mass combat. This duel plays out until one character is dead or incapacitated, or until both participants choose to withdraw back to their armies. At that point, the long tick count resumes. Killing a commander in a duel has all the usual effects of such, forcing immediate replacement by a hero or the unit dissolves.

Subterfuge is often predominant in these matters. Characters who are serving as special characters in the involved units can meddle in the duel as normal characters. Characters not part of the units or serving in their rank and file are without recourse, though the Storyteller may rule otherwise for very distant characters who stand ready to act at vast remove guided by some remote sense.

Also, obviously, dishonorably conducted duels will not carry much weight in diplomatic negotiations. Currently, it is thought highly ignoble to slay characters by meddling in the duel. Units whose special characters perceptibly break the sanctity of the dueling-ground suffer an immediate hesitation test at +2 difficulty. This is likely to change as the Time of Tumult grinds on and the wars of Exalts become more absolute and less a sporting diversion.

**Unit Damage:** The minimum damage that a unit inflicts with each successful attack is not the Essence rating of the commander, but rather, the Magnitude of the attacking unit. All complementary units begin play with full health equal to the leader's maximum, regardless of the current health of their commander. Units composed wholly of extras and led by extras would have only an extra's base health levels. Where possible, armies see that the leaders of units are at least heroic mortals, but what proportion of units consists purely of extras is probably best left to Storyteller taste.

When units take damage, the damage subtracts from this separate health track until they reach Incapacitated. At that time, the unit resets its health back to full and loses a dot of Magnitude.

A particularly severe attack can actually press through this cycle multiple times, costing the unit multiple dots of Magnitude. Once a unit drops to Magnitude 0, everyone is dead save the former commander, whose own health remains wherever it was at the start of battle (lowered by any successful called shot attacks at the commander during the war). Whenever a unit loses one or more Magnitude from a single attack, the commander's player must check for rout (see p. 169).

Note that units will very rarely be destroyed entirely by damage. This would represent a unit that had to be killed to the man, its formation hanging tight unto the last. This is true to automata and supernaturally crack troops, but more often, units will suffer hesitation due to damage and lose levels of Magnitude in that fashion, as troops shy from fighting or rout entirely.

Units do not bleed, risk infection or spend prolonged actions dying. In a similar vein, anyone who falls to Incapacitated on a battlefield dies from a coup de grace if they belong to a unit that is currently engaged with an enemy. Storytellers can make occasional exceptions for dramatic purposes, so a dying soldier can issue a last message or a protagonist can miraculously live to fight another day, but fallen Exalts can count on intensive enemy efforts to confirm their demise.

**Casualties:** Even in the bloodiest of slaughters, not every character who is lost when a unit loses Magnitude actually dies. Many flee. In the best-case scenario, wounded soldiers withdraw to the back of the ranks so that they can serve in future battles. However, people do die in war—many, many people. If a character belongs to a unit that lost any dots of Magnitude, roll (her Wits + Willpower) against a difficulty of the largest number of Magnitude points the unit lost from any one attack. If the roll fails, the character died during the battle. On a botch, she lives, but she must live out the remainder of her nasty, brutish existence with the agony of the gruesome maiming she suffered. All survivors must then repeat this roll with a difficulty of the *total* number of Magnitude dots lost in the battle. If this rolls fails, roll one die. The result is the number of unsoakable lethal health levels of damage the character suffered, which could still be sufficient to kill her. Following this, mortal survivors should check normally for infection (see p. 151).

As noted previously, unit commanders and special characters are protected from random death as casualties, at least until they are the only characters remaining. If a character does not wish to take part in hostilities and accept the risks of warfare, she had best desert at the soonest opportunity and keep running, for most armies take great pains to make examples of cowards and traitors.

## Exhaustion

Every time a unit attacks or suffers an attack, that unit risks losing an Endurance point once the attack is resolved. **Players of commanders or their best relays can avert this loss with a reflexive (Charisma + War) roll at a difficulty of the Fatigue value of the troops' armor.** A number of modifiers apply to

### Mob Rule

Players and Storytellers reading through these rules might wonder how they model large numbers of leaderless disorganized adversaries, such as zombie hordes and angry torch-wielding mobs. The simplest way is to give the mob a leader. Zombies typically follow the necromancer who created them, and unless they are given very specific orders and constant direction, they tend to scatter and rampage through the countryside. Angry mobs usually have someone at the forefront spurring the group onward. The standard assumption of these rules is that units deprived of a leader disintegrate, but an army doesn't just vanish off the map in the span of a minute. It takes time for the ranks to crumble in demoralized panic (or wander off without direction, in the case of automata and zombies).

To handle this, the leaderless unit immediately assumes unordered formation and recalculates its core statistics as if an average member were the leader (which may be an extra, meaning that the unit now has only three health levels per dot of Magnitude). All relays immediately fade back into the ranks, lost in the confusion, while sorcerers must either break away as solo units or also fade into the rank and file. Lacking special characters, no characters can be singled out for attack. The unit *must* continue whatever general action plan it was in the process of doing when it lost its leader. (Units engaged with an enemy unit must continue to fight, while those marching to specific location keep moving until they get there.) Once a unit completes its task (defeats the enemy forces pressing against it, reaches the destination, etc.), it cannot move or do anything else except repeatedly guard. If attacked with ranged weapons, it can defend itself and thereafter respond with its own ranged attacks or move to engage the enemy unit in close combat. If attacked and engaged in close combat, the unit can defend itself and fight back, but it slips back into waiting as soon as it triumphs. Most importantly, leaderless units make an automatic check for rout (see p. 169) at the beginning of every tick in which they have completed a course of action and are just waiting for orders that aren't coming (i.e., upon defeating an enemy or reaching the destination). The difficulty starts at 0 and cumulatively increases by one every time this specific rout check is made. Even units with perfect morale must make this check, rolling five dice. Therefore, a large horde of zombies might hold together long enough to devour a band of militia, but once it has done so, the zombies start wandering off.

The advantage of gradual disintegration is that a unit deprived of a leader can still fight on as it crumbles, possibly avenging its leader. More importantly, a hero from another allied unit can attempt to break away and rush to the floundering unit, reaching the soldiers in time to assume command before the whole unit falls apart. If these rules add undue complexity—if it furthers the story for a leaderless unit of extras to balk and perish in its hesitation without having further effect on the battle—don't use them. Assume the unit disbands and ceases to have an impact on the battle immediately, as the individual soldiers perish or flee.

this roll, adding or subtracting from the difficulty as follows (minimum difficulty 1):

| Circumstance | Difficulty Modifier |
|---|---|
| Unit's Morale 3+ | -1 |
| Unit has perfect Morale | -2 |
| Unit is engaged with an enemy unit | +2 |
| Unit charged as last action | +1 |
| Hot weather/snowy | +1 |
| Desert/blizzard | +2 |
| Extreme temperatures | +3 |

The formula for determining Endurance is on page 160. Units with no Endurance remaining suffer a -2 penalty on all actions from fatigue.

### Healing and Recruitment

While solo units recover from wounds like the characters they are, complementary units cannot miraculously regenerate reinforcements. Instead, a unit must spend a period of well-supplied rest recruiting or integrating reinforcements sent by superiors. Healing a single dot takes a number of days equal to (the current Magnitude of the unit + 1), repeating the cycle as many times as necessary to recover full strength. Once the unit regains its first point of Magnitude in this fashion, it also regains full health. During an actual battle, limited healing is possible through rallying (see p. 165), but this is simply a reallocation and regrouping of forces.

### Hesitation and Rout

On the battlefield, failure and despair can be fatal. The undead hordes of the Deathlords and the combat automata of the First Age don't feel fear, but mortal units that believe themselves beaten soon become so. Whenever a unit experiences a rout condition (see the following table), roll the unit's Morale at standard difficulty. Apply a dice penalty/bonus equal to the unit's (Magnitude – Drill), and adjust the difficulty according to the condition that triggered the rout check, as well as the unit's current formation (see p. 162):

If a rout check succeeds, nothing happens. On a failure, the unit hesitates. It cannot move until its next action. Worse, the unit loses one dot of Magnitude by every success by which the roll failed. This loss goes into effect immediately but has the dubious benefit of resetting the unit's health track to full. This does not displace heroes or sorcerers, but it might force extraneous relays to fall back into the rank and file.

### Special Character Actions

Until and unless they act independently of their unit, special characters do not need to be tracked as separate units in the tick rules. If a player wants to have a fast special character act prior to a slower, larger army, he may perform a Join War action for that character as if she were a solo unit when battle begins (using [Wits + Awareness] for the Join Battle roll as usual). If a player does not do so, the character cannot act independently until a long tick when her unit takes an action. Once a special character does act, it becomes separate for the purposes of timing and may remain "out of sync" with the unit until and unless the character uses Guard to wait and realign. "Falling back in line" is always a valid action to perform for the action of a special character's unit, provided the character can act. This action allows the player to stop declaring the special character's actions again until some future action tick of the unit when the player decides to have the character take a separate action again.

When a special character acts separately from her unit, she does not receive any of the benefits of the unit except that a called shot is necessary for anyone else to personally attack her (see pp. 166-167). Sorcerers always remain with their unit for the purposes of determining the range of their attacks or spells. Heroes must attack an enemy unit with which their unit is already engaged (or a special character thereof) in order to remain part of their unit's ranks. If a hero wants to run off and assault some other unit on the battlefield, she must be ejected to become an actual solo unit (or take part of the unit as a smaller breakaway unit, see p. 165).

| Event | Difficulty Modifier |
|---|---|
| Suffering Magnitude loss from damage | +0 |
| Receiving the first ranged attack since the unit's last action | +0 |
| Receiving a ranged attack from flame or Essence weapons | +1 |
| Being the subject of a spell | +1 per Circle |
| Becoming engaged with an enemy unit | +0 |
| …that is superior or led by a supernatural being | +1 |
| …that is overwhelmingly superior or composed of supernatural beings | +2 |
| Successfully disengaging from an enemy unit | +1 |

## Social Combat

Individual warriors can wreak terrible violence upon their enemies, and armies can put an entire nation to the sword. Yet, battle is not the only means of conquest, nor even the chief art of statecraft. Social combat is the arena of demagogues and diplomats, in which words strike blows and jaded repartee affords parries and ripostes. Interestingly, the rules for social combat closely mirror the rules for normal fighting.

### Beginning Debate

The Join Debate action replaces Join Battle, with the roll using (Wits + Awareness) being made as normal. Time progresses forward in long ticks lasting one minute each, the same time frame used in mass combat.

Unexpected social attacks are quite possible but do not involve being physically hidden. Instead, a surprise attack represents an unexpected shift in conversation from innocuous small talk to serious matters. In place of (Dexterity + Stealth), the aggressor conceals his intent with (Manipulation + Socialize), while the defender reflexively counters with (Perception + Investigation).

## Social Combat and Exalted

The world of **Exalted** is a world of epics. Epics are full of stirring speeches and impassioned arguments in closed council, which decide the fate of nations—the souls of the men of Creation are stirred by passionate argument. These social combat rules are made to model charismatic individuals attempting to put the full weight of their persuasive power behind a matter.

Characters know when they are engaged in social combat—everyone can tell when they are trying to be made to agree with something. Exalted characters using unnatural command of social combat to make servants and converts will be seen as using supernatural power to do so and will likely attract negative attention. Heroic mortals will be seen as prophets or would-be adventurers and may become popular or unpopular, depending on the climate of the day. Extras do not generally engage in social combat, but there may be a use for them—as ill-educated praters called out to debate theology with a character, for example.

In any case, these rules are not what one uses to convince others where to go for dinner. Rather, they are how one turns someone into an instant convert to his cause or wins the argument over the strategy his nation needs to follow in an upcoming war. Social combat can be used for small matters—intimidating the warden at a bridge may be minor but an essential use of a persuasive character's silver tongue. However, social combat should never be used for trivial situations or casual debate. If it is used in an argument over clothing, that argument should figure prominently in some larger matter or depict a character who is an unrelenting social bully.

Never forget that characters can flee the presence of individuals attempting to engage them in social combat or attack them in an attempt to cut short the conversation. However, part and parcel of the world of **Exalted** is that there are individuals whose words and truths are so divinely convincing that you dare not have an extended conversation with them lest you become a convert, and Creation in general is prone to heroic gesture and impassioned oratory. These rules model those realities. As a result, it is probably better to use them sparingly and grudgingly in your game than to ignore them entirely.

Reestablishing surprise later in a social engagement requires that the assailant make a completely new point unrelated to the earlier discussion (i.e., changing the subject), which is the equivalent of finding a new place to hide. Otherwise, this miscellaneous action uses the same rules, apart from the dice pools used.

## Actions

Characters may take a variety of possible actions in social combat, each with a Speed and associated DV penalty. Keep in mind that DV functions differently in social combat (see p. 172), but the concept of a protective value that is penalized by action remains.

### Move (Speed 0/-0 DV) and Dash (Speed 3/-3 DV)

Physical location plays little role in social combat, so as long as the interacting characters remain close enough to actually interact with one another. Therefore, although characters can move at 10 times the speed in a long tick that they can cover in second-based ticks, moving has no significance unless they move out of the encounter entirely. Because dashing actually counts as an action and forfeits opportunities for rebuttal, taking the dash action (see p. 143) is generally only used for literally running away.

### Guard (Speed 3/-0 DV)

The character listens warily, waiting for the right moment to interject a comment. This action functions like a standard guard, preserving maximum DV and keeping the frequency of DV refreshes high. Guarding in social combat follows the rules of a standard Guard action (see p. 143).

### Inactive (Speed 3/Special DV)

It is unlikely that a character will become physically incapacitated and drop out of social combat altogether. Furthermore, while unconsciousness makes characters physically vulnerable, such a state generally serves to make them socially invulnerable by making it impossible to communicate with them. If a Charm allows social attacks to be applied to an unconscious character (such as a subliminal programming Charm that functions against sleepers), the victim ceases to be inactive but remains socially invulnerable to anyone unable to communicate with her. This state otherwise follows the rules for a standard inactive action (see p. 143).

### Monologue/Study (Speed 3/-2 DV)

This action is the social combat equivalent to the Aim action available in standard combat. If a character takes time to deliver an extended speech as a social attack, doing so translates to an action cycle of Monologue, Monologue, etc. until the concluding point is an Attack with the usual bonuses for aiming. Unlike a standard Aim, a Monologue does not need to be directed at a single target, but instead requires that the final attack be a logical continuation of the same speech. Studying a target follows the Aim action more closely, in which the character listens and formulates an argument specifically intended to resonate with a particular target, rather than a group. Except as noted, both Monologue and Study follow the same rules as Aim (see pp. 142-143).

### Miscellaneous Action (Speed 5/-2 DV)

The character does something unrelated or tangentially related to the discussion at hand. Keep in mind that in long ticks, Speed 5 indicates five minutes of time, so either the action must take less than five minutes or the character must perform the action as a set of sub-actions with five-minute intervals. Unlike miscellaneous actions taken during normal combat, applying full concentration to a task does not make the character completely vulnerable (i.e., reduce DV to 0). Actually, such characters are so single-mindedly focused that they receive the same social invulnerability as being inactive. Deliberately ignoring someone in this fashion requires that the character not be restrained. (Prisoners undergoing interrogation generally do not have the luxury of doing anything but listening, answering and suffering.) Furthermore, a character who chooses not to listen or look at someone (turning away and covering his ears) cannot perceive the character he is ignoring and will automatically suffer the penalties for surprise if she gives up on talking and decides to physically attack.

**Join Debate:** (see p. 169) This miscellaneous action is the most common one in social combat, and like Join Battle, this action has a DV penalty of -0.

**Attack:** In order to physically attack someone, a character must perform a Join Battle action, prompting everyone who observes the impending hostility to do the same. This removes the scene from social combat and begins counting time in standard combat ticks.

**Read Motivation:** This is resolved normally in the span of five long ticks, like any other action. See page 131 for rules.

Except as noted, miscellaneous actions follow the same rules as described on page 143.

### Flurry (Speed Varies/Varies -DV)

A social flurry follows usual flurry rules (see p. 143), allowing a character to make a barrage of interconnected or unrelated points, possibly while doing something completely unconnected to the discussion at hand.

### Activate Charm/Combo/Power (Speed Varies/Varies -DV)

Characters may use Charms appropriate to a social scene, according to the standard timing rules for such. Most social Charms with a simple type list their Speed in terms of long ticks for easy integration into these rules. Using a Charm inappropriate to social tasks (such as magic that increases the damage of a physical attack) require the appropriate conditions be present. Therefore, characters must Join Battle and leave a social combat behind in order to physically attack someone. Ergo, characters cannot use Charms pertaining to physical attacks without first dropping down to standard combat time. The Storyteller remains final arbiter of what Charms may be used without shifting the scene and/or its narrative sequence of time.

### Attack (Speed Varies/-2 DV)

The character makes a social attack. The rules for making (or defending against) such attacks are explained in full in the next section.

## Resolution of Social Attacks

When a character makes a social attack against another, this attack represents any type of communication intended to change the feelings, actions, intentions or other aspects of another character, encompassing a broad range of interactions from intimidation to seduction to aggressive sale pitches.

### Social Traits

A number of basic traits play a role in resolving social combat:

**Charisma:** Charisma measures a character's force of personality and honest expression. Characters with low Charisma are viewed as weak or diffident—or simply as louts without social skills. Those with high Charisma are eminently noticeable and often outright eminent. People love them or hate them (or maybe a bit of both), but *everyone* respects them. Characters use Charisma whenever

they speak of anything in which they genuinely believe.

**Manipulation:** This measures guile and persuasiveness. Manipulation can be a subtle weapon or a blunt instrument of malice, but it is always a weapon. Those with low Manipulation are honest or naïve. Those at the high end are conniving and ruthless, able to don whatever mien best serves their needs. Characters use Manipulation to control others through deception or emotional trickery.

**Appearance:** Combining physical attractiveness and poise, a high Appearance aids in virtually any social endeavor, from oration to seduction to intimidation. Characters with a hideous visage have a higher effective Appearance rating for the express purpose of intimidating others or resisting intimidation (Appearance 1 = Appearance 3, while Appearance 0 = Appearance 5).

**Bureaucracy:** While social in nature, the uses of this Ability, operating as it does on a dramatic time scale, exceeds the scope of social combat.

**Integrity:** The "passive" defense of stubbornness and self-assurance, this Ability helps derive Mental Defense Values.

**Investigation:** This Ability focuses on obtaining the truth, which typically takes the form of an interrogation in the context of social combat. Each Investigation attack can reach only one target, whether that target is a single individual or a Magnitude 9 social unit. However, a unit must be an actual organized group with a unified agenda and allegiance, rather than everyone or anyone who happens to be in attendance. Often, those swayed by Investigation attacks speak the truth on the matter queried, though it is also possible to use this Ability to glean information without the target knowing, through a miscellaneous action (see p. 171). Investigation attacks have a Speed of 5 long ticks and a rate of 2.

**Linguistics:** Characters making or receiving social attacks through a letter, book or some other indirect proxy that relies on verbal eloquence rather than personal poise and delivery have an effective Appearance equal to their Linguistics rating, regardless of their physical attractiveness (or lack thereof). This provides bonuses or penalties to DV as described above.

**Performance:** The Ability governing oration, heart-stirring dances and theatrics, Performance reaches out to affect everyone who can perceive the effort. Characters cannot selectively apply a Performance roll, so they cannot exclude targets within its area of effect. This lack of intimacy is both a strength and weakness of the Ability, allowing demagogues to sway the hearts of crowds but also risking that weak-willed friends in attendance might throw themselves into causes they merely intended as political propaganda. Performance-based attacks have a Speed of 6 long ticks and a rate of 1.

**Presence:** This Ability controls intimate social attacks in which the full emotional weight of a character's personality descends upon a hapless opponent. Presence attacks follow the same targeting restrictions as Investigation attacks, with a Speed of 4 long ticks and a rate of 2.

**Socialize:** While many functions of this Ability operate on a dramatic time scale outside the scope of social combat, (Manipulation + Socialize) replaces (Dexterity + Stealth) for veiling intentions, and any instance where War would be used to manage a military unit changes to Socialize for social units and setting up coordinated social attacks. In general, Socialize cannot be used to make social attacks.

## Mental Defense Value

This derived trait measures a character's resistance to all forms of persuasion. Like standard DV, Mental Defense Value (MDV) has two forms:

**Dodge MDV:** This represents a character's capacity to avoid being influenced through a disciplined refusal to engage. By not arguing and instead standing fast to principles or sheer will, the character remains untouched. To calculate a character's Dodge MDV, halve (Willpower + Integrity + pertinent specialty + Essence), rounded down. If magic makes a social attack undodgeable, the attack cannot be resisted with stubbornness, and must be refuted.

**Parry MDV:** This is a character's capacity to deflect persuasion through retort, calculated as ([(Charisma or Manipulation) + Ability + pertinent specialty] ÷ 2), rounded up. Just as characters can parry blows with weapons or their hands, so too may social combatants use a range of possible Abilities according to the method employed. Investigation cuts through the charm of Charisma and finds the treacherous guile at the heart of Manipulation. Performance deflects with convincing rhetoric. Presence relies on forceful counterarguments. By default, characters will base their Parry MDV on the better of Charisma or Manipulation combined with the best rating in any of the valid social Abilities. Those who wish to use a stunt in their defense must match the stunt to the Attribute and Ability selected, and so may use any valid traits they wish. Unblockable social attacks defy all argument, though they may still fail before the unassailable walls of the ego.

## Mental Defense Value Modifiers

Characters suffer a DV penalty for taking actions as in physical combat, and this penalty vanishes when DV refreshes immediately before the character's next action. Characters can suffer an onslaught penalty (see p. 147) after enduring a flurry of social attacks by one person, as well as the penalty for coordinated attacks (see p. 144) by multiple individuals linked through a leader's Socialize. As usual, an inapplicable defense option leaves the appropriate MDV reduced to 0 before adding bonuses or penalties, and the usual rule of automatic success (see p. 156) applies against extras. Physical modifiers associated with standard combat such as cover, terrain, reach and so on do not apply. However, characters do face two additional modifiers that often come into play:

**Relative Appearance:** Characters affected by a social attack made by a being of lower Appearance add a modifier to their mental DV equal to (their Appearance – the Appearance of the attacker). Characters attacked by beings of greater Appearance suffer a DV penalty of (the aggressor's Appearance – their own Appearance). This modifier cannot exceed +3 or -3.

**Intimacy, Virtue or Motivation:** If a social attack attempts to convince a character to take a course of action that directly supports an existing Intimacy, she is at -1 MDV to resist. If the attack would result in a character acting in direct accordance with a dominant Virtue (any rated at 3+), she is at -2 MDV. Social attacks that directly align with a character's Motivation impose a -3 MDV. Only the greatest of these penalties apply, so attacks that play on a Virtue and an Intimacy impose a -2 penalty, not a -3.

Social attacks that demand a character act against an existing Intimacy give the target a +1 MDV. If the attack is patently unreasonable and/or would force a character to betray her core values (i.e., perform an action prohibited by a Virtue rated at 3+), the MDV bonus increases to +2. Convincing someone to violate

her Motivation and/or place her in immediate physical danger gives her +3 MDV to resist. Only the highest of these bonuses applies.

While players may suggest and justify penalties or bonuses based on Intimacies, Virtues or Motivation, the Storyteller remains final arbiter and should use common sense when determining the modifier. This is especially true when testing previously unstated loyalties. Most characters will feel protective loyalty toward their family members and friends and will be equally devout in their enmities. Convincing someone to betray a friend should be harder than convincing her to harm a rival. A bonus and penalty may simultaneously apply from these factors, such as when a character finds her high Compassion opposed to an action deemed necessary by high Conviction. In this case, the +2 and -2 would cancel out.

For quicker resolution, the Storyteller can simply reference the character's previous behavior to determine how opposed or amenable she would be to the suggested course of action, assigning a -3 to +3 personality modifier to MDV as appropriate. This rule makes characters accountable to player decisions: If a character condones a cold-blooded murder, others will probably have an easier time convincing her to permit another such murder in the future.

## Attack Steps

In general, social attacks follow the same 10 steps as normal attacks, with slight changes appropriate to the nature of such encounters. These differences are explained here, with steps not listed following the exact rules of physical combat.

**1) Declare Attack:** The attacker must decide the traits used for the attack, first selecting Charisma (for honest persuasion) or Manipulation (for guile or deception) and then Investigation (interrogating a target character or unit), Performance (affecting everyone in range who observes the attack) or Presence (targeting a character or unit). The declaration should also indicate the desired effect of the attack so the defender knows how to respond.

**2) Declare Defense:** Doing nothing is tantamount to going along with whatever the attacker wants, often removing the need for a roll unless a magical effect requires such. Parrying or dodging works as described previously for MDV. The declaration of defense can be as simple as "I stubbornly refuse!" for a dodge or "I object and argue!" for a parry.

**3) Attack Roll:** This uses the (Attribute + Ability) dice pool established in step 1.

**7-8) Determine Effect:** Social attacks do not inflict damage, but instead compel behavior or force willful resistance (see next section). Similarly, no mental soak exists. This compresses steps 7-8 into one step.

**10) Apply Effect:** In place of damage, the usual effects of the attack occur at this stage.

## Effects of Social Attacks

When a social attack roll successfully overcomes a character's MDV, she typically has a choice. She may either consent to the attack, performing the behavior described in the initial attack declaration, or she can refuse by reflexively paying one Willpower point to do so. If consenting to a social attack would violate a character's Motivation (at the discretion of the Storyteller), she *must* refuse. Characters who lack the Willpower required to pay the refusal cost accede to the behavior asked of them. Keep in mind that additional successes on the attack roll have no bearing on the intensity of the final effect. A 15-success attack is no more compelling than a five-success attack against a character with an MDV of 4.

### Social Stunts

Using social combat rules, players can reduce their characters' attacks to "I seduce her" or "I scare him" without any greater detail. This is the equivalent of a player saying "I hit him with my sword" during physical combat; it works and allows a roll, but it is inherently bland. Unless the action is of trivial consequence, players should endeavor to do a better job articulating social attacks. Physical combat rules exist to abstractly represent the fact that two players will not beat on each other to decide which of their characters wins a fight. In contrast, players can (and should) debate, argue and haggle with one another or the Storyteller. After all, **Exalted** is a roleplaying game, and playing a role is the point of the exercise. As a result, Storytellers should assign a stunt bonus of level one simply for talking in character (rather than describing the gist of what the character says). Better dialogue should qualify for better stunts. By liberally awarding stunts for good characterization, the Storyteller rewards those who put in extra effort and establishes the fact that the protagonists really do have an edge over most of the supporting cast who cannot stunt.

Without the aid of magic that explicitly grants some form of *unnatural* persuasion (from hypnosis to possession), the only form of persuasion available to a character through her Attributes and Abilities is *natural* persuasion. In a given scene, a character can suffer only two points of Willpower drain from natural persuasion attempts. Once this has happened, the character becomes jaded and suspicious. All further natural persuasion attempts automatically fail unless the attacker uses a stunt to try a new approach. Unnatural persuasion suffers no such limitations and may force characters to pay more than one Willpower per refusal and continue depleting Willpower all the way to zero in a single scene. Moreover, every time a Solar Exalt pays Willpower to resist unnatural persuasion, he also gains a point of Limit, but this can happen at most only once per scene.

Social attacks can impose a range of possible effects:

**Building/Eroding Intimacies:** Characters may establish their loyalty to causes, beliefs or other characters as they desire. Doing so forges a metaphysical attachment that some Charms may reference, as well as providing bonuses or penalties to MDV when facing persuasion that supports or violates an Intimacy. Characters must spend a total number of scenes deliberately establishing an Intimacy equal to their Conviction rating in order for the relationship to provide these effects. These scenes do not have to be consecutive. Building an Intimacy can involve private contemplation of a growing friendship or silently nursing a grudge as it blossoms into full hatred, but the process typically involves doing something in support of the Intimacy at some point in the scene. Breaking an Intimacy is equally voluntary and follows the same process, as gradual disillusionment wears away at the relationship for a number of scenes equal to the character's Conviction.

Note that a Motivation runs deeper than an Intimacy and cannot be eroded in the same way. Only a life-changing event or powerful magic can alter someone's Motivation. Characters cannot generally have more Intimacies at any one time than their (Willpower + Compassion).

Each successful social attack that a character does not (or cannot) resist can: reduce one existing Intimacy by a point and/or increase a new or growing Intimacy by one point. Fully established Intimacies that have suffered "damage" still count as Intimacies for all purposes until they have been damaged a number of times equal to the character's Conviction.

Typically, characters will spend Willpower to resist having existing loyalties eroded (even loyalties that have already suffered erosion), but they are less likely to oppose gaining new Intimacies unless these new Intimacies directly conflict with existing Intimacies. Only those with the weakest faith may be swayed to join a leader's cause in a single speech, however stirring it may be, and such fickle individuals will leave the cause as soon as anyone else wins their heart. Disabusing the faithful of their beliefs invariably requires a program of brainwashing (i.e., consecutive scenes of successful social attacks).

*Example: An Imperial peasant develops a loyalty to the Immaculate Order at a young age, which manifests as an Intimacy. If confronted with a persuasive Solar Anathema, she falls back on this Intimacy to resist his supposed lies. If the Solar convinces her of his heroism and depletes her Willpower into compliance, she gains a "point" toward an Intimacy with him and loses a "point" from her Intimacy with the Immaculate doctrine. With her Conviction 2, she stands at the brink. Another scene buffeted by the Solar's heroism could push her to join him and abandon her faith. On the other hand, she could instead return to an Immaculate temple, hear the comforting sermons of the monks and find her original faith restored.*

**Compelling Behavior:** Characters who do not or cannot resist a successful social attack can be convinced against their better judgment to spend the rest of the scene doing any one task, provided that doing so does not violate their Motivation. Typically, characters will resist any course of action that violates their Intimacies, but they are not required to do so. A husband might have an Intimacy to his wife and still accede to the proposition of a beautiful concubine, for instance, though doing so would count as a scene of damaging that Intimacy. If a character tries to incite a crowd into an angry mob without winning its Intimacy, it might choose to follow him rather than suffer Willpower drain, particularly if its constituents perceived no risk to themselves. Once the Black Helms showed up, a new scene would begin, and the compulsion would end. At that point, the leader can try to hold the crowd together with a new roll, but it would almost certainly spend Willpower to resist, and most would scatter.

*Example: Snarling at a crowd to "Back off!" with an implied threat of violence (Charisma + Presence; Manipulation if the character is bluffing about the violence). Demanding that a captured brigand reveal the location of his band's hideout (Manipulation + Investigation; forcing the prisoner to betray this Intimacy would likely require several scenes of interrogation). Convincing a swordsmith to sell a priceless blade (Manipulation + Presence; Charisma if presenting an honest reason why the character is worthy to wield it).*

**Breaking Motivation:** If a character is reduced to zero temporary Willpower through social attacks opposing her Motivation and she goes (permanent Willpower + Essence) days without ever recovering back her full Willpower, her will is broken. In this state (which lasts until the character has full Willpower), successful social attacks may compel her to take actions betraying her Motivation. This condition does not change her Motivation, but

merely forces her to betray that Motivation temporarily. Storytellers should be wary of inflicting such a dire fate on a protagonist. (See the "Stop Playing My Character!" sidebar.)

*Example: A faerie noble takes a pair of young mortal lovers captive and imprisons them in her dungeon. She observes that their love is deep and true (loving each other forms the core of their Motivation), but the boy is weaker (Willpower 4, Essence 1). After two scenes of mind games and torment, the noble reduces him to Willpower 0. Through a combination of sleep deprivation and further torment, she keeps him from ever regaining full Willpower for five days, breaking his spirit. Eagerly savoring his deepest anguish, she hands him a gossamer knife and commands him to kill his lover.*

### Written Attacks

Characters can work a single social attack into a letter, tract or other missive. This attack uses Charisma or Manipulation as normal, depending on the honesty of the message and an Appearance modifier based on Linguistics (see p. 172). The Ability in question must be Performance if the attack will affect anyone who reads it (up to once per scene per reader) or Presence if the message is tailored to affect a specific person whenever she first reads the letter. Besides coming outside the timing of social combat (and obviating an opportunity to retaliate), written attacks follow the same resolution process as any other social attacks. It is even possible to parry with retorts, and particularly vociferous readers might do so aloud (to the astonishment of those around them). Prayers to gods or other magical beings capable of receiving prayers are a special form of written attack in which the ritual conveys the message to the spirit in place of a physical letter. Characters cannot use Charms that grant unnatural influence through the medium of the written word unless those Charms are specifically intended for such use.

## Social Units

While most social combat encounters pit individuals against one another, other occasions involve clashes of organized groups or individuals seeking to impose their will on such groups. As with the complementary units of mass combat, social units have the statistics of their leaders and several other traits that confer bonuses. Unlike military units, social units use *all* the traits of their leaders, including Essence, Virtues, Willpower and any other personal qualities. The reason for this is that the unit can be attacked as a unit only through social combat with its leader. Attacks on constituent members are also possible, but they must be resolved as normal social attacks against the characters in question rather than the unit.

Social unit leaders may invoke the benefits of their office at any time they have all members of their unit in attendance observing them. A character can be a leader of multiple units simultaneously, but he receives the benefits of only the largest unit on scene, and all units must be components of the same organization (or at least allies). For example, a king is both the leader of his nation and of his court. Normally, he receives only the benefits of leading the court, due to the impracticality of having the entire nation in attendance.

While exercising their office, social leaders cannot have more dice from a social Ability in their pool (or a static unrolled rating) than their Socialize. This represents the strain of looking and acting the expected part of leader, with all due gravitas and dignity.

### Stop Playing My Character!

Social combat exists because social traits exist, much as the presence of combat traits necessitates a physical combat system. However similar the two systems are in scope and purpose, many players resent being told how to play their characters. If a merchant hawks his wares and a simple roll of the dice dictates whether a given character breaks down and reaches for her money, what is the point of roleplaying at all? Fortunately, the limitations on Willpower drain for natural influence make it very difficult for an entire bazaar of the most honey-tongued merchants to do more than frustrate and exhaust a protagonist, and characters with sufficiently high trait ratings won't even feel that. Characters wielding sufficient persuasion to crack through this mental resilience should be rare enough to satisfy most players.

### Magnitude

This trait is scaled exactly like the Magnitude of military units (see pp. 159-160). Social units add bonus successes to all social attacks and MDV equal to (their Magnitude – the Magnitude of the opposing unit). If the opponent has greater Magnitude, that unit receives the bonus instead. This bonus cannot exceed +3 successes.

### Policy

This collection of traits captures the Motivation of the group (the core agenda that all members share) and all its lesser loyalties. When a social attack against a unit could result in a course of action that upholds or opposes a unit's Policy, the usual modifiers to MDV apply.

### Loyalty

Although unit leaders have Willpower, they may not spend from their own reserves for unit actions or to resist the compulsions of successful social attacks. Instead, the unit itself has a Loyalty rating that equals the permanent Willpower of its leader and has a temporary pool equal to its permanent rating. The leader spends Loyalty points as if they were Willpower for all social actions (including to resist compulsions). Spent Loyalty points return at the rate of one per scene.

### Damaging Social Units

If a character or unit manages to pierce the enhanced MDV of a unit with a social attack, the unit leader has the usual choice. Provided the course of action does not oppose the unit's Motivation *or* any loyalties (see "Policy"), he can elect to implement it for the organization or pay one Loyalty point to resist (and take a point of Limit, if he's a Solar). If he exhausts his Loyalty pool, his ineptitude as a leader causes the unit to lose a dot of Magnitude as characters walk away, or worse, remain on hand like hyenas for the fatal mistake that affords an opportunity for coup. He must also accede to whatever demand reduced him to Loyalty zero, unless doing so violates the unit's Motivation. Immediately after these effects take place, the unit's Loyalty pool resets to maximum (-1 if the action that reduced Magnitude would have forced the leader to act against the unit's Motivation). This cycle repeats until the character is left alone at Magnitude 0, abandoned by all those he once led.

MY ANCESTORS ONCE WORSHIPED HERE, BUT NO ONE'S BEEN INSIDE IN YEARS.
I SEE THAT. YOUR KNIFE, PLEASE.
I RECOGNIZE THAT RARE, SWEET SCENT, PRINCE OF THE EARTH.

IT'S BEEN TOO LONG. WHAT DO YOU WANT?
I SPEAK ON HIS BEHALF.
PROCEED.
PIRATES COME TO HIS HOME SHORES WITH EVERY NEW MOON TO SLAKE THEIR INTEMPERATE THIRSTS. BUT WHEN THE PIRATES NEXT COME, THE LOCALS INTEND TO FIGHT.
HE ASKS THAT YOU SLOW THEIR SHIPS, BREAKING OAR AND HOLING KEEL BEFORE THEY GAIN THE HARBOR. WE CAN DO THE REST.
IF I MAY DEVOUR ANYONE WHO FALLS OVERBOARD IN THE FIGHTING — FRIEND OR FOE — I WILL HELP YOU. AGREED?
FINE.
THEN, SO BE IT.

# CHAPTER FIVE
# CHARMS, COMBOS & SORCERY

Charms are simple magical "tricks." Each is a technique for channeling Essence through the body or mind to enhance a Solar's Abilities to superhuman levels. Charms allow the Exalted to leap vast distances, to survive in the harshest conditions and to absorb without injury blows that would kill a mortal. With Charms, the Solar Exalted slew the Primordial despots, set order to chaos and forged the glorious First Age.

All Exalted and most supernatural creatures use Charms. On the surface, these magics resemble one another, yet similar does not mean the same. The Charms in this chapter are those used by the Solar Exalted, the Lawgivers, the Chosen of the Sun. They derive their power from Solar Essence and heroic spirit. Other sorts of Exalted wield their own Charms, from the protean shapeshifting of the Lunar Exalted to the elemental mastery of the Dragon-Blooded. Most Exalted can only use those Charms specifically created for the Chosen of their type. Only Eclipse Caste Solars and Moonshadow Caste Abyssal Exalted may learn the Charms of other Exalted types and spirits.

The Charms used by spirits and other Exalted types are briefly illustrated in the Antagonists chapter of this book.

## Learning Charms

The gods taught the Lawgivers the first Charms in the time before history. They first set the Exalted on the road to knowledge. The Exalted themselves have walked far along the road in the Ages since. Throughout history, the Exalted have studied the ways of power, devising new Charms and sharing them with their peers. Greatness comes to them so easily that many Solars need no tutelage—they develop their Charms in response to exigencies and their desires.

The Charms in this chapter are the most easily developed and best known of their kind. They are by no means the only ones, however. If both the players and the Storytellers are amenable, there's no reason that a player shouldn't design her own Charms or alter the Charm trees slightly to better suit her character.

## Charms and Combos

Solar Exalted may use one only Charm per action. **Flurries count as single actions for this purpose.** Each Charm requires the character to channel Essence in a particular fashion. Even

### Charm Concept: Lawgivers?

These Charms refer to the Solar Exalted as "Lawgivers," "heroes of the dawn," "Solars," "Solar Exalts," "Exalts," "heroes" and titles such as "savants of the Sun." These terms reflect the flavor of the Solar Exalted, but they are purely flavor. Referring to the Solars as heroes doesn't mean your character has to be one.

Similarly, most Charms start with a sentence or two giving the flavor of the Charm—what it might look like, or why it exists in the setting. This is also for flavor. Just because Bureau-Rectifying Method starts off by noting that the Lawgivers govern wisely doesn't mean your character has to. The actual rules for the Charm usually start by telling you "you must do this to use the Charm," "this Charm does X," or "roll (this dice pool)."

### Charm Concept: Essence

Most Charms, whether they say so or not, work by manipulating Essence. To use their powers, the Solar Exalted pour great fountains of Essence into their body, mind and heart—a wealth of raw magic that later Ages will find unimaginable. A mere 10 motes of Solar Essence is power comparable to a philosopher's stone or the blade Excalibur. Combos and Charms with the Obvious keyword often involve contrails of magic following the character's every move and random flares of Solar light. If you're not sure how a given Charm could possibly accomplish its effect, that's the answer—every Solar is carrying around more power in his personal Essence pool than the atomic bomb that struck Hiroshima, spending and shedding it with the reckless abandon of the heroes of the dawn.

the Exalted cannot easily perform two such feats at once. A character might be able to use a single Charm more than one time per action, depending on its type, but he cannot normally use two different Charms in a single action, even if both are reflexive. Charms that modify the character's Join Battle roll are considered part of the character's Join Battle action.

Exalted can build compound Charm effects called Combos to circumvent this limitation, however. The use of these Combos requires great effort on the part of the Exalted. Combos are explained further on page 244.

## Unstoppable Force, Immovable Object

Charms and supernatural effects often provide effects that succeed without the need for an opposed dice roll. Sometimes, two such effects conflict.

In **Exalted**, defense has primacy. If an unstoppable force meets an immovable object, the object stays still. An "attack" is an effect that damages or changes the Exalt's body, mind, spirit or traits. A "defense" is an effect that prevents such an attack. Insofar as the two effects' descriptions conflict, the defense always wins. For example, when using an unblockable attack against a magical parry that blocks even unblockable attacks, the parry wins. If the defense can parry only blockable attacks, the attack may succeed—the two descriptions do not conflict.

In some cases, neither effect is an attack or defense. Tracking someone isn't an attack, because finding him doesn't damage or change his body, mind, spirit or traits. Hiding one's tracks isn't an attack, unless it works by directly impairing the tracker's senses. Nor is either effect a defense. Sometimes, both effects are attacks—for example, an Exalt attacked with an strike that always hits might reply with a defensive Combo that always dodges and hurts the attacker on a successful dodge.

In these cases, make an opposed roll between the dice pools that the Charms support, enhance or require. If the appropriate Attribute is unclear in either case, roll (user's Essence + Ability) for both Charms. The Charm associated with the winning roll overrides the Charm associated with the losing roll. Some Charms are especially powerful and add bonus successes to this roll.

## Mental Influence

Characters can exert mental influence on others. The normal mechanism is a social attack. Some miscellaneous Charms and sorcery also allow mental influence. Mental influence is something that others can resist, but if it succeeds—that is, if the influence reaches someone's heart—they must spend Willpower to resist.

The rules for resolving an attempt at mental influence are found on pages 169-175.

### How Mental Influence Works

Social attacks and mental-influence Charms create beliefs, causes, emotions or intentions. Sometimes they instantly create an emotional commitment—an Intimacy—to that idea.

**Compulsions.** Compulsion effects create intentions. They make someone decide to act in a certain way, such as "I will conquer Thorns" or "I will fall asleep now."

**Emotions.** Emotion effects create emotions. They inspire love, lust, respect, fear or some other emotion.

**Illusions.** Illusion effects create beliefs. They make characters accept something as true, even if it isn't.

**Servitude.** Servitude effects bind someone to a cause. They make the character certain that that cause is worth serving.

The Storyteller is the final authority on how much freedom of interpretation a given character has in any given situation. A compulsion to destroy Gem might lead one Solar to attack its army and another to begin designing an ultimate Essence war engine. A compulsion to take five steps forward is generally less open to interpretation and argument.

Creating a long-term loyalty is usually a Compulsion—it forces the person to form an Intimacy (see p. 201) to an idea.

**Total Control.** Total control effects are a special category of mental influence. The target can no longer take voluntary actions, but can still act as dictated by the specific influence effect

exerting total control. Characters can suffer only one total control effect at a time. If a second total control effect is applied, the two effects must make an opposed roll as per "Unstoppable Force, Immovable Object" on page 179.

## Strategy

The most practical effects are those that create compulsions. These are the effects that let you control how people act. Servitude effects are useful, but it's important to remember that loyal but confused people can easily act against your interests.

Players should not rely on the effects of emotions and illusions. Characterization and drama can lead to unexpected results. That said, the real world contains ample proof that the ability to manipulate the emotions and beliefs of others can pay off handsomely for a sufficiently ruthless person.

**Unacceptable Orders**

There are some causes and intentions people cannot embrace. There are some emotions and beliefs they cannot uphold. Without total control or extremely powerful magic, it's impossible to make someone accept these ideas. They are "unacceptable orders."

The default system assumption is that every character finds ideas that he cannot survive ("suicidal despair," "challenge the Kukla to a duel," "you will fly if you jump off this bridge") unacceptable. It also assumes that these are the only unacceptable orders. Persuasion can overcome any conscious belief but not the survival instinct. This is sometimes realistic but is explicitly not based on realism. This rule exists to empower persuasion while making sure that characters influence their enemies to do more interesting things than "die."

Many characters use Charms or other abilities to define additional orders that they or others simply cannot accept. For many Solar Exalted, "defy your Motivation" is an unacceptable order. For some Dragon-Blooded, "break faith with your sworn brotherhood" is an order worse than death. Conversely, extras, martyrs, weary crippled death cultists and so forth sometimes accept suicidal orders, at the Storyteller's discretion.

Characters cannot use mental influence to issue unacceptable orders unless the Charm or spell they use specifically allows them to do so. Attempts to do so simply have no effect. The target resists automatically, pays nothing to do so and receives no benefit from doing so.

**Impossible Orders**

Ordering a peasant to grow wings is generally unproductive. Characters cannot use mental influence to issue impossible orders—things the target simply cannot do—regardless of how powerful their Charms might be. It is acceptable to urge the stones of the field and the stars in the sky to march on your enemies, but they lose no Willpower for being unable to do so.

## Natural Mental Influence

*Natural* mental influence comes from communication and interaction. Characters with high Appearance exert a certain influence simply by existing. The fire kindled in others by a high Charisma is natural mental influence. Manipulation shows a character's mastery of deliberate mental influence. Charms that enhance the character's social Abilities exert a natural mental influence.

Characters successfully affected by natural mental influence have two choices. If the influence is compatible with their Motivation, they have the option to accept the influence. They accept the kindled belief, cause, emotion or intention. If they want to resist the influence, or if it is not compatible with their Motivation, they must spend one Willpower to resist. This allows them to ignore the influence attempt.

Natural mental influence must *break* others' Motivation (see pp. 174-175) to force them to betray it. Even if the character has 0 temporary Willpower, unbroken characters cling to their core principles. **Characters spend two Willpower per scene at most to resist natural mental influence—after that, unless the attacker uses a stunt to come at the character from an unexpected direction, the character can resist all forms of natural mental influence without cost.** Natural influence cannot ever give someone an "unacceptable order"—such orders do not cost Willpower to resist.

## Strategy Notes

*Natural* mental influence is a normal interaction**.** This means that characters need not consider it more or less savage than ordinary persuasion attempts. It is not perceived as sinister or as supernatural mind control by its victims or its practitioners. It is a neutral tool applicable to both moral and immoral ends.

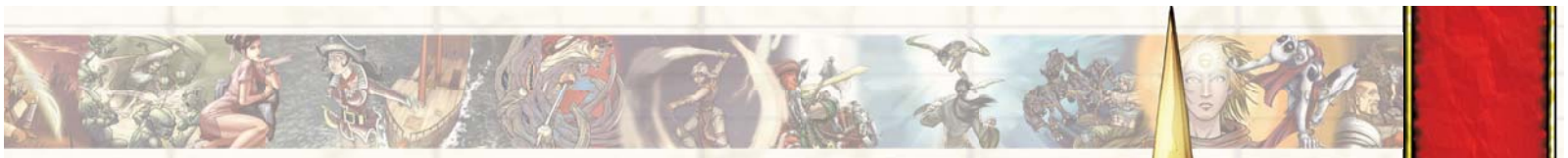
It is also limited in its impact**.** The reason targets do not see natural mental influence as an abusive invasion of their minds is that it's not. To actually brainwash a character with these techniques requires breaking them over the course of days.

Note that the Willpower cost of rejecting influence comes from the fact that the character exerting influence *makes a good case*. Players are entitled to resist any influence they think is inappropriate for their character, but resisting *every* form of persuasion is closer to paranoid isolation than independence.

## Unnatural Mental Influence

Sorcerous mind control and powerful Social Charms carry Essence-charged effects into the minds of others. These are *unnatural* effects. Some overwhelm their victims, literally invading their minds; others invest Essence into the words and actions of the Solar to give them unnaturally potent Social effect.

Characters who are successfully affected by unnatural mental influence have two choices. If the influence is compatible with



their Motivation, they have the option to accept the influence. If they want to resist the influence, or if it is not compatible with their Motivation, they must spend Willpower to resist. The default is one Willpower to entirely ignore the influence. Some influence is more powerful, requiring up to five Willpower to cast off. Some influence is more tenacious—spending Willpower might cast off the influence for only an action, a minute, a scene or a year. **Characters cannot resist unnatural mental influence without spending Willpower, regardless of how much Willpower other mental influence effects have cost them this scene.**

Resisting unnatural mental influence also puts a strain upon a character's soul. Each time the character resists, if the character has a Limit trait, he gains one Limit. **Characters gain at most one Limit per scene from resisting mental influence. After that, unless the attacker uses a stunt designed to impose Limit, the character does not gain further Limit from resisting mental influence.**

Unnatural mental influence can force a target with 0 Willpower to betray her Motivation. Only rare and special unnatural mental influence effects can force the target to obey an "unacceptable order." Unless the attacker is using such an effect, the target does not spend Willpower or gain Limit when resisting such orders.

### Strategy Notes

*Unnatural* mental influence is magical mental influence**.** Targets recognize the supernatural force behind the character's actions. If this influence is hostile, inappropriate, or used against targets who value their liberty and independence, unnatural mental influence makes enemies.

Unnatural influence has unlimited impact**.** Using Essence to shape others' minds can make even the most terrible enemy into the most abject servant.

## Charm Timing

Charms and Combos can be used in narrative time whenever the exact timing of events does not matter. Most Charms relevant in combat operate on the time scale of a battle—and even complex Charms take only a few seconds to use.

Social actions and mass combat actions operate on a different time scale. Commanding a military unit or making a speech takes several minutes. The same is often true of Charms that affect a mass combat or social conflict—particularly if they're not reflexive. There's no rule against using social or mass combat Charms in normal combat, but there are many such Charms with no battle application. They take several minutes to use or they affect only social or mass combat actions, so there's no way to use them in ordinary combat.

Some Charms deal with "dramatic actions"—such as managing a business or traveling between cities. These Charms require a variable length of time to use. The character cannot normally use these Charms when he is actively participating in a battle or other conflict.

## Presentation Format

This section explains the format used to present Charms. While each Charm is a unique magic, all Charms are presented in a regular format listing the Charm's important game statistics.

## Charm Name

**Cost:** The cost to use the Charm. Charms usually cost one or more Essence motes to use. This cost is generally written as follows:

Therefore, a Charm that costs three motes and one Willpower would have a cost listing of 3m, 1wp.

A character can use a Charm only if he can immediately pay the Essence cost for its use. A Charm that generates Essence cannot power itself when its wielder is otherwise without Essence. Charms that cost health levels to activate inflict unsoakable levels of damage, usually bashing damage, on the character using them. This damage cannot be prevented by any effect that does not also nullify the Charm. Finally, unless the description of the Charm states otherwise, the Exalt must spend the cost of the Charm before his player makes any rolls related to it.

**Mins:** The minimum scores the character must possess in the Ability that the Charm enhances and in Essence in order to learn the Charm. For example, a character who wishes to learn Phantom Arrow Technique must have an Archery Ability of 3+ and an Essence of 2+ in order to do so. Characters with insufficient Ability scores don't have the personal mastery of the Ability required to empower the Charm, and characters with insufficient

| Label | Cost | Example |
|---|---|---|
| #m | motes | (4m for four motes) |
| #wp | willpower | (1wp for one temporary Willpower) |
| #hl | bashing health levels | (2hl for two bashing health levels) |
| #lhl | lethal health levels | (1lhl for one lethal health level) |
| #ahl | aggravated health levels | (1ahl for one aggravated health level) |
| #xp | experience points | (2xp for two experience points) |

## The Rules of Charms

If players create their own Charms, Storytellers should keep the following rules of thumb in mind.

**Efficiency:** The Charms presented here are already at the peak of mote efficiency for Solar Charms. This is the basic Solar toolkit, refined through millennia of experimentation, a testament to the power of the Chosen written into the book of the world. Don't let a player convince you that because her character has spent time optimizing the Charm that he should get to use it at a discount.

**Coherence:** Charm trees work along a theme. Lesser Charms build on one another and act as a logical foundation for the more powerful Charms. Feel free to refuse a player who draws up a grab-bag assortment of what she wants her character to do and then cobbles it together into a Charm tree. Most Charms should either be offshoots of or variants on an established tree or part of an entirely new tree that the Storyteller and players design together.

**Theme:** Solars are the heroes of the dawn. They are the sages, warriors and god-kings of old, wakened from the sleep of ages to set their order on the world. They fight, they lead, and they rule. They don't really shapeshift, fire ice bolts out of their hands, raise legions of the dead, curse villages to doom or inject poison with their fingernails. These are the sorts of things that other Exalted do. No matter how long they work at it, Solars can't learn to shoot their mouth out on a tentacle and bite someone to death—any more than Gilgamesh, Herakles, David, Solomon, Paul Bunyan or the Yellow Emperor could. A Solar might shout loudly enough to shatter bones or call down solar flames, but she cannot achieve Gigeresque special effects without the art of sorcery.

**Limits:** Don't just let characters produce powerful Charm after powerful Charm. Charms have prerequisites because learning Charms is complex, and a lot of lesser knowledge leads to mastery. Don't let a player make a powerful Charm just because she's mastered one or two unrelated trees—if it were that easy, Charms wouldn't have prerequisites. Start with a weaker effect and work upward, or start with an effect that relates to existing Charms and move outward.

Essence cannot channel enough power into the Charm to manifest its effects. If a character stops meeting the minimum trait requirements for a Charm, she remembers the magic but cannot use it again until she restores her traits to appropriate levels.

**Type:** For the purpose of game mechanics, Solar Charms are divided into five types. A Charm's type governs how often it can be used in an action and if it requires a character's dice action or not. The five types of Charms follow.

*Simple*—The Charm is the character's action. It can only be used once per action. Simple Charms have an associated Speed and DV penalty.

Charm Speeds are measured in ticks. The Speed is the number of ticks that must elapse in combat time before the character can act again. **Simple Charms are Speed 6 unless otherwise noted, so using a Simple Charm is usually a six-tick action.** For example, a character can use a Speed 6 simple Charm on tick 2 and then take another action when his DV refreshes on tick 8.

Some Charms have a Speed measured in long ticks. These Charms are useful only in social conflict, in mass combat and in general when one has several minutes to spare. For example, a character who uses a Charm with a Speed of six long ticks cannot take another action for six minutes. The Charm usually fails if the character is forced to join battle in the meantime (but see "Dealing with Interruptions," on p. 125 of Chapter Four for details).

Some Charms have their Speed listed as a dramatic action. This means that the Charm is tied to a single action that usually takes a long time—gathering food in the woods, for example, or boating down a river. The character is committed to that action for as much as several days unless interrupted, and the Charm usually includes some measure of progress in the event of that interruption.

The DV penalty of a simple Charm reduces the character's DV while using this Charm. Charms default to a -1 DV penalty unless otherwise noted.

Charms with unusual Speed or DV penalties list these values in parentheses next to the type. For example, a simple Charm with a Speed of 3 ticks and the default DV penalty would have **Type:** Simple (Speed 3). **If you cannot find the Charm's Speed, the Charm has Speed 6; if you cannot find its DV penalty, the Charm has a DV penalty of -1.**

The character cannot take multiple actions when using a simple Charm.

*Supplemental*—The Charm enhances the character's action. Unless stated otherwise, a supplemental Charm can enhance actions involving only the Ability associated with that Charm. It cannot enhance actions involving other Abilities, and it cannot be used on its own. The character can invoke the Charm multiple times in a flurry, with each invocation assisting a single action.

*Reflexive*—The Charm isn't part of the character's action. Reflexive Charms used during attack resolution specify the steps of attack resolution during which a character can use the Charm (see p. 145). This information is written in parentheses next to the Type. Characters can use a reflexive Charm in any instant and as many times during her action as she wishes. She can even use it before her first action. She must pay the Charm's cost with each use.

Using a reflexive Charm counts as the one Charm the character can use in an action. This means that if the character has already used a Charm in her action, she cannot use a reflexive Charm until her next action. It also means that if she uses one reflexive Charm in her action, she cannot use a different one until her DV refreshes. Combos (see p. 244) change these limits.

Many reflexive Charms also function as supplemental Charms—they enhance some action the character is taking. For example, characters can use Crashing Wave Throw when throwing an opponent to enhance the effect.

*Extra Action*—Extra action Charms are Charm-based flurries (see p. 143). Each functions as a normal flurry but has no multiple action penalties. In addition, only the action with the highest DV penalty imposes a DV penalty. The others do not. This magical flurry is the character's action. Therefore, if a flurry gives the character two attacks, those two attacks are her complete action.

The character can use the Charm only once per action and cannot add multiple actions by mundane means.

*Permanent*—Permanent Charms permanently enhance the character's capabilities. The effect cannot be dispelled, and it has no cost to maintain. Most permanent Charms require the character to spend Essence to take full advantage of their effects, but doing so does not count as a Charm or an action. Permanent Charms do not list duration, and their cost is listed as —.

**Keywords:** These rules use the following keywords to describe qualities of a Charm.

*Combo-Basic:* Exalted can place this Charm in a Combo with reflexive Charms, including the Excellencies. They cannot place this Charm in a Combo with simple Charms, extra action Charms or supplemental Charms.

*Combo-OK:* Exalted can place this Charm in a Combo.

*Compulsion:* This Charm's special damage is a Compulsion effect.

*Counterattack:* This Charm is or involves a counterattack—something extra that happens during the course of attack resolution, usually but not always the defender counterattacking the attacker. Characters cannot use counterattacks to respond to other counterattacks, and characters cannot use multiple counterattacks to respond to a single attack unless otherwise stated. Making a counterattack imposes a cumulative counterattack penalty of -1 to your DV until your next action.

*Crippling:* This Charm's special damage is a Crippling effect.

*Emotion:* This Charm's special damage is an Emotion effect.

*Form-type:* This Charm is a martial arts Form-type Charm. Characters cannot use more than one Martial Arts Form-type Charm at a time. The character must end one Form-type Charm to use another.

*Holy:* This Charm's special damage is imbued with the judgment of the Unconquered Sun. Such Charms have extra impact when used against creatures of darkness (see p. 192).

*Illusion:* This Charm's special damage is an Illusion effect.

*Knockback:* This Charm knocks its target backward. Appropriate Charms can resist this effect.

*Obvious:* Observers can tell that the Exalt is using a Charm, and they have a rough idea of its effects. Obvious permanent Charms are only obvious when actively in use.

*Poison:* This Charm's special damage is a Poison effect.

*Servitude:* This Charm's special damage is a Servitude effect.

*Shaping:* Integrity and Lore Charms treat this Charm's effects as a Shaping effect.

*Sickness:* This Charm's special damage is a Sickness effect.

*Social:* This Charm is often used when the character participates in a social conflict. It affects actions on the social time scale.

*Stackable:* Multiple invocations of this Charm are cumulative—the Solar can use it more than once to increase the bonuses or penalties the Charm inflicts.

*Touch:* The Exalt must touch the target to use the Charm. Touching a non-consenting target requires a (Dexterity + Martial Arts) attack.

*Training:* This Charm trains other characters. Characters who receive training and aren't extras must pay the normal experience cost for any trait increases. If they can't afford this cost, they go into "experience point debt." They must pay at least half of all awarded experience points, rounded down, toward this debt until repaid.

*War:* This Charm is often used when the character participates in a war, by means of the Join War action. It affects actions on the war time scale.

**Duration:** The length of time the Charm lasts. Charms can measure their duration in real units, such as days, or game units, such as ticks or scenes. Indefinite Charms have no fixed duration—they last until the Exalt cancels the effect. Instant Charms happen in an instant—an abstract, indivisible moment of game time. If you look at your game as a kung fu movie, an instant is a single panel of the storyboard.

Some Charms last a certain number of actions—either the Solar's actions or the target's. These Charms always expire at the beginning of an action, not the end—an effect that lasts through two of the target's actions expires just as the target begins his third action.

**Prerequisite Charms:** Some Charms are very simple, and the Exalted can learn them on their own. Most Charms are more complex. The character's ability to execute them depends on his mastery of other, simpler Charms. Characters cannot purchase a Charm without first purchasing all of its prerequisites, either during character creation or with experience.

Thereafter follows a description detailing the effects of the Charm. Charms are idiosyncratic, and each Charm's description details the rules for its use.

# General Charms

## Excellencies and Related Charms

Every Ability has three Charms known as Excellencies. Characters can buy one, two or all three of these Charms for each Ability, though each of the three Charms may be purchased only one time for each Ability. In addition, Solar Exalted have two Charms that enhance their Excellencies. Each of these may also be purchased once for each Ability, as can other Storyteller- or player-created Charms of this sort.

### First (Ability) Excellency—

### Essence Overwhelming

**Cost:** 1m per die; **Mins:** (Ability) 1, Essence 1; **Type:** Reflexive (Step 1 for attacker, Step 2 for defender)
**Keywords:** Combo-OK
**Duration:** Instant
**Prerequisite Charms:** None

Lawgivers with this Charm are known for their moments of brilliance. **The Exalt's player can invoke this Charm when making a roll based on the relevant Ability. This Charm then adds one die to that roll for each mote spent.** This Charm is the paradigmatic dice adder. The rule that Solars are prohibited from increasing a dice pool by more than their (Attribute + Ability) almost always refers to the purchase of dice through the use of this Charm.

Characters can also use this Charm to enhance unrolled uses of the relevant Ability, usually to increase a Defense Value, for example, by increasing (Dexterity + Dodge) to protect against a physical attack. When enhancing static values, her player rolls one die for each mote spent on the First Excellency. Each success increases her effective (Attribute + Ability) rating for the task by two. **Therefore, each success on the First Excellency roll increases an applicable static value by one.**

Characters cannot use this or other Excellencies or dice-adding Charms to "create" actions. For example, if a character

## Valid Rolls and Valid Targets

When a Charm affects a valid action or a valid target, it means that the Charm does not give the character the ability to attempt something he otherwise could not. For example, the Charm Accuracy Without Distance guarantees success on an Archery roll to hit a valid target. It does not allow the character to automatically shoot at and hit the Mask of Winters (see p. 320) unless the Mask of Winters is actually within the maximum Range of his bow. Nor does it allow him to shoot through a thick stone wall unless other magic permits it.

## Multiple Purchases and Invocations

Characters cannot purchase a given Charm more than once unless otherwise stated.

Characters can use instant Charms only once during an instant. Multiple invocations of Charms with a longer duration are possible. The effects on the Solar or any given target are cumulative only if the Charm has the Stackable keyword.

## Rules Worth Rereading

If you skim these rules when learning the system, there are a few rules sections worth rereading before actual play. Make sure you understand all the vital concepts and how they work, then check the "Charm Concept" boxes if you have any relevant questions.

| **Vital Concept** | **Location** |
|---|---|
| Charm Timing | p. 181 |
| Combos | p. 244 |
| Committed Essence | this sidebar |
| Charms and Pools | p. 185 |
| Internal and External Penalties | p. 121 |
| Order of Attack Events | p. 145 |
| Order of Modifiers | p. 124 |
| **Charm Concept Box** | **Location** |
| "Creatures of Darkness" | p. 192 |
| Elsewhere | p. 189 |
| Groups | p. 198 |
| Intimacies | p. 201 |
| Medical Conditions | p. 221 |
| Mental Influence | p. 179 |
| Mortals | p. 218 |
| Natural Animals | p. 210 |
| Objects and Structures | p. 213 |
| Ownership | p. 238 |
| Shaping | p. 217 |

## Essence and Ability Minimums

The Ability minimums for Charms reflect the kind of mundane skill that the Charm enhances. If the Charm improves basic competence, it has a low Ability minimum. If it enhances the kinds of special tricks legendary masters do, it has a high Ability minimum.

Charms with an Essence minimum of 1 are usually internal. Unless the Charm is Obvious, it's hard for observers to distinguish the Charm from luck or ordinary competence.

Charms with an Essence minimum of 2 are usually feats appropriate to pulp and epic heroes.

Charms with an Essence minimum of 3 are usually magical expressions of the Solar Essence—they create something from nothing or infuse Essence into the world.

Charms with an Essence minimum of 4 reflect a Solar's transformation into a world-shaking font of holy power. They are mighty, angelic powers.

Charms with an Essence minimum of 5 touch on the remaining glory of the First Age. They are the Charms appropriate to the lords of Creation, the conquerors of chaos, the leaders of nations.

## Committed Essence

Most Charms are instant Charms. They happen in a flash, then they're done. Effects such as healed or inflicted wounds might linger, but the magic is gone.

Other Charms have indefinite duration. The Chosen sustain these Charms with the power of their spirit. The motes of Essence spent on the Charm remain spent. These motes are known as *committed Essence*. While the Charm's effect persists, the Exalt cannot regain the motes of committed Essence.

*Example: a character with a normal maximum Essence pool of 42 spends 10 motes to power the Hypnotic Tongue Technique Charm. The duration of this Charm is special—it lasts until the subject carries out the suggestion or until a number of days equal to the user's Charisma pass. Until one of these things occurs, the character's maximum Essence pool is 32, because 10 Essence motes are sustaining the effect of the Charm. After the Hypnotic Tongue Technique's effects have ended, the character can regain those 10 motes of Essence normally.*

An Exalt can end the effect of any of her Charms at any time. Also, motes spent to power sorcery are *not* committed unless otherwise stated, even if the spell's effects linger beyond an instant.

attacks on tick 3 and will attack again on tick 8, she cannot buy dice for an attack on tick 4 that only exists because she used the Excellency to conjure dice for it. A character who uses this or other reflexive Charms to add to an attack can also use it to enhance her *defense* until the next tick when she acts, but she must spend Essence for each separate roll she wishes to modify.

This Charm can be part of a Combo or used together with the Second Excellency, but it is incompatible with the Third Excellency. It can never be used on the same roll as the Third Excellency.

## Second (Ability) Excellency—Essence Triumphant

**Cost:** 2m per success; **Mins:** (Ability) 1, Essence 1; **Type:** Reflexive (Step 1 for attacker, Step 2 for defender)
**Keywords:** Combo-OK
**Duration:** Instant
**Prerequisite Charms:** None

Solar Exalted with this Charm are known for their unwavering perfection. **The Exalt's player can invoke this Charm**

## Charms and Pools

Charms can increase a Lawgiver's dice pools by only an amount equal to (the relevant Attribute + Ability). No combination of Charms can increase a Solar Exalt's dice pools by more than this amount. Charms that add automatic successes or remove penalties do not count as increases to a dice pool unless otherwise stated.

**For unrolled activities such as DV** (see p. 146)**, Mental DV** (see p. 172) **or feats of strength** (see p. 127)**, Charms increase a character's static rating by adding to (the relevant Attribute + Ability).** This bonus increases the (Attribute + Ability) pool, not the final result of any calculations, so if the (Attribute + Ability) is divided in half, the bonus rating will be applied before the division, not afterward. The result is that player will normally have to add two "dice" to increase a static value by one—although the First Excellency (see p. 183) provides a discount of sorts for this, increasing static values by one per success rolled.

Regardless, **no combination of Charms, including the First Excellency, can increase a static rating by more than half the (Attribute + Ability)**, and Charms that remove penalties do not count as increasing the character's static rating. **Treat Willpower as an Attribute for this purpose. If there is no applicable Attribute, Charms can add only a number of dice equal to the character's Ability.**

### Examples

| Pool or Rating | Maximum Increase |
|---|---|
| Perception + Awareness | Perception + Awareness |
| Dexterity + Melee + Specialties + Weapon Accuracy | Dexterity + Melee |
| Charisma + Presence – Penalties | Charisma + Presence |
| Dexterity + Stealth + Bonus | Dexterity + Stealth |
| Essence + Presence + 10 | Presence |
| Dodge DV | (Dexterity + Dodge) ÷ 2 |
| Parry DV with Sword | (Dexterity + Melee) ÷ 2 |
| Parry DV with Fists | (Dexterity + Martial Arts) ÷ 2 |
| Mental Dodge DV | (Willpower + Integrity) ÷ 2 |

*Example: Thorn has Dexterity 5 and Melee 3 and two specialties in Sword. Melee Excellency adds at most eight dice to her attack pool or +4 to her parry DV, even if she is using a sword and therefore has a 10-die attack.*

Charms that increase others' dice pools or static ratings count as a dice bonus from Charms. A Solar cannot add more dice to his pool by combining his Charms with assistance from another Exalt than he could alone. Charms that increase the dice pools or static ratings of creatures that do not wield Essence can increase those pools by a maximum of the creature's Ability, without benefit from Ability specialties.

**when making a roll based on the relevant Ability.** The Exalt then spends up to (Attribute + Ability) in motes. **This Charm adds one success to a roll for every two motes spent. Each success purchased with Essence Triumphant is the equivalent of purchasing two dice with the First Excellency or some other dice adder.** Therefore, if a Solar had a (Dexterity + Melee) total of 8, he could purchase up to four successes with the Second Excellency. Any magical effects that hinge on the character buying dice will then react as if the character had just bought eight (Dexterity + Melee) dice. The character could not add dice from the effects of other Charms because he has reached his maximum of eight by purchasing the four successes.

The Exalt can also use this Charm to enhance unrolled uses of the relevant Ability. Each two motes spent increases his effective (Attribute + Ability) rating for one task by two. **This means that every two motes spent on this Excellency increase a static value like a DV by one.** The First Excellency is thus considerably more efficient for increasing static values than the Second Excellency, but not reliably so.

This Charm can be Comboed or used together with the First Excellency, but it is incompatible with the Third Excellency, and it can never be used on the same roll as the Third Excellency.

### Third (Ability) Excellency—

### Essence Resurgent

**Cost:** 4m; **Mins:** (Ability) 1, Essence 1; **Type:** Reflexive (Step 4 for attacker, Step 6 for defender)
**Keywords:** Combo-OK
**Duration:** Instant
**Prerequisite Charms:** None

Exalted with this Charm recover smoothly from failure. **An Exalt's player can invoke this Charm after making a roll based on the relevant Ability. This Charm allows her player to make the roll again, using the new result if the Exalt prefers it.** The Exalt can also use this Charm to enhance static values derived from the relevant Ability. Doing so increases the character's effective (Attribute + Ability) rating for one task by the Ability rating. **This means that the Essence Resurgent Excellency increases an applicable DV by half the relevant Ability.**

### Infinite (Ability) Mastery

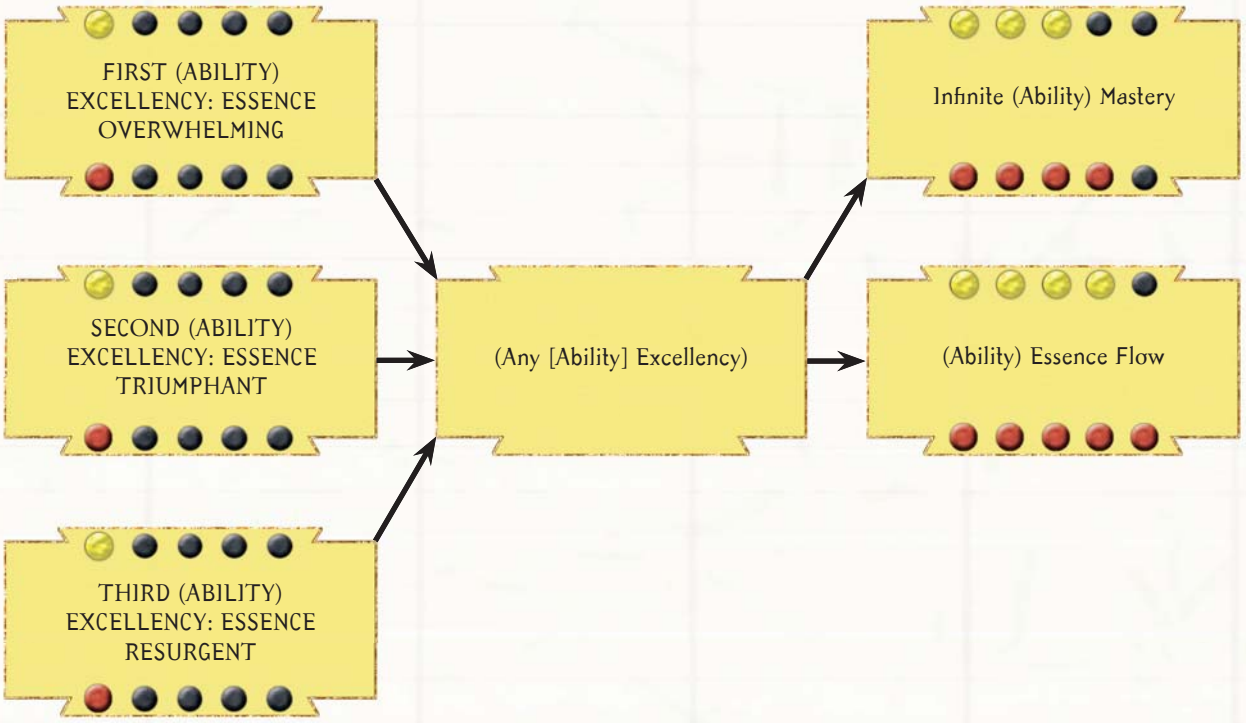
**Cost:** 2m+, 1wp; **Mins:** (Ability) 4, Essence 3; **Type:** Simple
**Keywords:** None
**Duration:** One scene
**Prerequisite Charms:** Any (Ability) Excellency

The Solar Exalted are infinite wells of talent. Each two motes committed to this Charm reduces the mote cost for the first three (Ability) Excellencies by one, to a minimum of 0. Exalted with Essence 3 can spend up to six motes on this Charm, while Exalted with Essence 4+ can spend as many motes as they like.

*Example: A character with Infinite Melee Mastery, a Melee of 4, a Dexterity of 4 and an Essence of 3 could commit up to six motes to the Charm. This would reduce the cost of any given Melee Excellency by three motes. While the character is technically using a Charm for the purposes of Combos, she could gain up to three bonus dice from the First Excellency on any action using Melee at a cost of 0 motes. She could buy one success with the Second Excellency at no cost in motes or reduce the cost of the Third Excellency to one mote. She could also gain one die with the First Excellency if the First and Second Excellencies were together in a Combo she had activated (see p. 244). Any additional effect—adding more dice or more success—would cost the normal price. So, the example character could purchase up to eight bonus dice using the First Excellency and apply a three-mote discount to the total cost, so buying the maximum eight dice would cost five motes.*

Apply the discount to the total expenditure on Excellencies relating to a given roll. A character who spends motes on the Comboed effects of the First and Second Excellencies does not receive the discount for the use of both Excellencies on a given roll. If the example character activated a Combo and spent four motes to buy two successes on a roll with the Second Excellency and four motes to buy four dice using the First Excellency, the cost would be five motes ([4 + 4] – [3 for the six motes committed to the Infinite Melee Mastery]).

In the Charm trees that follow, the crimson beads represent a Charm's Ability minimum, while the gold beads represent its Essence minimum.



This Charm and the relevant discount are incompatible with any effect that invokes the effects of Excellencies as innate powers rather than as Charms. A character must have the Excellency in order to invoke it at a discount through the use of this Charm.

### (Ability) Essence Flow

**Cost:** —; **Mins:** (Ability) 5, Essence 4; **Type:** Permanent
**Keywords:** None
**Duration:** Instant
**Prerequisite Charms:** Any (Ability) Excellency

The Essence of the Solar Exalted flows through them and brings their intentions and their actions into perfect harmony. Purchasing this Charm allows the Solar to invoke the First, Second and Third Excellencies for the relevant Ability as innate powers rather than Charms. This means that the character can use them even with a Combo that does not contain them or when she has already used a Charm for an action. However, she cannot use them out of place on the order of combat actions (see p. 145), nor may she apply the same Charm repeatedly to a single roll.

The character must abide by the dice pool maximums as normal. For instance, if a character has a (Dexterity + Melee) of 8, and the player buys four dice through the First Excellency, the player could not use the Second Excellency to buy more than two successes, even if one of those Excellencies was invoked as a natural ability. The Third Excellency remains incompatible with the first two, even if some or all of them are invoked as natural Abilities. The effects are the effects of a Charm used by the character in all ways, save that they can be used with other Charms from the Ability without being placed in a Combo. (See p. 244 for the Combo rules.)

The character must first buy the relevant Excellency to use it with this Charm, but he need not buy this Charm for each Excellency. This Charm is incompatible with any effect that reduces the mote cost of the first three Excellencies. Characters using these Charms as innate powers cannot benefit from any discount.

# Dawn Caste

## Archery

### There Is No Wind

**Cost:** 3m or 5m; **Mins:** Archery 4, Essence 1; **Type:** Supplemental
**Keywords:** Combo-OK
**Duration:** Instant
**Prerequisite Charms:** Any Archery Excellency

The Solar's heart knows the arrow's path. She spends three motes and fires a single flawless shot, regardless of distance, visibility, weather and other prevailing conditions. This Charm nullifies all penalties, except wound and multiple action penalties, applying to a single Archery-based attack.

If the Solar has Essence 3 or higher, she can spend two additional motes and this Charm will increase the Range of her weapon to her maximum visibility range.

### Accuracy Without Distance

**Cost:** 1m, 1wp; **Mins:** Archery 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Supplemental
**Keywords:** Combo-OK, Obvious
**Duration:** Instant
**Prerequisite Charms:** There is No Wind

The Solar fires a single perfect shot. The Exalt spends this Charm's cost and fires an arrow at a valid target. This Charm supplements the player's Archery roll and guarantees that the arrow hits. This Charm can be used in archery contests and for trick shots—such as severing a rope from afar—but it is most often used in attacks. Resolve such attacks normally. If the attack would have missed without this Charm, then it hits, calculating its raw damage based on an assumption of 0 attack successes. This Charm does not change the normal rules for valid targets—shooting "the gap in his armor" does not allow the Exalt to bypass armor soak, nor does this Charm allow the Exalt to fire through a stone wall or beyond the maximum Range of his bow without additional magic.

### Forceful Arrow

**Cost:** 3m; **Mins:** Archery 4, Essence 2; **Type:** Supplemental
**Keywords:** Combo-OK, Knockback, Obvious
**Duration:** Instant
**Prerequisite Charms:** There is No Wind

Essence imbues the Lawgiver's arrow with great force. This Charm supplements an Archery-based attack. If the attack hits and rolls even one die of damage, the enemy's player rolls (Stamina + Resistance) against a difficulty of (the attack's post-soak damage dice). On failure, the attack knocks the enemy away from the Exalt a number of yards equal to the Exalt's Essence. Objects do not get a roll, but are instead knocked back automatically if (the raw damage x 50) exceeds the object's weight in pounds.

### Trance of Unhesitating Speed

**Cost:** 2m or 4m per attack; **Mins:** Archery 3, Essence 2; **Type:** Extra Action
**Keywords:** Combo-OK, Obvious
**Duration:** Instant
**Prerequisite Charms:** Any Archery Excellency

The ideal archer flows with soft and unhesitating grace through the motions of firing her weapon. This Charm is a magical flurry of two or more Archery-based attacks. Each attack costs two motes, including the first, and the Exalt can buy up to (her permanent Essence + 1) attacks. This Charm lets the Solar make these attacks regardless of the weapon's Rate, without multiple action penalties, and with a DV penalty equal to the highest penalty for any one attack.

Some Archery weapons, such as firewands and siege crossbows, are difficult to fire rapidly. Characters using Trance of Unhesitating Speed with a weapon that has a Rate less than 1 must spend four motes rather than two motes on each attack.

This Charm need not be Obvious if the character does not exceed the normal Rate of the bow, but it can be Obvious at any time if the activating character desires.

### Arrow Storm Technique

**Cost:** 8m, 1wp; **Mins:** Archery 5, Essence 2; **Type:** Supplemental
**Keywords:** Combo-Basic, Obvious

**Duration:** Instant
**Prerequisite Charms:** Trance of Unhesitating Speed

Against a single Solar, the armies of the unrighteous fall. This Charm enhances an Archery-based attack. The Solar can apply this attack (for which he rolls only once) against (his permanent Essence x 3) valid targets. He cannot apply this attack to a single person or human-sized object more than once, but he can apply it repeatedly against the same military unit or larger object. This Charm requires that the character have separate ammunition for each target. The character can use this Charm even with weapons such as firewands that would normally require a reloading action between shots.

## Flashing Vengeance Draw

**Cost:** 3m; **Mins:** Archery 3, Essence 2; **Type:** Supplemental
**Keywords:** Combo-Basic
**Duration:** Instant
**Prerequisite Charms:** Trance of Unhesitating Speed

To assault the Chosen of the Unconquered Sun is folly. Their retribution is swift and terrible. The Exalt must have an Archery weapon available for use to invoke this Charm, but it need not be in her hands. This Charm enhances the Join Battle action, giving the Solar a number of bonus successes on the Join Battle roll equal to her Essence. This Charm immediately and reflexively draws and readies an available Archery weapon.

## Essence Arrow Attack

**Cost:** 2m; **Mins:** Archery 2, Essence 2; **Type:** Supplemental
**Keywords:** Combo-OK, Obvious
**Duration:** Instant
**Prerequisite Charms:** None

The character charges an arrow with Essence. The effects are based on the character's fighting style and anima. This Charm always adds the character's Essence in damage to an Archery-based attack. In addition, players can pick one of the following effects when purchasing this Charm.

*Fiery Arrow Attack:* The Solar's arrow (or appropriate ammunition)

catches fire mid-flight. If the Solar's Archery-based attack strikes a flammable material, this Charm ensures that it ignites. This Charm always destroys wooden ammunition when it's used.

*Dazzling Flare:* The Solar's arrow (or other ammunition) glows with holy fire or brilliant sunlight. This Charm makes the Solar's Archery-based attack Holy, and it inflicts aggravated damage against creatures of darkness (see p. 192). The arrow shines brightly enough to be seen for (the Solar's Essence x 10) miles, if fired straight upward or otherwise unobstructed.

*Righteous Judgment Arrow:* The Solar can spend a third mote on this Charm to add four extra dice of damage to the attack. This variation has a distinctive visual effect usually related to the character's anima. For example, if a Twilight's anima display shows a mandala of blue and gold light, her Righteous Judgment Arrow might have streamers of blue and gold that congeal into a mandala symbol in front of the target as the arrow hits.

Characters can purchase additional effects for this Charm at a cost of one experience point each or one bonus point for both.

### Phantom Arrow Technique

**Cost:**—(1m per attack); **Mins:** Archery 3, Essence 2; **Type:** Permanent
**Keywords:** Obvious
**Prerequisite Charms:** Essence Arrow Attack

The bane of the mortal archer is her dependence on ammunition, but Lawgivers can use this Charm to shape sparkling arrows of Essence. This Charm permits a Lawgiver to make ranged attacks without using ammunition. Each such attack costs one mote of Essence. The Exalt can attack as if using any form of ammunition without Resources cost, such as a broadhead, fowling, frog crotch or target arrow. This Charm permanently enhances the Exalt's capabilities. Therefore, shaping motes into ammunition is an unrolled reflexive action and not a Charm activation.

### Summoning the Loyal Bow

**Cost:** 1m; **Mins:** Archery 3, Essence 2; **Type:** Simple (Speed 3)
**Keywords:** Combo-OK
**Duration:** Indefinite
**Prerequisite Charms:** Phantom Arrow Technique

The Chosen may set aside their weapons for a time, but a life of peace can never be their fate. The Solar first draws a ranged weapon that he owns and has used to inflict damage in battle. This Charm banishes that weapon to Elsewhere. The Solar can then draw the weapon directly from Elsewhere later, using a miscellaneous action. The Charm ends when he does so. If he cancels the Essence committed to this Charm while the weapon is Elsewhere, the weapon falls to the ground at his side.
This Charm can banish only objects (including artifacts) deliberately created as ranged weapons.

### Immaculate Golden Bow

**Cost:** 5m, 1wp; **Mins:** Archery 4, Essence 3; **Type:** Simple (Speed 5)
**Keywords:** Obvious
**Duration:** One scene
**Prerequisite Charms:** Phantom Arrow Technique

The Solar shapes his Essence into a deadly bow. Each bow has an appearance unique to the Exalt who conjures it. It has a Range of 300 yards. It has Rate and Accuracy equal to the Lawgiver's permanent Essence score. It inflicts lethal damage, and its damage bonus is also equal to the character's permanent Essence. (The raw lethal damage of each shot equals [the character's Strength + Essence + extra successes + any bonus from arrows].)

#### Charm Concept: Elsewhere

Elsewhere is a place where things exist but do not interact or decay. Things that characters store Elsewhere are "safe enough." Though Charms could exist to steal things from Elsewhere (and Elsewhere could theoretically have strange monsters, Malfean taint, Wyld energy or some form of entropy), it is sufficiently secure that the First Age Lawgivers never developed a better storage space. Storytellers who want to treat Elsewhere as an actual place with actual events should carefully make sure that this approach does not devalue Elsewhere-using Charms.

### Inexhaustible Bolts of Solar Fire

**Cost:** 8m, 1wp; **Mins:** Archery 5, Essence 4; **Type:** Simple
**Keywords:** Combo-OK, Obvious
**Duration:** One scene
**Prerequisite Charms:** Phantom Arrow Technique

The Solar's quiver holds the arrows of the sun. This Charm allows the Solar to shape arrows from ambient Essence at will for the remainder of the scene. Doing so functions as Phantom Arrow Technique but does not cost one mote of Essence per arrow. This Charm can create firedust charges in addition to the normal ammunition options. Ammunition created by this Charm adds one die to its normal damage and never strikes an unintended target. It will stop in midair for an instant before vanishing rather than hurt someone the Solar wishes spared.

### Solar Flare Methodology

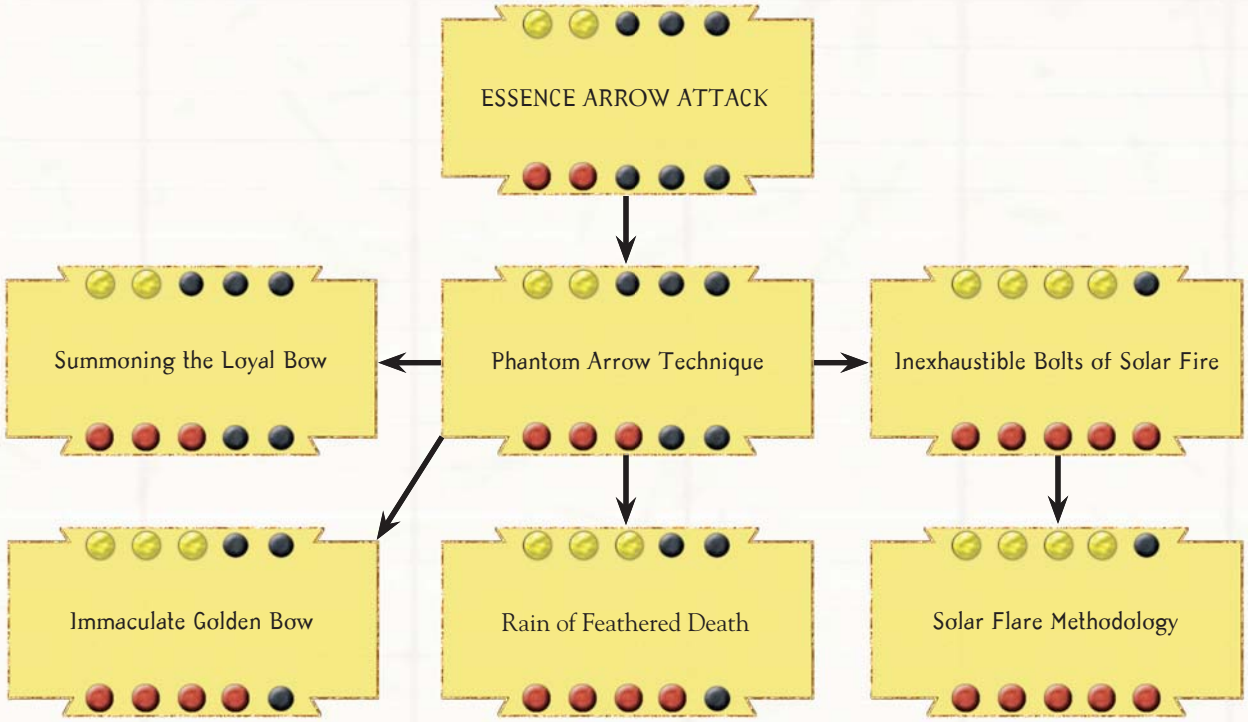
**Cost:** 5m, 1wp; **Mins:** Archery 5, Essence 4; **Type:** Simple (Speed 5)
**Keywords:** Obvious
**Duration:** One scene
**Prerequisite Charms:** Inexhaustible Bolts of Solar Fire

The Solar shapes his Essence into a firewand. Each such weapon has an appearance unique to the Exalt who conjures it. It has a Range of 15 yards. It has Rate 2 and Accuracy equal to Lawgiver's permanent Essence score. Its raw damage equals 16L, plus extra successes.

### Rain of Feathered Death

**Cost:** 3m or 8m per duplicate; **Mins:** Archery 4, Essence 3; **Type:** Supplemental
**Keywords:** Combo-OK, Obvious
**Duration:** Instant
**Prerequisite Charms:** Phantom Arrow Technique

Essence multiplies the force of the Lawgiver's blow. This Charm creates duplicates of the Exalt's Archery-based attack, usually meaning that one arrow or firewand charge becomes several in flight.




The Solar spends three motes per duplicate attack and can create up to (her permanent Essence score) duplicate attacks. Treat the original attack and all duplicates as a single attack when making attack and defense rolls, but if they hit, calculate the damage for each attack separately. If Rain of Feathered Death is used with ammunition costing more than one dot of Resources per shot or placed in a Combo with Charms that affect the arrow's damage, the cost for this Charm increases to eight motes per duplicate. All duplicates fade after the attack.

## Martial Arts

In addition to these specifically Solar Charms, the Martial Arts Ability allows access to the supernatural martial arts described on page 240. The prerequisites for these Charms—Fists of Iron Technique and Solar Hero Form—are found in the Solar Hero Style there.

### Thunderclap Rush Attack

**Cost:** 1m; **Mins:** Martial Arts 3, Essence 2; **Type:** Simple (Speed 3, DV -0)
**Keywords:** Combo-OK
**Duration:** Instant
**Prerequisite Charms:** Fists of Iron Technique

When the Solar Exalt strikes, she is swifter than lightning. The character pours Essence into quickening her actions. She then makes an unarmed Martial Arts attack. This Charm has a lower Speed and DV penalty than normal attacks.

### Knockout Blow

**Cost:** 4m, 1wp; **Mins:** Martial Arts 4, Essence 2; **Type:** Supplemental
**Keywords:** Combo-OK, Crippling, Obvious
**Duration:** Instant
**Prerequisite Charms:** Solar Hero Form

Solar Exalted with this Charm can topple even behemoths with a single punch. This Charm supplements an unarmed Martial Arts attack. This Charm takes effect if the attack hits and inflicts even one health level of damage. If [damage successes x Exalt's Essence] is greater than the target's remaining health levels, this Charm knocks the target unconscious, and the target remains so for a scene.

## Melee

### Hungry Tiger Technique

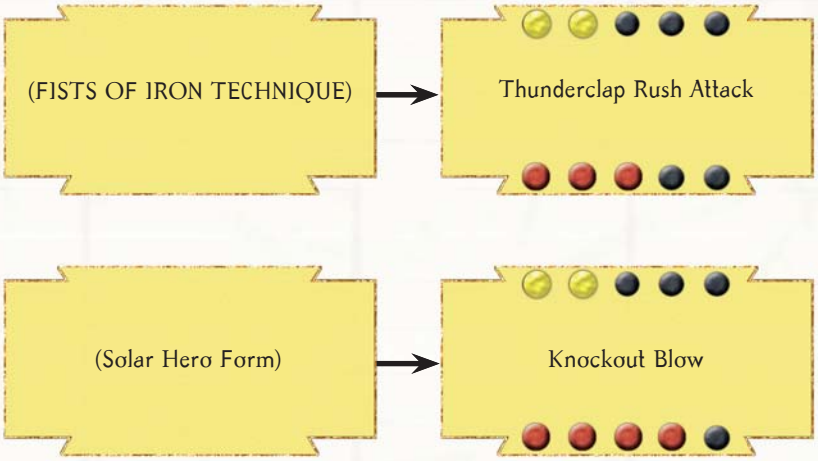
**Cost:** 1m; **Mins:** Melee 2, Essence 1; **Type:** Supplemental
**Keywords:** Combo-OK
**Duration:** Instant
**Prerequisite Charms:** Any Melee Excellency

Solar warriors make themselves one with their blades. The Exalt spends one mote and makes a Melee-based attack. This Charm allows the Solar's player to count extra successes on the attack roll twice for the purposes of determining raw damage.

### Fire and Stones Strike

**Cost:** 1m per die; **Mins:** Melee 3, Essence 1; **Type:** Supplemental
**Keywords:** Combo-OK
**Duration:** Instant
**Prerequisite Charms:** Hungry Tiger Technique

The Solar demonstrates his strength with a powerful Essence-fueled blow. The Exalt spends up to (his Strength score) motes and makes a Melee-based attack. If the attack hits, this Charm adds one die to the post-soak damage for each mote spent.




## One Weapon, Two Blows

**Cost:** 1m; **Mins:** Melee 2, Essence 1; **Type:** Reflexive (Step 1)
**Keywords:** Combo-OK
**Duration:** One action
**Prerequisite Charms:** Any Melee Excellency

The Solar warrior is as swift as the first rays of dawn. This Charm adds one to the Rate and one to the Accuracy of his weapon until his next action.

## Peony Blossom Attack

**Cost:** 2m per attack; **Mins:** Melee 3, Essence 2; **Type:** Extra Action
**Keywords:** Combo-OK, Obvious
**Duration:** Instant
**Prerequisite Charms:** One Weapon, Two Blows

The maneuver named Peony Blossom Attack burns significant Essence to unleash a powerful flurry of blows. The Lawgiver moves as smoothly and rapidly as ice on hot metal. This Charm is a magical flurry of two or more Melee-based attacks. Each attack costs two motes, including the first, and the Exalt can buy up to (her permanent Essence + 1) attacks. This Charm lets the Solar make these attacks regardless of the weapon's Rate, without multiple action penalties, and with a DV penalty equal to only the highest penalty for any one attack.

## Iron Whirlwind Attack

**Cost:** 5m, 1wp; **Mins:** Melee 5, Essence 2; **Type:** Extra Action
**Keywords:** Combo-OK, Obvious
**Duration:** Instant
**Prerequisite Charms:** Peony Blossom Attack

The maneuver named the Iron Whirlwind Attack conserves Essence but requires an utmost exertion of will. This Charm is a magical flurry of many Melee-based attacks. The Exalt makes a total number of attacks equal to (her Dexterity + 1). This Charm lets the Solar make these attacks regardless of the weapon's Rate, without multiple action penalties, and with a DV penalty equal to the highest penalty for any one attack.

## Invincible Fury of the Dawn

**Cost:** —; **Mins:** Melee 5, Essence 4; **Type:** Permanent
**Keywords:** None
**Duration:** N/A
**Prerequisite Charms:** Iron Whirlwind Attack

The Solar burns with holy prowess in battle and moves like lightning. This Charm increases the maximum number of attacks received from Peony Blossom Attack and Iron Whirlwind Attack by two. It may improve custom Melee extra-action Charms at the discretion of the Storyteller.

## Call the Blade

**Cost:** 1m; **Mins:** Melee 2, Essence 2; **Type:** Reflexive (Step 2)
**Keywords:** Obvious
**Duration:** Instant

**Prerequisite Charms:** None

The Solar's weapons know their master. The Solar holds out her hand and calls to the Essence of one of her weapons. If the desired weapon is within (Essence x 10) yards, and a flight path exists between the weapon and her hand, this Charm draws the weapon into her grasp. She must own the weapon she calls. This Charm can be used to draw and ready a sheathed weapon reflexively.

### Summoning the Loyal Steel

**Cost:** 1m; **Mins:** Melee 3, Essence 2; **Type:** Simple (Speed 3)
**Keywords:** Combo-OK
**Duration:** Indefinite
**Prerequisite Charms:** Call the Blade

This Charm functions exactly as the Archery Charm Summoning the Loyal Bow on page 189, save that it applies to hand-to-hand rather than ranged weapons. Characters are explicitly permitted to draw their stored weapons from Elsewhere using Charms such as Call the Blade.

### Glorious Solar Saber

**Cost:** 6m+, 1wp; **Mins:** Melee 4, Essence 3; **Type:** Simple
**Keywords:** Combo-OK, Holy, Obvious
**Duration:** One scene
**Prerequisite Charms:** Call the Blade

The Essence of the Lawgiver manifests in a gleaming blade of the sun. This blade is always a glowing weapon that inflicts aggravated damage against creatures of darkness (seeboxed text) and sheds sunlight as bright as a torch. The Exalt can summon this weapon to her hand from anywhere it has fallen, as a diceless miscellaneous action.

The player defines the appearance of this blade when purchasing this Charm. She can also define its weapon qualities, as follows. If she chooses a light, agile blade with Speed 3, she can divide a number of points equal to the Solar's Melee score between its Accuracy, Defense and lethal damage. If she chooses a larger sword with Speed 5, she can divide a number of points equal to twice the Solar's Melee score between its Accuracy, Defense and lethal damage. In both cases, Accuracy, Defense and Damage begin at 0 and cannot be lowered. The player can change this choice and allocation only when the character raises her Melee score. This weapon has unlimited Rate.

Characters can use this Charm to summon paired blades, one in each hand. Doing so increases the Charm's cost by four additional motes, to a total of 10 motes, one Willpower.

Players wishing to have multiple options can purchase this Charm a number of times equal to the character's Melee. Each purchase defines a different blade with distinct properties.

### Iron Raptor Technique

**Cost:** 2m or 4m; **Mins:** Melee 3, Essence 2; **Type:** Simple (Speed 5)
**Keywords:** Combo-OK, Obvious
**Duration:** Instant
**Prerequisite Charms:** Call the Blade

The maneuver named Iron Raptor Technique extends the Solar's reach. Her weapon flies toward the enemy like a hungry bird of prey, then returns at the Solar's call. This Charm is a Melee-based attack that costs two motes and can attack enemies up to (Essence x 8) yards from the Solar. It is in all other ways treated as a normal Melee attack.

If the Exalt has Essence 3 or more, she can spend two additional motes for a total cost of four motes and throw a burning arc of energy from her weapon instead of the weapon itself. This is called the "Sandstorm-Wind Attack." It cannot be blocked without a stunt or Charm.

### Blazing Solar Bolt

**Cost:** 3m, 1wp; **Mins:** Melee 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Simple (Speed 4)
**Keywords:** Combo-OK, Holy, Obvious
**Duration:** Instant
**Prerequisite Charms:** Iron Raptor Technique

The Solar's Caste Mark blazes. She then casts solar fire from her weapon at her enemy. This Charm is a Melee-based attack. Its attack pool equals (Dexterity + Melee + Essence). It has a Range of (Essence x 10) yards and cannot exceed it. It cannot be blocked or dodged without the use of Charms or other magic. It ignores cover, including shields, but it cannot otherwise strike around obstacles. It deals lethal damage with a base damage, before adding attack successes, of (the Exalt's Strength + Willpower). It deals aggravated damage against creatures of darkness (see below).

#### Charm Concept: "Creatures of Darkness"

Some Charms have special effects against "creatures of darkness." These are the enemies of the world, so named—where judgment is required—by the judgment of the Unconquered Sun. These include, but are not limited to: Yozis, demons, Neverborn, walking dead, ghosts, Deathlords, unshaped Fair Folk, Abyssal Exalted and Infernal Exalted. The Storyteller can make exceptions or add other groups to this list as appropriate. A sympathetic ghost might not be a creature of darkness, while a horror that eats at the world's heart would be.

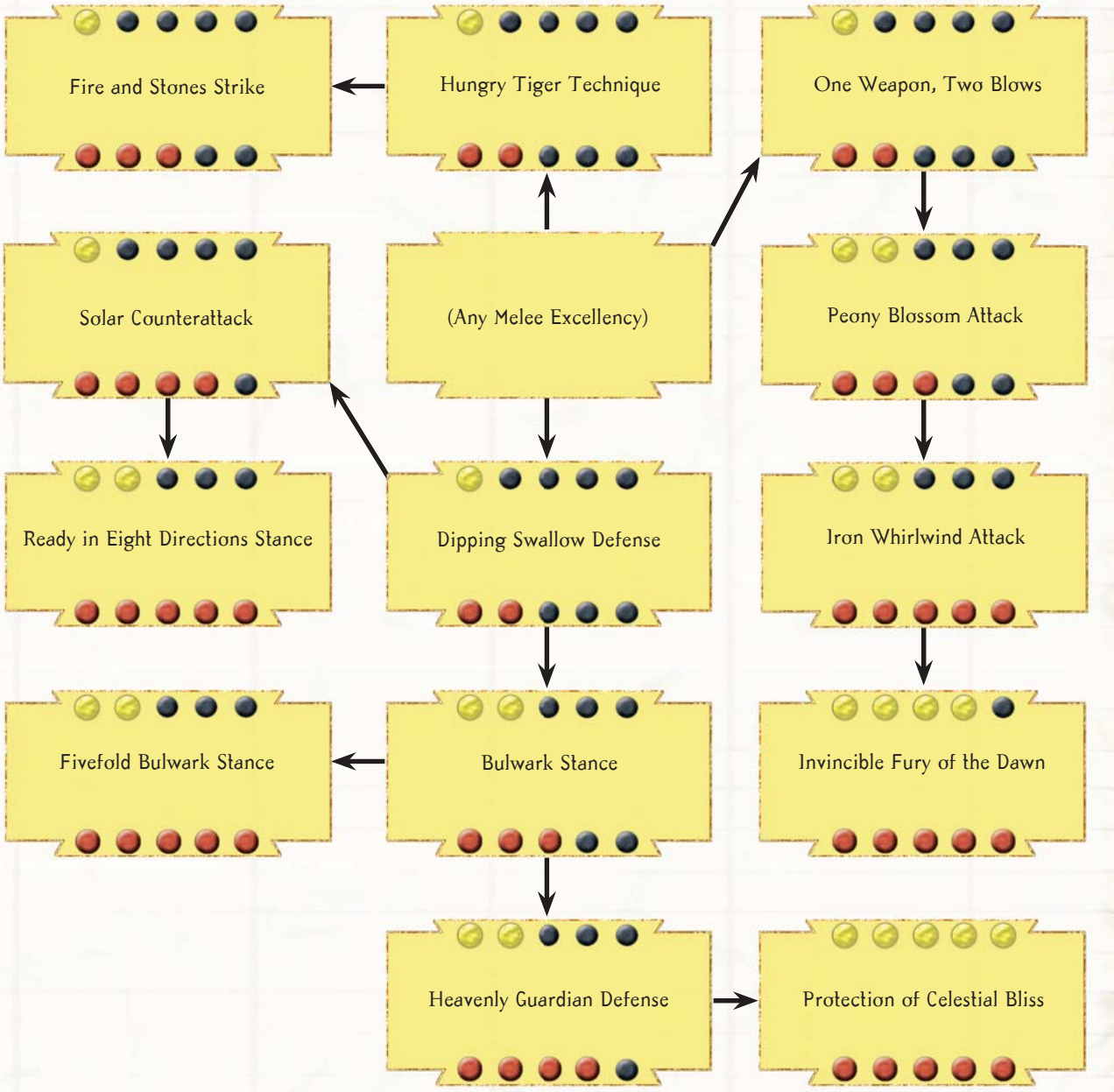
#### Strategy

Unless your Storyteller tells you otherwise, it's safe to assume that you'll fight creatures of darkness at some point during the game—but it might not happen very often. If you want the visceral thrill of smiting evil with holy power instead of consummate skill, or if you'll be fighting demons and walking dead on a regular basis, then it's worth taking Charms that hurt creatures of darkness.

### Dipping Swallow Defense

**Cost:** 2m; **Mins:** Melee 2, Essence 1; **Type:** Reflexive (Step 2)
**Keywords:** Combo-OK
**Duration:** Instant
**Prerequisite Charms:** Any Melee Excellency

The maneuver named Dipping Swallow Defense restores defensive advantage to a beleaguered or overextended fighter.




This Charm is used in response to an attack. It allows the Exalt to ignore all penalties that apply to her Parry DV when resolving that attack. Her Parry DV is still 0 if it's inapplicable, but it takes no further penalties.

### Bulwark Stance

**Cost:** 5m; **Mins:** Melee 3, Essence 2; **Type:** Reflexive (Step 2)
**Keywords:** Combo-Basic
**Duration:** Until next action
**Prerequisite Charms:** Dipping Swallow Defense

Like a terrible war machine, the Solar walks through the field of his enemy's blades and is unmoved. This Charm causes the character to ignore penalties that apply to his Parry DV until his next action. This includes penalties invoked by his own attacks. Note that the effects of inapplicability are not a "penalty" on DV.

### Heavenly Guardian Defense

**Cost:** 4m; **Mins:** Melee 4, Essence 2; **Type:** Reflexive (Step 2)
**Keywords:** Combo-OK, Obvious
**Duration:** Instant
**Prerequisite Charms:** Bulwark Stance

The character invokes this Charm in response to an attack. The attack must not be unexpected, and the character must have a weapon in hand. This Charm is a parry that perfectly defends against any attack, even if it is unblockable.

Mundane weapons can break when used with this Charm. If the character uses this Charm and a mundane weapon to block an attack that inflicts at least 25L raw damage before soak, the weapon breaks (though it still successfully parries).

This Charm has one of the Four Flaws of Invulnerability (see boxed text) common to all Solar perfect defenses.

### The Four Flaws of Invulnerability

Standard perfect defenses against physical attacks are a cheap way to entirely ignore attacks, but each has one of four flaws. A given Solar may learn any number of these perfect defense Charms (including buying the same Charm twice), but he can only choose a maximum of two different flaws among all the standard perfect defenses. For instance, he can choose Adamant Skin Technique with the Conviction Flaw, Heavenly Guardian Defense with the Conviction Flaw and Seven Shadow Evasion with the Temperance Flaw.

*Valor Flaw:* The Exalt must move toward the opponent he considers most dangerous, on every tick where this is possible without magic, until his DV refreshes twice.

*Compassion Flaw:* The Exalt can only use this Charm when in the presence of someone or something he cares about.

*Temperance Flaw:* The Exalt cannot take movement actions such as move, dash, flight, teleportation or jumping until his DV refreshes twice.

*Conviction Flaw:* This Charm does not function when a Solar's actions are contrary to his Motivation. The Storyteller should assume that a Solar's actions qualify unless an enemy deliberately arranges for terms of conflict that dispirit and shake the purpose of the Exalt. The player can interpret it more strictly if desired.

### Fivefold Bulwark Stance

**Cost:** 5m, 1wp; **Mins:** Melee 5, Essence 2; **Type:** Simple
**Keywords:** Combo-OK
**Duration:** One scene
**Prerequisite Charms:** Bulwark Stance

The world weeps when the Chosen fall, and so, the Unconquered Sun has given them every mastery of defense. For the remainder of the scene, this Charm removes the onslaught penalty other characters' attacks impose on the Exalt's DV. It also reduces the defense penalty imposed by each action the Exalt takes by one, to a minimum of zero.

### Solar Counterattack

**Cost:** 3m; **Mins:** Melee 4, Essence 1; **Type:** Reflexive (Step 9)
**Keywords:** Combo-OK, Counterattack
**Duration:** Instant
**Prerequisite Charms:** Dipping Swallow Defense

Those who attack the Chosen of the Sun invite their own deaths. The Solar invokes this Charm after using her Parry DV against an attack. This Charm gives the Solar a counterattack, which is resolved in Step 9 of the initial attack's resolution. Note the rules for counterattacks on pages 150 and 183.

### Ready in Eight Directions Stance

**Cost:** 5m; **Mins:** Melee 5, Essence 2; **Type:** Reflexive (Step 9)
**Keywords:** Combo-Basic, Obvious
**Duration:** Until next action
**Prerequisite Charms:** Solar Counterattack

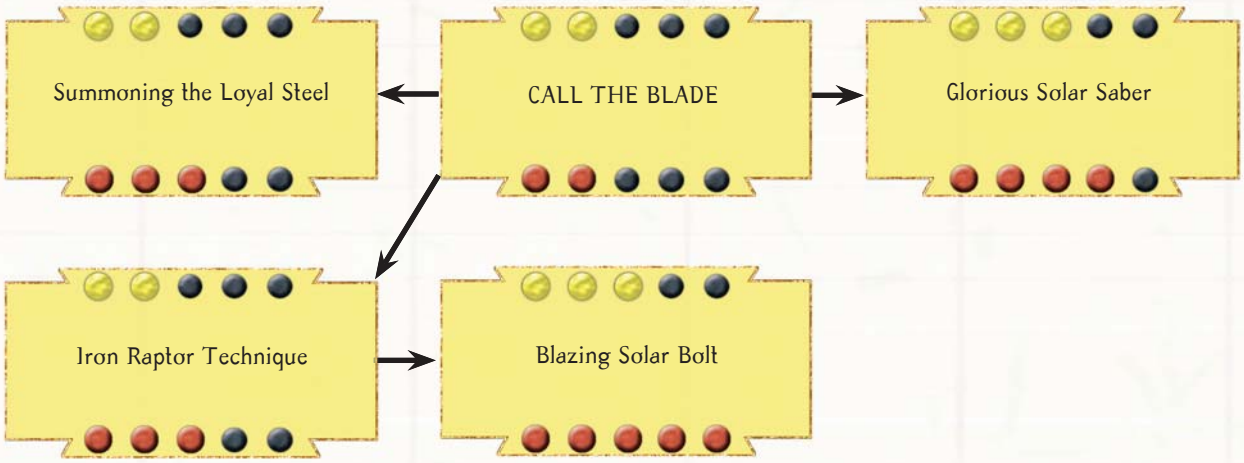
The Solar stands ready to force back any foe. Until his next action, whenever he uses his Parry DV against an attack, this Charm provides him with the option to make a counterattack. Note the rules for counterattacks on pages 150 and 183.

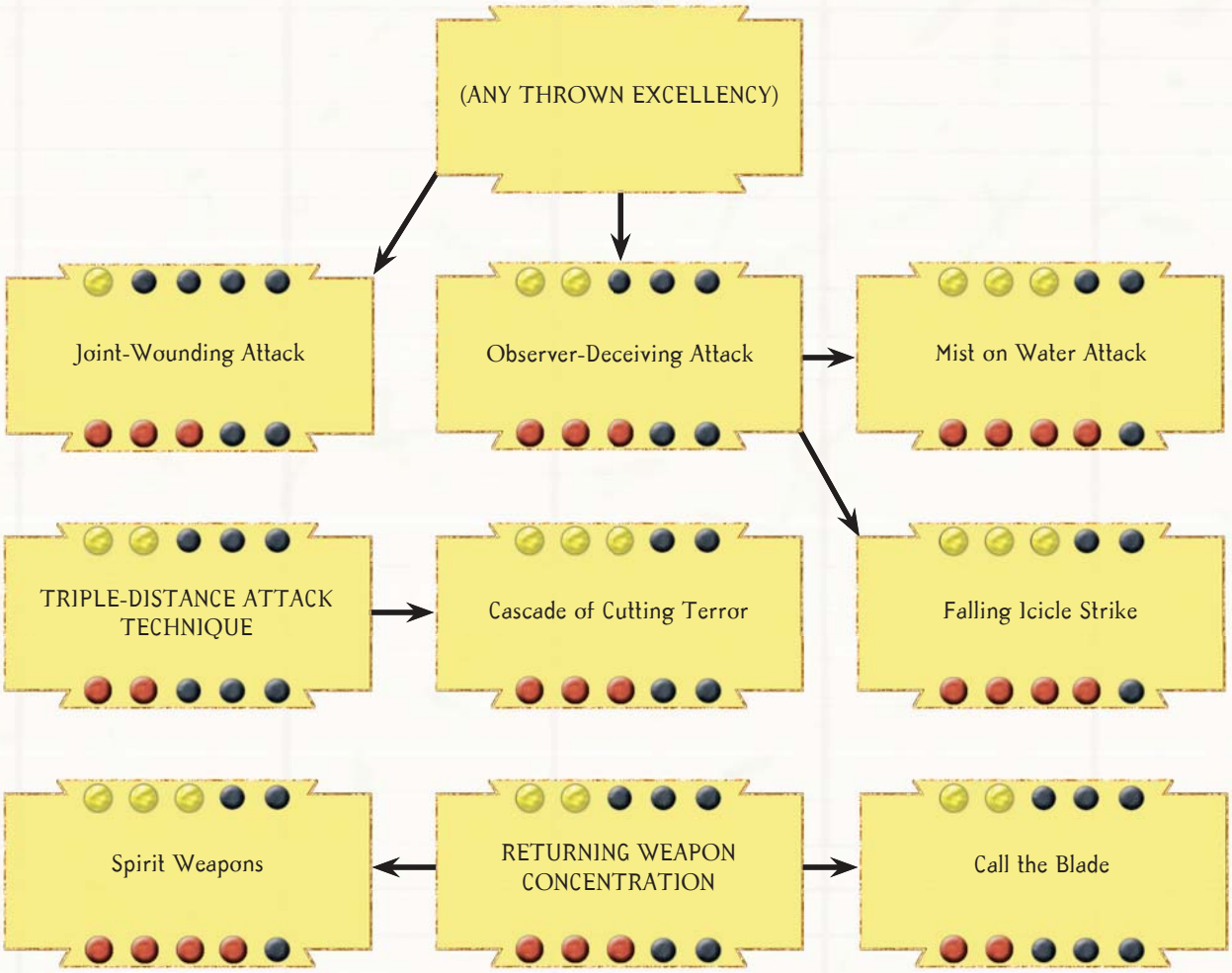
### Protection of Celestial Bliss

**Cost:** —; **Mins:** Melee 5, Essence 5; **Type:** Permanent
**Keywords:** None
**Duration:** Instant
**Prerequisite Charms:** Heavenly Guardian Defense

This Charm allows the character to prepare a single invocation of the Heavenly Guardian Defense maneuver in advance. The character can have at most one invocation prepared at any given time. The character invokes the Heavenly Guardian Defense Charm, paying the normal four motes. He can later use the Heavenly Guardian Defense against one attack of his choice, in any circumstance when using the Charm would be legitimate. Preparing the Charm counts as a Charm use, but invoking its abilities later does not. The motes remain committed until the Solar uses the Charm to block a single attack.

If the Solar has Essence 6 or higher, he may prepare up to his Melee score in invocations of the Heavenly Guardian Defense, and the cost to activate that Charm is reduced to three motes.






# Thrown

## Joint-Wounding Attack

**Cost:** 3m; **Mins:** Thrown 3, Essence 1; **Type:** Supplemental
**Keywords:** Combo-OK, Crippling
**Duration:** Instant
**Prerequisite Charms:** Any Thrown Excellency

Even in a pitched battle, the Lawgivers strike with controlled precision. This Charm enhances a Thrown-based attack so that it stuns or cripples the Solar's opponent. For each health level of damage this attack inflicts, this Charm subtracts one die (as a -1 internal penalty) from the target's Physical Attribute dice pools and one point from the equivalent static ratings. This is a Crippling effect that lasts for the remainder of the scene. The players and Storyteller decide how the effect is inflicted—it could be an injured hand, slashed tendons or a stunning blow to the head. Storytellers will have to work with the players to determine how the attack cripples more exotic opponents such as automata and the walking dead.

## Observer-Deceiving Attack

**Cost:** 3m; **Mins:** Thrown 3, Essence 2; **Type:** Supplemental
**Keywords:** Combo-OK
**Duration:** Instant
**Prerequisite Charms:** Any Thrown Excellency

The Solars' opponents are often arrogant and attempt to predict how and when the Lawgivers will strike. Such is their folly that they cannot see the vengeance of the Unconquered Sun even when it comes upon them. This Charm conceals a Thrown-based attack. Characters watching the Solar need (the Solar's Essence) successes on a reflexive (Wits + Awareness) roll to notice him making the attack. This success requirement decreases by one each additional time the Solar uses this Charm in a scene. For characters not watching the Solar, all evidence indicates that the attack comes from a direction and distance named by the Solar when making the attack. For example, a Solar attacking from behind might wound an enemy in the side or chest by having his missile curve at the last moment.

## Mist on Water Attack

**Cost:** 3m per action; **Mins:** Thrown 4, Essence 3; **Type:** Supplemental
**Keywords:** Combo-OK, Crippling
**Duration:** Varies
**Prerequisite Charms:** Observer-Deceiving Attack

This is a Charm of silent death that imbues the Solar's weapon with Essence. It supplements a Thrown-based attack

and supernaturally cripples its target. Targets affected by this Charm cannot speak or cry out. This Charm silences their every action. The bells they ring make no noise, and if they fall off of a wall, they will land silently. In short, their actions are not valid targets for hearing-based Awareness rolls. Should the attack kill the target, no one will notice the target's death until the Charm expires. The corpse usually remains standing, and a combination of circumstances, dramatic necessity and perfect timing and execution on the Solar's part keeps the target's companions from noticing the death.

This Charm can impose silence for a number of the Solar's actions equal to her Essence score. The Chosen must pay three motes for each action of silence she wishes to buy. The initial attack counts as an action. The Charm expires at the end of the appropriate action.

### Falling

### Icicle Strike

**Cost:** 1m; **Mins:** Thrown 4, Essence 3; **Type:** Reflexive (Step 7)
**Keywords:** Combo-OK
**Duration:** Instant
**Prerequisite Charms:** Observer-Deceiving Attack

Surprise is at the foundation of all military undertakings. The Sun's Chosen strike with secrecy and rapidity, confusing and confounding their enemies. Falling Icicle Strike enhances an unexpected attack (see pp. 155-156). Count damage successes for this attack twice. If the player rolls five damage dice and gets two successes, it will strip away four of the target's health levels.

### Triple-Distance Attack Technique

**Cost:** 3m; **Mins:** Thrown 2, Essence 2; **Type:** Supplemental
**Keywords:** Combo-OK
**Duration:** Instant
**Prerequisite Charms:** None

The Solar imbues his weapon with Essence, so that it flies true. This Charm enhances a Thrown-based attack. The Exalt spends three motes and triples the Range of the weapon.

If the Solar has Essence 4 or higher, this Charm also negates external penalties from environmental conditions.

### Cascade of Cutting Terror

**Cost:** 5m; **Mins:** Thrown 3, Essence 3; **Type:** Supplemental
**Keywords:** Combo-OK, Obvious
**Duration:** Instant
**Prerequisite Charms:** Triple-Distance Attack Technique

In the First Age, not even the most elusive demons could escape the Solars' judgment. This Charm supplements a Thrown-based attack, filling the air with dozens or hundreds of duplicates of the Lawgiver's thrown weapon. This Charm renders the target's Dodge DV inapplicable against this attack. It also doubles the Solar's successes on the attack roll before comparing it to defense, in Step 3 of attack resolution.

### Returning Weapon Concentration

**Cost:** —; **Mins:** Thrown 3, Essence 2; **Type:** Permanent
**Keywords:** None
**Prerequisite Charms:** None

The Solar cherishes his weapons. This Charm gives the character three bonus successes on any valid action that, if it succeeds, will physically reclaim one or more of the throwing weapons he owns—whether by yanking one back to him on a cord, snatching several up while running past, grabbing a knife from the lava's surface before it sinks or snatching a weapon physically from an enemy who has stolen it. This Charm does not affect attempts to reclaim throwing weapons by non-physical means such as persuasion, nor does it help when the character is taking preparatory actions such as running across a hair-thin bridge to where his weapon rests. Returning Weapon Concentration also makes any weapon slide free of any target without resistance, so that the lightest tug can reclaim even a knife sheathed to the hilt in a tree.

### Call the Blade
**Cost:** 1m; **Mins:** Thrown 2, Essence 2; **Type:** Reflexive (Step 2)
**Keywords:** Obvious
**Duration:** Instant
**Prerequisite Charms:** Returning Weapon Concentration

This Charm functions exactly as the Melee version on pages 191-192, save as noted above.

### Spirit Weapons
**Cost:** 2m; **Mins:** Thrown 4, Essence 3; **Type:** Reflexive (Step 1)
**Keywords:** Combo-OK, Obvious
**Duration:** One scene
**Prerequisite Charms:** Returning Weapon Concentration

The Exalt shapes weapons from shadows, Essence and light. This Charm permits a Lawgiver to create temporary throwing weapons. Each such weapon costs two motes of Essence to create. Each has the weapon qualities of a Thrown weapon costing at most Resources 2, such as an exceptional hatchet or throwing knife. These weapons last for one scene, but they thrive on the Essence of the Exalt who created them. If anyone else uses them to make an attack, these weapons fade away during Step 2 of the attack's resolution.

## War

### Rout-Stemming Gesture
**Cost:** 4m, 1wp; **Mins:** War 3, Essence 2; **Type:** Reflexive
**Keywords:** Combo-OK, Obvious, War
**Duration:** Until next action
**Prerequisite Charms:** Any War Excellency

The glory of the Solar Exalted steadies those who follow them. The Exalt can target up to her Essence in military units or (Essence x 100) scattered individuals with this Charm. The Exalt chooses the targets insofar as she cares to specify; otherwise, this Charm affects the closest non-enemy targets. Individual targets must be able to see or hear the Exalt. Targeted units must be able to see or hear some sort of Solar-sent signal. This Charm causes targets to succeed automatically on all Valor rolls. If used in the instant one or more targets fail a Valor roll, this Charm allows the targets that failed to reroll, but the reroll does not automatically succeed. This Charm's effects last until the Exalt's next combat or mass combat action.

### Commanding the Ideal Celestial Army
**Cost:** 3m; **Mins:** War 4, Essence 2; **Type:** Reflexive
**Keywords:** Combo-OK, War
**Duration:** Instant
**Prerequisite Charms:** Rout-Stemming Gesture

The Lawgiver's forces know his will. The Solar calls out an order or message. It is still conveyed by his voice, his signal or by relays, but the message is effectively instantaneous—his troops find themselves reacting almost as an extension of the Solar's desires. This Charm conveys a message up to 12 words in length to one or more loyal units within (Essence x 100) yards and guarantees that the message is clearly understood. This Charm has special effects when used immediately before a roll to determine whether a targeted unit hesitates or can change order rapidly. If the Exalt gives an appropriate order, the roll succeeds automatically.

### Mob-Dispersing Rebuke
**Cost:** 7m, 1wp; **Mins:** War 3, Essence 2; **Type:** Simple (Speed 3 in long ticks)
**Keywords:** Combo-OK, Social, War
**Duration:** Instant
**Prerequisite Charms:** None

The Lawgiver chastises the unworthy rabble. This Charm forces the player of an enemy unit most of whose members are within (Essence x 100) yards to make an immediate check for rout. The difficulty of this roll is 1 if the unit has Magnitude greater than the Exalt's Essence, and 2 otherwise. This Charm can be used socially rather than in war, in which case the Exalt can treat any mob, gathering or social group he can reasonably chastise as the target military unit.

### Fury Inciting Presence
**Cost:** 10m, 1wp; **Mins:** War 3, Essence 3; **Type:** Simple (Speed 5 in long ticks)
**Keywords:** Combo-OK, Obvious
**Duration:** One scene
**Prerequisite Charms:** Mob-Dispersing Rebuke

The righteous anger of the Lawgivers inspires mortals to service. The Exalt attempts to persuade everyone who can hear him to join him in righteous violence, his player rolling (Charisma + [Performance or War]). This Charm organizes all characters whom the Exalt successfully persuades and who do not resist the persuasion (see p. 179) into an unordered military unit under the Exalt's direction. This unit dissolves if the Exalt abandons it for more than 15 long ticks.

### General of the All-Seeing Sun
**Cost:** 1m; **Mins:** War 5, Essence 4; **Type:** Reflexive
**Keywords:** Combo-OK
**Duration:** Instant
**Prerequisite Charms:** Fury Inciting Presence

The Solar Exalted do not abandon their forces. This Charm informs the Lawgiver of the position and status of all units within (Essence x 10) miles containing a commander, hero, relay or sorcerer loyal to the Solar or to a cause for which the Solar is fighting. This includes solo units, but not solo extras. The character determines only the strategic position of each unit—where units are located relative to one another and to major landmarks such as mountains, cities and rivers. The status information that the Solar learns is the unit's fatigue, order and current Magnitude. The Solar acquires this information as an instinct but can convert it mentally into a battle map if appropriate for the character. The Storyteller is the final authority on whether a Solar without established loyalties is fighting for a given cause.

This Charm gives the Lawgiver awareness of all the major landmarks within one mile of any loyal units.

### Heroism-Encouraging Presence
**Cost:** 8m, 1wp; **Mins:** War 4, Essence 3; **Type:** Simple (Speed 6 in long ticks)
**Keywords:** Combo-OK, Obvious, War
**Duration:** One scene
**Prerequisite Charms:** Rout-Stemming Gesture, Fury Inciting Presence

The Chosen radiate the confidence and surety of the Unconquered Sun. This Charm affects any unit or social group that the Solar commands and every ally within (Essence x 5) yards. This Charm's targets no longer need to make Valor checks. In war, this Charm prevents rout and reduces the chance of fatigue (see p. 374).

### Charm Concept: Groups

Some Charms affect groups of people—normally, the crowd in a given location or a group organized for a specific purpose. These groups use the same Magnitude chart as social groups and military units, even if they're not participating in social or mass combat.

### Tiger Warrior Training Technique

**Cost:** 10m, 2wp; **Mins:** War 4, Essence 3; **Type:** Simple (Dramatic Action)
**Keywords:** Obvious, Touch, Training
**Duration:** One week
**Prerequisite Charms:** Heroism-Encouraging Presence

Under the banner of the Solar Exalted, even bandits and peasants become deadly warriors. This Charm involves training a military unit. This Charm requires five or more hours of effort in any given week to bear fruit. This Charm increases the Drill of a unit by one for each week of training, to a maximum of Drill 5. In each week of training, the trainer picks one trait to train: Valor, Strength, Dexterity, Stamina, Archery, Dodge, Martial Arts or Melee. This Charm increases that trait for each member of the unit by one dot, to a maximum of 4. The Solar can train with the unit or as a solo unit, increasing her own traits. She cannot increase others' traits past her own.

### Legendary Warrior Curriculum

**Cost:** —; **Mins:** War 5, Essence 4; **Type:** Permanent
**Keywords:** Obvious
**Duration:** One week

**Prerequisite Charms:** Tiger Warrior Training Technique

Solar Exalted imbue their warriors with something of their own nature. This Charm enhances the Exalt's ability to train warriors. This Charm allows him to use Tiger Warrior Training Technique to train others in any of the following:

• Military Abilities he possesses at 4 or more. In addition to the Abilities already available through Tiger Warrior Training Technique, military Abilities include Thrown, War, Integrity, Resistance, Survival, relevant Craft, Medicine, Athletics, Awareness, Stealth, Ride and Sail.

• Willpower. The Exalt can train Willpower to a maximum of 7.

• Bonus dice. The Solar can devote one week's training to rare and special techniques. This gives trained characters two bonus dice or one bonus success for a specific activity defined by the Solar during training. This benefit must have military relevance, it does not apply to Exalted targets, and it is not cumulative. Characters must abandon their previous training and lose the previous bonus to benefit from this Charm again. This bonus can apply to rolls for any Ability and is considered an artificial two-die specialty that stacks with (at most) one die of other specialties. Examples include a one-success bonus in silent communication, a two-die bonus in fighting when outnumbered and a two-die bonus for nocturnal fighting. Non-extras must pay four bonus points or eight experience points for this benefit, and they go into experience debt as usual if they cannot pay. The Storyteller is the final authority on whether a special technique has military relevance.

### Ideal Battle Knowledge Prana

**Cost:** 10m, 1wp; **Mins:** War 5, Essence 5; **Type:** Simple (Speed 6 in long ticks)
**Keywords:** Combo-OK, Obvious, War
**Duration:** One scene
**Prerequisite Charms:** Commanding the Ideal Celestial Army, General of the All-Seeing Sun

Those who follow the Lawgivers work as one. Ideal Battle Knowledge Prana provides the Solar and those who follow her—units directly or indirectly under the Solar's command within (Essence x 10) miles—with an instinct for the battlefield and the Solar's desires. This Charm halves the number of relays necessary to order each targeted unit. It also increases the Drill of all such units by one and increases the Might of these units by one (to a maximum of 3).

## Zenith Caste

### Integrity

### Integrity-Protecting Prana

**Cost:** 5m, 1wp; **Mins:** Integrity 1, Essence 1; **Type:** Reflexive (Step 2)
**Keywords:** Combo-OK
**Duration:** One day
**Prerequisite Charms:** None

The Sun's Chosen define their own reality. This Charm protects the character from any Shaping effect that directly alters her mind, body, spirit or traits. This includes instantaneous Shaping effects and any new alterations caused by long-term Shaping effects. This Charm also protects the character from any undodgeable, unblockable Shaping attacks. Wyld energy cannot create a serpent inside the character's stomach or turn her armor to lava, whether it's manipulated by an enemy or its own random whims, because these effects inflict immediate damage and the character's DV is not applicable.

This Charm does not protect against the miscellaneous dangers of the Wyld. If a Wyld effect creates a hundred-headed snake monster with burning chalcedony eyes that *then* eats the character, this is not directly altering the character's body through shaping. Nor is it an "attack" when a Wyld effect transforms the character's armor into harmless gossamer spider webs—simply an undesirable effect.

### Destiny-Manifesting Method

**Cost:** —; **Mins:** Integrity 3, Essence 2; **Type:** Permanent
**Keywords:** None
**Duration:** N/A
**Prerequisite Charms:** Integrity-Protecting Prana

A Solar forges her own destiny, and none gainsay her will. This Charm increases the difficulty of any rolled Shaping effect (see p. 217) used against the character by two. Characters using Shaping effects that involve the character can remove this penalty with any stunt that reconciles the Shaping effect with the Lawgiver's sense of her own destiny. In the Wyld or the Labyrinth, this Charm reduces the frequency of random unfortunate incidents by a factor of 10. There is no cost to use this Charm—it is a permanent enhancement to the Exalt's nature.

### Righteous Lion Defense

**Cost:** —; **Mins:** Integrity 3, Essence 1; **Type:** Permanent
**Keywords:** None
**Duration:** Permanent
**Prerequisite Charms:** None

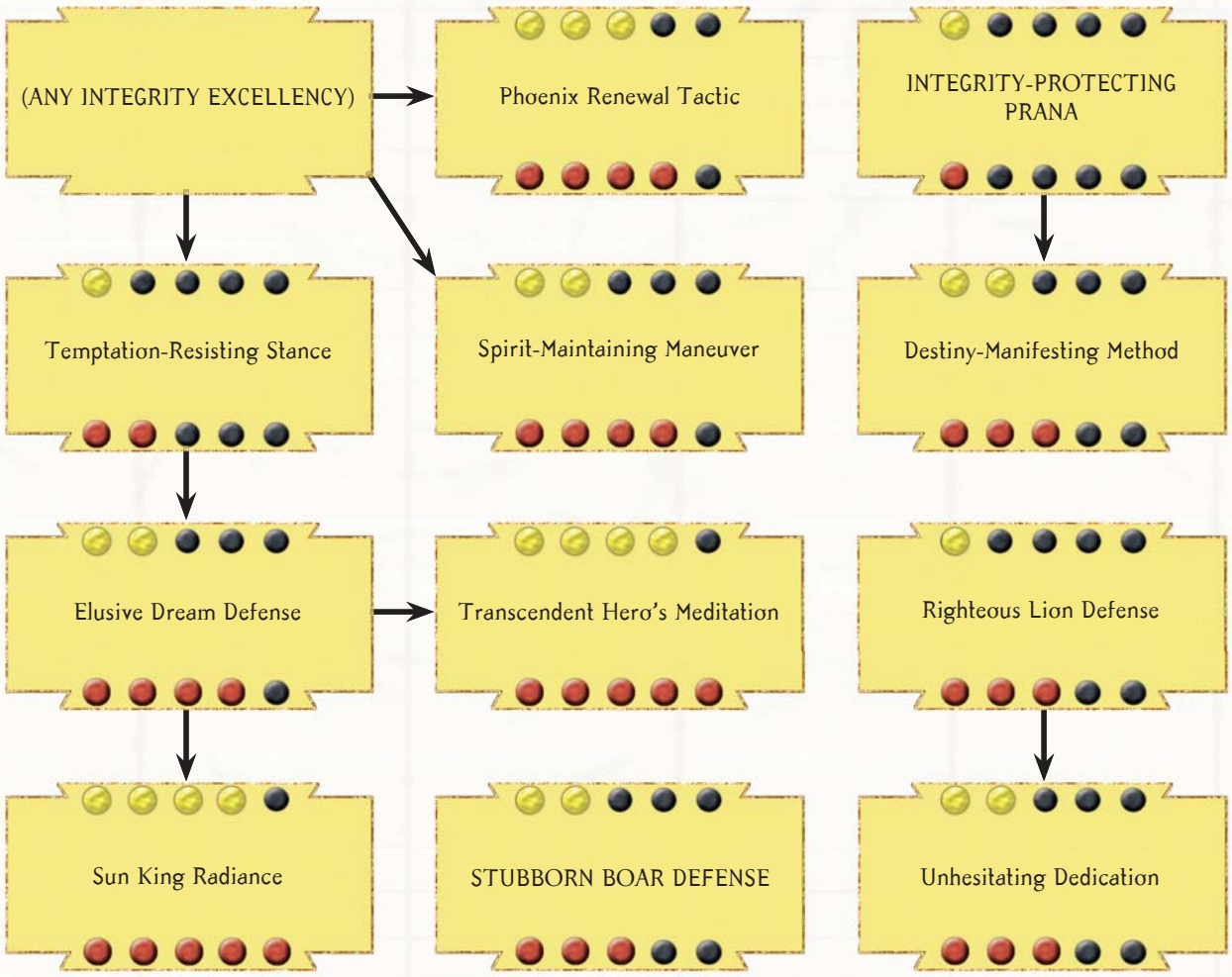
To the Solar Exalted, "death" and "surrender" are almost the same thing. This Charm helps a character hold fast to her fundamental Intimacies in the face of temptation. The player picks one of the character's Intimacies when purchasing this Charm. For the purposes of this Solar Charm, this loyalty must be to an ideal—not to a person or a love, but sometimes to a relationship; not to a tribe or city, but sometimes to the nation she might build of them; not to a battle or a war, but to the extinction of one foe or the conquest of a great region. (Other Exalted have versions of this Charm that support different commitments.)

This Charm allows the character to treat mental influence to betray or forsake that Intimacy as an unacceptable order (see p. 180). If the character voluntarily abandons that Intimacy or it becomes obsolete, this Charm ceases to function until, first, a new story begins and, second, the character chooses a new Intimacy to which the Charm applies. Players can also shift this Charm to a new Intimacy at any time by spending one experience point.

Players can purchase this Charm a second time to reinforce one additional Intimacy. Any further loyalties require more specialized magic.

### Stubborn Boar Defense

**Cost:** —; **Mins:** Integrity 3, Essence 2; **Type:** Permanent
**Keywords:** None
**Duration:** N/A
**Prerequisite Charms:** None




Solar Exalted in Limit Break cannot temper their glory with wisdom. This Charm causes the character to treat all directives from *unnatural* mental influence as unacceptable orders while in Limit Break.

### Phoenix Renewal Tactic

**Cost:** —; **Mins:** Integrity 4, Essence 3; **Type:** Permanent
**Keywords:** None
**Duration:** Instant
**Prerequisite Charms:** Any Integrity Excellency

From every Solar's heart flows an infinite stream of arete—excellence, Virtue and raw commitment to life. The player picks one Virtue when purchasing this Charm and can purchase this Charm multiple times to cover additional Virtues. Whenever the Solar would otherwise recover one or more Willpower points from stunts or natural recovery, this Charm gives the character the option to recover one point (one channel) of the chosen Virtue instead. The Storyteller may veto Virtue recovery from stunts opposed to that Virtue, such as the restoration of a Compassion point garnered from ripping an enemy's heart out of his chest.

### Temptation-Resisting Stance

**Cost:** 6m; **Mins:** Integrity 2, Essence 1; **Type:** Reflexive (Step 2)
**Keywords:** Combo-OK, Stackable, Social
**Duration:** One scene
**Prerequisite Charms:** Any Integrity Excellency

In foul nests of demons whose ways of corruption assault the human mind; amidst the courts of faeries gluttonous for human souls; in Nexus, surrounded by a thousand temptations—though the whole world seeks to drag him down, the Lawgiver is unmoved. This Charm increases the character's Dodge MDV by his Temperance for the remainder of the scene. Storytellers can allow the Exalt to use his Conviction, Compassion or Valor score instead of Temperance if the character has appropriate motivation.

### Elusive Dream Defense

**Cost:** 5m; **Mins:** Integrity 4, Essence 2; **Type:** Reflexive (Step 2)
**Keywords:** Combo-OK, Social
**Duration:** Instant (Story)
**Prerequisite Charms:** Temptation-Resisting Stance

Like a dream slipping from a waking man's grasp, the Solar eludes others' attempts to chain his mind. The Solar uses this Charm in response to an attempt at mental influence, be it

## Charm Concept: Intimacies

Some ideas are transient. They drift through the waters of the mind and disappear. Other ideas are stable, providing anchors for self, goals and desires. These ideas are called Intimacies, and they represent the ideas that people cling to over time and use to define themselves on a smaller scale than their Motivation. Characters form Intimacies to beliefs, causes, emotions, intentions, people, tribes, ideas—whatever. Mostly, these Intimacies aren't especially meaningful from a mechanical sense, though they are obviously very important to the character.

A character can have as many Intimacies as her (Compassion + Willpower) comfortably and can experience more in a pinch. Yet the Storyteller should start telling the character to remove the older, less important ones at the rate of one per story if the character goes above the maximum. The human heart can only encompass so much.

When Intimacies really matter is when a Charm uses them as the focus of its effects. When Essence is involved, these Intimacies often have magical effects. Magic often allows characters to form an Intimacy on the spot when they need one, so players shouldn't spend too much time exploring the comings and goings of the character's fancies unless it is a deliberate act worthy of roleplaying.

**Creating an Intimacy:** It takes time to commit one's heart to something. A character can swear to an intention in an instant, but it takes contemplation, consideration and service to work that loyalty down into his bones. Characters can take an action once per scene per idea to help develop their Intimacy to it. Maybe someone persuades them, or maybe they just sit and think. When a character has taken a number of commitment actions equal to his Conviction, he's built an Intimacy to that idea.

**Breaking an Intimacy:** Characters can take an action once per scene per idea to reject the idea. When a character has taken a number of rejection actions equal to his Conviction, he breaks any commitment he has to that idea. If he isn't committed to that idea, he becomes committed to an appropriate opposite—bitterness instead of love, patriotism instead of anarchy, or whatnot.

## Strategy

Don't spend too much time and effort tracking Intimacies. Instead, focus on the commitments that count—the ones backed up by magic.

To defend your character against influence, take a high Willpower and Integrity and use Righteous Lion Defense to bolster the Exalt's most important loyalties. To become a leader of men, your character should use Presence and Performance to convince others to commit themselves to him—to loving him, to taking up his service as a cause or simply to believing in him. Then, use Charms such as Sun King Radiance or Memory-Reweaving Discipline to seal the deal.

natural or unnatural. In addition to its core effects, this Charm perfectly negates that attempt at influence.

This Charm defends the character against mental influence by forging an instant, sorcerously charged Intimacy (see boxed text) to an idea or ideal that protects him. For the purposes of this Charm, this Intimacy might be enmity with the person attempting influence, contempt for that person or loyalty to something that the influence would make him betray. This effect is optional if the character already has such an Intimacy. If he has a preexisting one that is applicable, the magic can bolster it to inviolability instead. Characters observing the Solar when this Charm is used can make a reflexive (Perception + Investigation) roll against a difficulty of the character's Temperance to notice the newborn or newly renewed enmity, loyalty or disdain. The Solar genuinely accepts the Intimacy to which he commits himself with this Charm, although the player decides how much weight he gives it compared to his other ideas, plans, loyalties and goals. At the end of the story, the Essence charge dissipates from the Intimacy, and it is no longer a perfect defense, though the character may maintain it for later use, the sake of the memory or out of genuine feeling.

### Transcendent Hero's Meditation

**Cost:** 10m, 4wp; **Mins:** Integrity 5, Essence 4; **Type:** Simple (Speed 5 in long ticks)
**Keywords:** Combo-OK, Obvious, Social
**Duration:** Instant
**Prerequisite Charms:** Elusive Dream Defense

The Lawgivers shatter delusions and see all things truly. This Charm shatters all long-term Compulsion, Illusion and Servitude effects upon the Solar. The character can ignore mental influence that would prevent her from using this Charm. Characters can substitute an unsoakable aggravated health level of damage for the mote portion of this Charm's cost if they are otherwise unable to pay.

### Sun King Radiance

**Cost:** —; **Mins:** Integrity 5, Essence 4; **Type:** Permanent
**Keywords:** Obvious
**Duration:** Instant
**Prerequisite Charms:** Elusive Dream Defense

Others look to the Lawgivers for strength against temptation. This Charm allows characters loyal to the Solar to replace their own Essence with the Solar's Integrity score when calculating mental defense. It subtracts two dice (as a -2 internal penalty) from the dice pools of characters loyal to the Solar when they are actively attempting to betray that loyalty. This Charm has no effect on Abyssal Exalted or other Solar Exalted.

### Spirit-Maintaining Maneuver

**Cost:** 5m per 1wp; **Mins:** Integrity 4, Essence 2; **Type:** Reflexive
**Keywords:** Combo-OK, Social
**Duration:** Instant
**Prerequisite Charms:** Any Integrity Excellency

The Solar Exalted draw on their unwavering desire and intention to survive sustained mental assault. This Charm allows the Exalt to refuse *unnatural* mind control effects (see p. 180)

and Virtue compulsions (see p. 115) at a reduced Willpower cost. This Charm reduces the Willpower cost by one point for each five motes spent. If the Exalt pays the entire cost in Essence, she does not accumulate Limit. For example, if rejecting a supernaturally persuasive offer would normally require two Willpower, the Exalt can spend two Willpower; five motes, one Willpower; or 10 motes. If the character would normally break free of the mental influence after spending a certain amount of Willpower, treat the character as having paid the full Willpower price even if it is paid in motes.

### Unhesitating Dedication

**Cost:** 4m, 1wp; **Mins:** Integrity 3, Essence 2; **Type:** Simple
**Keywords:** Combo-OK, Stackable
**Duration:** Indefinite
**Prerequisite Charms:** Righteous Lion Defense

The Solar dedicates himself to a new goal or ideal. If the Solar has not already established an Intimacy to this ideal, this Charm allows him to do so instantly. This Charm lets the Solar treat this Intimacy as an additional Motivation, with all the benefits and drawbacks thereof. Lawgivers can invoke this Charm repeatedly but they can benefit from only a number of additional Motivations equal to their Conviction.

## Performance

### Respect Commanding Attitude

**Cost:** 5m; **Mins:** Performance 3, Essence 2; **Type:** Simple (Speed 4 in long ticks)
**Keywords:** Combo-OK, Compulsion, Social
**Duration:** One scene
**Prerequisite Charms:** None

Others listen when the Lawgivers speak. In ancient days, they commanded the attention of Primordials, beasts and gods. This Charm involves a performance or oration, and the Solar's player rolls (an appropriate Social Attribute + Performance) when invoking Respect Commanding Attitude. This Charm exerts unnatural mental influence on everyone who can see or hear the character. If the extra successes exceed a given target's MDV, that target suffers a compulsion to stay in the Exalt's company and respectfully observe the performance. Resisting this compulsion for five minutes costs one Willpower, up to a maximum of three Willpower per scene, and such resistance allows the target to leave, heckle or even forcibly silence the character.

### Phantom-Conjuring Performance

**Cost:** —; **Mins:** Performance 3, Essence 3; **Type:** Permanent
**Keywords:** Obvious
**Duration:** Variable
**Prerequisite Charms:** Any Performance Excellency

Essence enhances the Solar's arts. This Charm allows the Solar to create ghostly images, Essence flares, ethereal music and strange sensory effects when using a Performance Excellency or Presence Excellency. These effects do not seem entirely real, they remain within (Essence x 10) yards of the Solar, and they cannot be used to confuse or deceive others without a stunt. This Charm has no cost, but the Solar need not use its effects.

### Heart-Compelling Method

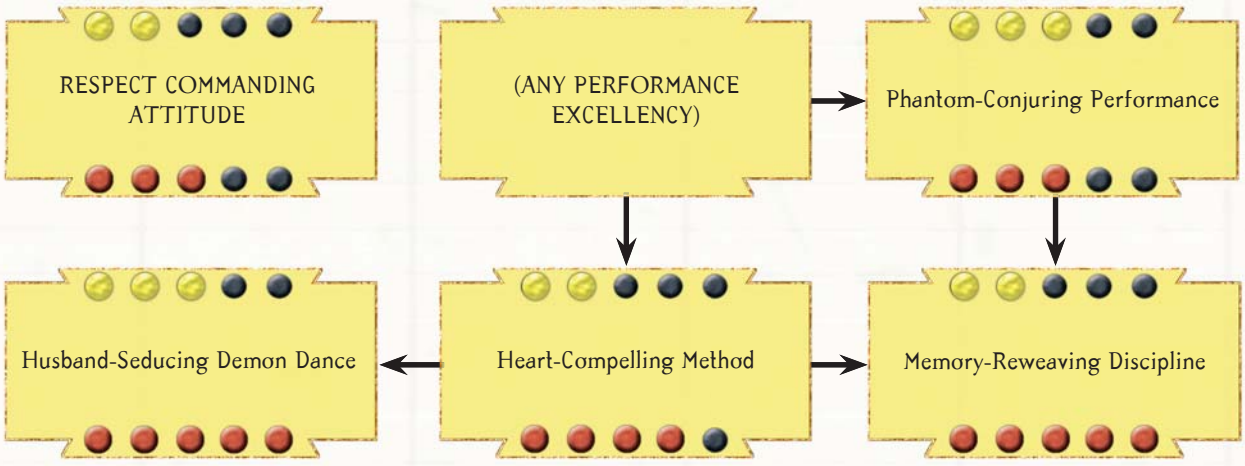
**Cost:** 6m; **Mins:** Performance 4, Essence 2; **Type:** Supplemental
**Keywords:** Combo-OK, Emotion, Social
**Duration:** One scene
**Prerequisite Charms:** Any Performance Excellency

The Solar Exalted rise above the common through their understanding of others' desires. This Charm supplements a Performance-based roll to rouse emotion in others. It exerts unnatural mental influence on every valid target of this roll. If their MDV is less than the extra successes on the roll, this Charm inspires the desired emotion intensely for a scene. Resisting the influence costs two Willpower.

### Memory-Reweaving Discipline

**Cost:** 10m, 1wp; **Mins:** Performance 5, Essence 2; **Type:** Simple (Speed 5 in long ticks)
**Keywords:** Combo-OK, Illusion, Social
**Duration:** Instant
**Prerequisite Charms:** Phantom-Conjuring Performance, Heart-Compelling Method

The Lawgivers define others' reality. This Charm is a Performance-based social attack that encourages a specific belief—for



example, overwriting the audience's memories and convincing them that the Solar has always lived in their town. This Charm exerts unnatural mental influence on every valid target of this roll. If their MDV is less than the extra successes on the roll, this Charm inspires them to believe. It also creates an instant commitment (see p. 201) to that belief. Shaking off the illusion requires one Willpower per scene, and the effect lasts until the targets break their commitment to the false belief.

### Husband-Seducing Demon Dance

**Cost:** 10m, 1wp; **Mins:** Performance 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Simple (Speed 6 in long ticks)
**Keywords:** Combo-OK, Emotion, Obvious, Social
**Duration:** Instant
**Prerequisite Charms:** Heart-Compelling Method

In answer to the call of the Solar Exalted, in ancient times, people gave up their homes and families and marched to war. Some Lawgivers gave speeches and shone with the sun's radiance, but others called their servants with beauty—piping, dancing or playing at the harp, wordlessly and terribly calling their soldiers to their deaths.

The Solar gives a performance, her player rolling ([Charisma or Manipulation] + Performance) and adding her Appearance in bonus dice. This Charm exerts unnatural mental influence on all who witness it. Characters with Mental DV less than the Solar's successes must spend two Willpower or fall instantly in love either with the Solar or something the Solar represents. This effect does not depend on gender or sexual preference. Targets incapable of sexual attraction to the Solar suffer starry-eyed infatuation or dedication to the Solar's cause rather than romantic desire. This love is a form of commitment (see p. 201). Targets can break the commitment naturally but they must spend one Willpower in each scene where they deliberately attempt to shake it off.

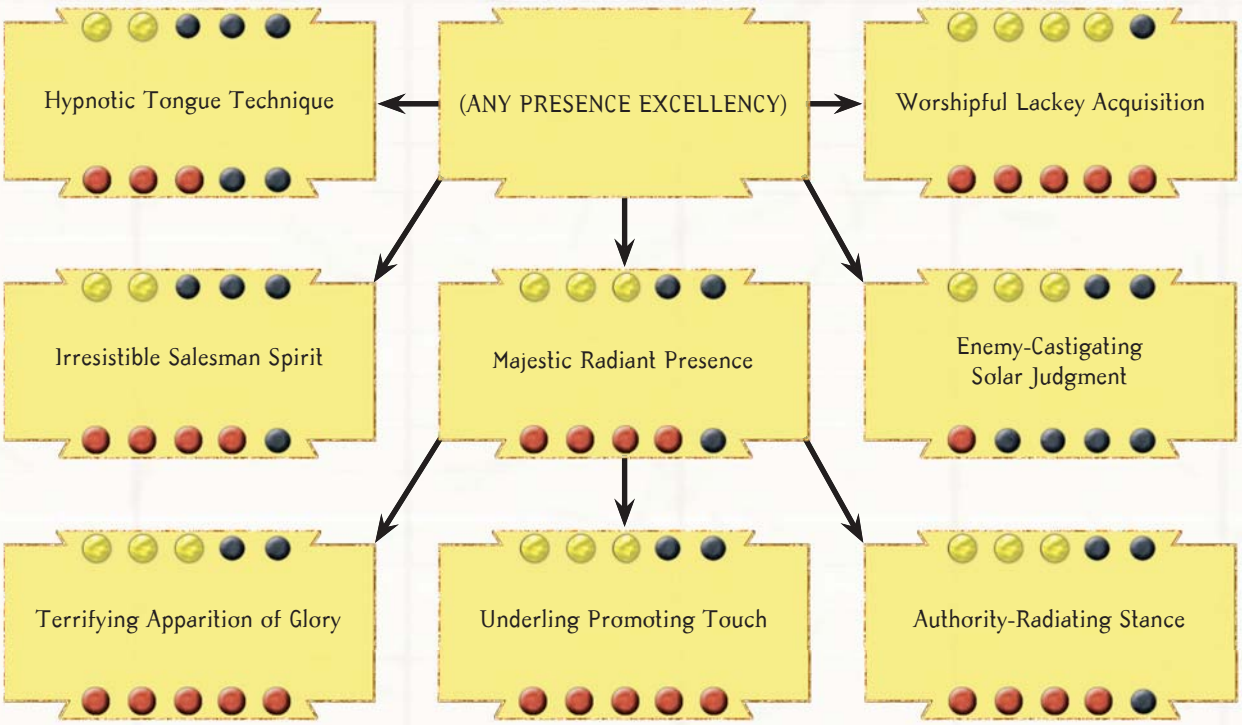
## Presence

### Hypnotic Tongue Technique

**Cost:** 10m, 1wp; **Mins:** Presence 3, Essence 2; **Type:** Simple
**Keywords:** Combo-OK, Social, Stackable, Touch
**Duration:** Solar's Charisma in days
**Prerequisite Charms:** Any Presence Excellency

It is hard for mortals to resist the shining glory of the Solar Exalted. This Charm exerts unnatural mental influence to create a Compulsion effect. The Lawgiver's player rolls (Manipulation + Presence). If the result exceeds the target's Mental DV, the target receives a compulsion to follow one order given by the Solar. The order can be as complicated as the Solar desires. The target must spend one Willpower to resist the order but need pay this cost only once per day. The influence fades when the Charm expires.

When the Solar uses Hypnotic Tongue Technique, the target is not aware of the compulsion, nor does the Solar need to spell out the order explicitly in words. If the target wishes to recognize the influence or remember it later, doing so costs four Willpower, which must be spent all at once, and the target is thenceforth fully aware of the effect. Recognizing or remembering the influence is not considered "resisting" it, and the target does not gain Limit from doing so.




### Majestic Radiant Presence

**Cost:** 7m; **Mins:** Presence 4, Essence 3; **Type:** Reflexive (Step 2)
**Keywords:** Obvious, Social
**Duration:** One scene
**Prerequisite Charms:** Any Presence Excellency

The Solar burns with the incandescent radiance of the Unconquered Sun. This Charm intimidates others, negating any physical or social attack made against the Solar unless the attacker's player succeeds on a reflexive resistance roll. The Solar's player chooses when purchasing this Charm whether a difficulty 1 Valor roll or a difficulty 2 Willpower roll is the appropriate form of resistance. The attacker need succeed only once per action, no matter how many attacks she makes during a flurry. This Charm's effects are a form of unnatural mental influence, and characters can spend three Willpower to resist the effects of Majestic Radiant Presence for a scene.

### Terrifying Apparition of Glory

**Cost:** 3m; **Mins:** Presence 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Supplemental
**Keywords:** Combo-OK, Social
**Duration:** Instant
**Prerequisite Charms:** Majestic Radiant Presence

The Solar burns with impossible glory. This Charm can supplement any attempt at natural mental influence. It renders the target's Dodge MDV inapplicable. This Charm is specifically permitted to supplement rolls for other Abilities. Reduce this Charm's cost to 2 motes if Majestic Radiant Presence is already active.

### Underling Promoting Touch

**Cost:** 7m, 1wp; **Mins:** Presence 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Simple
**Keywords:** Obvious, Touch
**Duration:** One story
**Prerequisite Charms:** Majestic Radiant Presence

Those who speak for a Solar share his majesty. This Charm imbues a target character with Solar Essence. When the target believes herself to be acting or speaking in the Solar's name, her player adds the Solar's Essence in dice to Presence rolls made for the character.

### Authority-Radiating Stance

**Cost:** 3m; **Mins:** Presence 4, Essence 3; **Type:** Simple (Speed 4 in long ticks)
**Keywords:** Combo-OK, Social
**Duration:** One scene
**Prerequisite Charms:** Majestic Radiant Presence

The Solar assumes the mantle of authority. This Charm is a form of unnatural mental influence. For the rest of the scene, each character who interacts personally with the Exalt and has a lower MDV than the Exalt's Presence suffers an unnatural Illusion effect. He believes that the Exalt is someone with authority over him. Recognizing this belief as an illusion costs two Willpower. This Charm, as a specific exception to the usual rules for unnatural effects, does not cost Limit to resist.

### Irresistible Salesman Spirit

**Cost:** 3m; **Mins:** Presence 4, Essence 2; **Type:** Supplemental
**Keywords:** Combo-Basic, Social
**Duration:** Instant
**Prerequisite Charms:** Any Presence Excellency

The glamour of the Lawgivers inspires others to dream of glorious things. This makes the Solars the ultimate salesmen and recruiters. Irresistible Salesman Spirit enhances a Presence-based roll to exert mental influence and make a favorable bargain or encourage a specific action. This Charm doubles the Solar's successes on the roll before comparing them to the target's MDV.

### Worshipful Lackey Acquisition
**Cost:** 12m, 1wp; **Mins:** Presence 5, Essence 4; **Type:** Simple (Speed 6 in long ticks)
**Keywords:** Combo-OK, Obvious, Servitude, Social
**Duration:** Solar's Charisma in days
**Prerequisite Charms:** Any Presence Excellency

The Solar Exalted surround themselves with the faithful. This Charm is a Presence-based social attack that inspires someone to recognize the Solar's greatness. The target chosen must be a valid target for persuasion attempts. The Solar's player rolls ([Charisma or Manipulation] + Presence), subtracting the target's MDV from the successes as an external penalty. If the Solar succeeds, this Charm exerts unnatural mental influence and creates a Servitude effect. It compels the target to serve the Solar loyally. This effect costs one Willpower per day to resist.

This Charm creates an instant commitment (see p. 201) to the Solar. The target cannot begin breaking faith (see p. 201) with that commitment until the Charm's effects end. The mental influence lasts until the target has fully shaken off this loyalty.

### Enemy-Castigating Solar Judgment
**Cost:** 2m; **Mins:** Presence 1, Essence 3; **Type:** Supplemental
**Keywords:** Combo-OK, Holy, Obvious, Social
**Duration:** Instant
**Prerequisite Charms:** Any Presence Excellency

The Solar ignites her spirit with the Essence of the Unconquered Sun. This Charm can enhance a physical attack. This Charm makes the attack Holy and causes the attack to inflict aggravated damage against creatures of darkness (see p. 192).

This Charm can also enhance social attacks that create guilt, shame or fear, or where the Exalt uses a stunt to draw on these emotions. It makes the attack Holy. This Charm makes creatures of darkness treat the social attack as unnatural mental influence that costs one Willpower to resist. This Charm also halves the creature's base MDVs against the attack.

This Charm is specifically permitted to enhance rolls based on other Abilities.

## Resistance

### Whirlwind Armor-Donning Prana
**Cost:** 1m; **Mins:** Resistance 1, Essence 1; **Type:** Simple
**Keywords:** Combo-OK
**Duration:** Instant
**Prerequisite Charms:** None

When the Solar armors himself for battle, there is no delay or fumbling—Essence smoothes his course. This Charm allows the Exalt to make one minute's progress on donning armor in a single action. The Solar Exalted normally use this Charm for a number of successive actions equal to the armor's mobility penalty in order to complete the armor-donning process. For example, six actions and six invocations allows an Exalt to gird himself in chain swathing. Facing exigent circumstances such as limited Essence or frequent interruptions, he could also spend two minutes' effort and four invocations of the Charm.

This Charm applies to personal worn items, including body armor, shields, clothing and warstriders.

### Hauberk-Lightening Gesture
**Cost:** 1m; **Mins:** Resistance 3, Essence 3; **Type:** Simple (Speed 3)
**Keywords:** Combo-OK, Obvious
**Duration:** Indefinite
**Prerequisite Charms:** Whirlwind Armor-Donning Prana

Armor worn in countless battles becomes a part of the Solar's spirit. It is always on hand when its master calls. The Solar first dons a suit of armor that she owns and has worn in battle. This Charm banishes that armor to Elsewhere. The Solar can gird herself in that armor directly from Elsewhere. Doing so takes as much time as donning the armor normally would, and she can use Whirlwind Armor-Donning Prana to speed the process. The Charm ends when she does so. If she cancels the Essence committed to this Charm while the armor is fully or partially Elsewhere, any donned pieces return Elsewhere, and then, the entire suit appears within arm's reach.

This Charm applies to body armor and shields, but not other worn items.

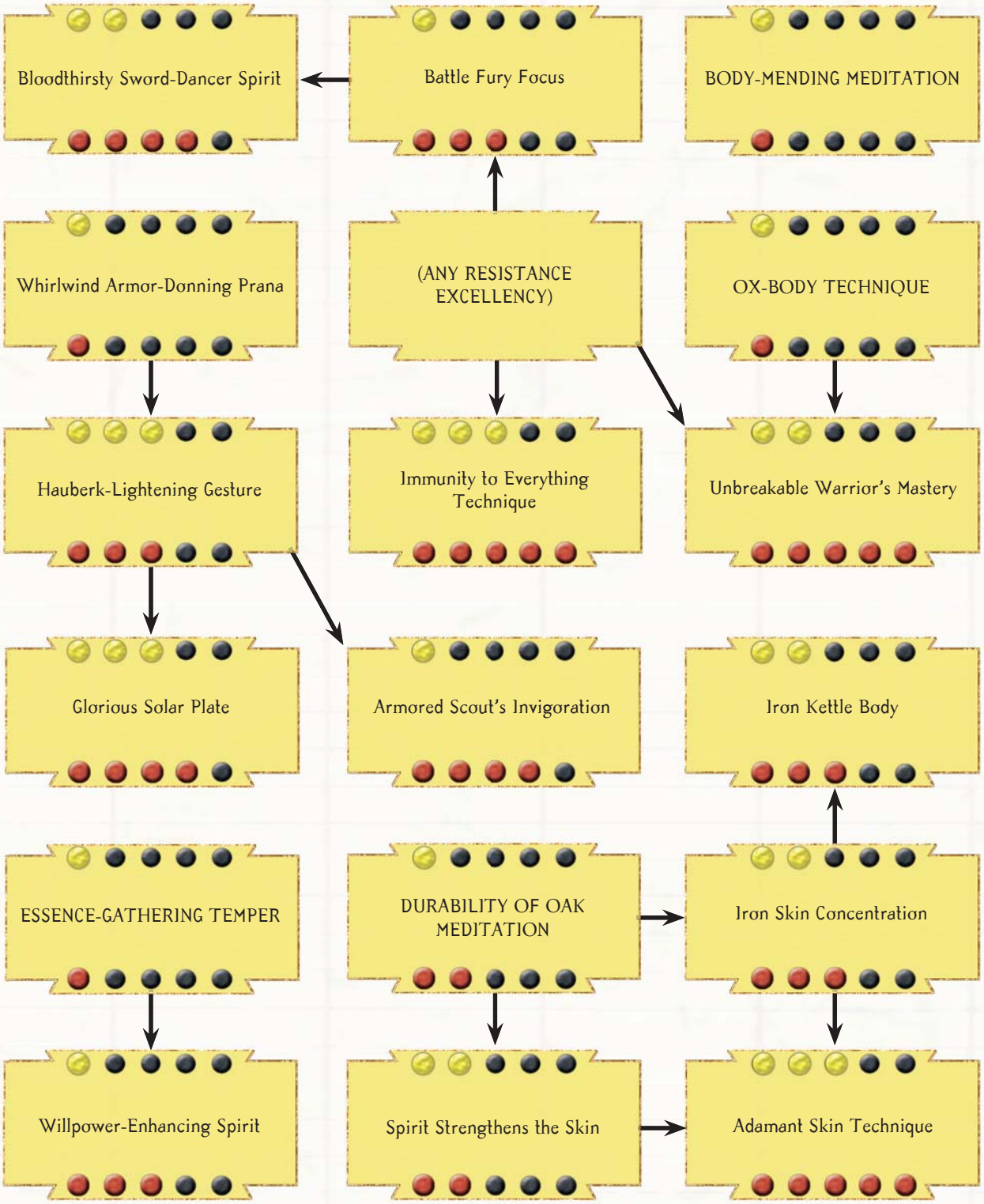
### Glorious Solar Plate
**Cost:** 10m, 1wp or 13m, 1wp; **Mins:** Resistance 4, Essence 3; **Type:** Simple
**Keywords:** Obvious
**Duration:** One scene
**Prerequisite Charms:** Hauberk-Lightening Gesture

The Solar armors herself in the blazing glory of the Unconquered Sun. This Charm creates a suit of golden body armor from the Solar's anima. The character can design the armor to suit his personal aesthetic and mood—it can be sleek, imposing, ornate or simple. Regardless of aesthetic, it is always unmistakably medium or heavy armor, and it always glows with a golden light resembling an 8-10 mote Solar anima display. This light is bright enough to read by in a three-yard radius.

Characters can only use this Charm if they are not already wearing body armor or a warstrider. It creates armor with 10L/10B soak, 5 Hardness, a -1 mobility penalty and no fatigue penalty. The character is instantly fully armored. For an additional three motes, if the character is not carrying a shield, he can create a glowing shield that gives a +1 cover DV bonus against hand-to-hand attacks and a +3 cover DV bonus against ranged attacks. This shield is always unmistakably a shield and bears the sunburst emblem of the Unconquered Sun.

### Armored Scout's Invigoration
**Cost:** 3m per fatigue/mobility reduction; **Mins:** Resistance 4, Essence 1; **Type:** Simple
**Keywords:** Combo-OK
**Duration:** Indefinite
**Prerequisite Charms:** Hauberk-Lightening Gesture

In these grim and degenerate times, the Chosen of the Sun must be as soldiers ready for a battle. They cannot relax in the face of their enemies, and must sometimes wear armor for days at a time. Yet, they do not weary. For each three motes spent, this Charm reduces both the fatigue value and the mobility penalty of the Solar's armor by one, to a minimum of 0. A fatigue value of 0 means that the Solar's player need never roll to see whether her character becomes fatigued from wearing the armor. This Charm lasts until the character removes the armor in question.




This Charm applies to any combination of worn items that give a mobility or fatigue penalty. This includes body armor, shields, combinations of body armor and shields, warstriders and articles of clothing that impose mobility or fatigue.

### Durability of Oak Meditation

**Cost:** 3m; **Mins:** Resistance 2, Essence 1; **Type:** Reflexive (Step 7)
**Keywords:** Combo-OK
**Duration:** Instant

**Prerequisite Charms:** None

A boy cannot cut down an oak tree with a kitchen knife. Nor can a mere mortal slay the Solar with petty blows of mortal steel. The Solar invokes this Charm after an attack hits but before damage is rolled. This Charm sets her Hardness against that attack to 8.

### Spirit Strengthens the Skin

**Cost:** 1m per pre-soak damage die removed; **Mins:** Resistance 2, Essence 2; **Type:** Reflexive (Step 7)
**Keywords:** Combo-OK, Obvious
**Duration:** Instant
**Prerequisite Charms:** Durability of Oak Meditation

The unconquerable flame of the Solar's spirit armors her against attack. She invokes this Charm after an attack hits her but before damage is rolled. This Charm reduces the raw (pre-soak) damage of the attack by one die for each mote spent. This Charm can reduce the damage of the attack to zero.

### Iron Skin Concentration

**Cost:** 2m; **Mins:** Resistance 3, Essence 2; **Type:** Reflexive (Step 7)
**Keywords:** Combo-OK, Obvious
**Duration:** Instant
**Prerequisite Charms:** Durability of Oak Meditation

Mortal weapons are as the stings of wasps and hornets to the Lawgivers reborn. The Solar invokes this Charm after an attack hits him but before damage is rolled. Roll (his Stamina + Resistance) against a difficulty equal to the attacker's Essence (up to a maximum of 6). On a success, this Charm prevents all damage from the attack; on a failure, this Charm still gives him +4A/+8L/+8B soak.

### Iron Kettle Body

**Cost:** 4m, 1W **Mins:** Resistance 3 Essence 2; **Type:** Simple
**Duration:** Scene
**Prerequisite Charms:** Iron Skin Concentration

The Lawgivers are armored in righteousness, and many need no other hauberk. This Charm gives the character +4A/+8L/+8B soak for the scene. This Charm cannot be used by characters wearing armor. The defense provided by this Charm is compatible with Iron Skin Concentration's effects.

### Adamant Skin Technique

**Cost:** 4m; **Mins:** Resistance 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Reflexive (Step 7)
**Keywords:** Combo-OK, Obvious
**Duration:** Instant
**Prerequisite Charms:** Spirit Strengthens the Skin, Iron Skin Concentration

Driven by her purpose and her Virtues, the Exalt becomes invincible. The Solar invokes this Charm immediately before the damage of a physical attack or similar effect is rolled. This Charm is a perfect defense against the raw damage of the attack, reducing it to zero after all other effects. This Charm has one of the Four Flaws of Invulnerability (see p. 194).

### Essence-Gathering Temper

**Cost:** 1m; **Mins:** Resistance 1, Essence 1; **Type:** Reflexive (Step 8)
**Keywords:** Combo-OK
**Duration:** Instant
**Prerequisite Charms:** None

The more terrible the enemies and adversities they face, the greater the power of a Solar's spirit. The Solar invokes this Charm when hit by an attack with the potential to damage her—that is, an attack with a calculated raw damage exceeding her Hardness, which therefore rolls at least one die of damage. The Solar's player rolls two dice for each damage die rolled. For each success on this roll, to a maximum of her Stamina in successes, the Lawgiver receives a number of motes of Essence equal to her permanent Essence score. For example, an Essence 2 Solar with Stamina 3 would receive two motes with one success, four motes with two successes and six motes with three or more successes. This Charm cannot increase the Solar's Essence pool past its normal maximum, and the Solar can never gain more than 20 motes from any combination of Charms including Essence-Gathering Temper during a single one of her actions.

### Willpower-Enhancing Spirit

**Cost:** 4m; **Mins:** Resistance 3, Essence 1; **Type:** Reflexive (Step 10)
**Keywords:** Combo-OK
**Duration:** Instant
**Prerequisite Charms:** Essence-Gathering Temper

The Lawgiver draws inner strength from the challenges that face him. He invokes this Charm when hit by an attack that damaged him—that is, an attack that cost him at least one

health level of damage. His player rolls one die for each health level lost. This Charm restores one point of temporary Willpower plus one point for each success rolled. This Charm cannot raise the Exalt's Willpower above its normal value.

### Battle Fury Focus

**Cost:** 5m; **Mins:** Resistance 3, Essence 1; **Type:** Simple (Speed 7)
**Keywords:** None
**Duration:** One scene
**Prerequisite Charms:** Any Resistance Excellency

The character steels herself for the struggle ahead. She awakens in her soul a deep and terrible passion—stoic dedication, primal rage, merciless justice or some other emotion appropriate to her nature—and lets it drive her into battle.

This Charm gives the character an extra die to all combat-related pools and reduces all wound penalties by one. The character must be engaged in combat or attempting to become so engaged. She can attack at range and differentiate friend from foe, but she cannot utter sentences of more than a few words, move away from the enemy or perform complex actions such as retrieving a small object from a pack. To end this Charm prematurely, her player must spend one Willpower.

### Bloodthirsty Sword-Dancer Spirit

**Cost:** 10m, 1wp; **Mins:** Resistance 4, Essence 2; **Type:** Simple (Speed 7)
**Keywords:** Obvious
**Duration:** One scene
**Prerequisite Charms:** Battle Fury Focus

When ordinary means have failed, and there is nothing left save life and death, then it befits the god-kings of legend to give themselves over to the battle-trance and make themselves implacable enemies to their foes. This Charm functions as Battle Fury Focus but is in all ways greater. It gives the character three extra dice to all combat-related pools and removes all wound penalties. The character's mind is consumed by the battle-trance. The character cannot speak coherently and cannot retreat. She may only take one or more of the following actions: moving toward her current target by the shortest route, attacking enemies within range, waiting for an attacker to engage her or selecting the nearest enemy as a new target when her previous target is incapacitated, dead or not locatable.

This Charm lasts until the character can no longer locate an enemy to kill. Enemies include known enemies and those who get in her way. Strangers and acquaintances can earn the enemy label if they are dressed like the enemy or if they act in a suspicious fashion. The character will not attack close friends, relatives or lovers for suspicious action or clothing—they must actively interfere to become targets of attack.

To end this Charm prematurely, the Solar must spend three Willpower and gain one Limit. Reduce this to one Willpower and no Limit if a loved one or friend attempts to restrain the character. Unfortunately, if the Exalt does not spend the Willpower when a loved one attempts to break her battle-trance, she is almost certain to lash out at the unrecognizable blur distracting her from slaying her target.

### Ox-Body Technique

**Cost:** —; **Mins:** Resistance 1, Essence 1; **Type:** Permanent
**Keywords:** Stackable
**Duration:** Permanent
**Prerequisite Charms:** None

The Exalted are like the mountains: not easily worn down by such mortal things as men. This Charm gives the Lawgiver additional health levels.

A player may purchase this Charm up to once per dot of the Resistance Ability her character possesses. Each purchase provides one of the following, at the player's option, determined at the time of purchase:

- One -0 health level
- Two -1 health levels
- One -1 health level and two -2 health levels

### Unbreakable Warrior's Mastery

**Cost:** 3m, 1wp; **Mins:** Resistance 5, Essence 2; **Type:** Reflexive (Step 10)
**Keywords:** Combo-OK
**Duration:** Instant
**Prerequisite Charms:** Any Resistance Excellency, Ox-Body Technique

The Solar shakes off wounds that would cripple a lesser person. This Charm applies when someone uses an attack with a Crippling effect against the Solar. The Solar's player rolls (Stamina + Resistance) against a difficulty of the attacker's Essence. If she succeeds, this Charm negates the Crippling effect.

### Immunity to Everything Technique

**Cost:** 6m, 1wp; **Mins:** Resistance 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Simple (Speed 4)
**Keywords:** Combo-OK
**Duration:** One scene
**Prerequisite Charms:** Any Resistance Excellency

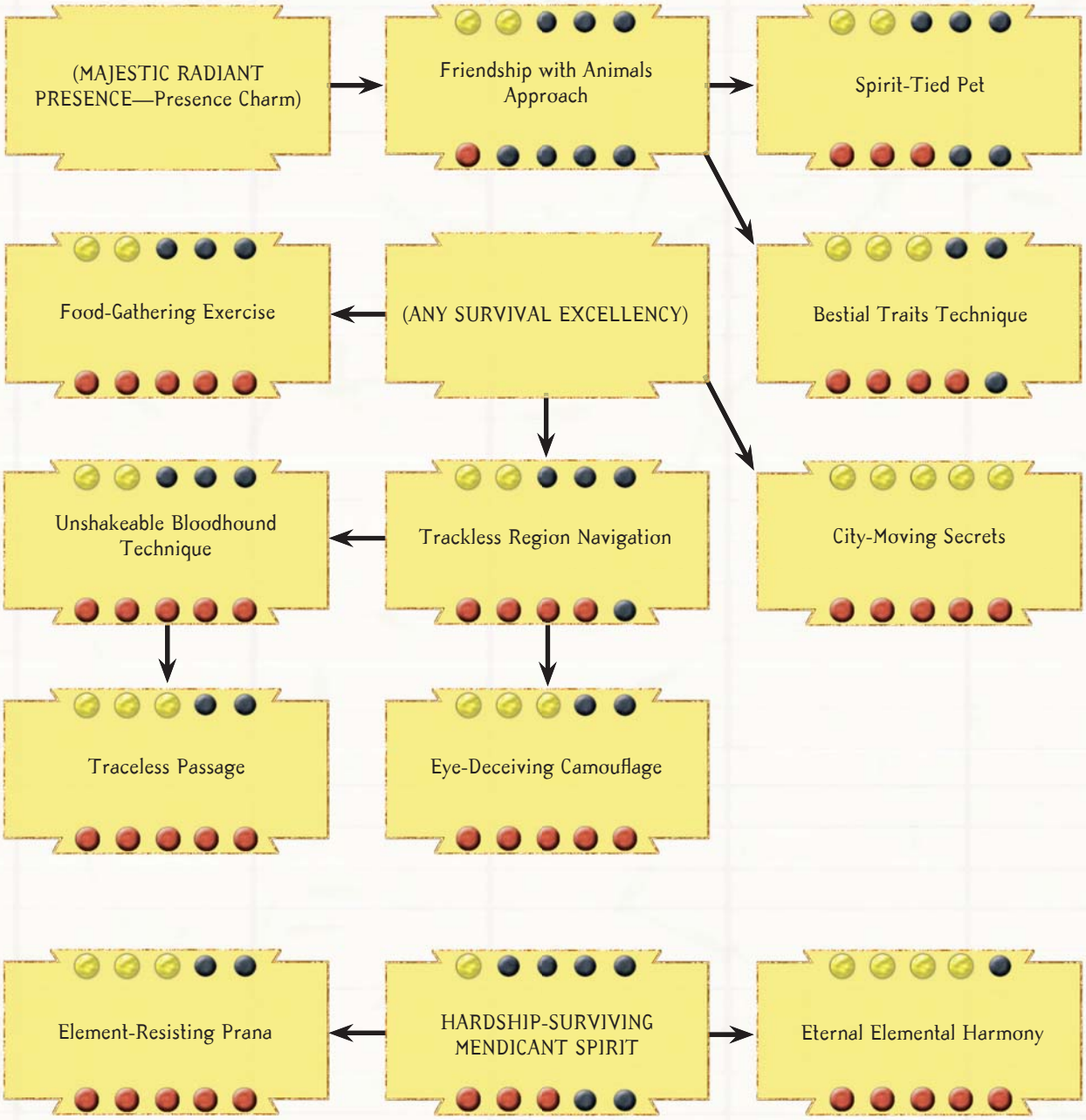
Not easily are the Lawgivers slain. This Charm stops poison and sickness from doing further damage to the character for one scene. This Charm also prevents the character from suffering new Poison or Sickness effects during this scene. Effects that would poison or sicken him have no effect whatsoever. The character can walk hand-in-hand with plague victims, sprinkle poison on his food and eat ichneumon eggs as caviar. There are never ill effects later from these indiscretions.

### Body-Mending Meditation

**Cost:** 10m; **Mins:** Resistance 1, Essence 1; **Type:** Supplemental
**Keywords:** Combo-OK
**Duration:** Until the day ends
**Prerequisite Charms:** None

Even wounded nigh unto death, a Lawgiver will marshal the strength to rise again. This Charm supplements a dramatic action to marshal the character's inner resources for recovery. This action requires one hour without a stunt or another Charm. The Solar's player rolls (Stamina + Resistance). Success speeds his healing rate by a factor of 10 or, if the character prefers, adds directly to the successes of a physician using Wound-Mending Care Technique on the character. See page 149 for more on natural healing rates.

Characters can activate Body-Mending Meditation when inactive (see p. 143).




## Survival

### Friendship with Animals Approach

**Cost:** 3m; **Mins:** Survival 1, Essence 2; **Type:** Reflexive (Step 1 or 2)
**Keywords:** Combo-OK
**Duration:** One scene
**Prerequisite Charms:** Majestic Radiant Presence

Even the beasts and birds recognize the heroes of the dawn. This Charm keeps natural animals from attacking the character unless they are provoked or driven by unusual pain or fear. It allows the Exalt to communicate with natural animals—with sounds and gestures—as if they shared a common language. Animals have limited capacity for comprehension, and the Exalt cannot convince an animal to adopt a belief or plan that it cannot understand.

Characters can activate Friendship with Animals Approach when inactive (see p. 143).

### Spirit-Tied Pet

**Cost:** 10m, 1wp, 1xp; **Mins:** Survival 3, Essence 2; **Type:** Simple (Dramatic Action)
**Keywords:** Combo-OK, Touch
**Duration:** Instant
**Prerequisite Charms:** Friendship with Animals Approach

Since the First Age, the Lawgivers have forged magical bonds with their chosen beasts. The target of this Charm must

be an animal loyal (see p. 175) to the Exalt. Normally, the Exalt wins this loyalty through persuasion and the use of the Friendship with Animals Approach. The Exalt can only use this Charm if he has no familiar, and using it on a new animal for the first time removes his Familiar Background entirely. This Charm is a dramatic action requiring several hours of interaction with the target. It increases the Exalt's Familiar Background by one dot, to a maximum of five. When the Exalt's Familiar Background reaches a sufficient level to have the animal as a Familiar, it becomes his familiar. For example, a tiger requires three applications of this Charm to become the Exalt's familiar, and two more to give the Exalt the abilities conveyed by Familiar 5.

### Bestial Traits Technique

**Cost:** 10m, 2wp; **Mins:** Survival 4, Essence 3; **Type:** Simple (Dramatic Action)
**Keywords:** Obvious, Touch, Training
**Duration:** One week
**Prerequisite Charms:** Friendship with Animals Approach

Animals trained by the Solar Exalted become more loyal and more powerful. This Charm involves training a natural animal or familiar. This Charm requires five or more hours of effort in any given week to bear fruit. This Charm replaces the normal effects of that training. In each week of training, the trainer picks one of the following to train:

- Strength, Dexterity, Stamina or Perception. This Charm increases the animal's Attribute by one dot, to a maximum of (its species average + 2).
- Valor. This Charm increases the animal's Valor by one dot, to a maximum of 4.
- Athletics, Awareness, Martial Arts, Resistance or Survival. This Charm increases the animal's Ability by one dot, to a maximum of the Solar's own rating in that Ability.
- Health and size. This Charm gives the animal an additional -1 health level and, optionally, increases its size by 10%. This Charm can give an animal a number of extra levels no greater than its Stamina.
- Intelligence. This Charm gives the animal the effective intelligence of a six-year-old human.

Using this Charm on a familiar increases all of these maximums by one and allows training the animal to adult human intelligence.

### Hardship-Surviving Mendicant Spirit

**Cost:** 10m; **Mins:** Survival 3, Essence 1; **Type:** Reflexive
**Keywords:** Combo-OK
**Duration:** Indefinite
**Prerequisite Charms:** None

The wilderness cannot subdue the heroes of the dawn. This Charm negates any environmental external penalties to Survival rolls made for the Solar. This means that the coldest glacier and the hottest desert are no more deadly for the Solar than the gentlest rolling plain. She can find food and water easily, she ignores inclement weather even when lightly dressed, and she does not suffer undue blisters, bug bites or plant poison even walking barefoot through the Far East. This Charm does not protect against environmental damage, however, so if the environment is deadly enough to force regular Resistance rolls, the Solar needs Element-Resisting Prana to endure it.

### Charm Concept: Natural Animals

For the purposes of Charms, a "natural animal" is a creature native to Creation with no inherent magical powers. If the Storyteller cannot determine whether to consider an animal natural, she can allow the use of Charms that affect natural animals but impose a +2 difficulty penalty on any relevant rolls.

Natural animals do not speak any languages. They are valid targets for social attacks, but only insofar as they understand the orders and ideas presented.

Herbivores and domestic animals have a Motivation to achieve comfort and happiness. Most predators have a Motivation to live, hunt and breed in the wild. This makes them more difficult to domesticate.

### Element-Resisting Prana

**Cost:** —; **Mins:** Survival 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Permanent
**Keywords:** None
**Duration:** Permanent
**Prerequisite Charms:** Hardship-Surviving Mendicant Spirit

This Charm enhances the character's Hardship-Surviving Mendicant Spirit. When using that Charm, the character now becomes immune to environmental hazards. She can survive in a bonfire, underwater, in a volcano's caldera or in a pool of boiling acid, all with ease. She takes damage or suffers Poison, Crippling or Sickness effects only when directly inflicted upon her by some character's action.

### Eternal Elemental Harmony

**Cost:** —; **Mins:** Survival 5, Essence 4; **Type:** Permanent
**Keywords:** None
**Duration:** Permanent
**Prerequisite Charms:** Hardship-Surviving Mendicant Spirit

This Charm enhances the character's Hardship-Surviving Mendicant Spirit. It reduces that Charm's cost to 5 motes and allows the character to activate Hardship-Surviving Mendicant Spirit even when she's inactive (see p. 143).

If the Solar has Essence 6+, this Charm negates the cost for Hardship-Surviving Mendicant Spirit entirely.

### Food-Gathering Exercise

**Cost:** 3m; **Mins:** Survival 5, Essence 2; **Type:** Simple (Speed 5 in long ticks)
**Keywords:** Combo-OK
**Duration:** Instant
**Prerequisite Charms:** Any Survival Excellency

The land gives its strength to the Lawgivers. This Charm affects the character or a group she leads with a Magnitude no greater than her Essence. The character or group may forage in the wild and find enough food for a small meal each. It takes five applications of this Charm per day to keep a group well fed. If the Solar has dependents not foraging with her, food found with this Charm can be brought back to them. For example, for three motes, a 10-person group can find enough food to maintain two dependents for a day.

### Trackless Region Navigation
**Cost:** 7m; **Mins:** Survival 4, Essence 2; **Type:** Reflexive
**Keywords:** Combo-OK
**Duration:** Indefinite
**Prerequisite Charms:** Any Survival Excellency

The deepest wilds are no mystery to the Solar Exalted. This Charm affects the character herself or a group she leads with a Magnitude no greater than her Essence. While this Charm is in effect, the character or group travels 10 miles per day across the harshest terrain and 20 miles per day across normal wilderness. The Solar's player automatically succeeds at any valid Survival roll for the Exalt to find her way—though the character must have enough information to make this a valid roll.

### Unshakeable Bloodhound Technique
**Cost:** 8m, 1wp; **Mins:** Survival 5, Essence 2; **Type:** Supplemental
**Keywords:** Combo-OK
**Duration:** Instant
**Prerequisite Charms:** Trackless Region Navigation

The Lawgivers hunt down their enemies with a relentless passion. This Charm supplements a roll to track an opponent. It guarantees that the Solar achieves at least (target's successes + 1) successes on the tracking contest, after taking all penalties into account. If another Charm contests this effect, add the Solar's Essence in automatic successes to her opposed roll to maintain the effects of this Charm.

### Traceless Passage
**Cost:** 5m, 1wp; **Mins:** Survival 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Supplemental
**Keywords:** Combo-OK
**Duration:** Instant
**Prerequisite Charms:** Unshakeable Bloodhound Technique

Solar heroes with this Charm can vanish into the wilderness. This Charm affects the Solar or a group she leads with a Magnitude no greater than her Essence. It enhances a roll made to travel without leaving signs of her (or the group's) presence. This Charm guarantees that any tracker achieves, at most, zero successes on the contest to track the character or group. If another Charm contests this effect, such as Unshakeable Bloodhound Technique, add the Solar's Essence in automatic successes to her opposed roll to maintain the effects of this Charm.

### Eye-Deceiving Camouflage
**Cost:** 6m; **Mins:** Survival 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Simple (Dramatic Action)
**Keywords:** Combo-OK
**Duration:** Indefinite
**Prerequisite Charms:** Trackless Region Navigation

This Charm is a dramatic action to camouflage the Solar or some person or object, and it normally takes one hour to perform. The player rolls (Intelligence + Survival) to determine the quality of the camouflage. This Charm makes the camouflaged thing impossible to detect with Awareness rolls using ordinary senses. Characters with inhuman sensory acuity, such as Lawgivers using Keen Smell and Taste Technique, can discover the hidden thing by opposing the camouflage roll with (their Perception + Awareness). Characters conducting a thorough search, such as a miscellaneous Investigation action with a normal Speed of five long ticks, can oppose the camouflage roll with an appropriate dice pool.

### City-Moving Secrets
**Cost:** —; **Mins:** Survival 5, Essence 5; **Type:** Permanent
**Keywords:** None
**Duration:** Permanent
**Prerequisite Charms:** Any Survival Excellency

This Charm enhances the character's Survival Charms. Survival Charms that allow the character to extend their benefits to a group of Magnitude 1 or more—such as Trackless Region Navigation—increase the allowed Magnitude for that unit by one. Players can purchase this Charm a number of times equal to the Solar's Essence.

# Twilight

## Craft

### Object-Strengthening Touch
**Cost:** 5m; **Mins:** Craft 2, Essence 1; **Type:** Simple (Speed 5)
**Keywords:** Combo-OK, Touch
**Duration:** One scene
**Prerequisite Charms:** Any Craft Excellency

The things of the world strive to serve the Solars well. This Charm makes an object more difficult to break. It increases the number of successes necessary to damage the object by the character's Essence. It increases the (Strength + Athletics) rating necessary to break the object with a feat of strength by the character's Essence. No combination of Charms that includes Object-Strengthening Touch can increase these totals by more than the character's Essence.

### Durability-Enhancing Technique
**Cost:** 3m; **Mins:** Craft 3, Essence 2; **Type:** Simple (Speed 6 in long ticks)
**Keywords:** Combo-OK, Touch
**Duration:** Instant
**Prerequisite Charms:** Object-Strengthening Touch

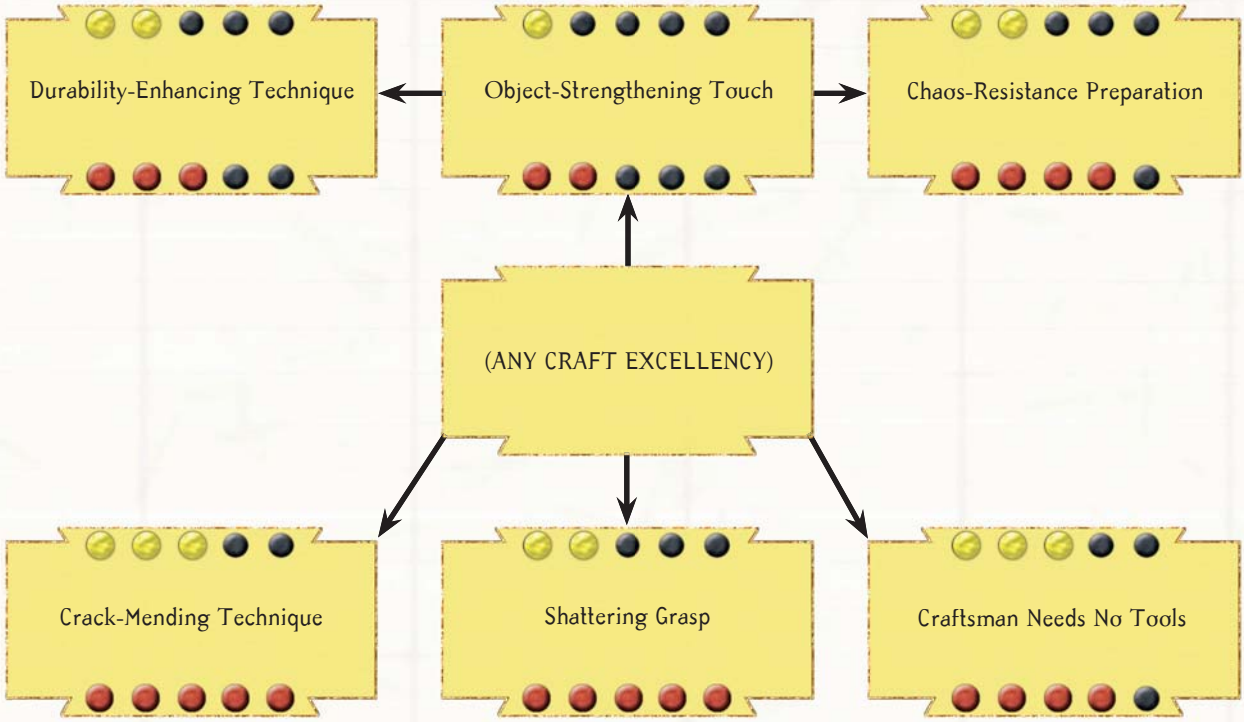
The craftsmen of the Unconquered Sun shore up the Essence of the world. This Charm increases the number of successes necessary to damage the object by one. It increases the (Strength

### Typical Targets for Craft

Craft Charms usually affect objects and structures. It is possible to affect automata (living artifacts) and even creatures with Craft Charms, but few of those Charms are presented here. Promises, dreams and hopes do not count as objects unless they are made tangible through some other effect.

### Craft Minimums

Characters can fulfill the Craft minimum for a Craft Charm with any Craft Ability. Supplemental Charms apply only to Crafts that the character masters to the level of the Craft minimum. Other Charms apply to all Crafts unless otherwise stated. A character with five dots of Craft (Fire) and no other Crafts could use Object-Strengthening Touch on any object, but could use Crack-Mending Technique to supplement repairs only suitable to Craft (Fire).




+ Athletics) rating necessary to break the object by one. These effects are permanent, but no combination of Charms that includes Durability-Enhancing Technique can increase these totals by more than the character's Essence.

### Chaos-Resistance Preparation

**Cost:** 5m, 2wp; **Mins:** Craft 4, Essence 2; **Type:** Simple (Speed 6 in long ticks)
**Keywords:** Combo-OK, Touch
**Duration:** Indefinite
**Prerequisite Charms:** Object-Strengthening Touch

The chaos of the Wyld corrodes the things of Creation. For every thing the touch of madness improves, one hundred things are ruined. Since the beginning, Lawgivers have opposed the ravages of the Wyld. This Charm makes an object immune to Shaping effects and Wyld chaos for as long as the Essence remains committed.

The object is also permanently made stronger. Specifically, in the Wyld, this Charm permanently makes random unfortunate incidents affecting the object 10 times less frequent. This Charm permanently increases the difficulty of rolled Shaping effects targeting the object by two.

### Crack-Mending Technique

**Cost:** 10m, 1wp; **Mins:** Craft 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Supplemental
**Keywords:** Combo-OK, Touch
**Duration:** Instant
**Prerequisite Charms:** Any Craft Excellency

The Lawgivers mend the flaws in the world. This Charm supplements any valid dramatic action to repair an object. This Charm allows the character to accomplish (Essence x 3) hours worth of normal repair work for each hour invested. It also allows the character to mend cracks and seal broken pieces together without glue or nails, leaving a join as strong and seamless as if the object were new. The character can perform the equivalent of days of painstaking labor in a few hours, reassembling and cleaning the shreds of a burnt letter or piecing a shattered crystal decanter back together.

### Shattering Grasp

**Cost:** 5m; **Mins:** Craft 5, Essence 2; **Type:** Simple (Dramatic Action)
**Keywords:** Combo-OK
**Duration:** One scene
**Prerequisite Charms:** Any Craft Excellency

The secrets of mending include the secrets of breaking. This Charm is a dramatic action taken to disassemble an object or structure. The character chooses whether to harmlessly or destructively take the object apart. This Charm allows the disassembly of only those objects the character can break with a feat of strength, adding twice the character's Craft to the character's (Strength + Athletics) pool to determine valid feats. This Charm can disassemble a single object in (8 – Essence) minutes, with a minimum of three minutes.

This Charm can target larger structures, such as castles and villages. In such cases, the Exalt proceeds methodically from one major component to the next, taking them apart at the normal rate, until he is interrupted or the task is complete. To take apart a large structure, the Exalt must dedicate at least (8 – Essence) hours, with a minimum of three hours, to the task; he cannot stop early unless he finishes or unexpected events interrupt him. The Exalt cannot demolish anything larger than a large castle or village with a single invocation of this Charm.

### Charm Concept: Objects and Structures

"Objects" and "structures" are things that are in a permanent inactive state. If it can't take actions on its own, it's an object or a structure. Things smaller than a yeddim that a player can reasonably consider a single item are "objects"—including walls, small buildings, belts and bags of marbles, but not collections such as "the swords those guards are holding."

Things larger than a yeddim are "structures" and are treated as a collection of smaller components, such as walls and windows.

### Craftsman Needs No Tools

**Cost:** 7m, 1wp; **Mins:** Craft 4, Essence 3; **Type:** Supplemental
**Keywords:** Combo-OK
**Duration:** Instant
**Prerequisite Charms:** Any Craft Excellency

The Chosen bring harmony to Creation. This Charm supplements a Craft action. It removes the need for tools as well as penalties for crafting without tools. The character still needs raw materials. This Charm can enhance a Craft action to build something, in which case the character accomplishes (Essence x 3) hours of work for each hour invested.

## Investigation

### Crafty Observation Method

**Cost:** 5m; **Mins:** Investigation 3, Essence 2; **Type:** Simple (DV -1)
**Keywords:** Combo-OK
**Duration:** Instant
**Prerequisite Charms:** Any Investigation Excellency

The world holds no mysteries to the Chosen of the Sun. This Charm is an Investigation-based action wherein the character studies observable evidence. This Charm functions exactly as a dramatic Investigation action that takes up to 15 minutes, save that the character performs it in a handful of seconds and does not need to ransack the scene.

### Evidence-Discerning Method

**Cost:** 5m, 1wp; **Mins:** Investigation 4, Essence 1; **Type:** Simple (Speed 5 in long ticks)
**Keywords:** Combo-OK
**Duration:** One story
**Prerequisite Charms:** Any Investigation Excellency

The Lawgivers see into others' hearts. This Charm allows the character to make an Investigation-based roll to profile someone's personality. The character need not interact with the target, but must have sufficient material evidence of the target's personality to estimate the target's nature. If the target deliberately sends out misleading cues, subtract an external penalty of ([the target's Manipulation + Socialize] ÷ 2) from the successes on the Investigation roll. Corrupted or incomplete evidence can also impose an external penalty.

If the roll succeeds, then each success reduces external penalties on dramatic, social and mass combat actions the character takes against the target. This Charm cannot reduce external penalties by an amount greater than the Solar's Essence.

The Exalt can have only one profile of a given target. The crispness of the profile—that quality that reduces external penalties—lasts only as long as the committed Essence. The Lawgiver's player cannot roll again to build a new profile unless the story ends or a new piece of evidence allows a dramatic reconceptualization of the target's personality.

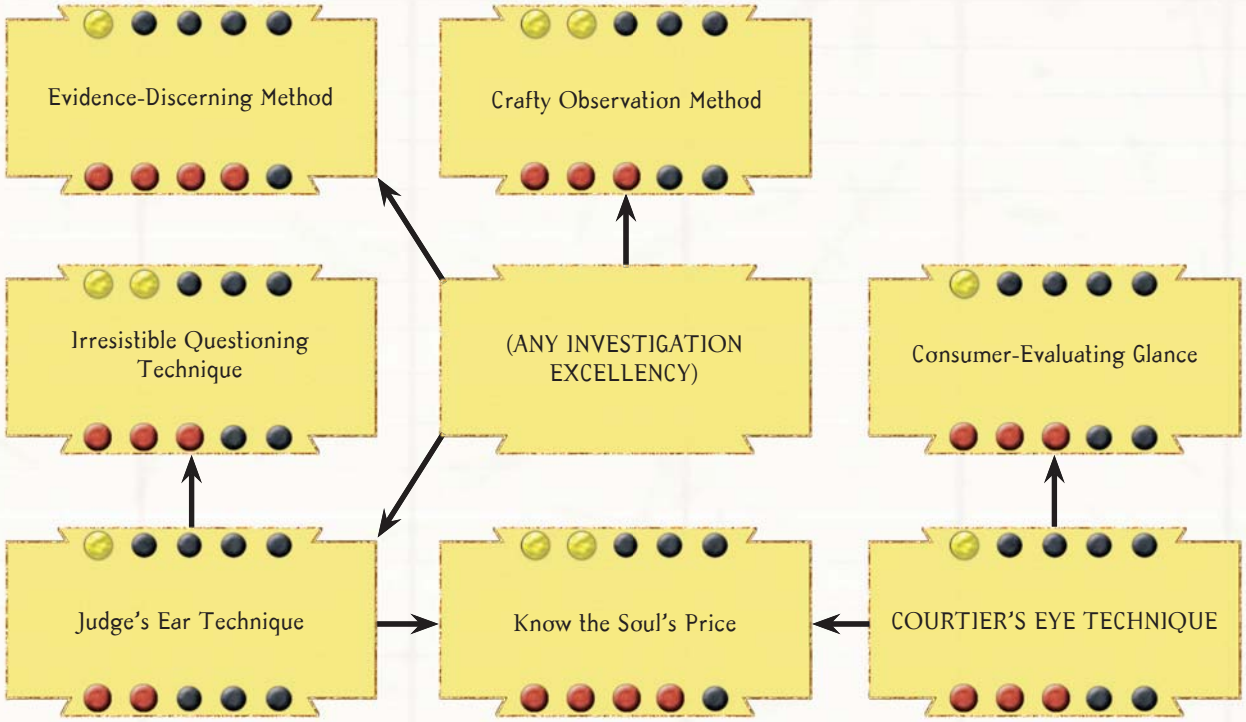
### Judge's Ear Technique

**Cost:** 3m; **Mins:** Investigation 2, Essence 1; **Type:** Reflexive (Step 1)
**Keywords:** Combo-OK
**Duration:** One scene
**Prerequisite Charms:** Any Investigation Excellency

The Lawgivers are the guardians of truth. This Charm allows the character to recognize as lies all deliberate lies presented to her. The character can also recognize the deliberate use of half-truths, though doing so does not tell her which part of the statement is true. If another Charm contests these effects (see p. 179), add the character's Essence in automatic successes to the (Perception + Investigation) roll to oppose the other Charm.

### Irresistible Questioning Technique

**Cost:** 4m; **Mins:** Investigation 3, Essence 2; **Type:** Simple (Speed 6 in long ticks)
**Keywords:** Combo-OK, Compulsion, Obvious, Social
**Duration:** One scene




**Prerequisite Charms:** Judge's Ear Technique

This Charm forces the truth from those who would lie to the heroes of the dawn. It involves an interrogation, and the Solar's player rolls (the appropriate Social Attribute + Investigation) when the Exalt invokes Irresistible Questioning Technique. This Charm exerts unnatural mental influence on the target. The target can resist with MDV. If the roll succeeds, the target is compelled to answer the Exalt's questions honestly. Resisting costs one Willpower per five minutes, to a maximum of three Willpower, and the compulsion lasts for one scene.

This Charm loses effectiveness with repeated use. Increase the target's MDV by three if an Exalt has used Irresistible Questioning Technique or a similar Charm on the target this story.

## Courtier's Eye Technique

**Cost:** 3m; **Mins:** Investigation 3, Essence 1; **Type:** Simple
**Keywords:** Combo-OK
**Duration:** Instant
**Prerequisite Charms:** None

The Lawgivers understand the harmonies of the world. This Charm allows the character to detect others' importance or wealth with a glance. This Charm targets one individual the character can sense. The Exalt's player rolls (Perception + Investigation), adding the Solar's Essence in automatic successes. If the target is concealing his identity or Resources in any way, subtract an external penalty of ([the target's Manipulation + Socialize] ÷ 2) from the successes on the Investigation roll. If the Exalt succeeds, she learns the target's Resources and Influence ratings. In addition, she can make a rough but solid estimate of how many allies the target considers himself to have in the immediate circumstances and how much wealth and power the target wields through organization-specific Backgrounds such as Backing and Followers. The Solar may not attempt to use this Charm on a given target more than once per scene.

## Consumer-Evaluating Glance

**Cost:** 2m; **Mins:** Investigation 3, Essence 1; **Type:** Reflexive
**Keywords:** Combo-OK, Compulsion
**Duration:** Instant
**Prerequisite Charms:** Courtier's Eye Technique

The intentions of others are transparent to the Chosen of the Sun. The Exalt uses this Charm immediately after interacting with a target. The Solar's player rolls (Perception + Investigation). The difficulty of this roll is 1, but subtract an external penalty of ([the target's Manipulation + Socialize] ÷ 2) from the successes on the Investigation roll. On a success, this Charm forces the target's player to declare the target's intentions in this interaction.

## Know the Soul's Price

**Cost:** 5m, 1wp; **Mins:** Investigation 4, Essence 2; **Type:** Reflexive
**Keywords:** Combo-OK, Servitude
**Duration:** Instant
**Prerequisite Charms:** Courtier's Eye Technique, Judge's Ear Technique

In the savage world that is Creation, everyone has a price. Even those whom jade coin cannot buy will sell themselves for something—sex, fame, the reclaimed honor of an ancestor or the salvation of the world. The Exalt uses this Charm immediately after interacting with a target. The Solar's player rolls (Perception + Investigation). The difficulty for this roll is 1, but subtract an external penalty of ([the target's Manipulation + Socialize] ÷ 2) from the successes on the Investigation roll. On a success, this Charm forces the target's player to declare the target's price. If the Exalt meets that price, this Charm invokes an unnatural Servitude effect—the target becomes loyal to the Exalt and must spend one Willpower per scene to act in a knowingly

disloyal fashion. This servitude lasts until the Exalt betrays the bargain—as by reclaiming an object given as the price—or the target has spent a total of 10 Willpower to act disloyally.

## Lore

### Harmonious Academic Methodology

**Cost:** 10m, 2wp; **Mins:** Lore 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Simple (Dramatic Action)
**Keywords:** Obvious, Touch, Training
**Duration:** One week
**Prerequisite Charms:** Any two Lore Excellencies

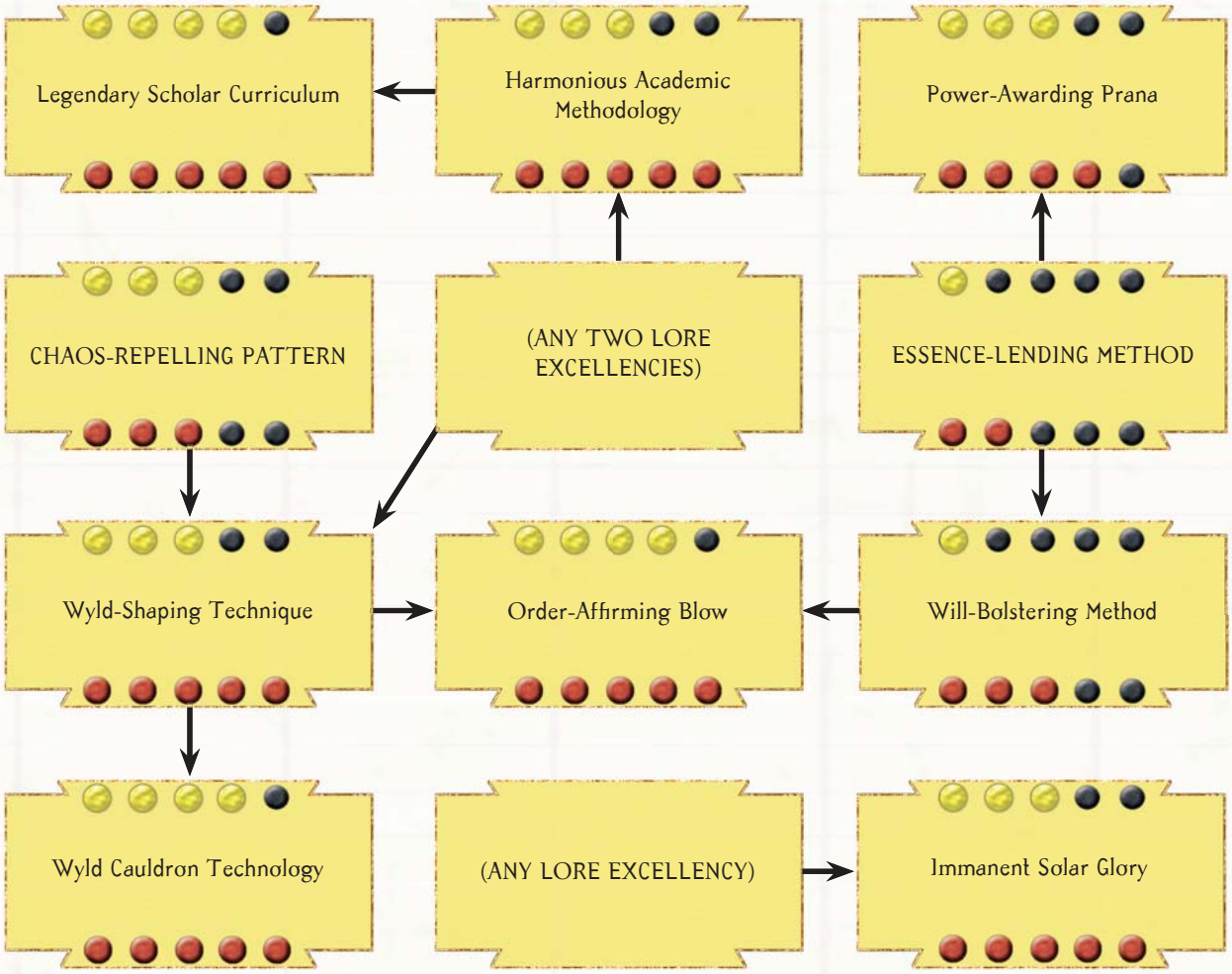
Enlightened Lawgivers bring wisdom to the masses. This Charm involves training an organized social group such as a class, ministry or guild. This action requires five or more hours of effort in any given week to bear fruit. In each week of training, the trainer picks one trait to train: Conviction, Temperance, Perception, Intelligence, Craft (Air, Earth, Fire, Water or Wood), Investigation, Lore, Linguistics, Performance, Presence or Socialize. This Charm increases that trait for each member of the unit by one dot, to a maximum of 4. The Solar can train with the group or as a solo character, increasing her own traits. She cannot increase others' traits past her own.

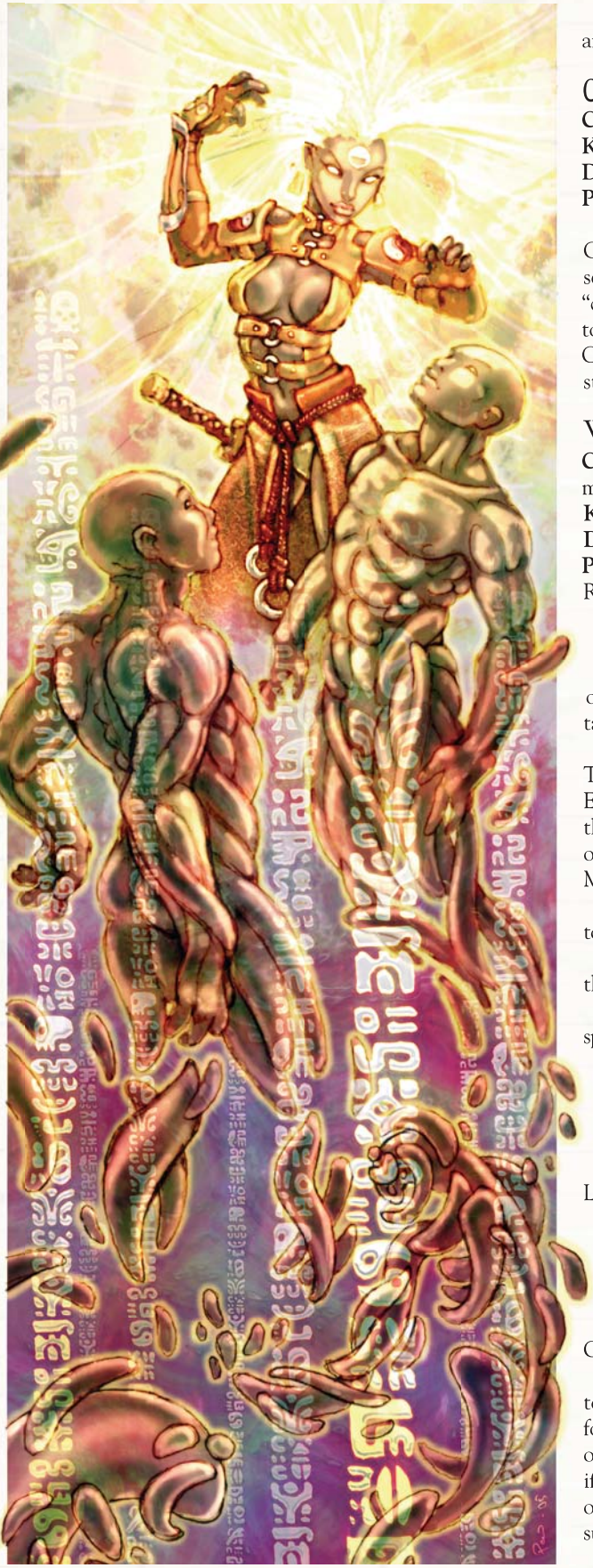
### Legendary Scholar Curriculum

**Cost:** —; **Mins:** Lore 5, Essence 4; **Type:** Permanent
**Keywords:** Obvious
**Duration:** One week
**Prerequisite Charms:** Harmonious Academic Methodology

The Solar scholar has a special mastery of training. This Charm enhances the Exalt's ability to train others. This Charm allows him to use Harmonious Academic Methodology to train others in any of the following:

- Social and scholarly Abilities he possesses at 4 or more. In addition to the Abilities already available through Harmonious Academic Methodology, appropriate Abilities include Awareness, Bureaucracy, exotic Crafts, Integrity, Larceny, Medicine and Occult.
- Virtues. The Exalt can train any Virtue to a maximum of 4.
- Attributes. The Exalt can train others' Charisma, Manipulation and Wits to a maximum of 4. She can even train Appearance with an appropriate rationale.





• Specialties. The Exalt can train others in specialties for any Ability she can train.

### Chaos-Repelling Pattern

**Cost:** 8m; **Mins:** Lore 3, Essence 3; **Type:** Simple
**Keywords:** Combo-OK, Obvious
**Duration:** One hour
**Prerequisite Charms:** None

The presence of the Lawgivers wards away chaos. This Charm surrounds the character with a mystic pattern of Essence—what the Fair Folk call an "island of Creation" or a "dead waypoint." The character's immediate vicinity—out to (her Essence) in yards—functions according to the laws of Creation, even if the character is in the Wyld, Malfeas or some stranger location.

### Wyld-Shaping Technique

**Cost:** 20m, 1wp; **Mins:** Lore 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Simple (Dramatic Action)
**Keywords:** Combo-OK, Obvious, Shaping
**Duration:** Instant
**Prerequisite Charms:** Any Two Lore Excellencies, Chaos-Repelling Pattern

In the First Age, Lawgivers used the Wyld-Shaping Technique to conquer the Wyld and expand Creation. They stood at the edge of the world and forced shape into the teeth of the howling storm. This Charm forces a region of chaos to take form as the Exalt commands.

Wyld-Shaping Technique is an extended dramatic action. The dice pool used equals (the Solar's Intelligence + Lore). Each roll requires five hours of effort, and the character pays the Charm's cost with each roll. This roll has a base difficulty of 1 in regions of Pure Chaos, 3 in the Deep Wyld, 5 in the Middlemarches and 10 in the Bordermarches of the Wyld.

The Lawgiver can spend accumulated successes at any point to complete part of her construction. This functions as follows.

**Demesne:** To forge a demesne, the Solar must first create the land and then spend successes equal to its demesne level.

**Land:** To create a stable region—such as land—the Solar must spend successes equal to its Resources value. She can spend up to five successes at a time. This does mean that creating fertile land and mineral resources requires more effort per acre than blasted plains, desolate marshes and lifeless ocean. The Solar can use Wyld-Shaping Technique in this region as if it were the Middlemarches of the Wyld, but all other effects consider it a Tainted Land—touched by Wyld energy, but a part of Creation.

**Magical Things:** To create a manse or artifact, the Solar applies the successes on this roll directly as Craft successes in manse or artifact construction. This Charm cannot speed the construction process more than tenfold, but the character is specifically permitted to supplement this process with Craft Charms such as Craftsman Needs No Tools.

**People:** To create extras, the Solar spends successes equal to the number of Background dots necessary to have them as followers. To create useful Essence 1 servants, the Solar spends one success per servant. Increase the required successes by one if the character is creating a coherent military unit, social group or government out of the chaos. The Solar can spend up to five successes at a time.

### Charm Concept: Shaping

Shaping effects change the character by altering reality. They bypass the laws of Creation. Most such effects involves Wyld energy or the chaos of the Labyrinth. Characters spending time in the Wyld often find their minds or bodies warped; this is a Shaping effect. The Fair Folk weave their glamours through temporary "corrections" to the laws of world and Wyld, which is also a Shaping effect. If the Maidens were to ignore the substance of established law, declaring a character unmade, this would be a Shaping effect—as it would be in Malfeas if a furious Yozi did the same.

Most Shaping effects available to the Exalted are available through sorcery, as Charms are part of the natural law of the world (unless they are explicitly designed to circumvent that law). Sidereal Exalted also have "astrology" that shapes others' fate. This is a Shaping effect, though it usually alters dice pools and circumstances rather than the target's body, mind or traits.

### Strategy Notes

If you plan for your character to spend much time outside Creation in the Wyld, you should try to pick up Integrity-Protecting Prana and most likely Chaos-Repelling Pattern. The Lawgivers are intrinsically resistant to the Wyld and similar places, but it really takes only one fluke event where you regress to a youth or grow an extra arm to ruin your heroic image.

If you're planning to spend your time almost exclusively in Creation, these Charms might not be worth it early in the game. Talk to your Storyteller about whether and when you should worry about your enemies transforming you in some horrible fashion.

**Wealth:** To create portable wealth, the Solar must spend successes equal to its Resources value. She can spend up to five successes at a time.

Things made by this Charm are not real in and of themselves. Their reality stems entirely from Creation—from the reality of the Lawgivers, the Imperial Mountain and the Loom of Fate. As long as the created things continue to interact with Creation or the Exalted, as through the magical trade networks established in the First Age to tame the Wyld, they survive.

If something created by this Charm fails to interact extensively with the things of Creation during a story, it begins to lose its reality. Roll its creator's Essence against either difficulty 1 or, if the Solar's creation does not interact with real things that story *at all*, difficulty 2. After three failures without any extensive interaction with Creation or an Exalt, something created by this Charm fades away entirely.

Creatures made using Wyld-Shaping Technique are outside Creation's processes of life and death. They do not reincarnate in Creation or as a real creature unless Heaven orders their pattern woven into the Loom of Fate. Nor do they form ghosts unless the Neverborn intervene to recreate their Essence pattern as such. They fade away upon their deaths and are no longer valid targets for Charms or other effects unless otherwise stated.

### Wyld Cauldron Technology

**Cost:** —; **Mins:** Lore 5, Essence 4; **Type:** Permanent
**Keywords:** None
**Duration:** Instant
**Prerequisite Charms:** Wyld-Shaping Technique

The Lawgiver may craft reality from the Wyld. This Charm enhances the Exalt's Wyld-Shaping Technique, allowing the character to make permanent and real things.

**Land/Wealth:** The character can make real land or wealth with Wyld-Shaping Technique. This follows the normal rules, but the character must make a sacrifice—normally, a quantity of orichalcum or jade with Resources value equal to the Resources value of the creation. The character cannot sacrifice functional artifacts. The character can instead spend (Resources value x 2) in experience points, carving the necessary land or wealth out of his soul.

**Magical Things:** If the character builds a manse or artifact out of materials imported from Creation, the result is real—it does not lose its reality as described above.

**People:** The character can change a person or a social group with Wyld-Shaping Technique. Doing so subtracts an external penalty equal to the target's MDV from the successes on the character's Wyld-Shaping roll. If the character succeeds, she may change the target's Motivation and impose a number of points of Wyld mutations equal to the Solar's Essence. The target can resist this change by spending four Willpower. The target can alternatively spend two Willpower and state a short condition, such as "do not make me hideous" or "do not make me a traitor," which limits the Solar's options but does not prevent the effect. Storytellers can veto conditions such as "do not change me at all." Targets of this Charm must be present in the Wyld and within (Essence x 10) yards of the Solar.

### Essence-Lending Method

**Cost:** 3m; **Mins:** Lore 2, Essence 1; **Type:** Simple (Speed 4)
**Keywords:** Combo-OK, Obvious, Touch
**Duration:** Instant
**Prerequisite Charms:** None

The intricate Essence flows of the anima are as a child's toys to the savants of the Sun. This Charm allows the Solar to give up to (her Essence x 3) motes to another character. The Solar loses exactly as many motes as the target gains, in addition to the cost of this Charm, but this transfer does not count as spending motes for the purposes of anima banner flare. Transferred motes go first to the target's personal and then to the target's peripheral Essence but cannot increase either the target's personal or the target's peripheral Essence past their normal maximums.

### Will-Bolstering Method

**Cost:** 5m, 1wp; **Mins:** Lore 3, Essence 1; **Type:** Simple
**Keywords:** Combo-OK, Obvious, Touch
**Duration:** Instant
**Prerequisite Charms:** Essence-Lending Method

Solar loremasters understand the subtle and delicate patterns of Essence that give rise to free will and the self. This Charm strengthens those patterns, reinforcing the target's determination

and certainty. This Charm allows the character to give up to (her Essence) in Willpower to the target. The Solar loses exactly as much Willpower as the target gains, in addition to the Willpower spent on this Charm, but this does not count against the normal limits on Willpower expenditure. This Charm cannot increase the target's Willpower past its normal maximum.

### Power-Awarding Prana

**Cost:** 15m, 1wp; **Mins:** Lore 4, Essence 3; **Type:** Simple
**Keywords:** Combo-OK, Touch
**Duration:** Indefinite
**Prerequisite Charms:** Essence-Lending Method

The Lawgivers share great secrets with their disciples. This Charm targets an Essence 1 character who cannot channel Essence. This Charm increases the target's effective Essence to 2, allows him an (initially empty) 15-mote pool and the ability to regain Essence as a Solar Exalt, and it permits him to learn Solar Charms with the normal training time for 10 experience points each. The target has access to this increased Essence, pool and Charms only when actively under the influence of Power-Awarding Prana (i.e., for only as long as the awarding Solar's Essence motes remain committed).

### Order-Affirming Blow

**Cost:** 15m, 1wp per Essence; **Mins:** Lore 5, Essence 4; **Type:** Simple
**Keywords:** Combo-OK, Shaping, Touch
**Duration:** Instant
**Prerequisite Charms:** Wyld-Shaping Technique, Will-Bolstering Method

The Lawgivers restore the hidden patterns of the soul. This Charm targets an individual, whom the Solar must touch. The Lawgiver spends 15 motes and an amount of Willpower equal to the target's permanent Essence. This Charm shatters all Shaping effects on the target, including long-term or permanent effects such as Wyld mutations and Sidereal astrology. The target is immune to further Shaping effects for the remainder of the scene.

Using this Charm outside the Wyld on one of the Fair Folk destroys the target. The dream-wrought bodies of the Fair Folk are a Shaping effect, and this Charm renders them into statues, dreams, objects, animals or ordinary humans at the Storyteller's discretion. Note that the Exalt must successfully touch Fair Folk to use this Charm against them.

### Immanent Solar Glory

**Cost:** —; **Mins:** Lore 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Permanent
**Keywords:** Obvious
**Duration:** Indefinite
**Prerequisite Charms:** Any Lore Excellency

The Solar draws strength from the harmonious governance of Creation. The greater the social structure he commands, the more Essence he may wield. This Charm allows the Solar to recover motes by tending to the affairs of a kingdom, organization or social or military unit he leads. Each hour spent inspiring the people or performing administrative tasks allows the Solar to recover motes equal to the unit's Magnitude.

In addition, each purchase of this Charm increases the character's Peripheral Essence pool by 10 motes. This Essence cannot be committed to an artifact. The character cannot recover this Essence normally—he can refill this pool only through the technique above and with Essence-recovery Charms. The player may purchase this Charm a total number of times equal to the Exalt's Essence.

## Medicine

### Touch of Blissful Release

**Cost:** 5m; **Mins:** Medicine 2, Essence 2; **Type:** Simple (Speed 5)
**Keywords:** Combo-OK, Touch
**Duration:** Solar's Essence in hours
**Prerequisite Charms:** Any Medicine Excellency

Those who serve the Solars faithfully need know no pain. The recipient of this Charm feels a temporary euphoria qualitatively similar to an opium high. This Charm cancels up to three points of the target's penalties from Sickness, Poison and Crippling effects and wound penalties. Its effects linger for five minutes after the duration expires. Touch of Blissful Release is not physically addictive to the target.

#### Charm Concept: Mortals

A mortal is someone who cannot spend motes of Essence to achieve effects. This includes normal people, animals and Wyld mutants.

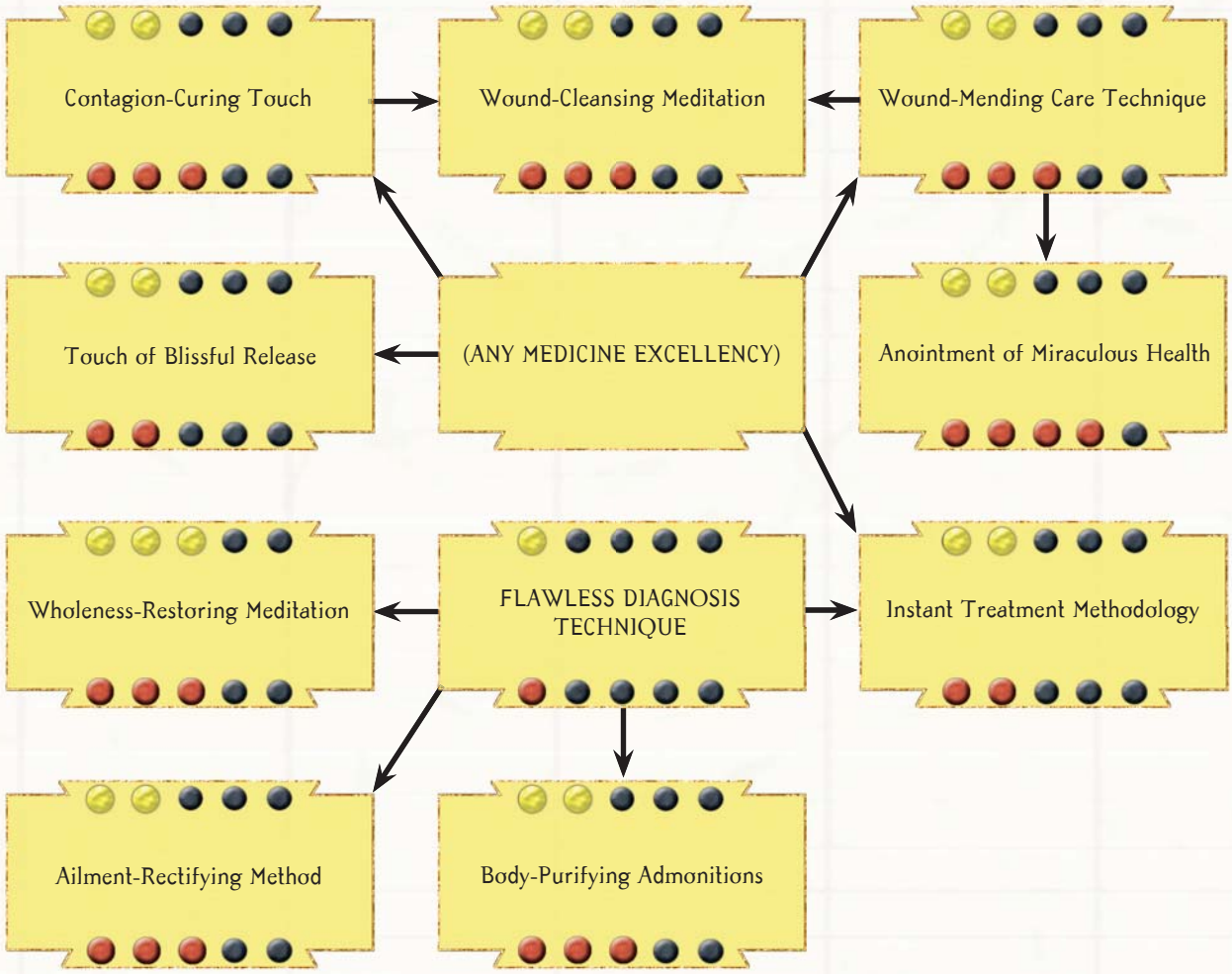
#### Treatment and Convalescence

Medicine Charms generally supplement or replace the normal dramatic action for medical treatment (see p. 137). Solar physicians use ordinary techniques rather than "healing magic"—herbal remedies, dressing wounds, splinting broken legs, personal inspiration and the like. Medical supplies are necessary unless otherwise stated. Experienced Solar physicians can master Combos that approximate healing with a touch, but the core of their talents is actual medical skill. The effects of Medicine Charms on most poisons, temporary Crippling effects and wound penalties are immediate. At the Storyteller's discretion, patients might need a short convalescence to fully recover from terrible illness, rare poisons, wounds and long-term Crippling effects—one to three days for Exalted, and one to three weeks for mortals.

### Contagion-Curing Touch

**Cost:** 2m; **Mins:** Medicine 3, Essence 2; **Type:** Supplemental
**Keywords:** Combo-OK, Touch
**Duration:** Instant
**Prerequisite Charms:** Any Medicine Excellency

Tie a Solar physician and a man dying of the plague to an anchor and cast them into a stormy sea—still the Solar may have the ingenuity to heal the victim. This Charm supplements a Medicine-based action to treat a patient. It does not reduce the time required for medical treatment, but otherwise allows




the Solar to treat patients in unfavorable conditions without medicines, penalties or a stunt. The medical shortcuts involved depend on the Exalt in question. Some learn special pressure points, others channel raw Essence to heal, and still others inspire new strength in their patients through words and actions.

### Wound-Mending Care Technique

**Cost:** 10m; **Mins:** Medicine 3, Essence 2; **Type:** Supplemental
**Keywords:** Combo-OK, Touch
**Duration:** Until the day ends
**Prerequisite Charms:** Any Medicine Excellency

Solar physicians can speed a patient's recovery from even the most terrible wounds. This Charm supplements a dramatic action to treat, monitor and tend to the patient. This action requires one hour spent without a stunt or a Charm. The Solar's player rolls (Intelligence + Medicine). This Charm replaces the normal benefits of medical care, instead allowing the target to recover a number of lethal or bashing health levels equal to the number of successes at the end of the day. If the target spends the day resting, the target recovers a number of additional lethal and bashing health levels equal to the Solar's permanent Essence. No patient can benefit from this Charm more than once per day.

### Anointment of Miraculous Health

**Cost:** 10m; **Mins:** Medicine 4, Essence 2; **Type:** Simple (Speed 5)
**Keywords:** Combo-OK, Obvious, Touch
**Duration:** Indefinite
**Prerequisite Charms:** Wound-Mending Care Technique

The Essence of the Solar Exalted fills others with new life. The efforts of the Solar healer inspire the injured, the broken, the faltering and the weak to rise and take their burdens up again. This Charm gives the target a number of temporary -1 health levels equal to the user's Essence. These health levels are the first lost when the character takes damage, and they are never healed back. When the Solar stops committing Essence to this Charm, the additional health levels fade without ill effect, whether or not they have been lost. They also fade instantly if Anointment of Miraculous Health is used on the target again.

### Wound-Cleansing Meditation

**Cost:** 10m; **Mins:** Medicine 3, Essence 2; **Type:** Supplemental
**Keywords:** Combo-OK, Obvious, Touch
**Duration:** Instant
**Prerequisite Charms:** Contagion-Curing Touch, Wound-Mending Care Technique

Great Solar healers can draw the poison from even unnatural wounds. This Charm enhances a dramatic action to treat, monitor and tend to the patient. This action requires one hour without a stunt or a Charm. This Charm replaces the normal benefits of medical care. Instead, the Solar's player rolls (Intelligence + Medicine). If she succeeds, the Solar converts the target's aggravated wound levels to lethal wound levels.

### Flawless Diagnosis Technique

**Cost:** 1m; **Mins:** Medicine 1, Essence 1; **Type:** Reflexive
**Keywords:** Combo-OK
**Duration:** Instant
**Prerequisite Charms:** None

The eyes of the Solar Exalted see the hidden truths of others' pains. This Charm lets the Solar automatically determine which of the target's observable traits and described symptoms are medically related. If the Solar uses this Charm in the process of a formal diagnosis, normally a dramatic (Perception + Medicine) action with a Speed of 5 long ticks, this Charm protects her from any error in diagnosis. If she has enough information, she accurately identifies each condition, its source and its additional effect. If she does not have enough information—as when a target who caught an unknown disease from eating infected human brains successfully conceals his cannibalism—she recognizes that some key piece of the puzzle is missing.

### Ailment-Rectifying Method

**Cost:** —; **Mins:** Medicine 3, Essence 2; **Type:** Permanent
**Keywords:** Touch
**Duration:** Instant
**Prerequisite Charms:** Flawless Diagnosis Technique

Disease and corruption cannot stand against the Solars' healing light. Solar Exalted with this Charm can cure any Sickness effect. This Charm guarantees that any attempt Solars make to treat a sickness is considered supernatural. It halves the length of the patient's convalescence. If the Exalt's player rolls five or more successes on a Medicine roll for the Solar to treat an ordinarily incurable illness, such as the Great Contagion, she can spend five motes and banish it from the patient's system. Treating sickness in this fashion is a dramatic Medicine-based action that takes one hour unless sped by a stunt or Charm.

### Body-Purifying Admonitions

**Cost:** —; **Mins:** Medicine 3, Essence 2; **Type:** Permanent
**Keywords:** Touch
**Duration:** Instant
**Prerequisite Charms:** Flawless Diagnosis Technique

The Lawgivers bring purgation and purity. Solar Exalted with this Charm can force even the most terrible Poison effects from the target's body. This Charm guarantees that any attempt they make to treat a poison is considered supernatural. If the Exalt's player rolls five or more successes on a Medicine roll for the Solar to treat an ordinarily incurable poison, such as spiritual taint, Yozi impregnation or even spells such as Blood of Boiling Oil, she can spend five motes and banish it from the patient's system. Treating poison in this fashion is a dramatic Medicine-based action that takes 20 minutes unless sped by a stunt or Charm.

### Wholeness-Restoring Meditation

**Cost:** —; **Mins:** Medicine 3, Essence 3; **Type:** Permanent
**Keywords:** Touch
**Duration:** Permanent
**Prerequisite Charms:** Flawless Diagnosis Technique

Essence can repair even severed limbs. Solar Exalted with this Charm can cure any Crippling effect. This Charm guarantees that any attempt they make to treat the effect is considered supernatural. If the Exalt's player rolls five or more successes on a Medicine roll for the Solar to treat an ordinarily incurable Crippling effect, such as limb amputation or Charm-induced paralysis, she can spend five motes and restore the patient. Treating Crippling injuries in this fashion is a dramatic Medicine-based action that takes one hour unless sped by a stunt or Charm. It takes the patient several days of convalescence to repair otherwise permanent damage such as lost limbs or blindness.

### Instant Treatment Methodology

**Cost:** 7m; **Mins:** Medicine 2, Essence 2; **Type:** Simple (Speed 7, DV -1)
**Keywords:** Combo-OK, Touch
**Duration:** Instant
**Prerequisite Charms:** Any Medicine Excellency, Flawless Diagnosis Technique

Rarely is a Solar forced to leave a task unfinished. This Charm is a Medicine-based action in which the character treats a patient. The Charm functions exactly as any Medicine-based dramatic action that takes up to one hour, save that the character performs it in a handful of seconds. As with Contagion-Curing Touch, the medical shortcuts involved depend on the Exalt in question. This Charm does not remove the need for appropriate medicine, surgical tools and suchlike, but the Solar can use a stunt or Combo to work around these limitations.

This Charm speeds only that portion of treatment that actively involves the physician. It does not accelerate any rest, recovery and convalescence the patient normally performs on his own. It can act as the dramatic action required by Charms such as Wholeness-Restoring Meditation and Wound-Mending Care Technique.

## Occult

### Terrestrial Circle Sorcery

**Cost:** —; **Mins:** Occult 3, Essence 3; **Type:** Permanent
**Keywords:** None
**Duration:** Instant
**Prerequisite Charms:** None

The Exalted shape the Essence of the world. This Charm lets the character hone her will to the razor-sharp edge necessary to perform magic of the so-called First Circle—a power infinitely greater than mortal thaumaturgy. This magic can affect up to a few hundred individuals at a time, and its spells take only a few moments to cast. This Charm allows the character to take Terrestrial Circle Sorcery actions (see p. 252).

### Celestial Circle Sorcery

**Cost:** —; **Mins:** Occult 4, Essence 4; **Type:** Permanent
**Keywords:** None
**Duration:** Instant
**Prerequisite Charms:** Terrestrial Circle Sorcery

Celestial Circle Sorcery can slay thousands, level fortresses and bind Second Circle demons to the Exalt's will. Only the Celestial Exalted can master this powerful sorcerous initiation. This Charm permits the character to take Celestial Circle Sorcery actions (see p. 252).

### Solar Circle Sorcery

**Cost:** —; **Mins:** Occult 5, Essence 5; **Type:** Permanent
**Keywords:** None
**Duration:** Instant
**Prerequisite Charms:** Celestial Circle Sorcery

The sorcery reserved for the Lawgivers is a work of perfection and adamant. The spells of Solar Circle Sorcery are awesome beyond words—they can bring life to regions or slay entire armies. This Charm permits the character to take Solar Circle Sorcery actions (see p. 252).

### Spirit-Detecting Glance

**Cost:** 3m; **Mins:** Occult 2, Essence 2; **Type:** Reflexive (Step 1)
**Keywords:** Combo-OK
**Duration:** One scene
**Prerequisite Charms:** None

Spirits cannot hide from the Lawgivers. Spirits such as demons, ghosts and gods often move through the world in dematerialized form, completely hidden from all observers. This Charm lets the character see, hear, smell and feel—but not touch—dematerialized creatures. It makes dematerialized creatures within the normal range of the character's senses valid targets for the character's Awareness actions, including reflexive Awareness actions.

### Spirit-Cutting Attack

**Cost:** 1m; **Mins:** Occult 2, Essence 2; **Type:** Supplemental
**Keywords:** Combo-OK, Obvious
**Duration:** Instant
**Prerequisite Charms:** Spirit-Detecting Glance

The Solar Exalted may attack even the subtle Essence of dematerialized spirits. This Charm enhances an attack, making dematerialized creatures within the attack's normal range valid targets. The attack deals aggravated damage to spirits, materialized or otherwise. This Charm is explicitly permitted to supplement actions using other Abilities. Note that if the character cannot see the spirit he attacks, he receives the normal -2 external penalty.

### Ghost-Eating Technique

**Cost:** 2m; **Mins:** Occult 4, Essence 3; **Type:** Reflexive (Step 10)
**Keywords:** Combo-OK, Obvious
**Duration:** Instant
**Prerequisite Charms:** Spirit-Cutting Attack

The heroes of the First Age used Ghost-Eating Technique to slay the Neverborn and the demon hordes. Spirits normally dissipate rather than dying when they lose all of their health levels to damage. The Solar invokes this Charm after making a successful attack that damages or dissipates a spirit. In addition to the normal damage from this attack, this Charm transfers a number of motes from the spirit to the Solar equal to (the Solar's permanent Essence x 2). If the spirit loses its last health level to this attack and dissipates, this Charm consumes the spirit utterly. Its Essence dissolves, and it will never be remade.

### Charm Concept: Medical Conditions

Resistance Charms help the Solar Exalted resist physical and spiritual maladies. Medicine Charms help them cure them. Unhappy medical conditions should almost always fall into one of the categories that the existing Medicine and Resistance Charms treat—they should inflict wounds, wound penalties or Crippling, Poison or Sickness effects.

Pain and general physical dysfunction are both "wound penalties." Characters are most likely to receive wound penalties from actual wounds, but supernatural pain and disability effects are also wound penalties.

Crippling effects reduce a character's physical capabilities. Paralyzing someone's arm cripples them, as does cutting its tendon or cutting the whole arm off.

Poison effects hurt a character by putting an unnatural physical or magical substance inside them. Tree frog venom, sorcerous magma or vitriol in the veins, bad shellfish and ichneumon eggs are all Poison effects.

Sickness effects weaken a character's system. Disease, infected wounds and the withering effects of life in the shadowlands are all Sickness effects. Sickness effects also include the physical malaise caused by otherwise natural conditions. The ravages of old age, poverty and pregnancy are all considered sicknesses, but the underlying conditions are not. As noted on page 350, Exalted resist non-supernatural illnesses.

### Strategy

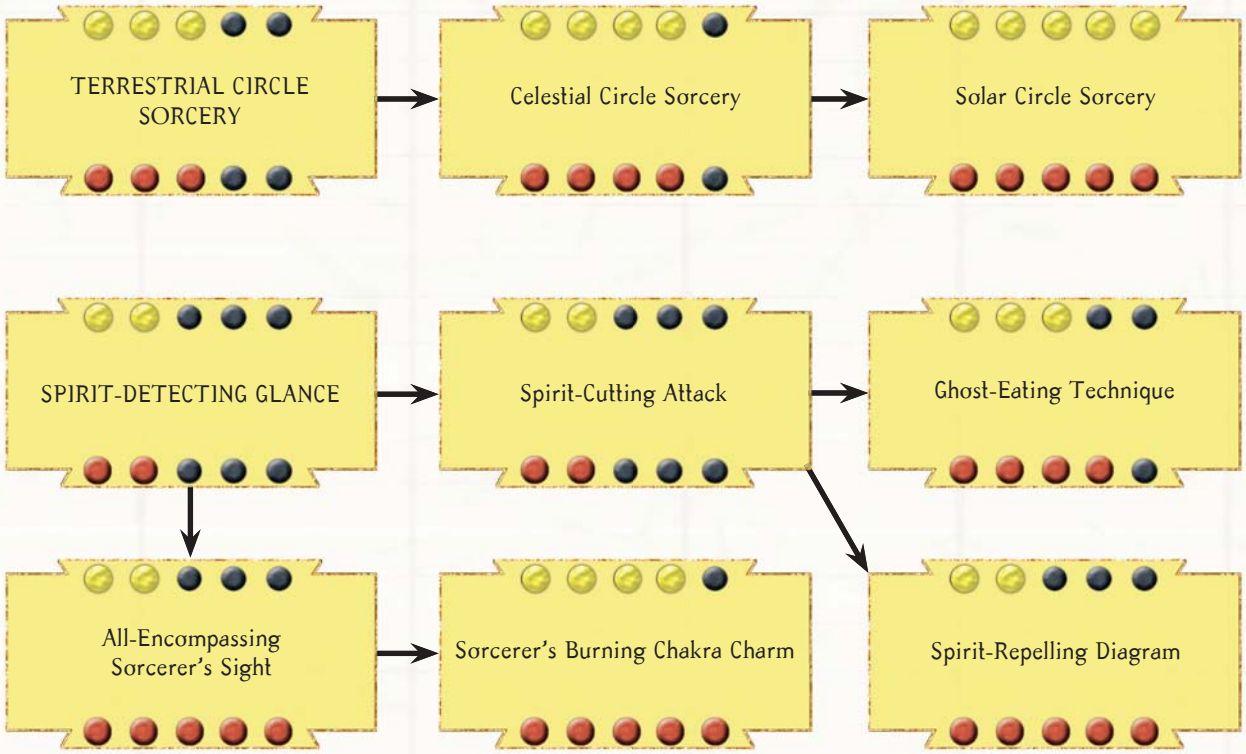
Battle Fury Focus and Bloodthirsty Sword-Dancer Spirit reduce wound penalties. You might also consider replacing the dice lost through Excellencies and stunts. Others can help you resist wound penalties with Touch of Blissful Release.

Unbreakable Warrior's Mastery and Immunity to Everything Technique are good Charms for characters concerned about Crippling, Sickness and Poison effects. A high Resistance also helps, as does a physician with Ailment-Rectifying Method, Body-Purifying Admonition and Wholeness-Restoring Meditation—but the physician will also need a Charm such as Instant Treatment Methodology if you're in a tight fix.

### Spirit-Repelling Diagram

**Cost:** 10m; **Mins:** Occult 5, Essence 2; **Type:** Simple
**Keywords:** Combo-OK, Compulsion, Obvious
**Duration:** One scene
**Prerequisite Charms:** Spirit-Cutting Attack

The Solar casts out spirits. She spreads her arms, and a blazing ring of gold-white light spreads from her, forming a circle centered on the character with a radius equal to (the character's Essence) yards. This circle remains centered on the character for the remainder of the scene. This Charm imposes a Compulsion effect on all dematerialized creatures who take actions in this scene. They are compelled not to enter the circle




while dematerialized and not to stay within the circle while dematerialized. Resisting costs Willpower equal to the Lawgiver's Essence, after which the spirit can ignore the Spirit-Repelling Diagram for the remainder of the scene.

### All-Encompassing Sorcerer's Sight

**Cost:** 6m; **Mins:** Occult 5, Essence 2; **Type:** Reflexive (Step 1)
**Keywords:** None
**Duration:** One scene
**Prerequisite Charms:** Spirit-Detecting Glance

Nothing is hidden from the Lawgivers. The character augments his vision with the ability to see patterns of Essence. This Charm allows the character to *see* motes, Essence-fueled effects, power and invisible but magical creatures and effects. These things become valid targets for the character's visual Awareness rolls, including reflexive visual Awareness rolls.

The ability to perceive Essence patterns has the following effects: All Charms are treated as Obvious with respect to the character. Dematerialized and invisible creatures and effects are considered visible. The character recognizes all artifacts, manses and demesnes as such. The character can automatically recognize a creature with Essence 4+ as a supernatural creature. **Characters using Stealth to avoid detection are not automatically revealed by their Charms, Essence trait or carried artifacts—**for the same reason that colorful clothing does not automatically void mundane attempts at stealth. Instead, add the *target's* Essence in dice to any attempt by the character to pierce mundane or magical Stealth. Similarly, this Charm does not automatically void disguises, magical disguises and similar deceptions, although circumstances might warrant a bonus to see through them.

If the character makes a conscious attempt to analyze what he sees, this Charm allows an (Intelligence + Occult) roll to do so. Identifying the exact effects of an unknown Charm or spell is difficulty 5. Gauging the rating of a person's Essence trait, a demesne, a manse or an artifact has difficulty 2.

### Sorcerer's Burning Chakra Charm

**Cost:** —; **Mins:** Occult 5, Essence 4; **Type:** Permanent
**Keywords:** Obvious
**Duration:** Varies
**Prerequisite Charms:** All-Encompassing Sorcerer's Sight

The Lawgivers see all things truly. This Charm functions as All-Encompassing Sorcerer's Sight, but it has no cost—the character gains the benefits automatically whenever her anima banner is at or beyond the 4-7 mote level. If she wishes to use Essence sight at some other time, she may commit one mote reflexively to do so. While that mote remains committed, her Caste Mark burns visibly, and she has access to the benefits of All-Encompassing Sorcerer's Sight.

# Night Caste

## Athletics

### Graceful Crane Stance

**Cost:** 3m; **Mins:** Athletics 1, Essence 2; **Type:** Reflexive
**Keywords:** Combo-OK
**Duration:** One scene
**Prerequisite Charms:** None

The Solar Exalted are as graceful as sunlight on water. This Charm lets the Exalt automatically succeed on any valid Athletics action to keep his balance. Moreover, this Charm allows the Exalt to keep his footing on any surface at least as

strong and wide as a human hair. He treats it as a three-foot-wide ledge capable of supporting a thousand pounds of weight when determining what movement and Athletics actions he can take and what penalties to them might apply.

### Monkey Leap Technique

**Cost:** 3m; **Mins:** Athletics 1, Essence 2; **Type:** Reflexive
**Keywords:** Combo-OK
**Duration:** One scene
**Prerequisite Charms:** None

The heroes of the dawn leap with the grace of a flying crane and the speed of a striking hawk. For the rest of the scene, the character can jump with a movement action instead of a miscellaneous action, and she doubles the length of all jumps.

### Soaring Crane Leap

**Cost:** 2m; **Mins:** Athletics 4, Essence 2; **Type:** Reflexive
**Keywords:** Combo-OK
**Duration:** Until next action
**Prerequisite Charms:** Monkey Leap Technique

Supported by Essence, the character can almost fly. Until her next action, the character can jump with a Move action instead of a miscellaneous action, and she multiplies the length of all jumps by five. This is not cumulative with the bonus of Monkey Leap Technique.

### Mountain-Crossing Leap Technique

**Cost:** 10m, 1wp; **Mins:** Athletics 5, Essence 4; **Type:** Simple (Dramatic Action)
**Keywords:** Combo-OK, Obvious
**Duration:** Instant
**Prerequisite Charms:** Soaring Crane Leap

The heroes of the dawn can leap great distances in a single bound. This Charm is a dramatic jumping action, normally taking about five minutes, in which the character leaps up to (Essence x 5) miles. If the character is interrupted mid-leap and forced to take non-reflexive actions, he continues along the original trajectory—but his landing is considered "falling from a great height" rather than "safely completing a jump."

### Foe-Vaulting Method

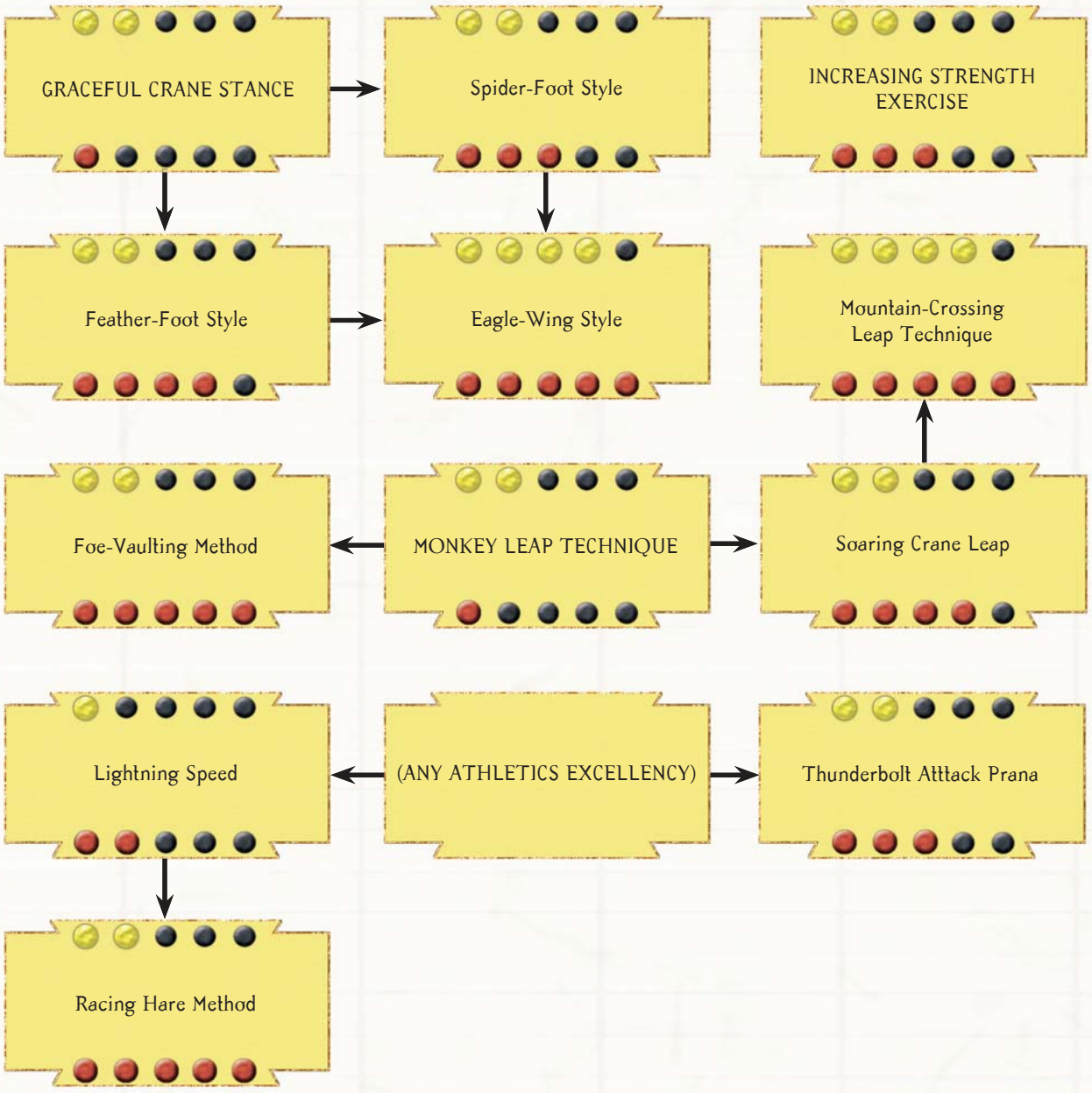
**Cost:** 1m; **Mins:** Athletics 5, Essence 2; **Type:** Reflexive
**Keywords:** Combo-OK, Obvious
**Duration:** One scene
**Prerequisite Charms:** Monkey Leap Technique

The Solar Exalt moves with unpredictable grace. For the rest of the scene, this Charm adds the character's Athletics in dice to any attempts to reestablish surprise (see p. 156). The character is not actually better at hiding, but his quicksilver movements make it harder for opponents to keep track of his exact position.

### Thunderbolt Attack Prana

**Cost:** 3m, 1wp; **Mins:** Athletics 3, Essence 2; **Type:** Supplemental
**Keywords:** Combo-OK, Obvious
**Duration:** Instant
**Prerequisite Charms:** Any Athletics Excellency

The athletes of the Sun often master signature attacks. This Charm uses the Solar's signature athletic move to enhance




an attack. A signature move is something like leaping into the air and swinging the character's fists in a brilliant Essence-laden arc, charging an opponent like a bull or pouncing on an enemy like a tiger. If the character receives mechanical benefits such as extra movement from his Athletics action, then it must be included in his current flurry. This Charm gives one bonus success on this attack in Step 3 of attack resolution and doubles the post-soak damage of the attack in Step 7 of attack resolution. This Charm is explicitly permitted to supplement actions of other Abilities.

The player chooses the signature attack when purchasing this Charm, but once this Charm is purchased, the character can purchase new signature attacks for one experience point or one bonus point each.

### Lightning Speed

**Cost:** 3m; **Mins:** Athletics 2, Essence 1; **Type:** Reflexive
**Keywords:** Combo-OK
**Duration:** One scene
**Prerequisite Charms:** Any Athletics Excellency

The Exalt becomes a blur of motion. This Charm increases the distance she can cover with a Move or Dash action by her Athletics score in yards. She can increase this further with Athletics Excellencies, spending motes to increase the static rating of her (Dexterity + Athletics).

### Racing Hare Method

**Cost:** 5m, 1wp; **Mins:** Athletics 5, Essence 2; **Type:** Simple (Dramatic Action, DV -6)

**Keywords:** Combo-OK, Obvious
**Duration:** Instant
**Prerequisite Charms:** Lightning Speed

To the Lawgiver, the great distances between Creation's territories are not so much an obstacle as a place to keep their dominions. This Charm allows the character to travel ([her Stamina + Essence] x 10) miles per hour, for up to one hour. This is a single dramatic action. If the character invokes this Charm again as her next action, she may ignore the Willpower cost.

### Spider-Foot Style

**Cost:** 4m; **Mins:** Athletics 3, Essence 2; **Type:** Reflexive
**Keywords:** Combo-OK, Obvious
**Duration:** One scene
**Prerequisite Charms:** Graceful Crane Stance

The heroes of the dawn make the impossible look easy. This Charm allows the character to run (using the Move and Dash actions) on any surface. She cannot stop while standing on a vertical surface or while upside down, however. If she does not make a Move or Dash action on every tick, she falls.

If the Solar has Essence 4 or higher, she can spend one mote per action to remain standing on a vertical or inverted surface. She can, for example, fence while standing upside down on the ceiling.

### Feather-Foot Style

**Cost:** 4m; **Mins:** Athletics 4, Essence 2; **Type:** Reflexive
**Keywords:** Combo-OK
**Duration:** One scene
**Prerequisite Charms:** Graceful Crane Stance

The Lawgivers tread lightly when they choose. This Charm allows the Solar to run or walk on unstable surfaces (using the Move and Dash actions) as if she weighed no more than a feather. This makes surfaces such as rice paper, water, lava and writhing maggots effectively solid beneath her feet—though not necessarily harmless. To stop and stand on such a surface requires a successful reflexive difficulty 2 (Dexterity + Athletics) roll for each action in which the character wishes to maintain balance.

### Eagle-Wing Style

**Cost:** 4m, 1wp; **Mins:** Athletics 5, Essence 4; **Type:** Reflexive
**Keywords:** Combo-OK
**Duration:** One scene
**Prerequisite Charms:** Spider-Foot Style, Feather-Foot Style

The Solar hero focuses her Essence and repels the ground. She leaps skyward and continues to fly until the scene ends or she wills herself to land. She can fly at triple her normal Move and Dash rates, but must move at least half her normal Move on every tick or she will have to land and end this Charm. The character must remain within ([Strength + Athletics] x 3) yards of a surface. She can "climb" walls or cliffs by zooming along their surface, but she can't naturally rise more than the stated distance above the ground.

To direct the flows of Essence, the character must keep one hand extended before her. This prevents the use of bows and other two-handed weapons while flying. The character may use thrown weapons, fight unarmed or wield one-handed weapons normally, regardless of how fast she is moving. The character can engage in aerial duels with characters capable of taking to the air, or she can hurl thrown weapons at foes on the ground or swoop down and strike them as she flies past.

### Increasing Strength Exercise

**Cost:** 3m per point; **Mins:** Athletics 3, Essence 2; **Type:** Simple
**Keywords:** Combo-OK, Obvious, Stackable
**Duration:** One scene
**Prerequisite Charms:** None

This Charm suffuses the character with Solar Essence, temporarily increasing his Strength. It adds one dot to the character's Strength for each three motes spent. No combination of Charms that includes Increasing Strength Exercise can increase the character's Strength by more than his Essence, and this bonus is treated as a dice bonus from Charms.

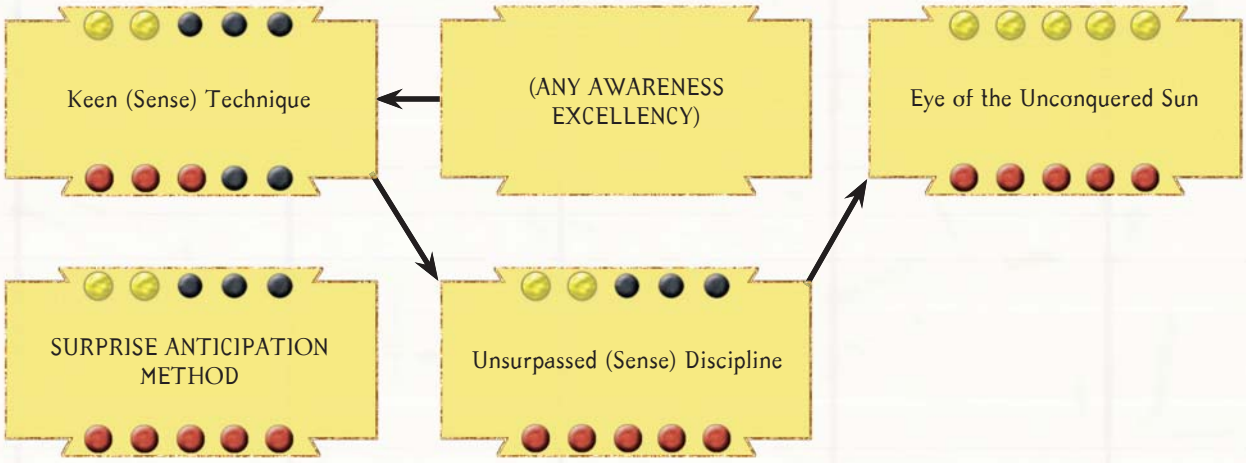
## Awareness

### Keen (Sense) Technique

**Cost:** 3m; **Mins:** Awareness 3, Essence 2; **Type:** Reflexive
**Keywords:** Combo-OK
**Duration:** One scene
**Prerequisite Charms:** Any Awareness Excellency

Essence enhances the Solar's senses. Keen (Sense) Technique is actually three Charms, one that heightens sight, one that heightens hearing and touch and one that heightens smell and taste.

This Charm gives two bonus successes on Awareness actions that use the relevant senses. It also allows the character to clearly



perceive sensory impressions that are normally too faint for human senses to validly observe at all. Some feats appropriate for users of this Charm follow.

**Sight.** The character can make out the detail on a commander's epaulet at 500 yards distance, at night. He can see the individual threads of a shirt, and with a legendary success, he can make out the motion of the mites that live on others' eyebrows.

**Hearing and Touch.** The character can gauge the quality of fabric with a touch. He reduces the external penalty to target unseen characters to -1 and the internal penalty from blindness to -2. He can hear conversations normally through thick stone walls. With a legendary success, he can read by touch.

**Smell and Taste.** The character can recognize others and hints of their recent activities by smell. He can track by scent, gaining one bonus success when tracking someone who has a scent. The character can identify spices and poisons by taste. With a legendary success, he can detect but not identify a few drops of tasteless poison in a wine—as its presence serves to dilute the wine.

### Unsurpassed (Sense) Discipline

**Cost:** 2m; **Mins:** Awareness 5, Essence 2; **Type:** Reflexive
**Keywords:** Combo-OK
**Duration:** One scene
**Prerequisite Charms:** Appropriate Keen (Sense) Technique

Essence grants the character supreme sensory prowess. Unsurpassed (Sense) Discipline is actually three Charms. One heightens sight, one heightens hearing and touch, and one heightens smell and taste.

This Charm doubles the character's successes on Awareness rolls, before subtracting any external penalties. Should the character employ this Charm in combination with the appropriate Keen (Sense) Technique, it is reasonable to imagine that she could critique the mating practices of insects, read with her fingertips or gauge an individual's mood by scent.

### Surprise Anticipation Method

**Cost:** 1m; **Mins:** Awareness 5, Essence 2; **Type:** Reflexive (Step 2)
**Keywords:** Combo-OK
**Duration:** Instant
**Prerequisite Charms:** None

In this degenerate time, the Lawgivers depend on a preternatural sense for danger. This Charm guarantees success on any valid Awareness roll to notice immediate mortal danger. This Charm works whether in or out of battle, awake or asleep. If the Exalt has a chance to notice a surprise attack during a prolonged struggle, a dart blown at him in the jungle, an invisible opponent or a cleverly concealed pit, he does so.

If the Exalt's player must make such a roll and has a chance of failing it, and if the Solar can invoke this Charm, this Charm invokes itself automatically. At that time, if the player has a Combo containing this Charm, he may declare the use of that Combo instead of just the Surprise Anticipation Method Charm.

Surprise Anticipation Method does not invoke itself if the character has already used his Charm for the action, if the character does not have any motes of Essence, if the character is Inactive and cannot become active, if the character is already certain to succeed on the Awareness roll or if the character cannot normally attempt an Awareness roll.

### Eye of the Unconquered Sun

**Cost:** 12m, 1wp; **Mins:** Awareness 5, Essence 5; **Type:** Reflexive
**Keywords:** Combo-OK, Obvious
**Duration:** One scene
**Prerequisite Charms:** Unsurpassed Sight Discipline

The Lawgivers see through all deceptions. This Charm lets the Solar see everything that is deliberately concealed within the normal range of his vision. This Charm renders Stealth effects, deception effects and concealment effects—natural and unnatural—inapplicable against the Solar. She may notice the effects, but they have no effect on her. This includes invisibility, mundane disguises, disguises augmented by Lunar shapeshifting or Sidereal astrology and Compulsion and Illusion effects that force her to deny reality. This Charm flares the Solar's anima to the 16+ mote level while in use. If another Charm contests this Charm's effects, Eye of the Unconquered Sun adds twice the Solar's Essence in automatic successes to the opposed roll to maintain the effects of this Charm. This Charm is considered a defense when used to prevent a surprise or social attack.

## Dodge

### Shadow Over Water
**Cost:** 1m; **Mins:** Dodge 3, Essence 1; **Type:** Reflexive (Step 2)
**Keywords:** Combo-OK
**Duration:** Instant
**Prerequisite Charms:** None

The Chosen move like shadows over water—with perfect grace and speed. The maneuver named Shadow Over Water restores defensive advantage to a beleaguered or overextended fighter. This Charm is used in response to an attack. It allows the Exalt to ignore all penalties that apply to her Dodge DV when resolving that attack. Her Dodge DV is still 0 against an undodgeable attack, but she takes no further penalties.

### Seven Shadow Evasion
**Cost:** 3m; **Mins:** Dodge 4, Essence 2; **Type:** Reflexive (Step 2)
**Keywords:** Combo-OK, Obvious
**Duration:** Instant
**Prerequisite Charms:** Shadow Over Water

The Solar hero is too quick for his enemies to land a blow. The Exalt invokes this Charm in response to an attack. The attack must not be unexpected. This Charm is a dodge that perfectly defends against the attack—even if the attack is undodgeable.

This Charm has one of the Four Flaws of Invulnerability (see p. 194).

### Reflex Sidestep Technique
**Cost:** 1m; **Mins:** Dodge 3, Essence 1; **Type:** Reflexive (Step 2)
**Keywords:** Combo-OK
**Duration:** Instant
**Prerequisite Charms:** None

The heroes of the dawn are in tune with the Essence of the world. The Exalt invokes this Charm in response to an unexpected attack. The attack is no longer unexpected (but if an appropriate Charm, it remains unblockable). This allows the character to use his Dodge DV and Charms such as Seven Shadow Evasion against the attack.

### Flow Like Blood
**Cost:** 5m, 1wp; **Mins:** Dodge 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Simple
**Keywords:** Combo-OK, Obvious
**Duration:** One scene
**Prerequisite Charms:** Any Dodge Excellency, Seven Shadow Evasion, Reflex Sidestep Technique

Essence permeates the Lawgiver's being. She moves with an impossible fluid grace. For the remainder of the scene, this Charm negates the onslaught and coordinated attack penalties that others' attacks impose on the Exalt's DV.

### Leaping Dodge Method
**Cost:** 3m; **Mins:** Dodge 3, Essence 2; **Type:** Reflexive (Step 9)
**Keywords:** Combo-OK, Counterattack
**Duration:** Instant
**Prerequisite Charms:** Shadow Over Water

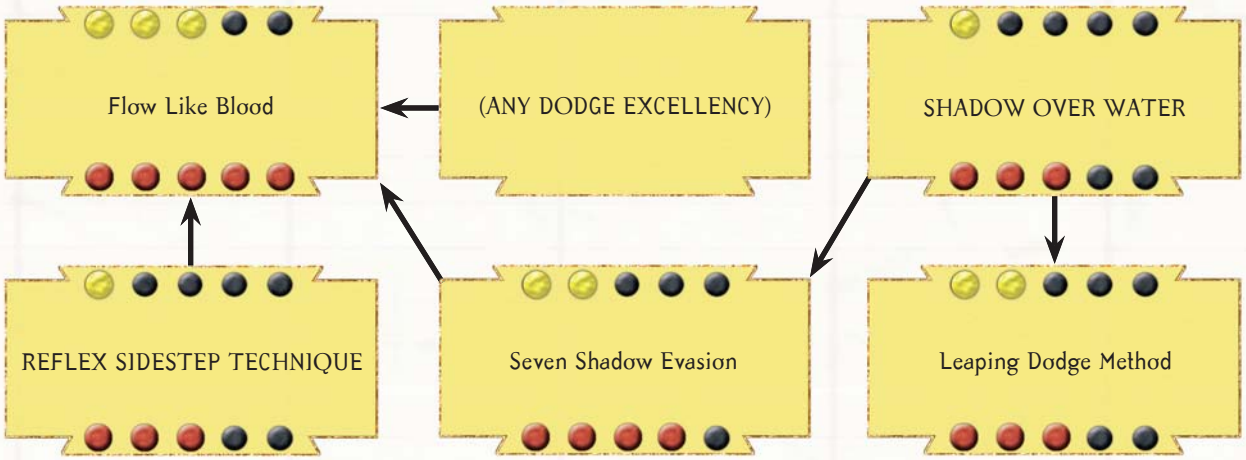
The Solar is as elusive as a dream. The Exalt invokes this Charm after using her Dodge DV to defend against an attack. This Charm allows her to leap away from her opponent, jumping up to ([Strength + Dodge] x 3) yards vertically or twice this distance horizontally. The Exalt chooses the exact direction and distance of this leap, so long as it is away from her attacker. This Charm is treated as a counterattack, even though the jump is not hostile. It reduces the character's DV by one, it cannot be used with a counterattack, and it is resolved in Step 9 of attack resolution.

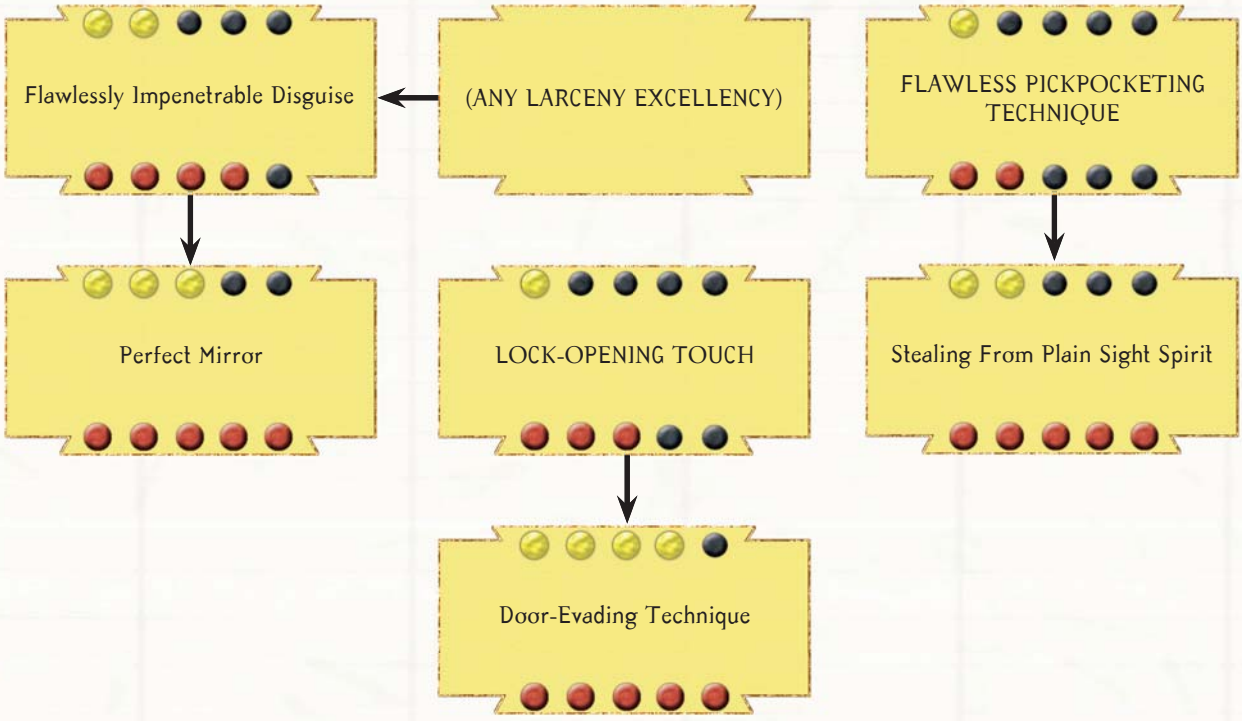
## Larceny

### Flawlessly Impenetrable Disguise
**Cost:** 7m; **Mins:** Larceny 4, Essence 2; **Type:** Simple (Speed 6 in long ticks)
**Keywords:** Combo-OK
**Duration:** Until the character sleeps
**Prerequisite Charms:** Any Larceny Excellency

After the Usurpation, the last of the Iron Wolves used this Charm to move in secret among the armies of the Dragon-Blooded. This Charm involves creating a disguise, and the player rolls ([Wits or Manipulation] + Larceny) to determine the disguise's quality.

This Charm allows the character to change his coloration, skin texture, hair color, and eye color. It also lets the character






seem anywhere between half and twice his actual age, change his apparent ethnicity, change his apparent gender and adjust his height by as much as 10% in either direction. The character can adjust his voice, accent, speaking style and scent to match. These aspects of the disguise are impenetrable—the flaws are too subtle for the eye to see or the ear to hear, so that ordinary Awareness and Investigation cannot detect them. Characters with inhuman sensory acuity, such as Lawgivers using Keen Sight Technique or a dog scenting its master, can see through the character's disguise, but the opposed roll incurs a +4 difficulty penalty.

This Charm does not help the character imitate others' appearance. The disguise is impenetrable, not exact. If someone sees through an imitation, they will see the character as an imposter who happens to naturally look almost exactly like the target the character is impersonating.

This Charm becomes a mundane disguise effect when the magic ends. Changes worked with makeup, posture, attitude and costume rather than Essence remain.

### Perfect Mirror

**Cost:** 10m, 1wp; **Mins:** Larceny 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Simple (Speed 6 in long ticks)
**Keywords:** Combo-OK
**Duration:** One hour
**Prerequisite Charms:** Flawlessly Impenetrable Disguise

The Solar Exalted know the secrets of others' hearts. This Charm involves creating a disguise, and the Solar's player rolls ([Wits or Manipulation] + Larceny) to determine the disguise's quality. This Charm functions as Flawlessly Impenetrable Disguise, save that it has a shorter duration, a higher cost and two additional abilities.

First, the character can halve or double his apparent Essence—as seen by creatures capable of perceiving such things—and can appear to possess a mystical trait to the extent that he can emulate its mechanical effects. For example, an Essence 4 character could disguise himself as an Essence 8 god. If that god's hair writhes and the god floats an inch above the ground, the character convincingly models these traits. He does not actually float, however.

Second, if the character has sufficient familiarity to disguise himself as someone else and that person's appearance is within the limits of this Charm, the character can perfectly imitate that person. Characters with ordinary senses cannot use Awareness or Investigation to see through this disguise, and even characters with inhuman sensory acuity—such as Lawgivers using All-Encompassing Sorcerer's Sight to spot the disguise Charm or demons recognizing the master to whom they are bound—have a +4 difficulty penalty on the opposed roll to penetrate the disguise.

Note that, because ordinary Investigation cannot see through this disguise, the character has all the important distinguishing features of the imitated target—mannerisms, scent, accent and all. He does not know things that only the target can know, however, so he cannot give passwords or issue countersigns. He is flawless at covering up his ignorance when someone attempts to ferret him out, though.

### Flawless Pickpocketing Technique

**Cost:** 3m; **Mins:** Larceny 2, Essence 1; **Type:** Supplemental
**Keywords:** Combo-OK
**Duration:** Instant
**Prerequisite Charms:** None

It is the Lawgivers' right to confiscate goods necessary to the service of the Unconquered Sun. This Charm enhances a valid pickpocketing roll—that is, a roll to steal something that the character can both reach and carry from another's person. The character cannot steal things in active use, such as the sword in someone's hand, the boots from the target's feet or an artifact to which someone has committed motes, unless the target is an extra.

This Charm guarantees success on the pickpocketing roll. If another Charm contests this effect, add the character's Essence in automatic successes to the (Dexterity + Larceny) roll to oppose the other Charm. In addition, characters using ordinary senses cannot spot the theft with Awareness. Even players of characters with inhuman sensory acuity—such as a spider feeling for the vibrations in its web while a character attempts to steal its larder—have a +4 difficulty penalty on the opposed roll to catch the character in the act.

### Stealing from Plain Sight Spirit

**Cost:** 5m, 0wp or 1wp; **Mins:** Larceny 5, Essence 2; **Type:** Simple
**Keywords:** Combo-OK
**Duration:** Until DV refreshes (Essence) times
**Prerequisite Charms:** Flawless Pickpocketing Technique

In the First Age, the Solar Exalted used this Charm to steal the artifacts of the Fair Folk and the Yozis then turn them to the service of Creation. This Charm is an attempt to steal something in plain sight, within (the Solar's Essence) yards. The character must be able to carry the item, and the character cannot steal things in active use—again, including attuned artifacts—unless he is stealing from an extra's person. The character automatically succeeds in stealing the item. If another Charm contests this effect, add the character's Essence in automatic successes to the ([Dexterity or Wits] + Larceny) roll to oppose the other Charm.

Characters using ordinary senses cannot spot the theft with Awareness. Nor may they notice the theft afterward until the Solar has refreshed his DV a number of times equal to his Essence score, barring unusual circumstances such as an attempt to use the item or the collapse of an arch after the character steals its keystone. Even players of characters with inhuman sensory acuity have a +4 difficulty on the opposed roll to notice the theft and a +8 difficulty on the unopposed roll to notice the item's absence.

This Charm normally costs five motes. To steal an item that he could not reach—on the other side of a window, outside of the character's cell, at the bottom of a narrow crevice and so forth—the character must also spend 1 Willpower.

### Lock-Opening Touch

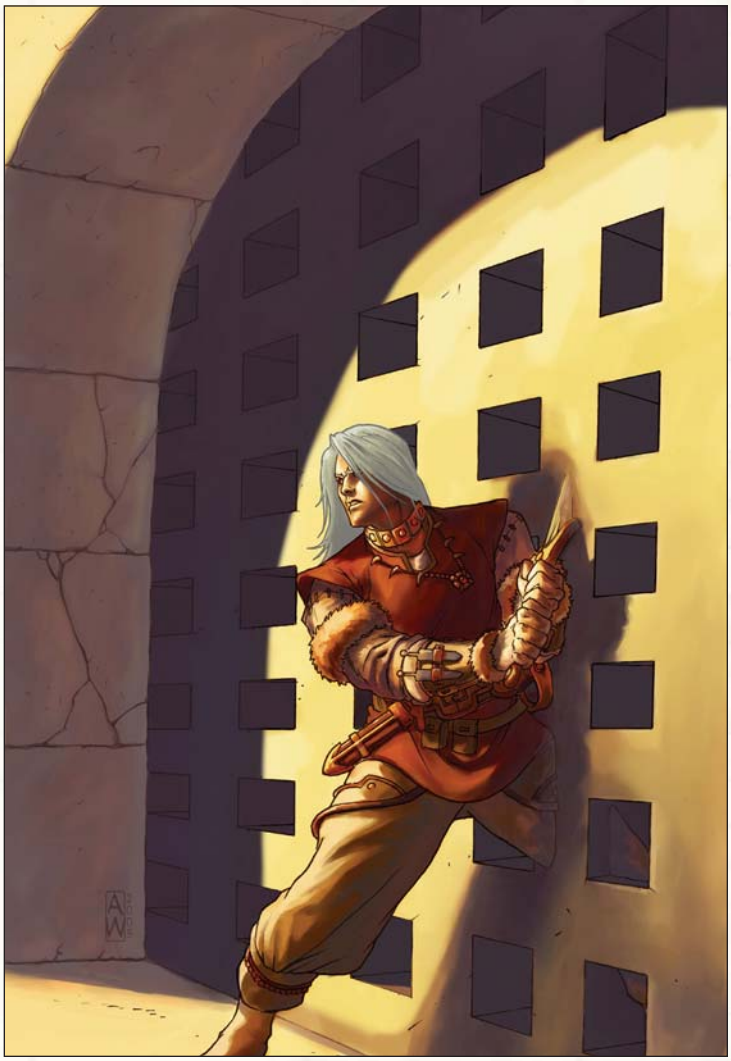
**Cost:** 3m; **Mins:** Larceny 3, Essence 1; **Type:** Supplemental
**Keywords:** Combo-OK
**Duration:** Instant
**Prerequisite Charms:** None

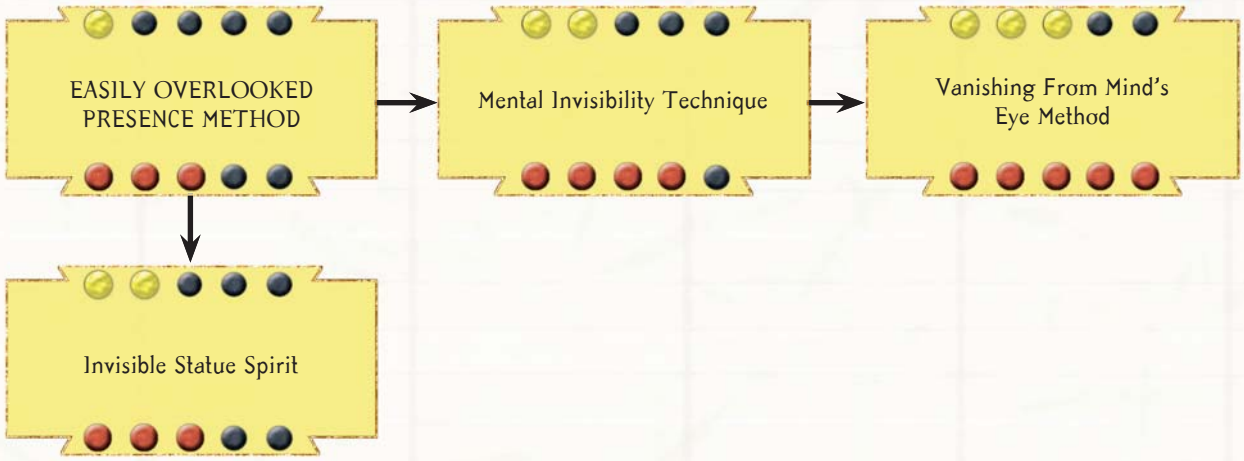
Mortal thieves must struggle with lockpicks and thieves' tools. The Exalted may use Essence. This Charm enhances a miscellaneous action to pick a lock. It makes success automatic even if the character has no tools (though such use makes the Charm Obvious). If this effect is opposed by another Charm or magical effect, add the character's Essence in automatic successes to the (Dexterity + Larceny) roll to oppose the rival magic.

### Door-Evading Technique

**Cost:** 10m, 1wp; **Mins:** Larceny 5, Essence 4; **Type:** Reflexive
**Keywords:** Combo-OK
**Duration:** Instant
**Prerequisite Charms:** Lock-Opening Touch

Only the unrighteous would lock a door to keep the Lawgivers out. Such an intention is proof of iniquity. This Charm is a Move action with the normal movement allowance, which bypasses a single closed portal. The character must be able to move, and this Charm uses up the character's Move action for the tick. The character can move through a closed door, a fallen portcullis or a sealed grate as if it were not there. This Charm only allows movement through portals—that is, objects intentionally designed for people, animals or spirits to pass through them. The character cannot use this Charm to walk through walls, squeeze through arrow slits or fish around inside a sealed chest.






## Stealth

### Easily Overlooked Presence Method

**Cost:** 3m; **Mins:** Stealth 3, Essence 1; **Type:** Simple
**Keywords:** Combo-OK
**Duration:** One scene
**Prerequisite Charms:** None

The Lawgivers must sometimes mask their glory, moving anonymously among the common folk. This Charm makes the character difficult to notice unless circumstances or battle readiness make him obvious. It causes Awareness and Investigation rolls made to notice the Solar to fail automatically unless the Solar is currently joined in battle (see p. 141) or the observer has a minimum two-die bonus from circumstances. Examples of relevant circumstances include the +1 bonus guards receive from alertness, the +1 bonus to notice a Northerner in a Southern city and the +3 bonus to notice a blood-drenched orichalcum-armored Solar at a formal dress party.

### Mental Invisibility Technique

**Cost:** 5m, 1wp; **Mins:** Stealth 4, Essence 2; **Type:** Simple
**Keywords:** Combo-OK, Compulsion
**Duration:** One scene
**Prerequisite Charms:** Easily Overlooked Presence Method

The Mental Invisibility Technique bends the minds of those who might observe the character. The Exalt's player rolls ([Dexterity or Manipulation] + Stealth), adding her Essence in automatic successes. This Charm exerts unnatural mental influence on all those who observe her. If the character's successes exceed a target's Dodge MDV, the target is compelled to ignore the Solar's presence whenever the Solar is not joined in battle (see p. 141). The target must spend four Willpower to resist this compulsion, which drops to one Willpower if someone calls the target's attention to the Solar.

### Vanishing from Mind's Eye Method

**Cost:** 10m, 1wp; **Mins:** Stealth 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Simple
**Keywords:** Combo-OK
**Duration:** Indefinite
**Prerequisite Charms:** Mental Invisibility Technique

In the night, surrounded by the brooding things of darkness, it is sometimes hard to remember the sun. This Charm allows the character to apply Stealth retroactively. The Solar's player rolls ([Wits or Manipulation] + Stealth), adding a number of automatic successes equal to the Exalt's Essence. This stealth veils the character in others' memories. The first time in each day that someone attempts to remember an event involving the character or attempts to recognize the character, that person's player must reflexively roll (Wits + Lore) and achieve more successes than did the Exalt's player. If he fails, the character does not remember or recognize the character—in his memories of past interactions with the character, the character is either a nameless, unremembered figure or simply not present at all.

### Invisible Statue Spirit

**Cost:** 5m; **Mins:** Stealth 3, Essence 2; **Type:** Simple
**Keywords:** Combo-OK
**Duration:** Indefinite
**Prerequisite Charms:** Easily Overlooked Presence Method

The Solar vanishes from others' sight. This Charm makes it impossible to detect the character with any sense save touch—unless they bump into him, observers simply cannot spot the character. This Charm fades instantly if the character joins battle or moves (with the Move action, the Dash action or their narrative and dramatic equivalents.) It fades automatically five ticks after someone notices the character by touch.

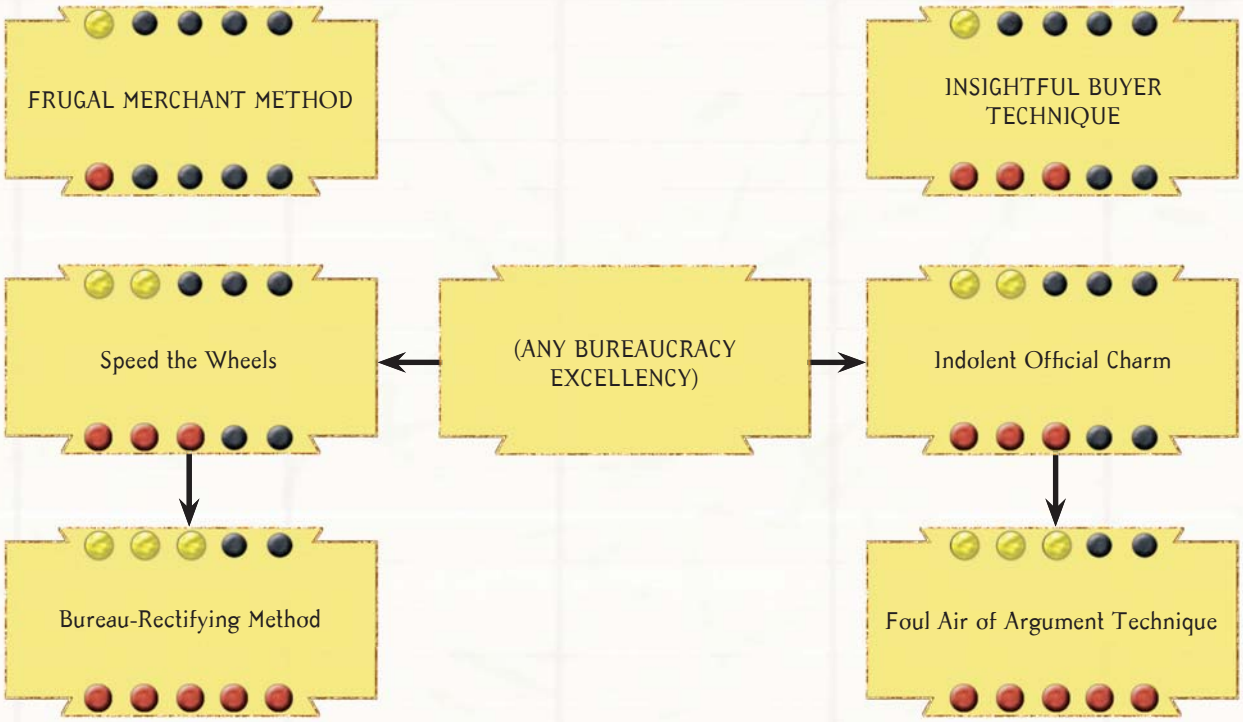
# Eclipse Caste

## Bureaucracy

### Frugal Merchant Method

**Cost:** 1m; **Mins:** Bureaucracy 1, Essence 1; **Type:** Supplemental
**Keywords:** Combo-OK
**Duration:** Instant
**Prerequisite Charms:** None

Only a fool would cheat the heroes of the dawn. This Charm supplements a normal or dramatic action to estimate something's quality and price. Examples include the normal action to estimate the quality of a gem and the dramatic action to evaluate a shipment of silk and spices. This Charm gives the Exalt a perfect awareness of the target object's quality and condition. This awareness gives one bonus success on any price




haggling if her bargaining opponent is honest (and using Charisma) and three bonus successes if the opponent is dishonest (and using Manipulation).

### Insightful Buyer Technique

**Cost:** 3m; **Mins:** Bureaucracy 3, Essence 1; **Type:** Supplemental
**Keywords:** Combo-OK, Social
**Duration:** Instant
**Prerequisite Charms:** None

Smoothly managing the economy is vital to the management of a state. This Charm supplements a social or dramatic action to buy, sell or trade something wisely.

This Charm provides information on market values. To the extent that the Exalt understands what the target item, shipment, import or export is—and to the extent that he understands the relevant markets—this Charm gives the Solar a perfect knowledge of its value in those markets. This information is sometimes worth the Charm's cost in itself, but the main effect of this Charm and this information is to reduce external penalties applying to the mercantile action by an amount equal to the Solar's Essence. Whether the Solar is trying to buy a good sword for himself, outfit his army in exceptional steel, trade off yeddim for silk before plague kills the beasts or sell off the produce of his nation's labor, he can overcome penalties from scarcity, volatile markets and trade barriers.

### Speed the Wheels

**Cost:** 8m; **Mins:** Bureaucracy 3, Essence 2; **Type:** Simple (Dramatic Action)
**Keywords:** Combo-OK
**Duration:** Indefinite
**Prerequisite Charms:** Any Bureaucracy Excellency

The Lawgivers bring order and destroy corruption. The Solar speeds the process of a bureaucracy. Normally, an organization must first take a Begin Project dramatic action—ranging from minutes to months in its duration, depending on the organization's structure—before it can start actual work on a project. The Solar communicates his desire for speedy resolution to the organization, and his player rolls ([Intelligence or Charisma] + Bureaucracy), adding the Solar's Essence in automatic successes. The difficulty of this roll is 1. If the person responsible for this project deliberately engages in delays, subtract an external penalty of ([that person's Intelligence + Bureaucracy] ÷ 2) from the successes on the Bureaucracy roll. The Solar is aware of such delaying tactics, however.

If the Solar succeeds, this Charm divides the time needed to begin the project by (the Solar's Essence + 1), with a maximum possible time of one season. For example, for an Essence 5 Solar, if it would normally take six months to authorize naval repairs or obtain an audience with the local king, this Charm reduces that time to a single month. If it normally takes a century to obtain necessary paperwork from a Fair Folk freehold, the Solar resolves the matter in a single season.

### Bureau-Rectifying Method

**Cost:** 8m, 1wp; **Mins:** Bureaucracy 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Supplemental
**Keywords:** Combo-OK
**Duration:** Instant
**Prerequisite Charms:** Speed the Wheels

The Lawgivers govern wisely. This Charm supplements an organizational effort that the Solar leads—a dramatic action taken by a bureaucratic, mercantile or governmental organization. This Charm reduces the external penalties on that action by

the Solar's Essence. It permanently reduces any internal penalties that organization suffers due to endemic corruption or inefficiency by one. The Solar must have sufficient authority to lead the effort. For example, the Solar could lead a nation's effort to build a network of roads, reducing the penalties imposed by bandits, uncleared wilderness and reluctant labor. This Charm incidentally purges the least useful members of the bureaucracy.

### Indolent Official Charm

**Cost:** 4m; **Mins:** Bureaucracy 3, Essence 2; **Type:** Simple (Dramatic Action)
**Keywords:** Combo-OK
**Duration:** Indefinite
**Prerequisite Charms:** Any Bureaucracy Excellency

The enemies of the Solar Exalted are creatures of vice. The Lawgivers exploit their venality and allow them to defeat themselves. This Charm empowers the natural indolence of others. The Solar communicates with an organization regarding a project, and his player rolls ([Intelligence or Charisma] + Bureaucracy), adding the Solar's Essence in automatic successes. The difficulty of this roll is 1. If the person responsible for this project wishes a speedy resolution, subtract an external penalty of ([that person's Intelligence + Bureaucracy] ÷ 2) from the successes on the Bureaucracy roll. The Solar is aware of such opposition, however.

If the Solar succeeds, this Charm multiplies the remaining time required for the target organization to begin that project by (the Solar's Essence + 1). It is always increased to at least (the Solar's Essence) in hours. If the project has already begun, this Charm instead applies an external penalty equal to the Solar's Essence to the organization's attempts to make progress.

### Foul Air of Argument Technique

**Cost:** 4m, 1wp; **Mins:** Bureaucracy 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Supplemental
**Keywords:** Combo-OK
**Duration:** Instant
**Prerequisite Charms:** Indolent Official Charm

Those who oppose the Lawgivers often break down under the burden of their own failings. This Charm supplements a deliberate attempt by the Solar to sabotage an organization's operation. Her player rolls ([Intelligence or Charisma] + Bureaucracy), adding the Solar's Essence in automatic successes. Subtract an external penalty of ([the organization's leader's Intelligence + Bureaucracy] ÷ 2) from the successes on the Bureaucracy roll.

If the character succeeds, then the organization suffers a permanent increase in corruption and inefficiency that imposes a -2 internal penalty on all of its actions. This Charm can be applied repeatedly to a single bureaucracy, but no combination of Charms including Foul Air of Argument Technique can impose a greater internal inefficiency and corruption penalty on an organization than (the Solar's Intelligence + Bureaucracy).

## Linguistics

### Whirling Brush Method

**Cost:** 4m; **Mins:** Linguistics 1, Essence 1; **Type:** Supplemental
**Keywords:** Combo-OK
**Duration:** Instant
**Prerequisite Charms:** None

The diplomats of the Unconquered Sun write with a swift and elegant hand. This Charm supplements a dramatic action to write something down—be it a copy of an existing book, the transcript of a live conversation or an original work. This Charm allows the character to write at (her Essence x 10) times her normal speed. Instead of dedicating 30 hours to copying a manuscript, an Essence 2 character might finish it in an hour and a half. Instead of six hours writing and polishing a treaty, an Essence 3 Eclipse might prepare it in 12 minutes.

### Flawless Brush Discipline

**Cost:** 8m; **Mins:** Linguistics 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Simple
**Keywords:** Combo-OK, Emotion
**Duration:** Instant
**Prerequisite Charms:** Any Linguistics Excellency

Flawless Brush Discipline heightens the beauty of a Lawgiver's script, making her every brushstroke ideal. Exalted using this Charm write with the hands of legendary sages and divine calligraphers. This Charm adds the character's permanent Essence to her Linguistics score to determine the beauty of the writing. In addition, this Charm causes the Lawgiver's words to exude a supernatural attraction. The Exalt's player rolls (Charisma + Performance) when recording her message. If the successes exceed the MDV of someone reading this work, the target is overcome with admiration or even love for the Exalt. This is an emotion caused by unnatural mental influence. The target must spend three Willpower to resist this effect or become committed (see p. 201) to the emotion that this Charm instills. If the target does not spend the three Willpower, the emotion lasts until the target breaks the commitment, and it costs one Willpower per scene to resist. Once affected, the target cannot suffer the effects of that Exalt's Flawless Brush Discipline again for one full year.

#### Linguistics Excellency

Increasing the static rating of Linguistics with the Linguistics Excellencies does not increase the number of languages a character knows.

### Letter-Within-a-Letter Technique

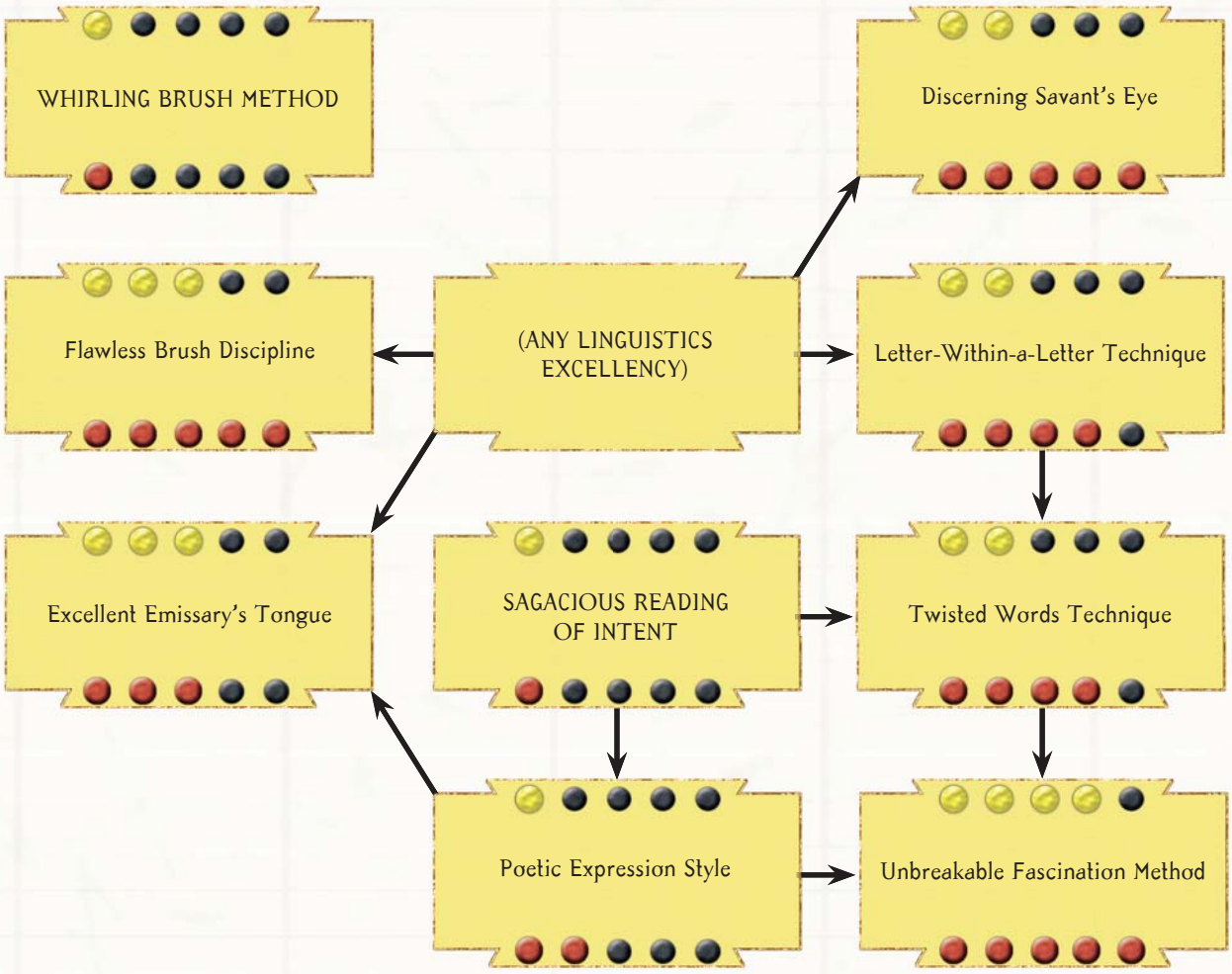
**Cost:** 6m; **Mins:** Linguistics 4, Essence 2; **Type:** Simple
**Keywords:** Combo-OK
**Duration:** Instant
**Prerequisite Charms:** Any Linguistics Excellency

Though the glorious Solar Exalted of the First Age are dead, many left secret messages for their heirs. This Charm allows the character to hide a message within another written work. Only the intended targets for the message can perceive it.

The concealed message can include natural or unnatural mental influence. If so, the influence is an attempted surprise attack. Add the author's Linguistics in automatic successes to the Socialize roll to take the target by surprise.

### Discerning Savant's Eye

**Cost:** 6m, 1wp; **Mins:** Linguistics 5, Essence 2; **Type:** Reflexive (Step 2)
**Keywords:** Combo-OK




**Duration:** One scene
**Prerequisite Charms:** Any Linguistics Excellency

The Solar heroes see through petty mysteries. This Charm lets the character understand encoded, obscured and hidden communication as if it were clear. For example, the Exalt can read weather-damaged stone tablets, recognize the signals in a coded exchange, browse ciphered manuscripts as if they were in their original language and make out the words of someone whose tongue has been cut in half. This Charm can oppose the concealing effects of Letter-Within-a-Letter Technique and similar Charms. The character is never surprised by social attacks while this Charm is in force.

### Sagacious Reading of Intent

**Cost:** 3m; **Mins:** Linguistics 1, Essence 1; **Type:** Reflexive (Step 2)
**Keywords:** Combo-OK, Social
**Duration:** Instant
**Prerequisite Charms:** None

The Lawgivers see others' purposes. This Charm identifies the motivation behind a given statement that the Exalt reads or hears—a one-sentence summary of what the person making that statement hopes to gain. If the Exalt invokes this Charm to defend against a social attack and the attacker's purpose is fundamentally hostile to the Exalt or the Exalt's Motivation, this Charm perfectly negates the attack.

### Poetic Expression Style

**Cost:** 3m; **Mins:** Linguistics 2, Essence 1; **Type:** Reflexive
**Keywords:** Combo-OK
**Duration:** One scene
**Prerequisite Charms:** Sagacious Reading of Intent

The Solar heroes express their desires clearly. Language barriers do not stop them—their every gesture conveys their desired meaning. This Charm removes external penalties to dramatic actions and combat actions caused by the character not knowing others' languages. She can convey tactical and strategic necessities with expressive gestures and sounds. For example, she can easily convey "Duck!" or work with backwater natives to develop their agriculture. This Charm does *not* remove penalties to social or military actions, so the character will have a difficult time persuading or leading others—naturally or unnaturally—if she does not know their language.

### Excellent Emissary's Tongue

**Cost:** —; **Mins:** Linguistics 3, Essence 3; **Type:** Permanent
**Keywords:** None

**Duration:** Varies
**Prerequisite Charms:** Any Linguistics Excellency, Poetic Expression Style

Essence enhances the Solar's language skills. This Charm allows the Solar to communicate and understand basic concepts in a language with which he has some experience but does not know. This requires a successful (Intelligence + Linguistics) roll for each five long ticks of conversation or page of written material, and the Solar must use a Linguistics Excellency. The difficulty is 5 if the Solar has a few days' experience studying or hearing the language. It rises to 7 if the Solar has a scene of experience studying or hearing the language. It's 10 if the Solar has only heard or read a few words. If the Solar uses this Charm to engage in social conflict in a language he does not understand, both the Solar and anyone he attempts to persuade receive a +3 to their MDV.

### Twisted Words Technique

**Cost:** 6m, 1wp; **Mins:** Linguistics 4, Essence 2; **Type:** Supplemental
**Keywords:** Combo-OK, Compulsion, Illusion
**Duration:** Instant
**Prerequisite Charms:** Letter-Within-a-Letter Technique, Sagacious Reading of Intent

The cadences of the Solar's language are subtly compelling. This Charm supplements a written attempt to compel or deceive others. It makes the persuasion attempt involved *unnatural*. The player rolls (Manipulation + an appropriate social Ability). This effects a compulsion or illusion on anyone who reads the written text and whose MDV the successes exceed. The target must spend three Willpower to resist this effect or become committed (see p. 201) to the intention or belief the Solar wishes to instill. If the target does not spend the three Willpower, the influence lasts until the target breaks the commitment and costs one Willpower per scene to resist. This Charm loses effectiveness with repeated use. Increase the target's MDV by three if an Exalt has used Twisted Words Technique or a similar Charm on the target this story.

### Unbreakable Fascination Method

**Cost:** 10m, 1wp; **Mins:** Linguistics 5, Essence 4; **Type:** Simple (Dramatic Action)
**Keywords:** Combo-OK, Obvious
**Duration:** Instant
**Prerequisite Charms:** Poetic Expression Style, Twisted Words Technique

The Solar's words blaze with power, fascinating others. This Charm is a dramatic action to speak before a crowd. It flares the Solar's anima to the 16+ mote level while in use. The rhythm and poetry of the Solar's words become a transcendent numinous experience for those who hear him speak.

This Charm exerts unnatural mental influence on all who hear, compelling them to listen raptly. This is automatically successful unless opposed by a defensive Charm. In addition, the Exalt's player rolls (Charisma + Linguistics), and if the successes defeat a target's MDV, that target is compelled to fall to his knees in awe, weep with rapture or otherwise react as appropriate to the presence and oration of a creature greater than a god. To resist one or both compulsions for a single action, the target must either have his player succeed on a Temperance roll, or he must spend one Willpower. The target need never spend more Willpower than the Solar's Essence in any given scene to resist Unbreakable Fascination Method.

This Charm ends when the Solar interrupts his speech for any reason other than a dramatic pause—that is, when he takes some other action.

## Ride

### Master Horseman's Techniques

**Cost:** —; **Mins:** Ride 1, Essence 1; **Type:** Permanent
**Keywords:** None
**Duration:** Instant
**Prerequisite Charms:** None

The Chosen of the Sun know their animals well. This Charm permanently enhances the Exalt's capabilities with one of the following tricks:

**Harmony of Spirits Style.** The Lawgiver can spend one mote reflexively to stop himself from falling off a mount. Characters can activate this effect when the character is inactive (see p. 143). In addition, as a permanent benefit, the character will not fall off the mount simply *from* being inactive during ordinary travel.

**Horse-Summoning Whistle.** The Lawgiver can spend one mote reflexively to call a mount loyal to him to his side. The mount makes its way to him as circumstances best allow.

**Master Horseman's Eye.** The Solar can spend one mote reflexively when evaluating a mount and perfectly recognize its strengths and weaknesses.

**Speed-Sustaining Technique.** The Lawgiver can spend one mote reflexively and touch a mount to sustain it for two hours. Effort during that time does not exhaust the creature, and it does not suffer harmful random incidents such as thrown shoes or injured hooves.

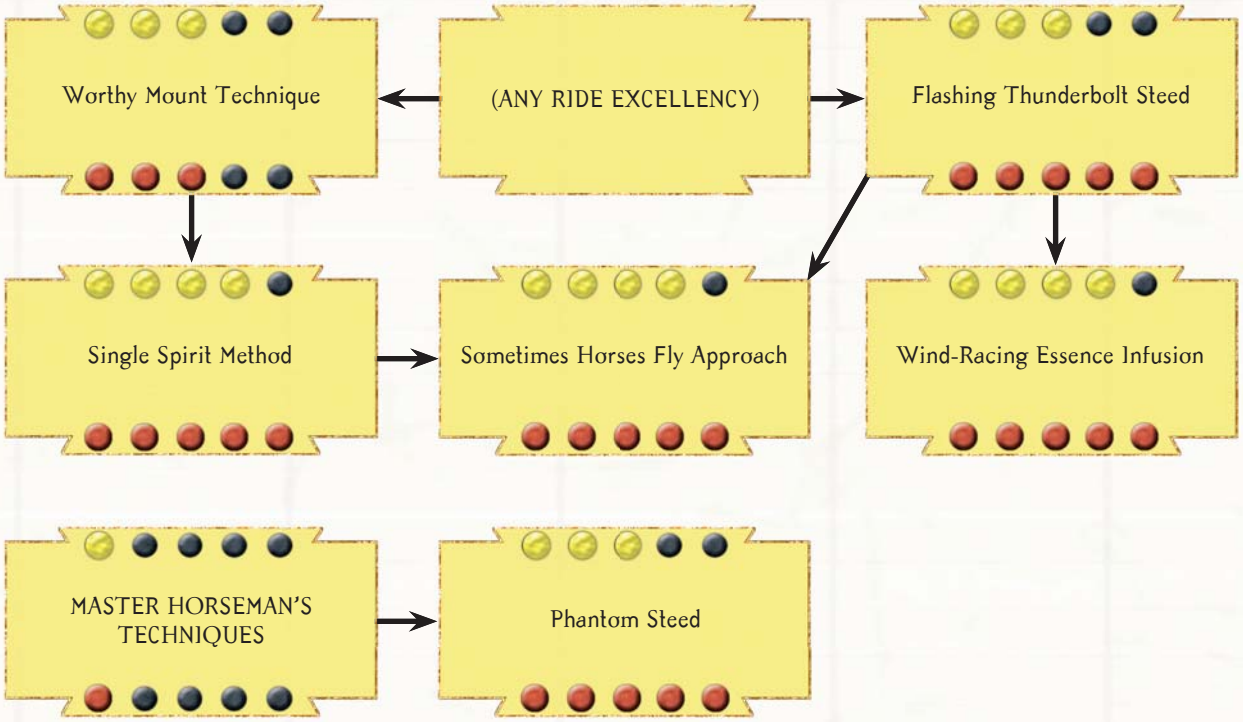
**Spirit-Steadying Assurances.** The Solar can spend three motes reflexively to prevent a mount from panicking. The mount will not panic for the remainder of the scene.

Characters with this Charm can purchase additional tricks from this list for two experience points or one bonus point. Using these abilities does not count as a Charm invocation—this Charm permanently enhances the Exalt's capabilities.

### Worthy Mount Technique

**Cost:** —; **Mins:** Ride 3, Essence 3; **Type:** Permanent
**Keywords:** None
**Duration:** Instant
**Prerequisite Charms:** Any Ride Excellency

The Solar heroes are as one with their mounts. This Charm lets a character use his reflexive Charms to assist a loyal animal he is riding rather than himself. This counts as the character using that Charm, but adds one mote to its invocation cost. Because this counts as the character using the Charm, it must abide by all of the normal limitations on Charm invocation. For example, the character can't use a Martial Arts Excellency to enhance an attack and also use Reflex Sidestep Technique to help his mount dodge in the same action without a Combo. However, he could use either of these to help both himself and the horse in a single action. If the character has a self-invoking Charm, such as Surprise Anticipation Method, then it invokes to protect his mount as well. If the mount faces unexpected mortal danger, the character reflexively spends two motes to enhance the mount's Awareness and allow it to shy.




### Single Spirit Method

**Cost:** —; **Mins:** Ride 5, Essence 4; **Type:** Permanent
**Keywords:** None
**Duration:** Instant
**Prerequisite Charms:** Worthy Mount Technique

This Charm enhances the character's Worthy Mount Technique. The character can use Supplemental Charms to enhance the horse's actions, adding two motes to their cost. For example, the character can use Thunderbolt Attack Prana to enhance his horse's attack, possibly even in the same action

### Phantom Steed

| Str/Dex/Sta | Per/Int/Wits/WP | Health Levels | Attack (Spd /Acc/Dmg/Rate) | Dodge/Soak |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 7/3/6 | 5 | -0x3/-1x2/-2x3/-4/I | Bite: 5/6/8L/1, Hoof: 6/6/13B*/2 | 6/3L/6B |

**Abilities:** Athletics 3, Awareness 3, Dodge 3, Investigation 1, Martial Arts 3, Presence 3, Resistance 2, Survival 2
* This damage is piercing.

that the character uses it to enhance his own. The character cannot do so when these Supplemental Charms are part of a Combo that includes a Simple Charm.

### Phantom Steed
**Cost:** 10m, 1wp; **Mins:** Ride 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Simple
**Keywords:** Combo-OK, Obvious
**Duration:** One day
**Prerequisite Charms:** Master Horseman's Techniques

The Solar shapes a pure white steed with a burning golden mane from the Essence of the world. This Charm creates a war horse that needs no sleep, rest or food. This war horse is loyal to the character and has Control Rating 2.

### Flashing Thunderbolt Steed
**Cost:** 5m, 1wp; **Mins:** Ride 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Simple
**Keywords:** Combo-OK, Touch
**Duration:** One day
**Prerequisite Charms:** Any Ride Excellency

Essence imbues the Lawgiver's mount with infinite energy. It can run all-out without suffering ill effects. It receives one automatic success on any rolls to keep its footing or successfully jump an obstacle. With this Charm active, a mounted character can reliably cover (the horse's Stamina x 10) miles per hour.

### Wind-Racing Essence Infusion
**Cost:** —; **Mins:** Ride 5, Essence 4; **Type:** Permanent
**Keywords:** Obvious
**Prerequisite Charms:** Flashing Thunderbolt Steed

The steeds of the Lawgivers possess extraordinary speed. This Charm enhances the character's Flashing Thunderbolt Steed technique, allowing the mount under its influence to reliably travel ([the creature's Stamina + the character's Essence] x 10) miles per hour.

### Sometimes Horses Fly Approach
**Cost:** 5m, 1wp; **Mins:** Ride 5, Essence 4; **Type:** Simple
**Keywords:** Combo-OK, Touch
**Duration:** One hour
**Prerequisite Charms:** Flashing Thunderbolt Steed, Single Spirit Method

The Solar heroes inspire their mounts to unusual feats. This Charm gives a horse the ability to fly, as well as the confidence to do so. It can run on water, clouds and even the air itself with a Move or Dash action, spending two yards of movement to ascend one yard.

Reduce this Charm's cost to five motes when used upon a horse summoned with Phantom Steed or a similar Charm.

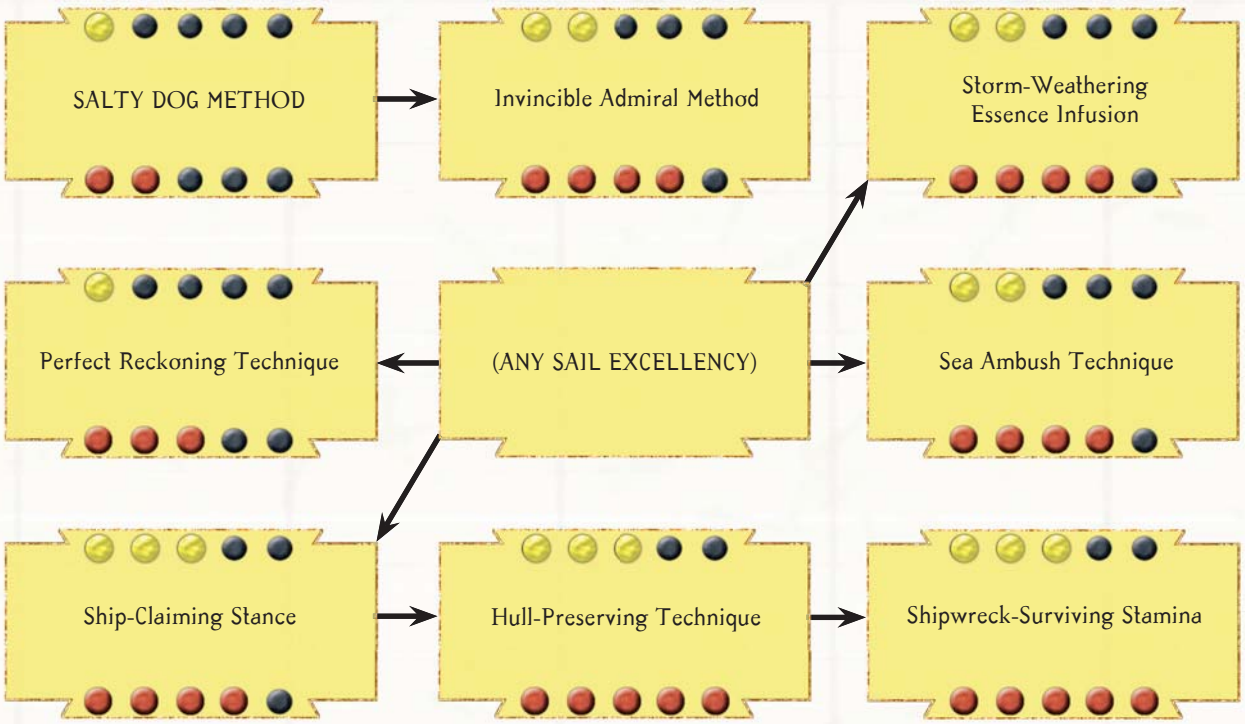
## Sail

### Salty Dog Method
**Cost:** 3m; **Mins:** Sail 2, Essence 1; **Type:** Reflexive (Step 1 or 2)
**Keywords:** Combo-OK, Social, War
**Duration:** One scene
**Prerequisite Charms:** None

This Charm assists in naval and shipboard operations, from maintaining sea legs during a storm to guiding an invasion fleet through the reefs on a foggy night. This Charm removes up to the character's Essence in external penalties from appropriate battle, social, dramatic and military actions. This includes both penalties directly related to the naval environment, such as fog and the rolling ship, and unrelated penalties such as an enemy's DV or MDV.

### Invincible Admiral Method
**Cost:** 12m, 1wp; **Mins:** Sail 4, Essence 2; **Type:** Reflexive (Step 1 or 2)
**Keywords:** Combo-OK, Social, War
**Duration:** One scene
**Prerequisite Charms:** Salty Dog Method

The heroes of the dawn are masters of the sea. Invincible Admiral Method resembles Salty Dog Method but extends its benefits to others. This Charm assists in naval and shipboard operations. The Solar must be on board a seagoing vessel. This Charm removes one point of external




penalties from appropriate combat, social, dramatic and military actions for all units within (Essence x 10) miles that are actively following the character's lead—including solo units. For example, this Charm benefits a Solar's crew during a boarding operation or the Solar's navy during a large-scale fleet battle.

### Ship-Claiming Stance

**Cost:** 5m, 1wp; **Mins:** Sail 4, Essence 3; **Type:** Simple (Speed 6 in long ticks)
**Keywords:** Combo-OK, Obvious
**Duration:** Instant
**Prerequisite Charms:** Any Sail Excellency

The Essence of a ship knows its master. This Charm claims a ship. The target ship must not be owned (see p. 238) by another Essence channeler. This Charm causes the Exalt to own the ship instantly. Other characters subtract one success as an external penalty from all actions while on board until the Exalt formally welcomes them to the ship and unless he later renounces them. This is enforced by the little god of the ship, so the Exalt must welcome and renounce others in the language of the Old Realm and in earshot of the ship itself.

### Hull-Preserving Technique

**Cost:** 8m, 1hl; **Mins:** Sail 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Reflexive (Step 2)
**Keywords:** Combo-OK, Obvious, Touch
**Duration:** Instant
**Prerequisite Charms:** Ship-Claiming Stance

The character protects her ship. She invokes this Charm in response to an attack upon the ship—whether by a ramming enemy, a reef's cutting edge or the tentacles of an underwater beast. She must be on the ship at the time. This Charm perfectly negates the attack, guaranteeing a post-soak damage of 0.

### Shipwreck-Surviving Stamina

**Cost:** 4m; **Mins:** Sail 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Reflexive (Step 10)
**Keywords:** Combo-OK, Obvious, Stackable, Touch
**Duration:** Indefinite
**Prerequisite Charms:** Hull-Preserving Technique

The character invokes this Charm in response to an attack that would shatter or sink her vessel. This Charm holds the ship together as long as the character remains on board and keeps the Essence committed. If the ship takes even one level of damage, it will fall apart, although the character may use this Charm again (maintaining multiple commitments) or other Charms to defend it.

### Perfect Reckoning Technique

**Cost:** 4m; **Mins:** Sail 3, Essence 1; **Type:** Simple (Dramatic Action)
**Keywords:** Combo-OK
**Duration:** Instant
**Prerequisite Charms:** Any Sail Excellency

The Lawgivers find their way through the most terrible seas. This Charm is a dramatic action to guide the ship toward its destination. The Solar must be on board and authorized to navigate. The ship travels on course at its maximum speed until something—sleep, combat or the need to focus on other matters—distracts the character and causes her to take another action. The Solar's player automatically succeeds at any valid Sail roll made for the character to find her way around known hazards to a given destination—though she must have enough information to make this a valid roll.

### Storm-Weathering Essence Infusion

**Cost:** 6m, 1wp; **Mins:** Sail 4, Essence 2; **Type:** Reflexive (Step 1)
**Keywords:** Combo-OK
**Duration:** One scene

**Prerequisite Charms:** Any Sail Excellency

Solar heroes can sail into the teeth of a storm. This Charm makes sure that a ship and crew survives a storm, maze of reefs, whirlpool or other hazard. The Solar must be on board and authorized to direct the crew. The Solar and the ship's crew receive two bonus successes on every action that directly serves the survival of the ship—whether repelling a unit of aquatic Fair Folk, patching the ship's side before it sinks or taking a simplified dramatic action to bypass a less interesting hazard.

### Sea Ambush Technique

**Cost:** 10m, 1wp; **Mins:** Sail 4, Essence 2; **Type:** Supplemental
**Keywords:** Combo-OK, War
**Duration:** Instant
**Prerequisite Charms:** Any Sail Excellency

The navies of the Lawgivers appear from nowhere even on the clearest day. This Charm allows the character to double successes on a Stealth action taken by a naval unit he commands, before external penalties are applied. Naval units influenced by this Charm can conceal themselves at +4 difficulty even if there are no obstacles to hide behind.

#### Charm Concept: Ownership

Charms occasionally refer to objects that the character "owns." This is not a legal but a physical statement—the Essence of an object knows its owner. The Exalt owns the object if its spirit is loyal to him (see p. 175) and is not loyal to any of his enemies.

One wins an object's loyalty in the same way one wins a person or animal's loyalty—with suitable role-playing, Ability rolls or Charms. Most objects are, like stray dogs, easily won. The character need only take possession of the object and treat it with a bit of care to establish ownership. If the object has established its loyalties to another person, or if possession is otherwise under dispute, then persuasion is necessary. Characters without applicable Charms can "communicate" with objects by treating them well, using them during important or emotional events and demonstrating the appropriate mastery—as by performing sword katas to win the loyalty of a daiklave. Typical objects have Willpower 3, Mental DV 3 and Conviction 2.

#### Strategy

Usually you don't need to worry about these rules—if an object is yours, it's yours. Even if you need to invest some narrative time to win an object's heart, it's rare that the details matter. If there's a specific rules reason that you need to own an object quickly, consider using persuasion Charms—a Servitude or Illusion effect can win it over fast.

## Socialize

### Wise-Eyed Courtier Method

**Cost:** 3m, 1wp; **Mins:** Socialize 3, Essence 2; **Type:** Simple (6 long ticks)
**Keywords:** Combo-OK, Illusion
**Duration:** Instant
**Prerequisite Charms:** None

The Solar reshapes the beliefs of a society. This Charm is a Socialize-based social attack to make a social group with Magnitude 1+ (such as a court, kingdom or secret society) believe something. The character must have spent several hours within the last year encouraging the desired belief within this group before using this Charm, and this Charm must be invoked in the presence of at least one member of that group. The Exalt's player rolls ([Charisma or Manipulation] + Socialize). Subtract an external penalty equal to the group leader's MDV plus half of the group's Magnitude from the rolled successes. If the character succeeds, the social group accepts the belief.

This Charm exerts unnatural mental influence. The targeted group—and any social groups of Magnitude 1+ that splinter off from the target—must spend six Loyalty to break free of the influence forever or one Loyalty to break free for a single scene.

This Charm has no effect on individuals—only on groups. The character can redefine a church's dogma or change the prevailing beliefs of a nation, but any given individual reacts of his own accord. The primary function of Wise-Eyed Courtier Method outside of narrative time is to limit the actions that social groups can take.

### Wild Revelry Approach

**Cost:** 3m, 1wp; **Mins:** Socialize 3, Essence 2; **Type:** Simple (6 long ticks)
**Keywords:** Combo-OK, Emotion
**Duration:** Instant
**Prerequisite Charms:** None

The Solar encourages a society to release its tensions in a mad torrent of emotion. This Charm is a Socialize-based social attack to make a group feel a strong emotion—to lose itself in hatred, grief, lust or the joy of festival. It functions exactly as Wise-Eyed Courtier Method, save that its unnatural mental influence imposes an Emotion effect rather than a belief.

### Taboo Inflicting Diatribe

**Cost:** 3m, 1wp; **Mins:** Socialize 3, Essence 2; **Type:** Simple (6 long ticks)
**Keywords:** Combo-OK, Compulsion
**Duration:** Instant
**Prerequisite Charms:** None

The Solar furiously condemns or supports some behavior, encouraging an entire society to accept or reject it. This Charm is a Socialize-based social attack to compel a social group with Magnitude 1+. The character must have spent several hours within the last month encouraging the desired attitude within this group before using this Charm, and this Charm must be invoked in the presence of at least one member of that group. The Exalt's player rolls ([Charisma or Manipulation] + Socialize). Subtract an external penalty equal to the leader's MDV plus

half of the group's Magnitude from the rolled successes. If the character succeeds, the social group adopts a taboo or fad of the character's choice. The society instantly integrates the taboo or fad into its Policy. The taboo or fad remains part of the group's Policy until the group's leader spends a total of 10 Loyalty, at most one per week, to remove it. It is also a part of the Policy of any social groups of Magnitude 1+ that splinter off from the target group, and the leader of those groups must spend a total of 10 Loyalty, at most one per week, to remove it.

This Charm has no effect on individuals, save that breaking the new rules of their society can make them outcasts. Its primary function outside of narrative time is to limit the actions that social groups can take.

### Venomous Whispers Technique

**Cost:** 10m, 1wp; **Mins:** Socialize 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Simple (6 long ticks)
**Keywords:** Combo-OK, Compulsion, Touch
**Duration:** Instant
**Prerequisite Charms:** Taboo Inflicting Diatribe

The Solar convinces society at large to reject a given individual or group. The Solar must touch an individual target or interact with the targeted group. This Charm is an unnatural Socialize-based social attack to undermine the target's position. The Exalt's player rolls ([Charisma or Manipulation] + Socialize). Subtract an external penalty equal to the target's MDV plus half of the target's Magnitude from the rolled successes.

If the character succeeds, the target puts his or its worst foot forward in every social situation. For the rest of the day, in every scene, the individual target or representatives of the group must spend one Willpower to act naturally. Otherwise, he or they subtract the character's Essence in dice as an internal penalty from all social dice pools.

### Understanding the Court

**Cost:** 20m, 1wp; **Mins:** Socialize 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Simple (Dramatic Action)
**Keywords:** Combo-OK
**Duration:** Instant
**Prerequisite Charms:** Any Socialize Excellency

The Lawgivers understand how people interact. This Charm is an attempt to survey the power relationships in a given social environment. The character builds an accurate profile of the people and relationships involved, which the Storyteller can detail as desired. The Exalt's player rolls ([Perception or Intelligence] + Socialize), adding a dice bonus equal to the Exalt's Essence. The difficulty of this roll is 1. If a major social group in the court is deliberately attempting to send out misleading cues, subtract an external penalty equal to the largest ([Manipulation + Socialize + Magnitude] ÷ 2) for such a group from the successes rolled. Unusual circumstances, such as a major player not being present at all during the character's survey, can also impose an external penalty. If the character succeeds, then each success reduces external penalties on dramatic and social actions to manipulate social groups within that environment. This Charm cannot reduce external penalties by an amount greater than the Solar's Essence.

The Exalt can have only one profile of a given social environment. The crispness of the profile—that quality that reduces external penalties—lasts only as long as the committed Essence. The Lawgiver's player cannot roll again to build a new profile unless the story ends or a new piece of evidence allows a dramatic reconceptualization of the court's structure.

### Mastery of Small Manners

**Cost:** 1m; **Mins:** Socialize 2, Essence 1; **Type:** Reflexive (Step 1 for attacker, Step 2 for defender)

**Keywords:** Combo-OK, Social
**Duration:** Until next action
**Prerequisite Charms:** None

The Solar attunes herself to the patterns of human interaction. This Charm makes her responses to social situations so natural and appropriate that in social combat she treats all enemy groups as one point of Magnitude smaller than they are (to a minimum of 0.) It also increases her effective Appearance by one dot. When in doubt, other characters will be more apt to do small favors and provide hospitality than not. Finally, this Charm ensures that the character understands the basic motivations of everyone present in the scene, as if her player had rolled three successes on a mundane Investigation roll to estimate each person's motives.

### Gathering the Congregation

**Cost:** 10m, 1wp; **Mins:** Socialize 3, Essence 3; **Type:** Simple (Speed 5 in long ticks)
**Keywords:** Combo-OK, Obvious, Social
**Duration:** One week
**Prerequisite Charms:** None

The glory of the Lawgivers inspires mortals to awe. The Exalt attempts to persuade everyone who can hear him to organize in his service, his player rolling (Charisma + [Performance or Socialize]). This Charm organizes all characters whom the Exalt successfully persuades into a social group under the Exalt's direction. The group dissolves if the Exalt abandons it for more than a day.

## Supernatural Martial Arts

The combat forms known as the "supernatural martial arts" require intense study, discipline and training. They do not flow naturally out of the paramount spirit of the Solar Exalted, any more than ordinary martial arts come naturally to mortals flailing in bar brawls. To learn supernatural martial arts, one must understand the Essence flows of the world and harmonize oneself with them.

These Charms are not specific to any Exalt type. The Solar Exalted have incredible strength of spirit and anima, but they must still learn the proper forms, katas and spiritual insights of the martial arts through dedicated experimentation or diligent study. For the other Celestial Exalted, it is no different—and any Celestial Exalt or Immaculate Dragon-Blooded can learn these Charms. Some supernatural martial arts, called the "Terrestrial" Martial Arts, are even available to mortals and ordinary Dragon-Blooded.

Supernatural martial arts styles are complete. It is possible to create new styles but not to augment existing styles with new Charms.

### Snake Style

The Charm cascade beginning with Striking Cobra Technique comprises the Snake Style of Martial Arts. The "form weapons" for Snake Style are hook swords and the seven-section staff. Snake Style Charms treat attacks and blocks with these weapons as unarmed attacks and blocks. This includes the artifact versions of these weapons, such as serpent-sting staves.

Snake Style is a Celestial Martial Arts style. Solar, Lunar, Abyssal and Sidereal Exalts, as well as Dragon-Blooded initiated into the fighting styles of the Immaculate Order, can learn it. It is a style traditionally practiced by the Solar Exalted, so only Solar Exalted can learn this style without a teacher.

### Striking Cobra Technique

**Cost:** 3m; **Mins:** Martial Arts 2, Essence 1; **Type:** Supplemental
**Keywords:** Combo-OK
**Duration:** Instant
**Prerequisite Charms:** None

For its first bite, the snake is most feared. This Charm supplements a Join Battle action, adding a number of automatic successes to the character's Join Battle roll equal to his Martial Arts score.

### Serpentine Evasion

**Cost:** 3m; **Mins:** Martial Arts 3, Essence 1; **Type:** Reflexive (Step 2)
**Keywords:** Combo-OK
**Duration:** Instant
**Prerequisite Charms:** Striking Cobra Technique

The serpent bends and weaves with utmost grace. This Charm gives the character +2 Dodge or Parry DV against a single attack.

### Snake Form

**Cost:** 5m; **Mins:** Martial Arts 4, Essence 2; **Type:** Simple (Speed 3, DV -1)
**Keywords:** Form-type, Obvious
**Duration:** One scene
**Prerequisite Charms:** Serpentine Evasion

The Exalt adopts the attitude and stance of a wary snake—head back, ready to advance or retreat. The Essence of the snake hardens his skin. His sinuous movements slow and distract his enemies.

For the rest of the scene, this Charm adds the character's Martial Arts score to his bashing soak. If an enemy attacks him, and the enemy can see the character's hypnotic motions, this Charm subtracts the Exalt's Essence in dice from the attacker's attack pool.

Characters cannot use more than one Martial Arts Form-type Charm at a time. The character must end Snake Form to assume another Martial Arts form.

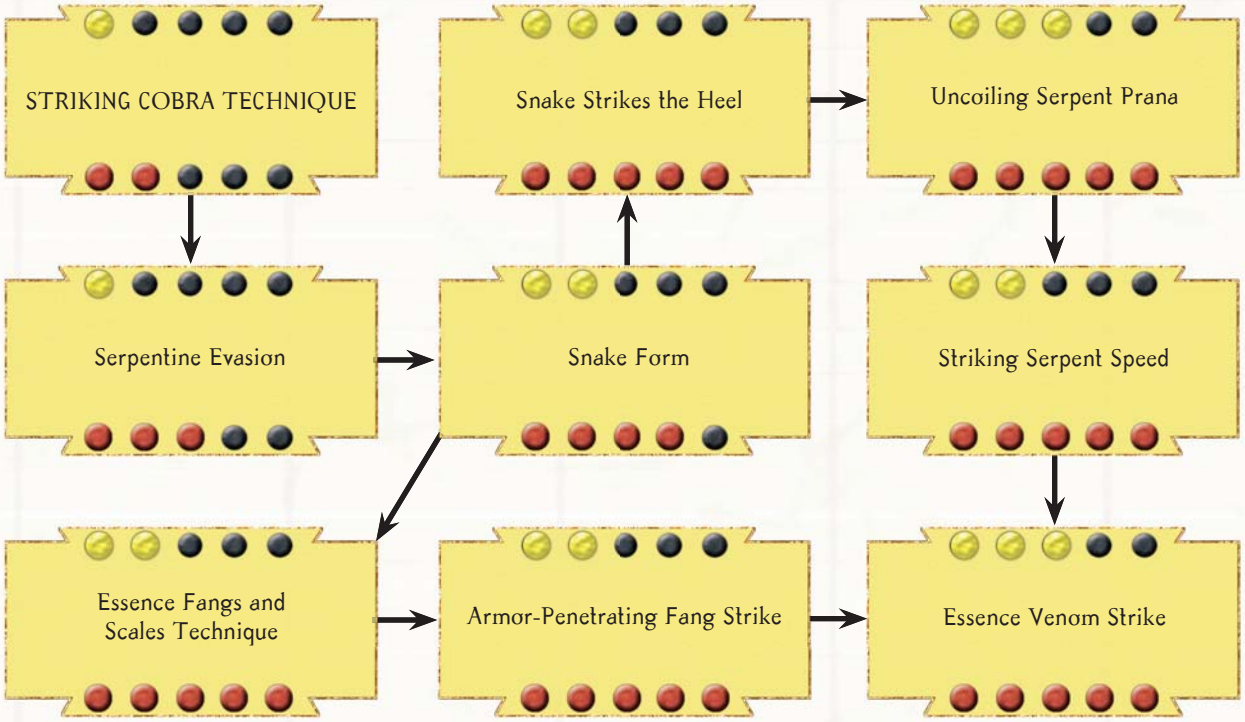
### Essence Fangs and Scales Technique

**Cost:** 6m; **Mins:** Martial Arts 5, Essence 2; **Type:** Simple (Speed 5)
**Keywords:** None
**Duration:** One scene
**Prerequisite Charms:** Snake Form

The snake's fangs bite deep. The snake's skin is strong and supple. This Charm gives the Exalt similar advantages. It makes her unarmed Martial Arts attacks inflict lethal damage, and this damage is piercing (see p. 373)—it ignores half of the target's soak from armor. In addition, this Charm allows the Exalt to soak lethal damage with her bashing soak.

### Armor-Penetrating Fang Strike

**Cost:** 4m, 1wp; **Mins:** Martial Arts 5, Essence 2; **Type:** Supplemental
**Keywords:** Combo-OK, Obvious
**Duration:** Instant
**Prerequisite Charms:** Essence Fangs and Scales Technique




The nix-snakes of the East can bite through tempered steel. The students of Snake Style learn similar ferocity. This Charm enhances an unarmed Martial Arts attack. It allows the attack to ignore the target's soak from armor. The target can only soak with Stamina and Charms such as Iron Skin Concentration.

### Snake Strikes the Heel

**Cost:** 4m; **Mins:** Martial Arts 5, Essence 2; **Type:** Reflexive (Step 9)
**Keywords:** Combo-OK, Counterattack
**Duration:** Instant
**Prerequisite Charms:** Snake Form

The snake defends itself by attacking. The Exalt invokes this Charm when hit by an attack but before damage is applied. This Charm gives the Exalt an unarmed Martial Arts counterattack. The dice pool for this counterattack equals the Exalt's Martial Arts score plus the number of extra successes rolled on the opponent's attack. (The original attacker's damage is still inflicted as normal.) Note the rules for counterattacks on pages 150 and 183.

### Uncoiling Serpent Prana

**Cost:** 3m; **Mins:** Martial Arts 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Supplemental
**Keywords:** Combo-OK, Obvious
**Duration:** Instant
**Prerequisite Charms:** Snake Strikes the Heel

The martial artist's anima flashes forward like a striking snake. Some martial artists instead strike with the shadow of their hand. In either case, this Charm enhances an unarmed Martial Arts attack, letting the Exalt target an opponent up to (Essence x 2) yards away. The character's anima or shadow actually strikes the target, so an unobstructed path to the target must exist.

### Striking Serpent Speed

**Cost:** 6m; **Mins:** Martial Arts 5, Essence 2; **Type:** Extra Action
**Keywords:** Combo-OK
**Duration:** Instant
**Prerequisite Charms:** Uncoiling Serpent Prana

Practitioners of Snake Style martial arts must internalize the raw speed and reflexes of a coiled snake. The player rolls (the Exalt's Essence x 2). This Charm is a magical flurry containing one action per success. These actions do not need to be attacks, but the character cannot take actions that would require more than seven ticks performed on their own.

### Essence Venom Strike

**Cost:** 7m, 1wp; **Mins:** Martial Arts 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Simple (Speed 4, DV -1)
**Keywords:** Combo-OK, Obvious
**Duration:** Instant
**Prerequisite Charms:** Armor-Penetrating Fang Strike, Striking Serpent Speed

The master of Snake Style is as quick as lightning and as deadly as a dozen serpents. The Exalt makes an unarmed Martial Arts attack. This Charm makes the attack's damage aggravated. It also adds the character's permanent Essence score to the damage of the attack.

## Solar Hero Style

The Charm tree beginning with Fists of Iron Technique comprises the "natural" Solar style of unarmed fighting. The form weapons for this style are the cestus, fighting gauntlet, khatar, tiger claws, pankrator's cestus and improvised weapons. Solar Hero Style Charms treat attacks and blocks with these weapons as unarmed attacks and blocks. This includes the artifact versions of these weapons. A weapon is an "improvised" weapon if it has a maximum Accuracy of -3 and a maximum Rate of 2, such as a barstool, keg of brandy, omen hound or unattuned daiklave.

For the other Exalted, this Charm tree is a Celestial Martial Arts style that emulates and imitates the power of the heroes of the dawn. Celestial Exalted and Immaculate-trained Dragon-Blooded can learn these Charms, but they cannot develop or learn additional Charms for this tree.

For the Solar Exalted, these Charms are ordinary combat Charms—they bring the grace, speed and power of the Sun's Chosen to bear. Solars can invent new Charms for this tree—such as Thunderclap Rush Attack and Knockout Blow, on page 190. These new Charms are treated as Solar Charms, not supernatural martial arts: Only Solar Exalted (and Moonshadow Caste Abyssal Exalted) are capable of learning them.

### Fists of Iron Technique

**Cost:** 1m; **Mins:** Martial Arts 2, Essence 1; **Type:** Supplemental
**Keywords:** Combo-OK
**Duration:** Instant
**Prerequisite Charms:** None

The Solar infuses her hands with the strength of her Essence and strikes like the Unconquered Sun. This Charm enhances an unarmed Martial Arts attack, improving its Accuracy by one and its Damage by two and making its damage lethal. The Solar can parry lethal hand-to-hand attacks without a stunt until his next action.

### Sledgehammer Fist Punch

**Cost:** 3m; **Mins:** Martial Arts 3, Essence 2; **Type:** Supplemental
**Keywords:** Combo-OK, Obvious
**Duration:** Instant
**Prerequisite Charms:** Fists of Iron Technique

This Charm is also called the "Pillar-Breaking Blow." The Lawgiver's anima flares, and he strikes like the judgment of Heaven. This Charm supplements an unarmed Martial Arts attack against an inanimate object, doubling the raw (pre-soak) damage of the attack.

### Dragon Coil Technique

**Cost:** 3m; **Mins:** Martial Arts 3, Essence 2; **Type:** Reflexive (Step 1)
**Keywords:** Combo-OK
**Duration:** Until next action
**Prerequisite Charms:** Fists of Iron Technique

The clinch of the Lawgivers does not fail. The Solar's grip is inexorable, and she may, if she chooses, squeeze the life from the strongest opponent. This Charm makes clinch crush damage lethal. This Charm also adds the Solar's Essence in dice to the dice pools to inflict, maintain and control a clinch. It also adds the character's Essence to the damage of clinch crush attacks.

This Charm cannot be placed in a Combo with extra-action Charms.

### Solar Hero Form

**Cost:** 6m; **Mins:** Martial Arts 4, Essence 2; **Type:** Simple
**Keywords:** Form-type, Obvious
**Duration:** One scene
**Prerequisite Charms:** Sledgehammer Fist Punch, Dragon Coil Technique

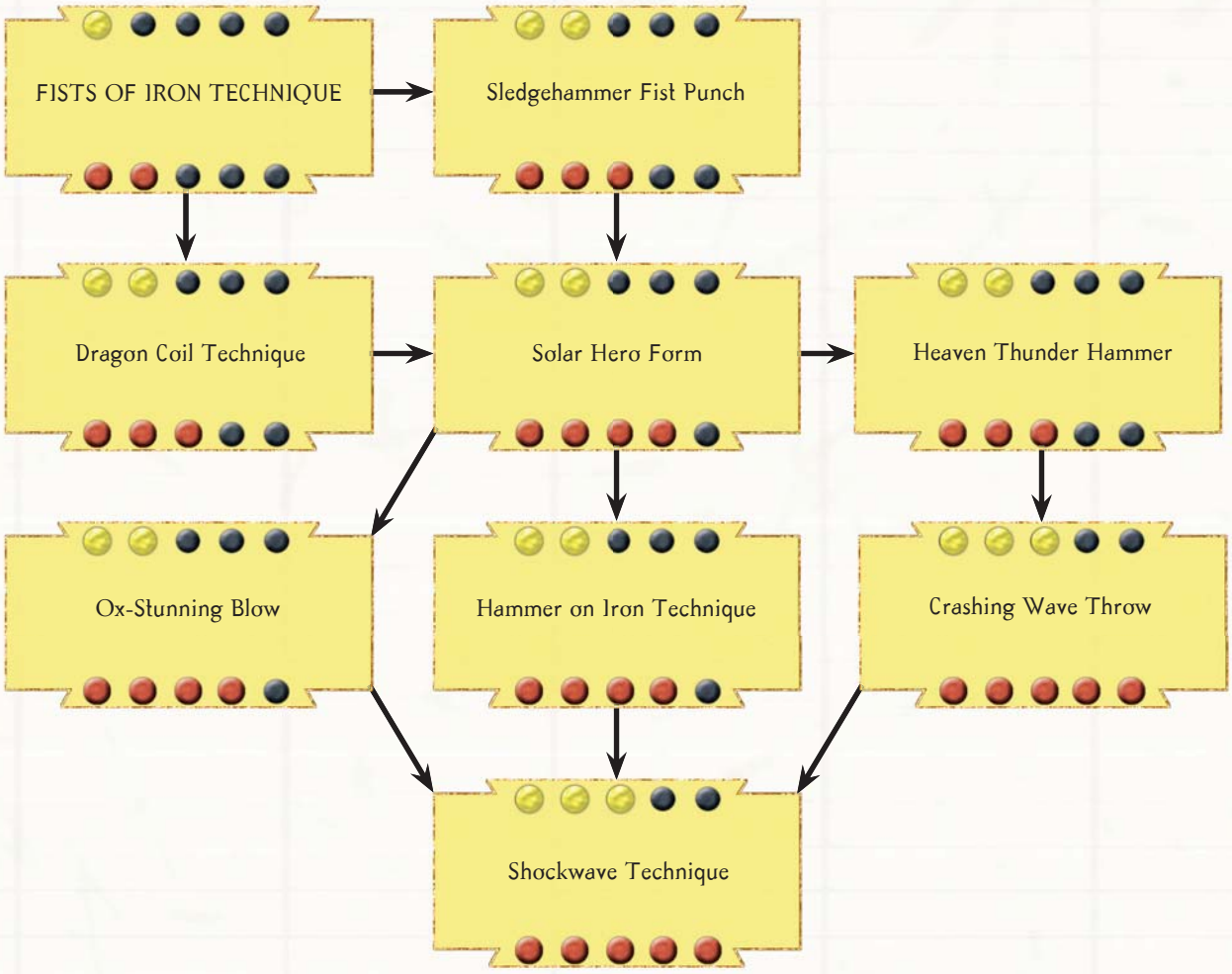
The Solar suffuses his body with the Essence of the Sun. He becomes a paragon of strength and skill, radiant with the power of a legendary hero returned. There is nothing formal to this fighting style, but there is an unstoppable and unchallengeable grace to it. This is an honest battle art, for champions, gladiators and heroes. It was forged in the dawning of the world so that the Lawgivers could face the greatest monsters with nothing save their hands and skill and be undaunted by them.

This Charm allows the Exalt to count the successes of unarmed Martial Arts attacks twice for the purposes of determining damage. She must spend one mote reflexively in Step 7 of attack resolution each time she takes advantage of this effect. This Charm also allows the character to make an unarmed Martial Arts block against ranged and lethal attacks without a stunt.

### Heaven Thunder Hammer

**Cost:** 3m; **Mins:** Martial Arts 3, Essence 2; **Type:** Supplemental
**Keywords:** Combo-OK
**Duration:** Instant
**Prerequisite Charms:** Solar Hero Form

The fury of the Lawgivers scatters their enemies like leaves before the storm. This Charm supplements an unarmed Martial Arts attack. It ensures that the Solar's attack throws his enemy backward one yard for each point of pre-soak damage. Targets that strike hard objects take one die of damage for each yard




they would otherwise have traveled. This damage is typically bashing but it can be lethal if the target strikes a sufficiently dangerous object.

### Crashing Wave Throw

**Cost:** 3m; **Mins:** Martial Arts 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Reflexive
**Keywords:** Combo-OK
**Duration:** Instant
**Prerequisite Charms:** Heaven Thunder Hammer

The effective application of strength casts aside small nuisances. The Solar can use this Charm when he ends a clinch by throwing his opponent. This Charm increases the distance he can throw his opponent to (Martial Arts x 5) yards upward or (Martial Arts x 10) horizontal yards. Characters thrown over cliffs or high into the air take falling damage normally. Targets that strike hard objects take damage as with Heaven Thunder Hammer.

### Ox-Stunning Blow

**Cost:** 1m per die; **Mins:** Martial Arts 4, Essence 2; **Type:** Simple
**Keywords:** Combo-OK, Crippling
**Duration:** Instant
**Prerequisite Charms:** Solar Hero Form

The Essence-driven fists of the Solar Exalted can stun even legends, giants, armored cataphractoi and monsters. The Lawgiver spends up to twice his Strength in motes and makes an unarmed Martial Arts attack. If he hits, this Charm replaces his normal damage with stunning damage. He inflicts one die of stunning damage for every mote spent on this Charm. Extra successes add to his damage as usual. Stunning damage ignores natural and armor soak, but it can be soaked with Charms. Each success on the damage roll imposes a -1 penalty to the target's dice pools and DV for the next three actions. This is a Crippling effect (see p. 152).

### Hammer on Iron Technique

**Cost:** 3m, 1wp; **Mins:** Martial Arts 4, Essence 2; **Type:** Extra Action
**Keywords:** Combo-OK
**Duration:** Instant
**Prerequisite Charms:** Solar Hero Form

The Lawgivers' arts of battle bring an unrelenting punishment to their enemies. This Charm is a magical flurry of many unarmed Martial Arts-based attacks. The Exalt makes a total number of attacks equal to (her Essence + 1). This Charm lets the Solar make these attacks regardless of her weapon's Rate,

without multiple action penalties and with a DV penalty equal to the highest penalty for any one attack. She must make all of her attacks against the same target.

### Shockwave Technique

**Cost:** 3m; **Mins:** Martial Arts 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Supplemental
**Keywords:** Counterattack, Knockback, Obvious
**Duration:** Instant
**Prerequisite Charms:** Crashing Wave Throw, Ox-Stunning Blow, Hammer on Iron Technique

The Solar burns with Essence. Her strength and agility rise to inhuman levels. This Charm supplements a single attack. It makes the target's Parry DV inapplicable. If the Solar hits, this Charm allows her to make one further unarmed Martial Arts attack by hurling the first opponent into another. This attack has a range of (Martial Arts x 5) yards. It is also unblockable. The first opponent is treated as a weapon with -3 Accuracy and +4B damage. If the attack misses or the Solar targets empty space, the first opponent travels the full (Martial Arts x 5) yards, with effects as noted in Heaven Thunder Hammer.

Hurling one opponent into another operates with the same timing as a counterattack. This Charm cannot enhance a counterattack, and it prevents the target from responding with Charms with the Counterattack keyword such as Solar Counterattack or Leaping Dodge Method. The second attack is resolved in Step 9 of the original attack and imposes a cumulative counterattack-based penalty of -1 on the Solar's DV.

## Combos

Normally, an Exalt can use only a single Charm per action. However, with long practice and focus, the Exalted can combine Charms together, becoming able to use two or more Charms in the same action. For example, an Exalt who has mastered the Combo of Peony Blossom Attack and Fire and Stones Strike can make a magical flurry of several attacks *and* inflict extra damage with all of them. The number and power of the Combos an Exalt has mastered are a better measure of her power than the raw number of Charms she knows.

### Developing Combos

Characters develop Combos through long exercise of their powers, devoting hours of effort toward integrating their Abilities and understanding their Charms and how they interact. Many characters will have done this prior to the beginning of play, at least to a limited degree. Starting play with a Combo costs a number of bonus points equal to the number of Charms in the Combo.

During play, a character can develop Combos through arduous practice. The experience cost of Combos developed during play is equal to the sum of the minimum Ability values of the Charms. However, Storytellers don't have to let a character learn a Combo just because the player has enough experience points saved up. Combos are hard—they don't just develop overnight or when you really need them. Characters often must undergo arduous training or seek out special conditions to learn their new secret moves. Make learning new maneuvers part of the game, not just a matter of writing something new down on a character sheet. As a general rule, training for a Combo takes a number of days equal to three times the sum of the minimum Abilities of the Charms in the Combo.

### Should I Learn Martial Arts?

The Solar Exalted are the heroes of the dawn. They are matchless. Their natural grace is the model that martial arts are built to emulate. They can learn the Snake Style, but they are already deadlier than the serpent. They can learn Tiger Style, but they are already fiercer than tigers.

Functionally the supernatural martial arts are often weaker than ordinary Solar Charms. Solar martial artists with a single style are constraining their natural brilliance within combat forms designed for lesser creatures.

The martial arts do have two advantages. First, the supernatural martial arts break the normal limits on Solar Charms. These Charms are like Sorcery—they obey their own design rules, rather than flowing from the nature of the Solar anima. These Charms always have a martial focus, but they can intrude to a limited extent on the turf of the other Abilities and Exalt types.

Second, the supernatural martial arts provide powerful Combos. Only in the realm of martial arts can one easily supplement ranged attacks from the firewand-using Righteous Devil Style with the deceptive ninjitsu of Ebon Shadow Style or the sinuous hand-to-hand techniques of Snake Style.

Your character does not have to study supernatural martial arts Charms to be a martial artist. If he carries himself with grace and discipline, reflects deeply on the world and defeats legions of enemies with his hands or sword and his fighting spirit, then he's not just a martial artist—he's a good one. Only if you want him to hunt down or develop occult fighting techniques in order to build unstoppable signature moves should he study the supernatural martial arts.

This book contains one supernatural martial arts style—Snake Style. It also contains a natural Solar unarmed combat style. For the Solar Exalted, the Charms in this style are simply natural unarmed fighting techniques. For other Exalt types, the Solar Style is a powerful hero-emulating martial art.

### General Guidelines

Combos may include only those Charms with the Combo-Basic or Combo-OK keywords. Charms with the Combo-Basic keyword can share a Combo with only reflexive Charms. A Combo can include more than two Charms but it can never include the same Charm more than once. Storytellers are always free to veto the combination of certain Charms, and the Storyteller's decision is final when it comes to defining how a given Combo works.

Once a Combo is bought, it is set. While there is no limit to the number of Combos a character can develop, a character cannot add Charms to a Combo after she develops it. A character who wishes to add another Charm to a Combo must purchase the Combo again, with the additional Charm in it.

The character then knows both versions of the Combo. The use of the individual Charms that compose the Combo is in no way restricted by them being part of a Combo—characters may use the individual Charms normally outside of the Combo.

When a character uses a Combo in battle or in war, there is an unmistakably brilliant display of Essence. Any character present will know that the Exalt is using a Combo the moment she pays the temporary Willpower to activate it. However, the witness will not know the exact nature of the Combo until he has seen it used once. The display of a Combo's activation is very distinctive, and once a character has seen it activated, he will be able to recognize it if he sees it again.

Characters can use Combos in a social conflict or to enhance dramatic actions. This use does not produce a Combo display unless one of the Charms in the Combo is Obvious.

### Timing

Combos allow a character to use two, three or more Charms in a given action. Don't worry if this seems like it could get confusing. This section presents a point-by-point description of how the different types of Charms work together in a Combo. There are a lot of rules, but it's not as complex as it looks. Beneath the precise wording and occasional repetition, the core concepts are simple ones.

*Simple*—a Combo can have only one simple Charm in it.

If there are supplemental Charms in the Combo, the character *must* use them to supplement the simple Charm.

If there is an extra-action Charm in the Combo, the character *must* use the simple Charm as every action in the magical flurry. The character *must* use the simple Charm a number of times equal to the minimum number of actions in the flurry. The simple Charm *must* be from the same Ability as the extra-action Charm unless one of the Charms explicitly permits the combination, and it *must* be an appropriate action for every action the magical flurry contains.

*Supplemental*—There is no limit to the number of supplemental Charms that can be part of a Combo.

If there is a simple Charm in the Combo, the supplemental Charm *must* be used to benefit it. This means the supplemental Charm *must* be from the same Ability as the simple Charm unless one of the Charms explicitly permits the combination, and it *must* be able to benefit the kind of action the simple Charm is.

If there are no simple Charms in the Combo, the supplemental Charm *must* benefit all of the character's non-reflexive actions. Unless the Charm's description indicates otherwise, supplemental Charms can only benefit uses of the Ability on which they are based.

The supplemental Charm *may* benefit the character's reflexive actions, including actions given by reflexive and permanent Charms, if it can validly apply to them. Unless the Charm's description indicates otherwise, supplemental Charms can only benefit uses of the Ability on which they are based.

*Reflexive*—There is no limit to the number of reflexive Charms that can be part of a Combo.

If there is a simple Charm in the Combo that *can* validly benefit from the reflexive Charm, the character *may* use the reflexive Charm to supplement it.

If there is an extra-action Charm in the Combo and one or more actions in the flurry *can* validly benefit from the reflexive Charm, the character *may* use the reflexive Charm to supplement it.

If there is neither an extra-action nor a simple Charm in the Combo and the reflexive Charm *can* validly benefit one or more of the character's dice actions, the character *may* use the reflexive Charm to supplement it.

If there is a supplemental Charm in the Combo and the reflexive Charm gives a reflexive action and the supplemental Charm can validly apply to that action, then the supplemental Charm *may* benefit that action.

The reflexive Charm can be used outside the character's dice actions, as usual. However, the player must state that the Exalt is using a Combo, and which Combo, and must pay the price for the Combo (see below), as soon as the player uses the first Charm for that Combo in a given action—he cannot use a reflexive Charm and then later in the action declare that he actually wishes to use a Combo containing that Charm.

*Extra Action*—Only one Charm of the extra-action type may be used in a given Combo.

If there is an extra-action Charm in the Combo, then the character *must* activate it.

If there is a simple Charm in the Combo, the character *must* use the simple Charm as every action in the magical flurry. The character *must* use the simple Charm a number of times equal to the minimum number of actions in the flurry. The extra action Charm *must* be from the same Ability as the simple Charm unless one of the Charms explicitly permits the combination, and the simple Charm *must* be an appropriate action for every action the magical flurry contains.

If there are supplemental Charms in the Combo, they *must* all benefit all of the actions in the flurry. This means that they *must* benefit the same kinds of actions that the flurry includes.

If there are reflexive Charms in the Combo, they *may* be used to benefit any of the actions in the magical flurry.

*Permanent*—Permanent Charms may not belong to Combos. Characters *may* use the ongoing benefits of permanent Charms during a Combo.

## Paying the Price

Developing a Combo enables the Exalt to use multiple different Charms in the same action, but this is not without cost. Channeling so much Essence is an act requiring tremendous willpower. The character must pay the normal cost of the Charms involved, and if she cannot afford to pay the cost of all the non-reflexive Charms in the Combo, then it does not work. Some Combos will have a variable cost. In this case, the character must be able to pay at least the minimum possible cost to activate the Combo.

**The character must also spend one point of temporary Willpower to activate the Combo**, above and beyond the cost to activate the Charms that make up the Combo. A character can activate a Combo only once per action and cannot use a Combo during an action in which she has already used Charms of any other sort.

## Examples

In order to help illustrate how the Combo rules work, three examples have been included. One is of a simple Combo, one is of a complex Combo involving multiple actions, and one is

of a social Combo. Players and Storytellers should use these as guidelines for building their own Combos.

One of the things to note is the amount of attention paid to how the Combo looks when it is in use. While a Combo is a complex *mechanical* effect, don't just focus on that aspect of it. It's also a character's super attack move, and with rare exceptions, those sorts of things involve complex and showy special effects. Keep in mind that a combat Combo of any significant size is going to burn enough Essence to make the character's anima banner flare up. A cool description is entirely merited.

## A Simple Combo

Janet wants Ocean Pearl to take on dangerous opponents and armies of extras when necessary. Janet makes a Combo containing the First Melee Excellency and Dipping Swallow Defense. Once Ocean Pearl activates this Combo, she can unleash powerful blows without sacrificing her defense.

To use this Combo, Janet marks off a point of Willpower and announces that she is using the Combo. Once she does so, until her next action, she can use the First Melee Excellency to add dice to her Melee attacks and Parry DV. In addition, because she has a Combo, she can use Dipping Swallow Defense to keep her Parry DV high.

Note that even though the Charms are reflexive, if Janet wishes to use them both during an action, she must declare she's activating the Combo and spend the temporary Willpower to do so the first time she uses one of the Charms. If she used one without activating the Combo, then she wouldn't be able to use the other during the action because a character can't use a Combo during an action when she's already used a Charm.

This Combo would cost two bonus points during character generation because there are two Charms in it. During play, it would cost three experience points because the First Melee Excellency has a minimum Melee of 1 and Dipping Swallow Defense has a minimum Melee of 2.

**Description:** When using this Combo, Ocean Pearl's anima flickers all around her like sunlight on water. Her every move is impossible perfection. Her sword burns with white Essence-fire that leaves contrails behind it, delivering the Unconquered Sun's judgment unto the unworthy.

## A Multiple-Action Combo

Kirby wants Wind to develop a powerful Martial Arts Combo after a stinging defeat at the hands of his Circle's Abyssal nemesis. Kirby builds a Combo of the Martial Arts Charms Fists of Iron Technique, Thunderclap Rush Attack and Hammer on Iron Technique. He adds the Dodge Charm Seven Shadow Evasion just in case the Abyssal survives long enough to strike back.

When Kirby wishes to use this Combo, he must mark off one point of Wind's temporary Willpower in order to activate the Combo. He must mark off one point of temporary Willpower and three motes of Wind's Essence to activate Hammer on Iron Technique and then two motes of Wind's Essence per attack—one to pay for Thunderclap Rush Attack and one to pay for Fists of Iron Technique. Wind has Essence 3, so he will make four attacks all told. In order to use this Combo, he must spend a grand total of two temporary Willpower and 11 motes of Wind's Essence.

When Wind uses this Combo, he makes a magical flurry of four Thunderclap Rush Attacks against a single target.

The Combo is Speed 3—he'll be ready to act again three ticks later. Because Thunderclap Rush Attack has a low DV penalty and Hammer on Iron Technique prevents the four attacks' penalties from accumulating, he has only a -1 DV penalty from attacking. He also gains +1 Accuracy and +2 Damage from Fists of Iron Technique, and his unarmed Parry DV is applicable against lethal attacks until his next action. If someone attacks him before his next action, he has the option to spend three motes and invoke Seven Shadow Evasion, perfectly dodging the attack.

This Combo would have cost four bonus points to develop in character creation because it contains four Charms. Since he is developing it during play, Kirby spends 13 of Wind's experience points instead. Fists of Iron Technique has a minimum Martial Arts of 2, Thunderclap Rush Attack has a minimum Martial Arts of 3, Hammer on Iron Technique has a minimum Martial Arts of 4, and Seven Shadow Evasion has a minimum Dodge of 4.

### An Improved Version

Kirby later realizes that—as nice as this Combo is—he does not have enough attack dice to hit his enemies reliably. He designs a new Combo, with essentially the same function, but including the First Martial Arts Excellency. This new Combo would have cost five freebie points in character creation, because it has five Charms in it. Since he's developing it in play, he spends 14 of Wind's experience points—the First Martial Arts Excellency has a minimum Martial Arts of 1. This makes Kirby wince, since he already spent 13 experience on a Combo that is now useless. He resolves to include at least one Excellency and at least one defense in every Combo from now on.

**Description:** When Wind uses either version of this Combo, he gathers snowy Essence about him in a frozen moment of stillness. Then, in the space between moments, he is upon his enemy, his fists leaving four shining indentations in his enemy's chest. They shimmer with white and golden light, sending painful waves of Essence through his target's form, before slowly fading away.

### A Social Combo

Melody is having occasional trouble using Rain's Memory-Reweaving Discipline to best effect, so she builds a Combo containing Memory-Reweaving Discipline, the Second Performance Excellency and the First Integrity Excellency.

When Melody wishes to use this Combo, she must mark off one point of Rain's temporary Willpower to activate the Combo. She must mark off another one point of temporary Willpower and 10 motes of Rain's Essence to invoke Memory-Reweaving Discipline. Since Memory-Reweaving Discipline is a social attack, and dice adders for attacks are declared in Step 1 of attack resolution, she must immediately declare if she's using the Second Performance Excellency to enhance its effects and spend two motes for each bonus success she wishes to buy. If someone uses a social attack on her during this period, she can defend herself with the First Integrity Excellency.

**Description:** There is no Combo display for this Charm, since none of the Charms involved are Obvious. Rain is simply very persuasive as she explains what her audience should believe.

## Combat Strategy

What follows is a primer for basic combat strategy integrating Charms in **Exalted**. Following the suggestions in this section can greatly increase a starting character's survivability, and the strategies offered allow for a number of different character concepts.

### Hitting the Enemy

In order to damage an opponent, your Exalt needs to hit him.

#### Knowing the Opposition

**Hazard X (0–1 DV).** Barn doors and stationary objects often have a base 0–1 DV. So do clumsy opponents and mortal antagonists with awkward weapons.

**Hazard • (2 DV).** Enemies such as beastmen, zombies and venal mortals fall readily to the might of the Solar Exalted. Four to six attack dice can regularly breach these enemies' full defense. These adversaries must leave their defense wide open to make even a single attack.

**Hazard •• (3 DV).** In the First Age, only the greatest of monsters dared to trouble the world. In the Lawgivers' absence, lesser horrors have moved in—creatures such as buck-ogres, giant spiders, erymanthoi and nemissaries now haunt the wilds and raid mortal farms. Mortals find these creatures fearsome, but six to eight dice regularly breaches such a monster's defense. If these enemies attack, they invite a devastating Solar response.

**Hazard ••• (4–6 DV).** Heroes, Fair Folk and the Exalted often manage this kind of defense—as do some of the faster monsters, elementals and demons. It takes at least eight attack dice to break this defense regularly, and 10 dice are preferable. Enemies at this level can make a cautious single attack and preserve some of their defense. Basic combat Charms can keep an Exalt's defense in this range even when making attacks.

**Hazard •••• (Essence-based defense).** Experienced Dragon-Blooded, Second Circle demons, powerful spirits and Celestial Exalted often muster a powerful Essence-based defense. It generally takes at least 12 attack dice or a special advantage (such as an unblockable attack against a heavily armored opponent) to pierce this defense with any reliability. Even then, attackers will miss frequently.

**Hazard ••••• (Impenetrable defense).** Facing a particularly terrible assault, many of the Exalted can muster an impenetrable defense—no matter how many dice you roll on your attack, your character won't hit. Don't waste your time with your deadliest attacks if you think your opponent can apply such a defense—make sure she's used her Charm for the action before you use an expensive attack.

#### Targeting Strategies

The traditional offensive strategy is the **accurate attack.** Characters with eight to 15 dice in their (Dexterity + Ability + specialties + Accuracy) pool can break most defenses of Hazard ••• or less. This strategy benefits from accurate weapons such as straight swords, staves and daiklaves. Orichalcum and moonsilver weapons are a good choice for warriors who desire accurate attacks. Charms that improve the attack pool, such as the Excellency Charms for Archery, Martial Arts, Melee and Thrown, break Hazard ••• defenses with ease and can often penetrate a Hazard •••• defense.

The ultimate extension of this strategy is the **perfect attack**, which always hits unless faced by an impenetrable defense. Accuracy Without Distance is one example of a perfect attack.

In fighting heavily armored opponents or enemies with an Essence-fueled defense, an **unblockable attack** is worthwhile. These attacks negate the Parry DV and most parry-related Charms. Opponents who rely on their Parry DV suffer a disproportionate loss of defense. Shockwave Technique is one example of an unblockable attack.

In fighting unarmed opponents or opponents with an Essence-fueled defense, it is also worthwhile to use an **undodgeable attack.** These attacks negate the Dodge DV and most dodge-related Charms. Opponents who rely on their Dodge DV suffer a disproportionate loss of defense. Cascade of Cutting Terror is one example of an undodgeable attack.

Finally, one can attempt to **lower the opponent's defense**. Coordinated attacks, multiple attacks and Charms such as Ox-Stunning Blow can impose temporary DV penalties on an opponent. Encouraging an opponent to overextend himself when he's attacking your character does the same.

## Not Getting Hit

The simplest way to survive a fight is to avoid one's enemies' blows.

### Knowing the Opposition

**Hazard X (1–3 attack dice).** Housecats, children and drunkards flail with 1–3 attack dice. It takes 1 DV to block half of these attacks and 3 DV to block 90% of them.

**Hazard • (4–6 attack dice).** Bandits, soldiers, undead shock troops and minor monsters attack with 4–6 attack dice. It takes 3 DV to block half of these attacks and 5 DV to block 90% of them.

**Hazard •• (7–9 attack dice).** Demons, elementals, nemissaries, Wyld monsters and young Terrestrial Exalted—these monsters and monster-slayers attack with 7–9 attack dice. It takes 4 DV to block half of these attacks and 6 DV to block 90% of them.

**Hazard ••• (10–15 attack dice).** Powerful spirits, Celestial Exalted and Immaculate Dragon-Blooded often wield 10–15 attack dice—eight to 10 dice in their basic attack pool, one or two dice from specialties and an accurate weapon. It takes 6–7 DV to block half of these attacks and about 10 DV to block 90% of them.

**Hazard •••• (Essence-based attack).** Charms such as Melee Excellencies can produce an attack with 20–25 dice; other attack Charms actively limit your defensive options. To block this kind of offensive with any regularity, you need a perfect defense or a reliable method to push your DV to 12–15.

**Hazard ••••• (Perfect attack).** Some terrible attacks—from Accuracy Without Distance to the teeth of the Kukla—are impractical to defend against with DV alone. Perfect or specialized defenses are necessary.

### Evasive Strategies

Characters who want to avoid taking hits need a high base DV. This benefits from high-defense weapons such as paired hook swords, the khatar and the seven-section staff. Orichalcum weapons are a good choice for warriors who desire a high base DV. Characters focused on their Dodge DV should wear armor with low mobility penalties, such as moonsilver armor or a chain shirt and give additional priority to a high Essence score. Having built a high DV, combat provides two core processes of defense: maintaining a high DV in adverse circumstances, and raising it when necessary.

The simplest way to keep DV high is to **limit your offense.** Unless the opponent is too distracted to attack, your Exalt should use multiple attacks and actions with care—most attacks impose a -1 DV penalty. Charms such as Thunderclap Rush Attack impose a smaller penalty, while extra action Charms such as Peony Blossom Attack reduce or remove the penalty for making additional attacks.

Similarly, try to **limit the opponent's offense.** If your Exalt's enemy can launch a flurry of attacks, your DV plummets. If several enemies can coordinate their attacks, your DV falls. To prevent flurry penalties, keep opponents too busy defending themselves to lower their own DV with flurries—or use a persistent defense, such as Fivefold Bulwark Stance. To prevent the penalty from coordinated attacks, keep most opponents at range or use defensive Charms such as Flow Like Blood.

Circumstances and fighting strategies often make these ideas inadequate—your Exalt probably wants to deal out as much damage as possible, and her enemies likely have the same desire. If penalties drive your Exalt's DV down, **consider a reflexive defense** such as Shadow Over Water or Dipping Swallow Defense. These Charms are probably the most useful defensive tools in a young Exalt's arsenal. Unless you have a good reason not to, buy one of these Charms. If your defensive strategy depends on them, though, make sure to keep their steady mote consumption in mind.

The other half of defense is raising your Exalt's DV when necessary. If you need one or two more DV against an attack, Charms such as Dodge Excellencies, Martial Arts Excellencies and Melee Excellencies work well. If an attack seems likely to overwhelm your defense, consider a perfect counter such as Heavenly Guardian Defense.

## Taking Damage

If and when your character is hit, your opponent's player rolls damage. It takes somewhere around 18 rolled dice of damage to inflict seven health levels of lethal damage and incapacitate your character. If you purchase extra health levels with Ox-Body Technique, each should take two or three more damage dice to cut away.

Healing is difficult in the world of **Exalted**. Expect lost health levels to remain lost until your character has downtime to rest and recover—days, for most Lawgivers, and hours, if you have healing Charms. In a tense situation, even a single health level lost to damage is meaningful.

### Knowing the Opposition

**Hazard X (1–3 dice of raw damage).** Magical and environmental effects often inflict one to three dice of damage, as do punches, kicks, war fans and table knives in the hands of the weak. These attacks roll one die, sometimes two, against a Solar. Heavy and superheavy artifact armor helps, but normal armor doesn't, because normal armor always lets at least one die of damage through.

**Hazard • (4–7 dice of raw damage).** The Solar Exalted resist bleeding, maiming and infection. This makes the knives and spears of poorly trained militia, the claws and teeth of animals and the infected nails of the undead less threatening to them. These attacks usually roll two to six dice of damage against an unarmored character. They roll one die, sometimes two, against a Solar in armor.

**Hazard •• (6–11 dice of raw damage).** Trained soldiers, deadly predators and spine chains tend to inflict six to 11 dice of raw damage. These attacks roll four to 10 dice of raw damage against an unarmored character, enough to kill in two or three blows. Light and medium armor gives a better survival chance, cutting weak attacks down to one die and strong attacks down to five dice or so. These attacks roll one die, sometimes two, against a Solar in heavy or superheavy armor.

**Hazard ••• (10–20 dice of raw damage).** Monsters, Dragon-Blooded warriors and young Celestial Exalted tend to inflict 10 to 20 dice of raw damage. These attacks can kill an unarmored Solar Exalt in one or two blows. Light and medium armor takes away some of the sting, but these attacks roll two to five damage dice against even the most heavily armored opponents.

**Hazard •••• (21+ dice of raw damage).** The most powerful attacks of the Exalted, particularly damage-dealing Combos, can deal more than 20 dice of raw damage. Powerful spirits, behemoths and experienced Celestial Exalted can often deal this kind of damage with ordinary attack Charms. Even with superheavy orichalcum plate armor, these attacks hurt. Unarmored characters who let the opponent roll this much damage can expect to die.

**Hazard ••••• (35+ dice of raw damage or instant death).** Opponents with Essence 4 or more sometimes have access to Charms or Combos that kill their targets, regardless of armor or other physical protection. Soak is an inadequate defense against these attacks.

## Armored Fighting

Armor dramatically reduces the post-soak damage of Hazard • to ••• attacks, and heavy artifact armor can help against Hazard •••• attacks. Even the most powerful enemies use Hazard ••••• attacks sparingly and at a significant Essence cost, with certain highly focused exceptions such as living mountains and vortices of Oblivion.

Armor is a good thing, and artifact armor is better. That's why ordinary soldiers wear armor. If it weren't an obvious net good in combat, people would outfit their armies in comparatively cheaper nudity. Armor is tactically superior to normal clothing unless you invest in Charms designed for unarmored fighting.

Even with armor, you still need defensive Charms. Hordes of enemies or powerful enemies using extra-action Charms can nickel and dime your character to death right through superheavy armor. Armor does not allow you to "take" hits, but rather to *risk* taking hits. An armored fighting style usually incorporates

low-budget dodge or parry Charms—Charms such as Dodge Excellencies and Shadow Over Water or Melee Excellencies and Dipping Swallow Defense. If your character's armor can reliably reduce your opponent's damage to acceptable levels, you may be able to use offensive Charms without a Combo.

### Disadvantages

Armor has a **mobility penalty**, which reduces your Dodge DV and increases your risk of taking damage. It also makes acrobatics harder. To avoid mobility penalties, use the Charm Armored Scout's Invigoration, pay the attunement cost for moonsilver armor or choose armor with no mobility penalty: a chain shirt or artifact breastplate.

Armor has a **fatigue value.** This means that wearing armor for long periods of time can exhaust you. You cannot wear armor continuously. To avoid fatigue, use the Charm Armored Scout's Invigoration, pay the attunement cost for jade armor or choose armor with no fatigue value: an artifact breastplate or an artifact reinforced buff jacket.

Armor costs **Background dots**. To start the game with armor, you need to spend Background dots on either Resources or Artifact. If you do not start the game with armor, then you are less likely to enjoy your investment in an armor-based fighting style and are more likely to want unarmored fighting Charms.

Armor **takes time to put on**. This means that you can be caught without your armor. If your fighting style depends on armor, this can kill you or cost you time when unexpected combat occurs. To reduce this penalty, use the Charm Whirlwind Armor-Donning Prana. To make sure that your armor is always available, use Hauberk-Lightening Gesture. To avoid this problem entirely, you must wear armor continuously or take a Charm such as Glorious Solar Plate. Wearing armor continuously is obvious, can cause social problems and requires a solution for fatigue.

Armor **lets minimum damage through**. Players of attackers who hit you, no matter how heavy your armor, still roll their minimum damage—normally one die, two dice or their Essence in dice. Starmetal armor reduces this minimum by one die, which negates most Hazard • or •• damage. Some artifact armor has Hardness, which entirely blocks any attack with raw damage less than the Hardness. Hardness from armor is usually only functional against Hazard X damage—but some effects, such as the spell Invulnerable Skin of Bronze, give enough Hardness to block Hazard • damage entirely and reduce the threat posed by a horde.

### Unarmored Fighting

Depending on armor is a strategic liability—even in the best of worlds, it's an obvious and limited defense that burdens either your character's body or her Essence pool. Some characters prefer to operate without armor, developing Charms that allow them to survive the damage of a Hazard • to •••• attack. The Charm cascade beginning with Durability of Oak Meditation performs a function similar to armor—it allows the character to risk taking hits. These Charms are referred to as a "Resistance-based defense."

### Disadvantages

If your character gets hit, Resistance-based defense **requires using a Charm.** This means that offensive Charms are dangerous to use. If you get hit before your next action, you don't have armor or a Charm available to help you take it. Small, fast weapons and Charms such as Thunderclap Rush Attack may let you act between two of your opponent's actions and have a Charm ready again by the time he can attack. You should also consider placing your common offensive Charms in Combos with your Resistance-based defense.

This also means that **other defensive Charms are dangerous to use.** Defensive Excellencies and reflexive defenses are fallible. If you use one and get hit anyway, you don't have armor or a Charm to help you take the hit. A Combo with two defensive Charms is often less efficient than a perfect defense, so your dodge and parry-based strategy should focus on scene-length Charms such as Flow Like Blood and Fivefold Bulwark Stance and possibly perfect defenses such as Seven Shadow Evasion and Heavenly Guardian Defense.

If your character uses an unarmored strategy, Resistance-based defense **comes into play late in attack resolution.** Since you use a Resistance-based defense after your character has already been hit, you're going to take hits more often. This is both an advantage and a disadvantage—against incredibly damaging attacks, it's nice to have the option to use Adamant Skin Technique after they hit. Against attacks with unpleasant additional effects, such as death, paralysis or enslavement, a Resistance-based defense might not be useful.

Finally, **artifact armor can be really cool.** It can suit a wide variety of visual and character themes. It can have interesting powers besides soak. Even if you have no interest in dressing your character in leather straps and weighty metal, you could find yourself envying players whose characters wear dragon armor, warstriders or flowing moonsilver chain mail somewhere down the line.

## Sorcery

The magic of Charms comes naturally to the Exalted, enhancing their Abilities and making impossible feats trivial. Yet there are feats more transcendentally difficult and powerful than jumping over mountains and taming societies to the Exalt's will. These feats are the work of sorcery—mastering the occult Essence flows of the world and shaping the Essence of Creation.

Not every Exalt studies this power. Weaving the Essence patterns of spells is demanding, torturous and dangerous. Sorcery is slow and awkward to use on a combat scale. Only the weakest spells brook interruption without risking the sorcerer's death, and only a few of the lesser effects have practical benefits when cast during a battle.

## Where Do Sorcerers Come From?

Learning the secrets of sorcery is a process of initiation. The prospective sorcerer must overcome five trials—which is either considered part of the "training time" or played out, as the Storyteller and player feel appropriate. According to legend, the first person to overcome these trials and initiate herself was a Solar named Brigid.

The first trial is humility. The initiate must learn to see beyond his own hubris, often in the course of challenges impossible to finish, deliberate humiliation by a mentor or contemplation of past failures. Storytellers might encourage players to take the lead in describing this initiation, as players are sometimes resentful when their character is humiliated at the Storyteller's hands. Brigid's humiliation was that she could not match the power of her peers—she had no skill in developing Charms.

The second trial is tutelage. The initiate must find a teacher—not necessarily a mentor as such, but a person or spirit able to give them a new insight. The Salinan College, a sorcerous academy of the First Age, encoded the principles of sorcery into the world. This ensures that the Solar Exalted can always find someone to bring them sorcerous wisdom. Even the greatest lost spells can be discovered again, given enough time, by those willing to listen to the secrets the world holds ready for them. Brigid's tutelage came from four powerful spiritual beings of uncertain provenance—presumably servants of the Unconquered Sun, although he has never spoken on the matter.

The third trial is a journey. The Lawgiver must wander and, through wandering, learn appreciation for the world as it is. Her glorious works may someday remake Creation, but the present matters as much as the future. The third trial is about understanding the importance of each moment of life. Brigid traveled to the elemental poles in pursuit of sorcery's secrets.

The fourth trial is fear. The Solar must learn mastery over her darkest fear—whether a fear of losing her way, of causing others' deaths, of claiming her true power, of finding herself powerless or simply of "spiders." For Brigid, this fear was found at the end of her journey, when she faced the Unconquered Sun and feared herself unworthy of him.

The fifth trial is sacrifice. To become a sorcerer, one must make a terrible sacrifice. This trial is repeated when the sorcerer ascends to higher levels of initiation, so that a sorcerer who cuts off his finger or abandons a brother to learn Terrestrial Circle Sorcery might lose a portion of her sanity to reach the Celestial Circle and cast aside her own true love to master the Solar Circle. Brigid's sacrifice, if any, was unknown.

In the First Age, sorcery was widely known and practiced. There were vast libraries and colleges established to record and disseminate sorcerous lore. Only the youngest and weakest Celestial Exalted ignored the potential of these secrets, and initiation into the Terrestrial Circle was common for educated and cultured Dragon-Blooded. This infrastructure no longer exists. The knowledge of sorcery is scattered through the world, and mighty bargains must be struck and great quests undertaken to recover the more powerful spells.

## Learning Sorcery in Play

Characters wishing to use sorcery must learn the Sorcery Charms on pages 220-221. This is a process that requires initiation, and it teaches them the worldview and insights necessary to cast spells of the appropriate circle. This is not enough to begin casting, however. Spells in **Exalted** are too complex to cast from a book. The character must memorize a spell, internalizing its structure and precepts, and doing so costs experience points. The ability to cast spells—that is, to take sorcery actions—is useless unless the character also learns the specific spells he hopes to cast.

Characters who wish to learn spells they cannot currently cast must have the Storyteller's permission.

## Inventing Sorcery

Creating spells is demanding. It requires months or years of effort. The magician must have a properly stocked library to research magic and a testing field of some sort where everything living is expendable. In the First Age, magicians typically had their demon servants ferry them to rocky islets in the middle of the open ocean, where they could work their prodigies of destruction without fear of accidentally leveling a metropolis.

The mechanical process of creating a spell is simple—it is an extended dramatic action based on (Intelligence + Occult). The difficulty is equal to the spell's circle—1 for Terrestrial Circle spells, 2 for Celestial Circle spells and 3 for Solar Circle spells.

The Solar's player makes one roll for each 300 hours of dedicated research done by the character—one month's work, if the character dedicates herself to nothing else. She must accumulate a number of extra successes equal to (Circle x 10) to complete the construction of the spell. The use of an Occult Excellency is highly recommended.

If the Lawgiver is working from partial notes or attempting to recreate the effects of a well-known but lost spell, the player rolls (Intelligence + Lore) instead of (Intelligence + Occult). The amount of information she has about the spell proportionally reduces the number of successes required—if she knows half of the structure of a First Circle spell, she needs only five extra successes to figure out the rest.

## Sorcery Actions

Using sorcery requires a sorcery action. Most characters cannot take sorcery actions, any more than they can take a fly action or a shapeshift action—that's why the character must first learn the appropriate Charms.

## Shape Sorcery (General Rules)

Characters use sorcery actions to enact sorcerous rituals. This action type lets the character shape a single spell that he knows.

Shaping a spell takes the character out of active participation in a battle—he may operate on combat time, but he cannot focus on or react to events. He cannot use Charms or Combos, including reflexive Charms. He cannot take voluntary reflexive actions, such as speech, Move or Dash. He *can* benefit from the established effects of ongoing or permanent Charms, and he *can*—as a special exception to the rule on reflexive actions—activate his anima.

Sorcery is inherently Obvious. Observers might not know what spell the Exalt is casting, but it is obvious that the Exalt is using sorcery unless the spell description states otherwise.

If the character is distracted, then his player must make a reflexive (Wits + Occult) roll for the Exalt to keep his concentration. This roll is difficulty 1. If this distraction inflicts damage, subtract an external penalty equal to the health levels lost from the character's successes. If the roll fails, the spell dissipates harmlessly and has no effects. If the roll succeeds, the shaping effort continues. If the player botches the roll, the effects

can be terrible. The magic might run terribly awry, or it could dissipate as brilliant heat and burning light. The consequences in the former case are left to the Storyteller. In the latter case, everyone within a number of yards equal to the spell's Circle takes a number of dice of lethal "Essence burn" damage equal to the sorcerer's Essence.

Essence spent on a spell is committed for the duration of the shaping. Once the character takes a Cast Sorcery action (see below) the Essence is no longer committed unless specifically stated.

If the character loses the spell due to distraction, he refocuses on the world, and the player makes an immediate Join Battle roll.

### Shape Terrestrial Circle Sorcery (Speed 5, DV -2)

The character shapes a Terrestrial Circle spell that he knows. Doing so always costs one temporary Willpower plus the Essence cost of the spell. The character can take a Cast Sorcery action as his next action, releasing the spell and rejoining any battle. If the character does not do so, consider the spell interrupted.

Some Terrestrial Circle spells have Speeds measured in long ticks or dramatic actions. War magic often takes effect on the military time scale, while long rituals are interruptible dramatic actions.

### Shape Celestial Circle Sorcery (Two Actions—each Speed 5, DV -3)

The character shapes a Celestial Circle spell that he knows. Doing so always costs two temporary Willpower plus the Essence cost of the spell.

The character must take two full actions to shape the spell. He spends the motes and Willpower on the first of these two actions. The character can then take a Cast Sorcery action as his next action, releasing the spell and rejoining battle. If the character does not take these three actions in sequence, consider the spell interrupted.

Some Celestial Circle spells have Speeds measured in long ticks. The character must still take two full actions to shape the spell. Other spells have Speeds measured as a dramatic action, in which case the character may shape the spell as a single dramatic action of the length stated.

### Shape Solar Circle Sorcery (Three Actions—each Speed 5, DV -4)

The character shapes a Celestial Circle spell that he knows. Doing so always costs three temporary Willpower plus the Essence cost of the spell.

The character must take three full actions to shape the spell. He spends the motes and Willpower on the first of these three actions. The character can then take a Cast Sorcery action as his next action, releasing the spell and rejoining battle. If the character does not take these four actions in sequence, consider the spell interrupted.

Some Solar Circle spells have Speeds measured in long ticks. The character must still take three full actions to shape the spell. Other spells have Speeds measured as a dramatic action, in which case the character may shape the spell as a single dramatic action of the length stated.

## Cast Sorcery (Varies, DV -0)

Characters use this action to release the energies of a spell and refocus on the world. The character still cannot use Charms or Combos, including reflexive Charms. He still cannot take voluntary reflexive actions. He still benefits from the established effects of ongoing or permanent Charms.

This action causes the spell to take effect. If there is an ongoing conflict, such as a battle or war, the character returns to active participation. Determine the Speed of this action by making a Join Battle roll (see p. 141).

## Spell Format

Each spell lists its cost in motes—not counting the Willpower necessary to invoke the spell—and the target of the spell. It then proceeds to a description.

## The Terrestrial Circle

The Terrestrial Circle is the least of the Circles of magic. It is also called the First Circle and the Emerald Circle. This is the mightiest circle that the Dragon-Blooded can master. Even for Celestial and Solar Exalted, the spells of the Terrestrial Circle form the mainstay of the sorcerer's repertoire.

### Death of Obsidian Butterflies

**Cost:** 15m

**Target:** Area (30 yards wide, 100 yards long, 10 yards high, starting at the caster)

Death of Obsidian Butterflies calls forth a cascade of sculpted obsidian butterflies with razor-sharp wings. Their wingspans vary from an inch across to almost a foot. Flashing over the character's shoulders and past her sides in a glassy black torrent, they slash through the air in a pattern 30 yards wide, 100 yards long and 10 yards high. Brush, grass and small trees are cut off near the ground. Larger trees and wooden structures suffer serious damage. Stone is defaced but structurally unharmed.

When the character releases the magic, her player rolls (Perception + Occult), adding a number of automatic successes equal to the sorcerer's permanent Essence. Everyone in the attack pattern not behind an inch or more of stone or several inches of wood is subject to attack.

Characters defend against Death of Obsidian Butterflies as if it were a hand-to-hand attack. Each attack is independent, so magic and penalties that reduce the attack do not help others defend. Treat the butterflies as rolling a number of attack successes equal to those the sorcerer's player rolled, minus one for each two dice of dice penalties that circumstances impose. The attack inflicts 8L plus any extra successes in raw (pre-soak) damage.

The thousands of shattered glass butterflies don't go away after the spell. Walking barefoot in the area thereafter is not recommended.

### Demon of the First Circle

**Cost:** 20+m

**Target:** One First Circle demon

This spell calls up one of the lesser inhabitants of the demon realm—a twisted, hellish world very different from Creation.

These wicked creatures resent being called into the burningly clean air and bright yellow sunlight of our own world, but a cunning sorcerer can shackle them into magical bondage.

Shaping this spell is a dramatic action. It must begin at sundown, and it ends at the stroke of midnight. The actual spell costs 20 motes, opening the doorway to Malfeas and calling forth the target. The character can pay extra motes during the initial Shape Terrestrial Circle Sorcery action to help ensure successful enslavement of the demon, with effects as described as follows. The spell's cost and the extra motes are committed until the character takes the Cast Sorcery action.

Once the demon is summoned, sorcerer and demon engage in a contest of wills. This is represented by an extended opposed roll. Make one roll reflexively for each on each of the sorcerer's actions. The dice pool for each participant is (Essence + Willpower). The demon is at a -1 internal penalty to its dice pool for each five motes beyond the spell's basic cost that the sorcerer spent. Continue the contest of wills until either the demon or the sorcerer accumulates three or more successes more than the other. Until this happens, the demon is not vulnerable to attack and cannot attack by any normal means.

If the sorcerer wins, this spell exerts unnatural mental influence on the demon, binding it into servitude. The demon becomes loyal (see p. 175) to the character and will serve him for a year and a day, or the demon becomes loyal to a task the character names and will serve it until it is complete—potentially, forever. In either case, the demon returns to Malfeas automatically when the loyalty ends. Demons do not ever spend Willpower to break free of this Servitude effect, and it is their highest—though not their only—loyalty.

If the demon wins the extended contest, the sorcerer's player may make a reflexive (Wits + Occult) roll at difficulty 3 to banish the demon back to Malfeas. If it fails, the demon is free in Creation, which often means an excruciating death for a sorcerer with few motes remaining.

The Exalt chooses which species of demon he summons. He can also summon specific demons by name, but he cannot use this spell to summon and bind demons who are already present in Creation.

This spell normally involves a great number of ritual implements and protective sigils. If the character dispenses with these tools, subtract an external penalty of one success from the first roll to bind the demon and—should he fail to win the opposed roll—an external penalty of two successes from the roll to banish it.

### Emerald Countermagic

**Cost:** 10 or 20 motes

**Target:** Caster or one spell

The sorcerer uses Emerald Countermagic to protect herself and her companions from hostile sorcery. **This spell has special timing rules. The character can shape Terrestrial Circle sorcery to cast this spell as a reflexive action that takes 0 ticks.** It follows all of the other normal rules for sorcery actions, and she must take a Cast Sorcery action as her next normal action.

If the character spends 10 motes of Essence, she secures her own person against hostile magic. She crosses her arms or makes a gesture of defiance, and a nimbus of multicolored energy surrounds her. For the duration of the Cast Sorcery action and for her next action thereafter, any spell that attempts to affect her in a fashion she considers undesirable shatters and its effects are wasted.

The sorcerer can also opt to spend 20 motes of Essence and shatter a Terrestrial Circle spell operating within a radius of (the caster's permanent Essence x 50) feet. If the spell is currently being shaped, its caster is automatically interrupted. Spells currently in effect are shattered. This does not banish demons or spirits, whose summoning has already been accomplished and is no longer considered a spell.

Emerald Countermagic is not a clean or quiet process. "Shattering" a spell means that it is literally torn apart. Its effects fail, and random trivial magical effects wash out over the area. The sorcerer is safe from undesirable consequences, but others in the area may suffer minor burns or damage. The precise effects are at the Storyteller's discretion, although they should be significantly less harmful than a hostile Terrestrial Circle spell.

### Impenetrable Frost Barrier

**Cost:** 20m

**Target:** Area (10–15 foot radius around the caster)

This magic protects the sorcerer and his companions from attacks by enemies with ranged weapons. A thin, cold blue-gray plume of mist issues from the Exalt. It extends 10 to 15 feet from

him, depending on the wind conditions and the local temperature. These mists swirl about any incoming missile attacks, buffeting them and coating them in ice. Most such weapons are dragged hopelessly off course, and the impacts of the rest are cushioned.

For the next 20 minutes, attacks by ranged weapons against the sorcerer or anyone standing in the mist suffer an external penalty equal to twice the sorcerer's permanent Essence rating. The mists are of limited power—missiles weighing more than 30 pounds ignore this effect.

### Infallible Messenger

**Cost:** 10m
**Target:** Summoned cherub

The sorcerer conjures up a minor spirit from Essence. This spirit is called a cherub. Cherubim are multicolored humanoid figures only a few feet tall with six glittering blue-chrome wings. The sorcerer whispers his message, which can be no more than five minutes in length, into the cherub's ear. (This can be a social attack with a Speed no greater than five long ticks.) The sorcerer then names and describes a target. The cherub is able to travel from one point to another in Creation or Yu-Shan nearly instantly. It travels hundreds of miles an hour and can traverse the world in less than a day. Unless the target's location is mystically obscured, the cherub will find the recipient, deliver the message perfectly to his ear (even using the original sender's voice) and then dissipate. The Exalt can enhance this message with appropriate instant-duration Charms such as Irresistible Salesman Spirit and Linguistics Excellencies.

### Invulnerable Skin of Bronze

**Cost:** 20m
**Target:** Caster

Until the sun next crosses the horizon, the character's skin hardens into shining bronze, as supple and as flexible as silk, but as invulnerable and cold as any metal. The character gains +6L/+12B soak and 6L/12B Hardness. The character inflicts two extra dice of damage with barehanded Martial Arts attacks and weighs an extra 100 pounds. While Invulnerable Skin of Bronze does not impede his motions or slow him, caution is advised near bodies of water and deep mud.

### Stormwind Rider

**Cost:** 15m
**Target:** Summoned stormwind

The sorcerer calls up a mighty wind and wraps herself in it. The result is a dust devil—a tornado-like vortex that's smaller and less devastating to the landscape. The dust devil flies low, usually just touching the ground. The stormwind vortex can jump obstacles 50 feet wide or 30 feet high but cannot actually fly. It can survive falls of 30 feet and completely protects the sorcerer and any other contents during such short falls. If the vortex falls any farther, it dissipates on impact. Treat longer falls as 60 feet shorter, with a minimum of a 0-foot fall, for the purposes of determining damage.

The dust devil carries the sorcerer and (Essence x 200) pounds of passengers or cargo at speeds of 45 yards per tick—roughly 100 miles per hour. The vortex is immensely maneuverable. A character steering it in combat may take a 30-yard Move action or 45-yard Dash action on every tick and can fly it through a forest or other obstacle-strewn location. The first time the character sets foot on the ground, the vortex and its magic dissipates.

Characters inside the vortex can see out. It requires concentration to fly the vortex, imposing a two-die internal penalty on the character's actions and DV. The roaring winds impose a two-success external penalty on missile attacks into or out of the vortex, a three-success external penalty on Awareness rolls to recognize those inside and a three-success external penalty on Awareness rolls to hear others' words when within 15 yards of the sorcerer. It's considered polite, when using a stormwind to visit an associate, to land a fair distance away and approach on foot.

This spell can be used in war. If the sorcerer increases its shaping time to long ticks and reduces its movement to wartime movement, this spell can transport a unit of Magnitude no greater than his Essence, along with (Essence x 200) pounds of well-organized and well-packed unit supplies. The sorcerer must be attached to this unit.

### Summon Elemental

**Cost:** 10+m
**Target:** Elemental

This spell is much like Demon of the First Circle and uses, generally, the same rules, with the following exceptions.

- It summons an elemental and not a demon.
- It can be cast at any time—shaping the spell is a dramatic action requiring four hours of effort, but it need not start at sunset or end at midnight.
- The roll to banish the elemental if the binding fails is difficulty 1, not difficulty 3.
- The elemental will not serve for more than a lunar month, and it cannot be set to tasks that take longer than a year and a day. This effect is still an unnatural Servitude effect, and elementals do not spend Willpower to break free of it.

The kidnap and enslavement of elementals can outrage the Celestial Bureaucracy. Characters who mistreat their servants or bind the servants of powerful gods are likely to earn the ire of the spirit world. Elementals are seen somewhat as the "poor relations" of the powerful gods of Heaven. A little mistreatment won't raise eyebrows, but callously burning out elemental servants for the sorcerer's purposes forces Heaven to act.

The Lawgiver chooses what elemental or species of elemental he summons. Certain elementals, important to the function of the world, have the right to send a proxy in answer to the sorcerer's call rather than answering it themselves.

### Wood Dragon's Claw

**Cost:** 10m
**Target:** Caster

Until the character wishes otherwise and terminates this spell, her hands warp and twist into the shape of huge gnarled claws of oak. These are lesser replicas of the claws of the greater elemental dragons of Wood. The character receives 15 points to allocate to the claws' Accuracy, Defense, Damage and Rate. The damage inflicted by the claws is lethal. No single rating may exceed (the caster's Essence + Occult). At the beginning of each action, the character can reflexively reallocate the 15 points however she chooses.

Attacks made with these claws have Speed 5. They are considered barehanded unarmed Martial Arts punches. The character can use these claws to parry mundane armed and unarmed attacks without needing a stunt.

## The Celestial Circle

Celestial Circle Sorcery is significantly more complicated and powerful than Terrestrial Circle Sorcery. It is also called the Second Circle and the Sapphire Circle. Only Celestial Exalted can master this second sorcerous initiation, learning spells that can slay thousands, level fortresses or call up Second Circle demons.

### Blood of Boiling Oil

**Cost:** 30m
**Target:** Touched creature

The character gathers a roiling ball of Essence between her hands. This sphere glows brighter and brighter as the power within it grows. It starts a dull brick red, but the color grows in brightness and saturation until it is, first, the color of red-hot iron and, then, an unearthly glittering scarlet. Then, the sorcerer takes a Cast Sorcery action and the sphere vanishes noiselessly and without display. The sorcerer's hands are left covered with glowing scarlet arcane characters.

If the sorcerer now lays a hand on another living being, the power flows from her hands into the unfortunate victim, transmuting his blood to boiling oil. Most mortals die instantly when subjected to this attack, and even the Exalted can be slain with but a single touch.

To resolve this attack, the sorcerer must make a successful barehanded attack on the target. This attack can be combined with a regular attack, a Charm or even a Combo, allowing a powerful warrior-mage to unleash an attack of unparalleled power.

This spell activates with the first successful barehanded attack that the sorcerer makes that rolls even a single die of damage. When it activates, the sorcerer's player must immediately make a reflexive (Charisma + Occult) roll. The target takes one level of unsoakable lethal damage each tick for (the sorcerer's Essence x successes) ticks. This is a Shaping effect and a Poison effect.

Magical creatures generally resist transmutation. When this Charm is used on a creature capable of spending Essence, such as an Exalt or a Fair Folk noble, subtract the target's Essence from the number of successes achieved on the (Charisma + Occult) roll. This spell has no effect on nonliving creatures or living creatures that have no blood.

This spell remains in effect for (the sorcerer's Essence) minutes or until the sorcerer strikes someone and overcomes their Hardness. It is possible to inflict this damage accidentally on someone else, but—even if the sorcerer fumbles and strikes herself—the spell never targets the sorcerer.

### Demon of the Second Circle

**Cost:** 30+m
**Target:** Second Circle Demon

This spell is very similar to Demon of the First Circle and uses, generally, the same rules, with the following exceptions:

- It summons a demon of the Second Circle, not a demon of the First Circle. This is a much more powerful creature—terrible, awe-inspiring and dangerous, capable of wreaking great evil or performing great feats.
- This spell can be cast only on the night of the new moon or during Calibration. The ritual is still a dramatic action that begins at sundown and ends at midnight.
- The cost to reduce the demon's dice pool is 10 motes per die, not five.

Demons of the Second and higher circles are vengeful, intelligent creatures. Though they cannot reach Creation on their own, if they are somehow given the opportunity to avenge themselves on a sorcerer who once enslaved them or treated them cruelly, they will do so.

### Dolorous Reflection

**Cost:** 20m
**Target:** Caster

The character extends his hands, then crosses them in a defensive posture. Hundreds of bands of mystical energy swirl around him in a brilliant, surging cocoon. The bands fade from view within a few seconds, but their effects remain. The effects of Dolorous Reflection persist until the character takes a movement or attack action, and then for a number of long ticks equal to twice the character's permanent Essence score thereafter.

Until the effects of the spell end, any physical ranged attack on the character is caught in the swirling bands of Essence, whirled around her at tremendous speed and hurled back at the character who launched it. The sorcerer's player makes a reflexive (Wits + Occult) roll for each reflected attack. This roll acts as the attack roll for the reflected attack, and the character who launched the attack may apply DV and other defenses normally. Reflected attacks are made without Range penalties and inflict their original base damage. This spell has no effect on hand-to-hand attacks or attacks consisting entirely of Essence.

This spell can be used in war. If the sorcerer increases its shaping time to long ticks, this spell can protect a unit of Magnitude no greater than the Exalt's Essence. The sorcerer must be attached to this unit. This use also increases the duration of the spell to twice the sorcerer's Essence in hours.

### Incomparable Body Arsenal

**Cost:** 30m
**Target:** Caster

For a number of hours equal to her Essence score, the character transforms her body into an automaton of rust-streaked black iron. This form resembles her natural body, but it appears roughly cast and is studded with rivets where the "segments" meet. A character using this spell need not breathe, is immune to Poison effects and suffers no ill effect from extreme temperatures.

Incomparable Body Arsenal grants the character 10L/10B Hardness and +10L/+10B soak. In addition, the character's body is a trove of hidden weapons. Her skin can sprout rusty iron spikes at will; double-bladed, eight-inch-long knives flick from her fingertips; barbed iron spears extend from her palms at a whim; and her mouth can drop open, puppet-like, to fire a razor-sharp multi-bladed projectile on a long iron chain. Whatever sort of weapons she needs simply extend from her metallic form.

The character's Strength and Stamina both increase by two, even if that causes them to rise above 5. This is considered part of her natural Attribute and does not count as a dice bonus from Charms. The character inflicts (Strength + 8) lethal damage in a clinch. Her barehanded Martial Arts attacks have +1 Accuracy and inflict (Strength + 6) lethal damage. The character can make barehanded Martial Arts attacks out to a range in yards equal to her permanent Essence.

Worn armor and carried weapons are banished Elsewhere for the duration of this spell, as it is not compatible with the use of other armor or weapons. The character moves at normal speed and weighs no more than her usual weight. She suffers a -5 external penalty to any attempt to swim, however.

### Sapphire Countermagic

**Cost:** 15m or 20m
**Target:** Caster or One Spell

This spell functions as Emerald Countermagic, save for the increased cost and the changes noted here. **This spell has special timing rules. The character can shape Celestial Circle sorcery to cast this spell as two reflexive 0-tick actions.**

This spell can shatter Second Circle as well as First Circle spells. The shattering of a Second Circle spell has more profound effects than the destruction of a First Circle spell—the random burns and magical effects may cause minor damage to others, although always less than that of directed First Circle magic.

Used to counter First Circle spells, this spell extinguishes them instantly and entirely. This functions like shattering the spell but causes no collateral damage.

### Travel Without Distance

**Cost:** 25m
**Target:** Caster

The mighty among sorcerers can travel across the face of the world in an instant, if they must. The character gathers a blazing corona of Essence around him and shapes it through a complex series of finger and hand gestures. When he releases the magic, he is wrapped in whirling clouds of Essence. When the clouds dissipate, he is gone. The character can choose to reappear in any location he has seen before, either with his own eyes or through magic, so long as the destination is within 10 miles per point of the character's permanent Essence and is not warded against magical travel.

The character's arrival is as spectacular as his departure, with the same whirling clouds gathering out of nothingness and then dissipating to reveal the character, still wrapped in a corona of Essence and still channeling the magic with complicated gestures. This arrival takes the same amount of time as the character's departure—after appearing, the character must take two Shape Celestial Circle Sorcery actions before he can join a conflict. If the character is interrupted during this time, then the spell is not lost—having already functioned—but the character is disoriented and suffers a -2 internal penalty to all actions for (8 – Stamina) hours.

Travel by this spell is quite safe. The design of its Essence structure ensures that, if the destination is unsafe, the character appears in the nearest stable, open space with solid footing and no ongoing sources of environmental damage.

This spell can be used in war. If the sorcerer increases its shaping time to long ticks, this spell can transport a unit of a Magnitude no greater than the Exalt's Essence. The sorcerer must be attached to this unit. If the unit joins war before the second half of the casting completes, every member of the unit and the unit itself suffers the aforementioned disorientation. Use the Stamina of the unit leader to determine how long this disorientation lasts.

## Solar Circle

Solar Circle Sorcery is the mightiest power available to the Exalted. It is also called the Third Circle and the Adamant Circle. Only the Solar Exalted can master this third sorcerous initiation, learning spells that can literally reshape the world.

### Adamant Countermagic

**Cost:** 20m or 25m
**Target:** Caster or one spell

This spell functions as Emerald Countermagic, save for the increased cost and the noted changes. **This spell has special timing rules. The character can shape Solar Circle sorcery to cast this spell as three reflexive 0-tick actions.**

This spell can shatter Second and Third Circle as well as First Circle spells. It extinguishes First and Second Circle spells without side effects, but shattering Third Circle spells is more dramatic. The explosion of Essence fragments that results from countering a Third Circle spell—while it will not harm the sorcerer using Adamant Countermagic—has effects more profound than many First Circle spells. Such an explosion can kill or transform mortals and lay waste to the countryside.

### Demon of the Third Circle

**Cost:** 40+m
**Target:** Third Circle demon

This spell is very similar to Demon of the First Circle and uses, generally, the same rules, with the following exceptions:

- It summons a demon of the Third Circle, not a demon of the First Circle. This is one of the lieutenants of the Yozis, a creature spiritually intertwined with one of the banished Primordial god-monsters that ruled before the dawn of the world.
- This spell can be cast only during Calibration. In the Old Realm, all the magicians gathered together at sunset during every night of Calibration for a great feast that lasted until dawn, so that none might be tempted to dabble with the powers of darkness. This tradition continues to this day among the Dragon-Blooded, though none have the power to summon forth such creatures of evil. The ritual is still a dramatic action that begins at sundown and ends at midnight.
- The cost to reduce the demon's dice pool is 10 motes per die, not five.

Demons of the Third Circle have bonus dice on their roll, putting their effective (Willpower + Essence) in a range between 18 and 25.

### Rain of Doom

**Cost:** 60m
**Target:** Area

This spell calls down a supernatural storm of vast proportions on the target. A rain of corrosive venom falls from the sky, and sickly green lightning lashes the ground. The venom falls in sheets from dusk till dawn. It is corrosive enough to pit stone and warp glass. Wood bursts into thick red-orange flame at its touch. Metal simply dissolves. Living creatures exposed to the venom suffer terrible burns. Most humans and animals die shortly thereafter in convulsions.

For years or even decades after the storm, nothing but stunted scrub will grow on the land washed by the rain, and those areas that catch the runoff of the storm will be similarly blighted. The venom is neutralized by the touch of daylight, and it evaporates easily, so the devastation is limited. However, even several days after the event, the venom can be dangerous to areas near the target that are not warmed or lighted by the sun.

The game effects of the venom are as follows:

• Those exposed to the rain suffer one dose of poison for each action in which they remain in the rain. Each dose inflicts one die of lethal damage on every combat action until the character removes soaked clothing and scrubs exposed areas clean. This is a Speed 5 miscellaneous action unless the character is armored, in which case it takes the normal time. The character may subtract his lethal soak from the damage taken in each action.

• Any mundane objects left out in the rain are ruined by exposure to it.

• Characters exposed to the runoff are exposed to a number of doses of this poison appropriate to the amount of runoff they encounter—bathing in a pool of venom might inflict 20 doses, while venom dripping from a withered leaf into the character's hair would be a single dose.

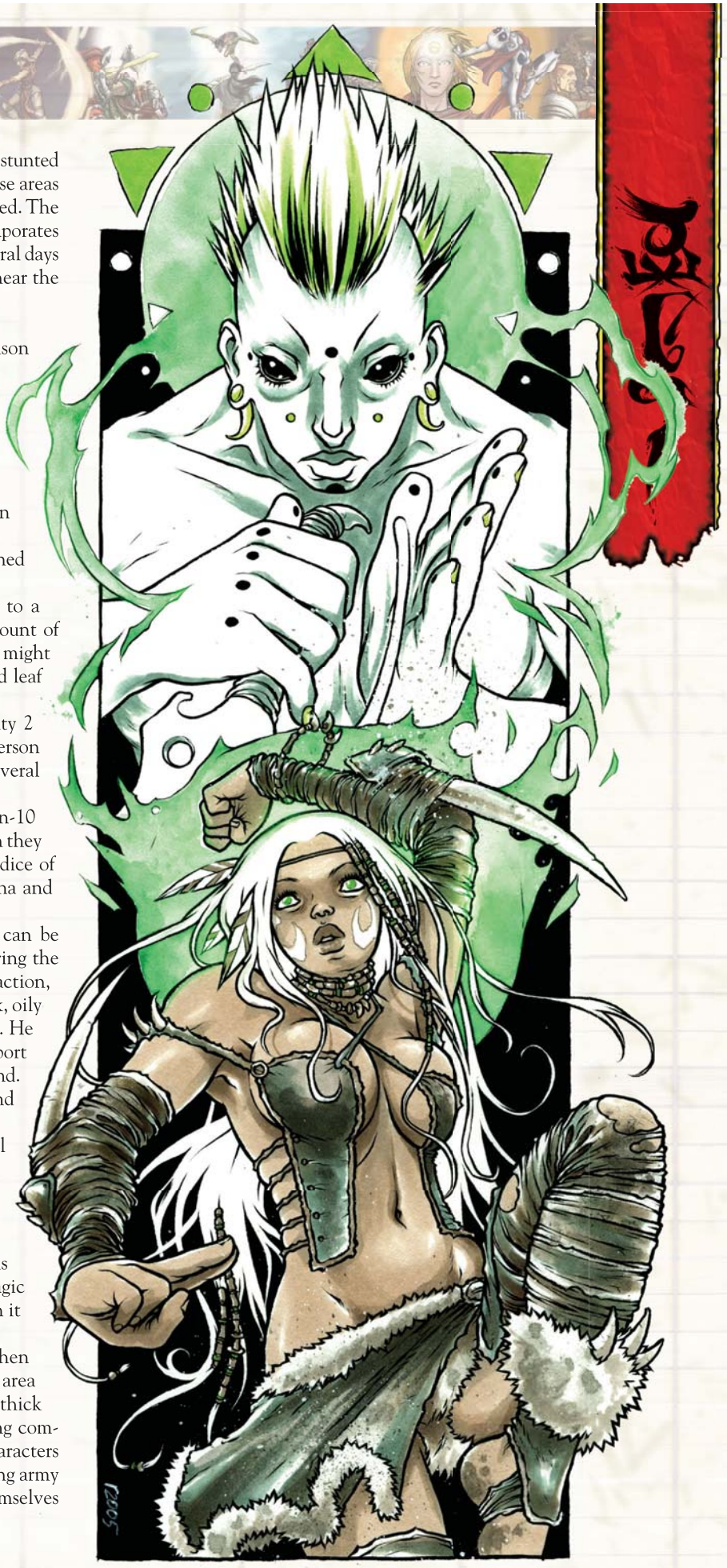
• Make a (Stamina + Resistance) roll at difficulty 2 for mortals touched by the venom. Failure means a person succumbs to a painful, convulsive death over the next several hours.

Characters outdoors during the rain have a 1-in-10 chance of being hit by lightning for every combat action they spend outdoors. Characters hit by lightning suffer 12 dice of lethal damage, which can only be soaked with Stamina and Charms.

The Rain of Doom spell is complex to cast. It can be shaped only after the sun has touched the horizon during the evening. Once the character invokes the Cast Sorcery action, the sky begins to darken at an unnatural pace with thick, oily clouds. The sorcerer must immediately begin traveling. He can walk, run or ride a beast, but he cannot fly or transport himself with any magic that involves leaving the ground. He or his mount must actually tread the ground around the target area.

The caster has from the completion of the spell until night has fallen fully to circumnavigate the desired area of effect. For the purposes of this spell, this sunset period lasts about one hour. The sorcerer cannot recross his path, and he must reach his starting point before night falls fully. If the character crosses his own path or fails to reach his starting point before darkness falls, the magic is wasted, and the gathering storm disappears as though it had never been.

If the character successfully describes a circuit, then from an hour after nightfall to the rising of the sun, the area within is lashed by the Rain of Doom. Near that area, a thick rain falls, mixed with sleet and hail, but this is nothing compared to the horror within the spell's area of effect. Characters outside the spell's area of effect—for example, a besieging army manning the siege lines—must take steps to protect themselves from the spell's runoff.



ARE THEY GONE?
WHAT ABOUT THE WAGONS THAT FLED? CAN YOU SEE THEM?
THE BARBARIANS ARE WITHDRAWING. MAYBE THEIR LITTLE RAID'S FINALLY OVER.
FINALLY HAD ENOUGH, I RECKON.
YOU DON'T THINK THAT THING GOT THEM, DO YOU? THAT HORRIBLE... BEASTMAN...
NO TELLING. MAYBE HE LET 'EM GO SO HE COULD FINISH US OFF.
SAY KID, ANY MONSTERS OUT THERE?
UM...
NRRAAAA!!!!!

NO NO NO NO NO...
SOMEBODY HELP!
AIEEE!!!
MERCHANT PRINCE CARAVEL, I PRESUME.
YOU'VE GROWN FAT ON THE BLOOD OF CHATTEL SLAVERY, GUILD'S-MAN!
YOU DEAL IN HUMAN MISERY WITHOUT GUILT OR REMORSE, BUT NO LONGER! THOUGH IT GIVES ME NO FACE, I DO THIS IN LUNA'S NAME AS A SERVICE TO ALL CREATION!

# CHAPTER SIX
# STORYTELLING

This chapter offers guidance for you to share stories about reincarnated demigods molding Creation in their own image and provides advice for running a game of **Exalted**. You will learn the practicalities of running an **Exalted** game, how to create your own series and how to simplify bookkeeping. You will also find some rules for character advancement and tips on playing Solar Exalted who are centuries old. Take what you need, ignore what you don't, and run the best damn **Exalted** game you and your players can come up with.

## Getting Started

As Storyteller, your first goal is to focus the options for the **Exalted** game. You need to create some general parameters for your game, and the players need to do the same for potential characters. Next, you need to figure out the style of game you're trying to run and where it will occur in Creation. Finally, you need to work with your players so they can figure out how their characters interact with your series.

## Initial Questions

Before you begin an **Exalted** series, you and your players need to answer some basic questions about the characters, the setting and the rules. Storytellers need to figure out the following:

- Who is interested in playing? When can everybody meet, and how often? Should the game run for a set number of sessions, or will it be ongoing?
- Are there any elements of the setting that you want to explicitly avoid? Will you need to change or ignore any of the rules before you play?
- Who are the direct antagonists and recurring characters the Exalts will encounter throughout the series? With what allies do the Exalts begin, or what aid can they initially procure? How far across Creation do you expect the game to span?

We recommend you get together with your players to ask them some questions as well:

- Where are the characters from? How did they arrive at the game's starting location? How do they know one another?

• What areas of knowledge and expertise does each character bring to the circle? Are there any hooks characters should possess or avoid? Should the characters have vastly different capabilities, or is it okay to overlap?

• Should the characters form a perfect circle by selecting one of each Solar caste? Can they possess similar Backgrounds, such as matching artifact armor or a group mentor?

Use these questions to get started. If you like to plan ahead, come up with useful questions of your own for current or future games.

## Changing the Rules

You are in complete control of your game and can change any rule you want, at any time, for any reason. However, **Exalted** rules often interlock with others, so be sure you understand what the rule affects before making changes. Players who find their Charms invalidated by your changes can become frustrated, particularly if they discover this during play. Be flexible in such cases, and always apply the rules consistently.

Write down rules changes and why you made them, and inform your players of changes *before* the situation comes up in the game. This lets you keep everything straight if you return to the game after a break or if you decide to change something back. It's also a common courtesy that prevents a lot of game-stopping arguments.

*Example: Chip is a Storyteller who dislikes Solar Exalted only being able to activate one Charm per action unless they use a Combo. He changes this for his game, letting Solars activate as many Charms as they want per action, assuming they have the Essence to do so. The Solars begin to wipe the floor with ridiculously strong opponents for a few actions, only to run out of Essence much faster. Two of his players who developed Combos for their characters before the rule change now feel completely ripped off.*

*Chip prefers more powerful Solar characters, so he decides to double all Solar Essence pools so they don't "run dry" so quickly. He also agrees with the players that their Combos are currently dead weight. He revises his rule so that multiple Charm use, Combo or not, requires one temporary Willpower and Combo Essence expenditure should be halved to encourage Combo creation. These changes drastically alter the typical **Exalted** game, but Chip and his players enjoy the changes.*

## Keeping Characters Unique

It's okay if characters have similar Abilities and Charms or belong to the same caste. If players have character ideas that overlap, have them work together to make sure their concepts aren't too similar. As long as nobody feels her character is overshadowed by another (whether by numbers on a sheet or involvement in the story), each should be able to fill her own niche. Exalted castes are broad and customizable enough that no two characters need be alike.

*Example: Todd's character Wrathful Serpent is a Night Caste with a focus on Snake Style martial arts. He works to liberate the slaves of Silk Hold and form them into an unstoppable army*

*of tiger warriors. Mark's character Omai is also a Night Caste, a champion in his farming village's annual wrestling competition before his Exaltation. Now, he's a happy-go-lucky wanderer trying to find his place in the world. Although they are of the same caste, Wrathful Serpent and Omai are unique enough to complement each other's presence.*

## Game Styles

There is no one true way to play **Exalted**, but there are basic assumptions many players bring to the table. If you need inspiration, or if your players want to try something different, use these style summaries for ideas. Each includes a "focus," a general recommendation for building characters to suit that style.

### "Vanilla" Exalted

The most obvious **Exalted** game involves the Solar Exalted returning to the world, evading the Wyld Hunt, establishing a power base, conquering the surrounding regions and fighting against the minions of the Scarlet Empress. This conflict could involve drawing a line in the sand and fighting any who cross it (such as Cathak house troops or an Imperial legion). It could mean working to damage specific interests (like House Cynis's Guild connections or the Realm's defense network). It could even mean actively seeking to bring down the Scarlet Dynasty, either from without or within (such as by forcing the Imperial Manse to explode through pinpoint, aerial geomantic assaults).

The players' characters eventually end up calling the shots in a reestablished Solar Deliberative remade in their image, defending their people and Creation from all who oppose them. This style can emphasize rebuilding and restoration of society from the tragic mess of things made by the Dragon-Blooded, or it could focus solely on the long, hard road to seizing the Imperial Manse. Look to the anime *Escaflowne* or the novel *Dune* for inspiration.

**Focus:** No change

### A Land Once Divided Must Unite

Similar to a standard game of **Exalted**, this style emphasizes the triumph of just, fair and wise rule over tyrants and the self-interested. The players' characters should seek to succeed through prodigious cunning, exceptional force of arms and superlative strategy, both on and off the battlefield.

This style of game can encompass a small region plagued with warring states or the whole of Creation. Generally, the players' characters start small with little to their name, but they prove themselves capable of military might and heroism. From there, they involve themselves in intrigues to support fair rulers and topple tyrants, for they must gain legitimacy in the eyes of the people before imposing their rule. The classic novel *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*, sometimes called "the Chinese *Iliad*," provides a perfect model for this style of series. Alexander the Great is a Western example for this series style, and the cartoon *Reign the Conqueror* features a thinly veiled Alexander in a world full of visual and conceptual inspiration for your **Exalted** campaign. You may find mass combat, social combat and the Mandate of Heaven system (see **The Exalted Storyteller's Companion**) useful for this style of play.

**Focus:** Social Backgrounds (Backing, Influence, etc.), War Ability

### "And I'll Form The Head!"

**Exalted** is usually over-the-top, but this style cranks it to nigh-ridiculous levels of excess. This game might involve Solar pilots with color-coded warstriders air-dropped from a mobile skyship fortress into hot battle zones where they fight hundreds of warstrider-using enemies, then return home to be embroiled in melodramatic, soap-opera relationships with Storyteller characters (or each other). The players' characters may sport Essence cannons, implosion bows and the ability to call tactical Wyld strikes upon their enemies. Powerful individuals and organizations will have complicated, intricate plots that might inadvertently destroy the world.

This style of game harks back to how Creation looked and worked in the First Age, but it can also be really fun if you're going for a *Final Fantasy* vibe. Be sure to throw in a fading Dragon King empire, an enraged behemoth that is slowly eating Creation and mysterious geodesic aerial fortresses that spill forth a surprise invasion of impossibly fast pyramid-shaped skyships.

**Focus:** Artifact Background

### Outlander

Perhaps Creation doesn't interest you much. Whether the Wyld, Yu-Shan, the Underworld, Malfeas or Elsewhere, **Exalted** is full of strange places where the laws of nature are more often suggestions. These places defy what we think of as reality and are home to alien creatures with agendas varying between odd and completely incomprehensible. An Outlander game brings the characters in close contact with these foreign elements.

The Storyteller should concentrate on the differences between Creation and the worlds beyond, highlighting the peculiar denizens and the strange logic by which they operate. This is an opportunity to show exactly why Creation and its occupants are important. According to legend, the Solar Exalted slew the Primordials, so be careful not to make the characters the smallest fish in a very big pond. The movers and shakers of the worlds beyond recognize Solars as a force of change and will react accordingly, whether by ignoring them, attempting to end a threat or seeking them as allies. Hayao Miyazaki's *Spirited Away* and *Princess Mononoke* provide excellent inspiration for the bizarre behavior of spirits or Fair Folk.

**Focus:** Essence 3+

### Miscellany

There are many other game styles you can apply to your **Exalted** game. Here are a few more suggestions:

*Project: Exalt* is a lighthearted, goofy take on the **Exalted** setting. Perhaps the characters are all teenagers in a Gold Faction academy or must bring a Deathlord's incursion to a halt by finding him a worthy date for an exclusive ball in Yu-Shan. This style doesn't take much of anything seriously and is mostly played for laughs. The *Slayers* anime is a good example of this style.

*Invasion!* presents your standard **Exalted** game with a massive influx of otherworldly beings intent upon conquering, enslaving or destroying Creation. The characters attempt to fight, delay or flee from the seemingly unstoppable enemy, be they Fair Folk, demons, the armies of the Deathlords, Autochthonian troops, Lunar-led beastmen tribes, angry spirits or anything else. Perhaps the characters can stop the invasion with some form of First Age superweapon after finding allies among those who would normally seek to destroy them.

*The Solars Who Came in from the Cold* assumes a game of intrigue and espionage, perhaps with the players' characters working for the Gold Faction, a merchant in Nexus, a particularly blasphemous Dynast or even a Deathlord using a proxy. The characters won't always know who to trust, but they must rely on brains, skills and cunning to survive rather than their combat capabilities.

*Sorcery & Sorcery* is similar to a standard **Exalted** game, except every character plays a sorcerer. Should the players wish to emphasize this aspect, the game can take on a life of its own as the Storyteller plays to their sorcerous ambitions.

*Walk the Earth* is perhaps the simplest form of game, for it follows the characters as they wander around Creation with no overriding purpose beyond a desire to see the world and have unique escapades in new places. This style of game is an **Exalted** travelogue, allowing Storytellers who enjoy altering Creation as they see fit to share cool, standalone stories set in a personalized backdrop.

## Location, Location, Location

Creation is huge. One inch on the map of Creation equals 800 miles. To put this in perspective, the period at the end of this sentence is roughly equivalent to four times the size of New York City. An area the size of your fingernail is over 30,000 square miles, about the size of South Carolina or Belgium. One square inch is approximately the total landmass of Alaska or Colombia. The Blessed Isle covers roughly one-and-a-half times as much land as the United States or China and is about equal in size to modern Russia.

The locations and regions described in Chapter One are numerous, but they offer many options for places to set your game. Read through the chapter to find areas that leap out at you. Make a list if you want, noting locations that sound cool. If you know the kinds of characters your players want to play, find places you think would offer opportunities for the characters to thrive. Narrow down your list until you have an area that provides the most opportunities for characters to develop their own stories.

## Travel

Traveling through Creation can take a lot of time, so use this to your advantage. It is rarely possible to move as the crow flies due to natural boundaries. If traveling by foot or with a cart, stopping only for supplies and following the lay of the land, characters could easily take three months to move an inch on the map. That's one full season of travel for you to play with, coming up with people or towns the characters encounter along the way. With horses, characters can cover the same distance in roughly half the time, but the travelers must take care of their mounts.

River travel can be faster but is limited by the river's direction, the speed of the river's flow and whether the boat travels with or against the current. A boat naturally flows downstream at the speed of the current, but to steer, it must somehow be propelled. Travel upstream is always slower, as boats must fight the current. Rivercraft can be sailed if the river is wide enough, but they are most commonly pulled by dray animals on a tow path close to the riverbanks. Boats can be rowed for extra speed, but only smaller vessels use this as their primary method of propulsion.

An average vessel can travel an inch on the map in six weeks if headed downstream, or three months upstream. Faster currents reduce downstream travel times while increasing upstream travel times. Likewise, slower currents reduce upstream travel times while increasing downstream travel times. Generally, the wider the river is, the slower the current flows. Flooding, typically seasonal, often increases the current. River travel over longer distances is usually limited by daylight hours, as navigating sandbars and the twists and turns of the river can be very dangerous in the dark without perfect familiarity with the river. Boats can take shelter nightly in a marina or drop anchor along riverbanks.

Ocean and sea travel is the fastest mundane method of travel in Creation. Assuming average winds and travel as the crow flies, a typical ship sailing over "open water" of an ocean or sea can travel one inch on the map in about a week. Hard rowing can as much as double the speed, but it is not sustainable over periods longer than a few days without risk of injury to the rowers. A combination of sailing and light rowing is more common, allowing a ship to travel an inch in five days. Sailors on open-water vessels generally work in shifts, allowing 24 hours of travel per day. Coastal travel is somewhat slower, with a vessel working its way along a coastline and putting in to ports or anchoring offshore throughout the course of its journey. Coastal travel combines the risks of night travel along rivers with the speed of open water travel. Ships traveling a coast generally do so with a mix of rowing and sailing. They can travel an inch on the map in between two and three weeks, depending upon the complexity of the coastline.

## Distance and Communication

Creation is populated with societies typically equivalent to a bronze or iron age level of technology. Natural boundaries such as mountains, oceans, dense forests, tundra and deserts discourage the formation of trade routes between cities. In many places, the concept of "nations" is nebulous at best, with city-states aware of their immediate neighbors and a vague notion of "exotic lands" 800 miles away—roughly an inch on the map of Creation. Most maps made in the Age of Sorrows are generally local and vague, accounting for

### Average Travel Times

The following assumes a moderate pace of travel over open terrain, with no stops but for re-supply or minor repairs. Use this chart as a thumbnail for travel over great distances, with the numbers indicating how far you can go within that period of time. All numbers are in miles.

To calculate the estimated travel time between two fixed points, first determine the distance between them and the method of travel to be used. Look to the travel type's row. Find the column with the highest number that can be subtracted from the distance and leave you with a positive result. Subtract as many times as necessary, with each subtraction one more of that column type. If the remainder is less than the column's number, you can move one column to the left and repeat the process. Total the travel time for your estimate.

Multiple methods of travel is easy to determine. Split land, river and ocean travel separately for the relevant distances. If necessary, split these further into the types of travel used in each leg. Add the total time together to determine the length of travel.

*Example: Dave's character Golden-Eyed Vengeance takes a riverboat to Nexus, which is 1,500 miles downstream from his river village. He uses the "downstream" row and finds 600 miles in the "monthly" column is the largest possible number. He subtracts this twice, leaving him with two months traveled and 300 miles to go. This is roughly half a month's travel, so it will take Golden-Eyed Vengeance two-and-a-half months to reach Nexus from his village by boat.*

| Travel Type | Hourly | Daily | Weekly | Monthly |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Land Travel** | | | | |
| Foot/cart | 3 | 15 | 75 | 250 |
| Drawn carriage | 4 | 20 | 100 | 350 |
| Horse | 6 | 30 | 150 | 500 |
| Horse relay, simple | 10 | 50 | 300 | 1,000 |
| Horse relay, elaborate | 15 | 100 | 600 | 2,000 |
| River Travel | | | | |
| Upstream, unassisted | 2 | 25 | 100 | 300 |
| Upstream, assisted | 3 | 30 | 120 | 360 |
| Downstream | 4 | 50 | 200 | 600 |
| **Ocean Travel** | | | | |
| Coastal travel | 6 | 100 | 400 | 1,200 |
| Sailing | 6 | 125 | 800 | 2,400 |
| Light rowing | 8 | 175 | 1,000 | 3,000 |
| Hard rowing | 12 | 250* | 1,200** | 4,800** |
| **Supernatural Travel** | | | | |
| Tireless rowing | 15 | 360 | 2,500 | 8,800 |
| Horseback, tireless | 25 | 600 | 4,200 | 15,000 |

* Mortal rowers safely maintain pace for (Stamina) days, resting 2x that amount

** Assumes one day hard rowing per two days rest, with sailing in the interim

major landmarks, changes of terrain, roads or trails, dangerous areas and the general direction of other significant cities or towns.

News travels at the pace of those who spread it, which generally means on foot and rarely in a straight line. It's often colored with embellishments, rumors, misunderstandings or just plain wrong information the further it spreads from the source. Faster methods include horseback or bird messengers. On an established road, with a series of horse-relay stations established to keep mounts fresh, a message can travel roughly 100 miles per day. Without roads or horse relays, a single rider can manage roughly 30 miles per day through open terrain or half that through rough terrain. Very difficult terrain usually requires a rider to walk her mount, dropping both to about 10 miles per day. Word delivered by riverboat spreads faster downstream, at 50 miles per day, than upstream, at 25 miles per day. Rough waters can drop this by half, with particularly bad conditions taking five times as long. Messages carried in open water sailing vessels travel 125 miles per day, or 250 miles per day of hard rowing, with bad weather reducing the distance covered. For this reason, coastal cities generally communicate faster than those inland.

Although rare, messenger birds trained to return to a certain location can carry messages in tubes attached to their legs. They can travel 30 miles per hour through unfamiliar terrain, with short bursts of speed up to twice that, and have a range of about 500 miles before they must take an extended rest. Beyond this distance, they have an increasingly greater chance of becoming lost. Messenger birds have their flaws, such as hostile forces looking to intercept the messages or natural predators. Also, messenger birds can make the trip in only one direction—they are trained to return "home." As such, they are often caged and carried with a messenger who releases them to travel home with their message.

One form of rapid communication uses a series of signal towers manned by sentries. The towers are within visual range of one another—often dozens of miles distant, sometimes over 100. When a predetermined signal must be sent over a great distance, the sentries in the first tower light a great bonfire at its top. The sentries in the next tower see this and light their own bonfire, and so on down the line until the predetermined message is delivered to its destination. The message itself must be determined ahead of time and is a one-way "yes" or "no" form of communication, generally some kind of confirmation, such as a call for aid or a signal to attack at dusk. Care must be taken to prevent provocateurs from lighting such towers prematurely to send false or early confirmation, and methods of doing so vary in sophistication from area to area.

### Supernatural Communication

Everything changes when magic or First Age technologies enter the picture. Immediate or near-immediate communication over longer distances is possible, with greater rarity as distance increases and communication delays decrease. Imperial legions travel with portable heliographs, large shuttered lights that can rapidly transmit information for as far as the naked eye or telescopes can see.

The Realm actively maintains a system of heliographs. Such devices are prohibitively expensive outside the Scarlet Empire, but travelers occasionally encounter decrepit Shogunate heliograph towers elsewhere. Heliography typically requires those communicating to do so in code, as anybody looking in the same general direction of a signal lamp will notice its presence at night. Use during daytime is more difficult to spot, but still possible if someone is specifically watching for it.

Sorcerers, creatures or spirits capable of providing near-instantaneous communication between two or more parties are highly sought after. The Realm uses an extensive network of freelance sorcerers to keep its various prefectures and satrapies in touch, usually with the Terrestrial Circle spell Infallible Messenger. Such relationships can often be a devil's bargain, for while such communications are almost always secure, the messenger typically remains aware of the parties involved. He could even learn the contents of the message itself, so it is in the best interest of all parties to utilize the most trustworthy of envoys. Rarely are those with such a prized ability killed outright for bearing witness to sensitive information, although it has been known to happen. Typically couriers privy to sensitive information are kept in a gilded cage of sorts, their every earthly desire provided for while they are kept under heavy guard to prevent capture or voluntary departure.

### Armies on the March

Well-trained armies in Creation can realistically march about 15 miles per day, or 25 to 30 miles with a forced march in relatively open terrain. Rough terrain can easily halve those distances. Armies typically march in column formation along roads, which leaves them vulnerable to attack but offers the fastest method of advancement. Cavalry and lightly armed scouts move in a screen before the army, ranging a few miles ahead to sweep for enemy troops. Marching armies often disrupt any other transportation along the road.

Crossroads, mountain passes and bridges offer strategic positions for armies. Armies cross rivers by fording and at bridges, either those already existing or over hastily built artificial fords or temporary bridges. Fodder for mounts travels with the baggage train, typically the slowest part of the army and found to its rear.

### The Importance of Supply

Food is a serious issue for armies. Range and direction is limited by food carried, available plunder and any storehouses along the way. One rider and mount together require about the same amount of food and supplies as four soldiers. Armies that cannot find enough food to survive will starve, disband or revolt against their commanders. There is often a high agricultural surplus in most civilized areas because the rice crops come in three to five times per annum.

The logistics capabilities of most societies means that a roving army of 5,000 is a force to be reckoned with. Defensive forces fortifying a central point such as a typical city-state can exceed this number by three or four times if kept in good supply, though troop quality can vary greatly as these forces generally include militias, conscripts and mercenaries in addition to a core of professional soldiers. Societies capable of fielding larger armies over sustained periods of time and distance can dominate substantial amounts of land.

### Naval Power

Navies or naval convoys are typically limited in speed by the slowest vessel amongst the pack, with faster outriders splitting off

from the main force when speed is a necessity. Imperial warships often have a heliograph setup of some kind. Imperial flagships also have some form of near-instant magical communication such as at least one sorcerer capable of casting Infallible Messenger. Squadrons of fighting vessels can form a blockade to prevent supplies or enemy vessels from traveling through, typically around a port or along common routes of travel. Armies transported by naval vessels must be sufficiently supplied for longer journeys, but those traveling in convoy can send supply ships to friendly ports or link up and redistribute supplies if necessary.

## Accelerated Travel

Various forms of non-standard travel and communication exist within Creation. The following is a short list detailing the approximate rate of travel for each. Italicized entries indicate travel is "as the crow flies," defined previously. "Treat as Exceptional" means that you should add in that modifier to more easily approximate the speed, although the mount isn't necessarily exceptional itself.

**Ships**

**Powered paddlewheel (First Age only):** Ocean "rowing" speeds. Engine quality and fuel requirements determines quality of rowing.

**Cranked paddlewheel:** River "upstream, assisted" speeds, even in the ocean.

**Haslanti iceship:** Ocean "sailing" speeds on ice and water. Iceships cannot be rowed.

**Haslanti air boat:** Ocean "sailing" speeds. Air boats cannot be rowed.

## Complex Travel

The travel distances on the travel type table do not account for natural or political boundaries, assuming travel occurs in roughly a straight line with no external delays. If you would prefer to add complexity, use the following modifiers. Use the slowest moving travel type if multiple people with multiple forms of locomotion are traveling together.

To apply modifiers you must first select a terrain type, then apply terrain modifiers and finally apply travel qualities. Multiply this fraction by relevant number on the travel type table, rounding up. If the total is 0, then travel is limited to no more than one mile per day, at the Storyteller's discretion.

**Terrain Types**

Select terrain type to determine base movement.

**Open:** x1 base movement. Includes rolling plains or tundra, calm waters and otherwise gentle terrain.

**Difficult:** x3/4 base movement. Mounts or wheeled vehicles at x1/2 base movement. Includes forests, deserts, ice plains, foothills, a river ford, seasonal squalls or otherwise rough terrain.

**Extreme:** x1/2 base movement. Mounts or wheeled vehicles at x0 base movement, but this can be improved with modifiers. Walking a mount brings a traveler to x1/4 base movement which is matched by mount. Includes marshes, mountains, dense forests, whitewater rapids or otherwise normally impassible terrain.

**Terrain Modifiers**

Total all positive and negative modifiers, then apply. They can never increase movement above x1 or below x0 base movement.

**Trails:** +1/8 movement. Includes any common throughways, river routes or beaten paths through an area. Found in any terrain type.

**Highways:** +1/8 movement (add to Trails bonus). Includes any form of well-maintained road system, such as that on the Blessed Isle. Found in open or difficult terrain. Storyteller may rule it is found in extreme terrain, but this is rare. Highways don't always go to your specific destination, but they can get you to the vicinity where you can take local trails. Land-based only.

**Long Distance:** -1/4 movement. Apply to any travel lasting more than a day. This accounts for natural and political borders, skirting around impassible terrain, et cetera.

**Political Upheaval:** -1/8 movement. General political unrest makes travel difficult. Times of great strife can cause delays, with roads being clogged with refugees, bridges being defunct or secret police running "security" checkpoints.

**Warzone:** -1/4 movement. Armies are on the march or fighting throughout this area, and neutral travelers must take care to provide proper authorization for travel or avoid troop movements. Reduce to -1/8 if an army sanctions the travel, and ignore if travelers are visibly members of a friendly army. However, there is a -3/4 movement penalty for traveling behind the lines of an enemy army, and doing so almost always ensures martial conflict. Getting through the lines in the first place should be no easy task.

**As the Crow Flies:** Ignore long distance terrain modifier, if applicable. Travel occurs in roughly a straight line and assumes the terrain type is open unless otherwise stated.

**Travel Qualities**

Unlike terrain modifiers, these qualities *can* increase movement above x1, but cannot reduce it below x0.

**Exceptional:** +1/8 movement. Applies to methods of conveyance only: mounts, vehicles and vessels. A fast or well-crewed form of travel. Resources are often one or two dots more expensive. Cannot be included with "substandard."

**Mounts**

**Riding bird (gryphon, hawk of Metagalapa):** Land "horse relay, simple" if three days or less, otherwise use "horseback." Mount is assumed to be exceptional when factoring prices and speed.

**Howdah-mounted bird (roc):** Land "horse relay, elaborate" if a week or less, otherwise use "horse relay, simple." Mount is enduring.

**Mammoth or yeddim:** Land "cart" if pulling a wagon or heavily burdened, otherwise use land "drawn carriage." Mount is enduring.

**Tyrant lizard:** Land "horse relay, simple." Mount is enduring.

## Travel and Communication Spells

Here is a quick summary of spells that speed travel or communication. Details are either found in this book or are left to other supplements. Italicized entries indicate travel is "as the crow flies."

**Terrestrial Circle**

**Becoming the Wood Friend:** Any forest, scrubland or cultivated field is considered open terrain.

**Calling the Wind's Kiss:** Maintain a ship's maximum speed, ignoring normal currents or small storms for ([Essence] hours + 2 motes per hour) to maintain. Treat difficult terrain as open, and apply the make haste bonus for the duration of the spell (ignoring [Stamina + Resistance] limits).

**Conjuring the Azure Chariot:** Flight capable at 200 miles per hour for as long as the sun is in the sky, and must be cast during daylight hours.

**Enduring:** +1/8 movement. Applies only to mounts. The mount has particularly great endurance and can travel farther than most creatures before needing rest.

**Accurate Maps:** +1/8 movement. Resources requirements are usually one dot for Open, two dots for Difficult and three dots for Extreme. Allows travelers to avoid known hazards. The Storyteller deems whether maps are "accurate." Travelers without at least Survival 1 do not get this bonus.

**Make Haste:** +1/4 movement (daily), +1/2 movement (hourly). Only applicable for land-based travel. For hourly distances, see page 130 regarding strenuous activity. For daily distances, replace "hours" with "days" to determine how long travelers can make haste and how many days of rest they require after doing so. Any penalty negates this quality. Armies performing forced marches are limited by their weakest members.

**Substandard:** -1/4 movement. Applies to methods of conveyance only: mounts, vehicles and vessels. A sluggish or unreliable form of travel. Resources are often one dot less expensive to purchase or rent. Cannot be included with "exceptional."

**Hunted/Hunting:** -1/4 movement. Travelers are actively hunted and are attempting to evade capture or are themselves hunters actively seeking a target over long distances.

**Large Group:** -1/4 movement. Guild caravans, armies, naval squadrons and other large groups traveling together have a difficult time coordinating their movement. Any amount of travelers larger than 500, mounted travelers greater than 200 or ships of more than 20 are considered to constitute a large group. Rapid communication capabilities through artifacts or sorcery reduce this factor by 1/8, and groups with extensive training on coordinated movement (i.e., elite troops or well-seasoned caravans) reduce it by 1/8. Both reductions stack.

**Unfamiliar Land:** -1/8 movement. Apply penalty if none of the travelers have ever been through this region. Ignore after three months' travel in the region, if travelers take a previously traveled route, if travelers have a local guide or if any traveler possesses Survival ••••+.

*Example: Dave's character Golden-Eyed Vengeance wants to travel from his river village to Nexus, 1,500 miles downstream. Dave's Storyteller determines that roughly 1/4 of it (375 miles) is considered difficult terrain due to a sluggish rainy season, but the other 3/4 of the journey (1,125 miles) is considered open.*

*The terrain modifiers include +1/8 for trails (a well-traveled waterway) and -1/4 for long distance (far longer than a day's travel), for a total of -1/8. The leg through difficult terrain will be 5/8 movement, while the leg through open will be 7/8 movement.*

*As for travel qualities, Golden-Eyed Vengeance hires an exceptional boat for +1/8 movement, and the Storyteller decides such a boat would have accurate maps for another +1/8, for a total of +1/4. The difficult leg is now 7/8 movement, while the open leg is 9/8 movement.*

*Looking at the distances for downstream river travel, the difficult leg of 375 miles uses weekly travel: (200 miles * 7/8) is 175 miles per week. Two weeks of travel is 350 miles, with 25 miles remainder. A day's travel is normally 50 miles, and even with the 7/8 movement factored in it will come out to just over half a day's travel.*

*The open leg of 1,125 miles uses monthly travel: (600 miles * 9/8) is 675 miles per month. One month of travel leaves 450 miles to go, so Dave switches to Weekly travel: (200 miles * 9/8) is 225 miles per week. This remaining 450 miles is exactly two weeks of open travel. Totaling everything together, Golden-Eyed Vengeance reaches Nexus in two months and a little more than half a day.*

### I Teleport Across Creation!

Barring certain spells with limited application such as Travel Without Distance, it is simply not possible to immediately teleport to any point in Creation. Certain beings or artifacts might have the epic capability of limited teleportation over great distances, but such an occurrence is so rare it should be unique and *always* carry a price. Travel between fixed locations separated by great distances is still legendary, but it could be considered slightly less rare than unique.

**Stormwind Rider:** 100 miles per hour land-based mount that treats terrain with obstacles as open. Spell requires concentration and lasts until the caster sets foot upon the ground.

**The Horse that Travels Earth and Water:** Use land "horse, tireless" until next sunrise, and treats all water as land of same terrain type.

**Travel Without Distance:** Instantaneously travel to any location seen before within (Essence x 10) miles.

**Viridian Mantle of Underwater Journeys:** Swim or walk on underwater surface as though at full running speed on land. Apply make haste bonus (ignoring [Stamina + Resistance] limits) as long as the subject remains underwater.

**Celestial Circle**

**Cloud Trapeze:** Flight capable at 100 miles per hour. Ends when sorcerer breaks concentration.

**Rolling Earth Carpet:** Ground changes to open terrain for caster and 100 marching humans/50 mounted riders, centered on caster for duration of committed Essence. Ignore long distance, political upheaval and warzone terrain modifiers and the hunted travel quality, although this spell does not preclude encounters with enemies.

**Swift Spirit of Winged Transportation:** Flight-capable ship travels 200 miles per hour at one mile above the ground until it reaches water-based destination. Only flat-bottomed ships can set down safely on land.

**Solar Circle**

**Chariot of the Blazing Sun:** Flight capable at 750 miles per hour until destination reached, sorcerer dispels it or the sun leaves the sky.

## Character Connections

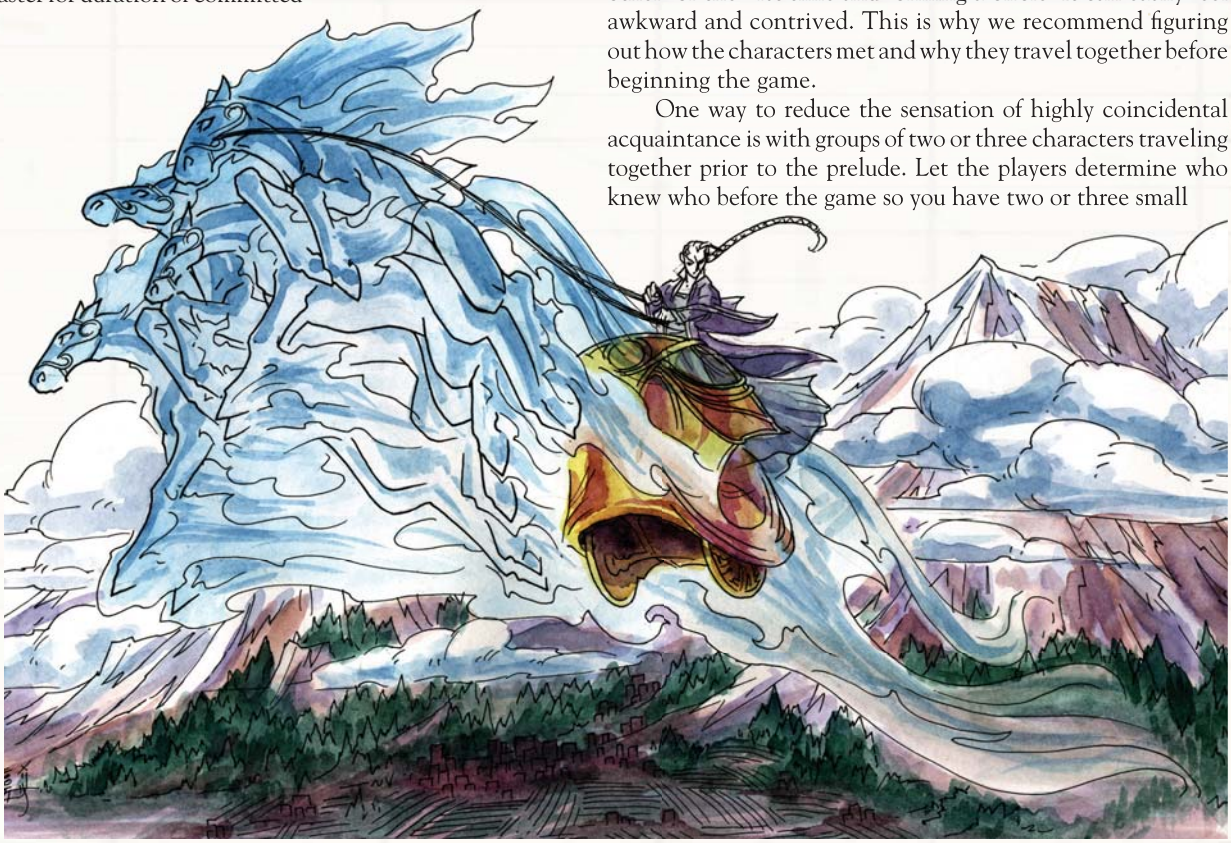
Will the characters meet during the first session, or do they already know one another when the game begins? Just how do a handful of inexperienced demigods wandering around the entirety of Creation have a remote chance of traveling together?

It may help to tell your players that their characters begin the game together, but ask them how they met and why they stay with one another. If they come up with something particularly interesting that presents you with a lot of story ideas, you can provide a one-time award of one bonus point that must be spent before the first session. Their explanation is subject to your approval, so be sure they know beforehand the topics you want them to avoid—for example, antagonists such as deathknights, organizations such as the Lintha pirates or locations such as Nexus.

### Solar Cliques

There is a certain conceit to characters meeting each other for the first time and forming a circle. It can easily feel awkward and contrived. This is why we recommend figuring out how the characters met and why they travel together before beginning the game.

One way to reduce the sensation of highly coincidental acquaintance is with groups of two or three characters traveling together prior to the prelude. Let the players determine who knew who before the game so you have two or three small



groups of characters. It can be much easier to figure out how to bring a few small groups together than an odd assortment of five characters, and doing so can lead to interesting interactions and alliances within the circle.

### New Characters in Ongoing Games

Should you find yourself in a situation where you must introduce a new character to the circle during a series, figure out at least three circumstances under which your character would join the circle, and let the other players and Storyteller know prior to the game. If you can't or don't want to do this (either because you aren't sure yet or you dislike talking about motivations "out of character"), make sure you give the other characters leeway. If you don't, you could find that you've maneuvered yourself out of the game. Consider it your character's first major challenge.

## Forming a Circle

Players who are having a tough time coming up with reasons to form a circle can look at the following ideas for game openings.

### The Enemy of my Enemy

The easiest way for characters to encounter one another is when they are on the run from a greater menace. The Wyld Hunt is the most organized one, but Creation is not exactly short on inordinate threats to Solars. Exalts can find it extremely difficult to conceal their presence, and solitary travelers with the power of the Unconquered Sun are likely to seek each other out if they become aware of other Solars in the area. Characters can come from all across Creation and won't necessarily need to know one another, but by the end of the prelude, they should decide to stick together for their own safety… at least for the time being.

### The Gods Will It

The characters are thrust together by will of the gods themselves. The Unconquered Sun, Luna, one of the Five Maidens or a being of equivalent caliber exerts an otherworldly impetus to unite the characters. If this pull is not subtle, Zenith characters could witness direct prophecy while Solars from other castes receive metaphorical dreams full of places they have never been. The Exalts travel to find one another, for their visions clearly indicate the importance of the other characters to the accomplishment of their divine task. This backdrop works well in a game with an emphasis on the more mythic elements of Creation.

### Supernatural Conspiracy

There is no shortage of people looking to improve their position, and naïve Solars can make perfect tools if properly controlled. At least, that's how the ambitious and the arrogant view it, be they the Sidereal Gold Faction, a collection of little gods, an elemental court, a particularly amoral Dynast, a cunning Deathlord or any number of supernatural movers and shakers. While the characters begin the game serving a power they are told is greater than their own, they should have many opportunities to disabuse their controllers of this notion.

### Many Birds With One Stone

The hidden Sidereal advisors to the Wyld Hunt are quite pragmatic in their business. They recognize that newly reincarnated Solars remain relatively weak in the days of an underfunded Wyld Hunt. So, in order to receive more troops and materiel devoted to this task, they devise a system of herding multiple Solar Exalted together where they can be defeated with a single concentrated attack. The characters are the first targets of this new system and must work together to escape the wrath of the Scarlet Empire.

### Don't Get Mad, I'm Acting In Character!

You might feel your character would avoid the other characters for various reasons worked into your background, which you want to keep secret from the rest of the group until some undetermined future point. That's fine, but you might want to give the other *players* some warning. Let them know your character is "acting strange" because of your history. Without this basic heads-up, the players themselves could take it personally and literally leave your uninvolved character behind.

If the other *players* are getting annoyed with you, either you need to stop what you're doing and figure out how to make this character work, or you should come up with a new character who has a reason to work with the circle. Devotion to a cause so great that prevents you from joining a circle under any circumstance means you have created a Storyteller character, not a player's character.

### Beyond the Second Breath

The characters knew one another before they became Solar Exalted. Perhaps they were all close friends. Whatever their background, they are now Exalts who stick together because of their previous connections. The implications of the Unconquered Sun Exalting people who knew each other beforehand could easily become a major plot point.

### Friends Beyond Death

Each Solar soul that grafts itself to a promising mortal has borne witness to hundreds of former lives. Sometimes, memory fragments of these former lives bleed through to the mortal currently containing the soul. The characters' fractured memories all share a common thread confirming that, in a previous life, the Exalts knew one another quite well. This can provide a group impetus to uncover the truth behind their past lives. Did they fight back-to-back until the very end, or did they become the bitterest of enemies? Will history repeat itself, or will they carve their own destiny into the skin of Creation?

## Creating a Series

Now that you know who is playing what, what topics interest your players and where you want to begin your game, you can start to work on actually creating your series. You'll need to develop the areas where the characters begin, create some memorable characters who the Exalts can meet, flesh out the antagonists of your setting and figure out some general approaches to the story.

It's alright if you do this along with the earlier steps while getting started. You might need to do some revision once you have more of a handle on what the players want to do with their characters. If the players want to have absolutely nothing to do with the North, you had better change any plans you had for them to find the Ice Sword in the Ice Cave—or at least explain why there's an Ice Cave in the desert wastes of the South.

## Develop an Area

You have a general idea, so now you need to get specific. Draw a basic map of the area surrounding the starting location with major landmarks such as cities, rivers, roads and important historical locations included. (Don't worry if you aren't an artist—it doesn't need to be fancy.) Come up with cool setting-pieces that the characters can visit. Write up important extras the characters will meet, as well as any antagonists. Figure out neighboring areas and their general attitudes. Create any groups or factions that the characters could fight, join or encounter. Jot down ideas for neat artifacts that might be discovered and used by the characters.

At this stage, nothing needs to be fully developed. You don't absolutely need to create individual statistics for all eight assassin lieutenants serving the Naked Jackal—you just need to know that the Naked Jackal has a group of scary lieutenants who could be challenging in a fight. Detailing everything beyond a rough outline happens when you have a better idea how everything interacts.

If you want to include the Fair Folk in your game and you come up with an idea for a cool villain you want to turn into the main antagonist, you might now think it better for the Naked Jackal to start off as a potential ally. Keep things fairly nebulous so you can move things around if you think of something cooler later on.

### Start Small

Before you can go about introducing the players to your piece of Creation, you need to merge the ideas you came up with earlier into the starting location your players helped develop. Spend time developing extras the characters see often at the beginning of the game. Come up with distinctive places they can consider home. When you begin, you want to ground them to the setting by getting them involved with the locals and their issues.

True, the characters are larger than life, but the players (particularly those new to **Exalted** or to gaming in general) should begin with a framework of some kind before they run off to conquer the world. Giving them a sense of "home" can help you show what they have lost or emphasize how far they have progressed. Also, it can make things easier on you while you're trying to get a handle on the setting yourself.

### Think Big

**Exalted** is a world of big people with bigger ideas, so there is no such thing as "too much" when planning your game. The First Age Lunar with her beastman host could be the former lover of a character's Solar ancestor. The Realm's inevitable civil war should involve some desperate factions seeking strange yet powerful bedfellows in the form of the characters. Blow up Nexus. Let a Guildmaster's rapacious greed form a conspiracy with Fair Folk lords to literally enslave a whole country. Drop a gleaming scarlet star onto Gem. Include a Deathlord faction attempting to destroy an elemental pole to unhinge Creation. If you're feeling really ambitious, do all of the above at once. Whatever you do, make it really big.

### Flesh It Out

Take a look at all the dots you have before you and start connecting them together. Fill in the ideas you wrote down earlier. Detail your starting location, and focus on the nearby areas next without making them quite as comprehensive. Figure out which antagonists, factions or countries have an interest in the region and where they or their agents would be, as well as what specific objectives they have for the local area. Leave the rest blank for now, because at this point you don't know where the characters will go.

If you enjoy coming up with an exhaustively detailed world where everything is developed ahead of time, more power to you. However, remember that the characters are going to be the primary movers and shakers in the world, so don't make things so rigid that you're stuck with something neither you nor the players want later on. Leave yourself some wiggle room to allow for change.

### Employ Your Players

Don't feel you need to be the only one who comes up with all this stuff. Your players are a great resource, particularly because their characters drive the game. Ask them for help with ideas they'd like to see in the game, such as a town built into the trunk of a half-mile-diameter redwood or legendary manses made of gold and lost to the depths of the Western ocean. Encourage them to come up with neat artifacts or wonders that made life easier in the First Age, such as bowls that warm any food placed within or ornithopters constructed from austrech parts.

If the characters are generally well informed of the resistance they can expect in an area, let players who enjoy developing statistics for antagonists or extras do so. Leave the important antagonists for yourself, but otherwise, let excited players make their mark on Creation.

Be careful when you take this approach. Some players get very invested in what they create to the point of considering it "theirs," and they could become upset when you change it or don't use it in your game. Give them boundaries, and make sure to communicate during this process. The players must present you with a concept before going ahead with the actual design. Make sure everybody understands that they are providing you with a blueprint that you will likely change and that you might not end up using.

# Running the Game

**Exalted** is unlike a lot of roleplaying games when it comes to the level of control provided to the players. This can be daunting to even the most experienced Storytellers, to say nothing of those running a roleplaying game for the first time. The important thing for both you and the players to realize is that the characters control the direction of the game. While they regularly react to circumstances you provide them, you will just as often be the one improvising a response to what they are doing.

## The Prelude

You might want to run a short session called a prelude so the players get a feel for their characters' personalities. We recommend you do this with each player individually before the first session.

Preludes generally take 30 minutes to an hour and don't involve many rolls of the dice. They focus more on roleplaying and how the character interacts with various extras. You should run a prelude only if the player is initially interested and understands the purpose. If it starts to feel at all drawn out or the player isn't getting into it, wrap it up.

## The First Session

The first session of the series introduces your players to the game. Do everything you can to start it with a bang. Instead of the characters meeting in a tea house before leaving to search through some ancient ruins for an artifact, have them start the game with the artifact in hand, escaping from the collapsing ancient ruins and being chased by beastmen hordes, then end it with a relaxing tea house.

Think of the opening to a James Bond movie—you see the action-packed culmination of an exciting adventure that seems unrelated to what comes next, but that later on ties into the plot. Aim for this by setting an over-the-top scene and asking your players to describe exactly how they got into this predicament. Cut them some slack and let them get creative, because you can tie that into the ongoing series later.

If this is your first time running **Exalted** or if you have players who are new to the game, you should primarily use this session to test out the limits of the system and show the players' characters exactly how cool they can be. Go lenient with stunt requirements to get people in the mood, giving examples of the kinds of things they can do before letting them run with it. Encourage them to focus on the basics, to test out any rules they don't fully understand and to use any Charms they're itching to activate. Remember to emphasize that Solars can use only one Charm per action except in a Combo.

While the characters should feel threatened in dangerous situations, killing off a character in the first session is discouraged. The point is not to show the players exactly how easily you can destroy their characters, but for your players to test out what does and doesn't work. Should your players be very timid and hesitant to put themselves into dangerous situations, you might want to tell them flat out that if they "die" in this session they will actually just be incapacitated instead. They will recover partially or fully by the next session with some kind of permanent scar—nothing that affects them mechanically, but something that looks cool or scary. Be careful to mention this only if your players are having a hard time getting involved, as implying they are completely invulnerable can ruin a sense of challenge for some players.

### Reworking the Characters

You might want to allow players who were unsatisfied with the way their character performed in the first session to rework their characters. If any player finds a character fundamentally boring to play or poorly balanced, now is the time to change it. However, be sure to take an active role with the player to smooth out the rough spots. Some players might want to completely remove non-combat Charms in favor of ass-kicking. If your first session was mostly action, encourage them to keep any non-combat Charms you foresee coming up in your game. While combat Charms can certainly tip the balance in a fight, non-combat Charms can sway whole nations.

### What Do Solars Do?

The short answer is "anything they want." The longer answer is that while Solars have returned to their birthright as gods among mortals, their near-boundless capability is limited only by their lack of experience, allies and resources. Consequently, most Solars end up looking to gain any or all of the above. They form nations, break the landscape and change Creation for good or ill. See the "Game Styles" section in this chapter (p. 262) if you prefer a framework to help you develop how this can come about.

Think about it like this: Imagine the souls of the founders of the United States of America suddenly reemerging and fusing with people in the modern day. These contemporary individuals see our world through the filter of the Founding Fathers and wonder what went wrong between then and today. They then set out to restore the centuries-old ideals to their modern world.

This contemporary outlook is important to understand. While one of these people might bear the soul and partial memories of a founder—as well as the will to return the country to an ideal of greatness—she will be able to filter away the elements of the past that just didn't work, as well as account for modern issues. If you aren't familiar with American history, you can easily substitute the birth of Islam, China's Qin dynasty or Kemal Atatürk's 20-year transformation of the Ottoman Empire into the Republic of Turkey.

## Beyond the First Session

The first session lays the groundwork for your first **Exalted** series. It is vital to recognize that the series itself is a shared experience. You are not dictating an unchangeable narrative, displaying the elaborate schemes of antagonists and extras punctuated by the occasional interruption of the players' characters. Instead, you are crafting a fun experience based around the characters themselves. Talk frankly with your players about what they want out of the game, and make sure you get their feedback, or you'll never be able to give them what they want.

### Kung-Fu Fighting

The hallmark of a good kung-fu movie is the inclusion of exciting, often over-the-top action scenes. Think of the spectacular tea house sword slaughter in *Kill Bill: Volume 1*, the nighttime rooftop chase in *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*, Jackie Chan's bell-tower showdown in *Shanghai Noon* or the defense of the calligraphy school in *Hero*. While the actual fighting is entertaining in and of itself, these scenes are memorable for the various setting-pieces and how the characters involved operate within them.

Though a roleplaying game is clearly not a kung-fu movie, you can easily use those movies as inspiration. Look at what makes them thrilling and fun, then use those elements for

your own game. Check out what goes into a cool setting-piece, particularly the overtly dangerous elements, as well as commonplace items of setting elements that can affect the direction of a fight. Most importantly, make the environments interactive. If the players are hesitant to get in on the action, have extras or antagonists attempt to use the environment against the characters. Provide them with opportunities, and let the stunts take care of the rest.

If you know that a fight scene could break out in a cool setting-piece, figure out ahead of time what can happen with the environment itself. Work out the things that will happen from tick to tick, regardless of character involvement, and what can happen depending upon the characters' interactions with the environment. Allow Lore, Occult, Craft or other Ability rolls to pick up on some of these setting elements.

*Example: In a battle at a First Age foundry, superheated steam billows every tenth tick as water pours from massive barrels upon glowing warstrider components, obscuring vision and potentially injuring those too close to the source. The first character, extra or antagonist hit with a 20+ raw damage blow will slam into and destroy the ladle controls. Every fifth tick thereafter, the foundry ladle begins pouring hundreds of gallons of glowing white adamant at random locations from above the molding area. This makes the obscuring steam all the more dangerous. Characters (or antagonists!) making successful (Wits + Craft) rolls can direct the ladle themselves to drop burning adamant death from above.*

### Action vs. Combat

A sense of action can prevent the tedium of back-and-forth slugging matches that can potentially slow down an **Exalted** game. Sure, the deathknight known as Resplendent Lotus-Eater of 10,000 Sanguine Sutras deals a base damage of 25L, but if you turn that into a brutal back-and-forth slugging match, who cares? The next enemy with base 25L damage will be just as meaningless as this one if it comes down to yet another fight scene in an empty room or barren courtyard.

Instead, place the fight somewhere unexpected like atop the spearpoints of a close-packed legion of troops, with the Lotus-Eater using an Abyssal Charm to run atop the moving spear-points and slay officers below him. Characters with mobility Charms such as Graceful Crane Stance or Monkey Leap Technique can fight atop or around the spears as well, while the surprised legionnaires take haphazard potshots at anybody they can reach.

Have the confused troops ebb and flow like a rippling sea of iron as they try to compensate for the astounding things going on above their heads, but don't bother tracking their statistics. Just give the mass a few attempted hits with spears at enemies above them. If enough officers die, have the legion scatter.

Another way to keep things fresh is to provide the characters with a sense of urgency. Perhaps scattering the legion is Lotus-Eater's goal, which is why the Exalts must stop him. Although the Solars characters have no love for the Realm, they know the legion is needed here to stop the rapidly approaching zombie troops sent by a Deathlord calling itself Angry Dreams of Vengeance in the Waking Hour. They can't bring this up with the legion's commanders, who wouldn't listen anyway. Instead, they must stop the Lotus-Eater so the legion can delay the zombies, which gives the Solars time to stop the Delicate Balance of Concupiscent Marrow and Carnelian Kisses from completing her casting of Rain of Doom upon the Lap.

Come up with action scenes that don't involve fights, or temporarily suspend fights with action that forces the characters to cease what they're doing. Environmental dangers such as a panicking crowd, unexpected geysers erupting from the ground, an oncoming avalanche, tidal waves, yeddim stampedes, collapsing buildings, a shower of burning rocks falling from the sky, storms of jagged metal hail or cut trees plunging to the ground with characters upon the branches can completely change the course of play. Giving the players a sense of movement and threat of harm to their characters can be much more effective than the hundredth fight with Dragon-Blooded assassins.

## Experience

Character growth is measured with numerical points provided by the Storyteller to the players, known as experience.

There are two kinds of experience: *banked* and *total* experi-

ence. Banked experience is any experience stored by the player for future improvement of a character's traits. Players who "spend" experience in this manner reduce their banked experience by the amount spent.

Total experience is the total amount received from the Storyteller and is never spent or reduced. When the Storyteller awards experience, the player adds this amount to banked and total experience. It is not necessary to track total experience if your Storyteller doesn't need you to track it.

*Example: Mike's character Brilliant Monkey currently has three points of banked experience and 29 points of total experience. He records this on his character sheet as "3 / 29" in the experience section. If he receives five points of experience from his Storyteller, he now has eight points of banked experience and 34 points of total experience. Although Mike can spend his banked experience to improve his character, the total experience is never reduced.*

## Awarding Experience

The Storyteller awards experience at the end of every session. There are five main sources of experience:

**Basic Award: 4 points.** Players who show up receive this award. Four to five hours of play is a good benchmark for a session, so if you run significantly shorter sessions you can reduce the amount to two points. Longer regular sessions could award six, but this applies only to games planned for around seven or more hours, not sessions that occasionally "run long."

**Bonus Award: 1 point.** If a player comes up with something really cool, makes everybody in the game collapse with laughter or portrays a character particularly well, hand out this award at the end of the session. Be sure to award good ideas as well as good acting, for some players are uncomfortable being the center of attention. Others have a hard time making everybody laugh. This should be an award for good play, not a personality bonus.

**Stunt Award: 1 point.** Once per session, a player can opt to receive this award when the Storyteller confirms a natural three-die stunt. The Storyteller records this and provides it to the player when next awarding experience. Players who opt to take this award do *not* also regain Essence or Willpower. Players cannot achieve this award again until after receiving their next basic award, no matter how many three-die stunts they perform.

**Story Award: 5 points.** The players accomplished a significant story goal, either set for themselves or determined secretly by you. If you find yourself handing out this award more than once every three sessions, you need to make the story award more difficult to accomplish. If you award it less than once every eight sessions, you need to create more easily attainable goals.

**Long-Term Award: Variable.** Occasionally, a Storyteller might determine that months or years pass between games, and during this time, players earn a basic trickle of experience. See "Long-Term Experience Awards" on p. 275 for details.

## Storytellers Tracking Experience

We recommend Storytellers track the experience awarded to each player. Write down the names of the characters on a piece of paper and create columns with each session's date. During a session when a player gets a bonus or stunt award, put a mark down next to his name for that session. At the end of the session, mark down basic or story awards and award the experience to each player. It might help to distinctly mark story goals to help remember when the players completed them.

While not essential, tracking experience helps gauge the rough experience level of the players. Combined with total experience scores on character sheets, it also helps answer any questions your players have about whether or not they received an experience award in the previous session.

It's generally never a good idea to reduce basic awards or to provide "negative experience awards." The only times you should reduce a basic award is when players are hours late without warning or a good explanation, or if they intentionally derail the game. In such a case, you have larger problems at hand than experience-point distribution.

## Spending Experience

Players can spend a character's banked experience to purchase new traits or increase existing ones. Increasing a trait costs banked experience equal to a multiple of its *current* rating. This is the value of the trait *before* it is raised. Players should always bring up the desired increase with their Storyteller.

*Example: Marcus wants to increase the Martial Arts Ability of Jin, the Storm's Eye, from 4 to 5. Jin is Dawn Caste, so Martial Arts is one of his Caste Abilities. Increasing a Caste Ability costs (rating x 2) – 1, which will cost Jin (4 x 2) – 1, or 7 experience points. Should his Storyteller approve, Marcus can subtract 7 from Jin's banked experience and fill in one more dot of Martial Arts.*

You can spend experience toward a trait even if you don't currently have enough experience to increase the trait. To do so, reduce your banked experience and write how much you have spent on your character sheet along with the total you need to reach. When you meet this goal, increase the trait and erase the note.

## Training

Characters have a difficult time becoming better at what they do without practice, and improvement can slow to a crawl with nobody to show them the ropes. The training times listed in the table assume the character has some form of tutor, which assumes somebody at least as proficient in the trait as the rank the character seeks to obtain. Without a tutor, double all times. Your character cannot begin his training until you spend all the experience points to raise that trait.

Training times assume a character trains for eight hours per day and six days per week, so if a character is unable to train at this rate, increase the time accordingly. Characters can train longer than eight hours per day or more than six days per week, but doing so does not shorten the training time. It is possible to suspend training time for as long as a month without having to begin anew.

Solar Exalted characters do not require tutelage or training to increase Favored or Caste Abilities. They are Creation's true innovators and masterless in both. Use the (Minimum Ability) days formula whether with a tutor or without.

## Increasing Magical Traits

Solar Exalted can immediately raise Essence to 3 by spending experience. However, increasing Essence above 3 requires

### Experience Costs

| Trait Increase | Cost | Training Times |
|---|---|---|
| Attribute | rating x 4 | (rating) months |
| Favored or Caste Ability | (rating x 2) – 1 | immediate |
| Out-of-Caste Ability | rating x 2 | (rating) weeks |
| Essence (to 3) | rating x 8 | immediate |
| Essence (above 3) | rating x 8 | (rating) months |
| Virtue | rating x 3* | immediate |
| Willpower | rating x 2 | immediate |
| New Trait | Cost | Training Times |
| Ability | 3 | 3 weeks |
| Specialty | 3** | 3 weeks |
| Favored/Caste Charm | 8 | (Min. Ability) days |
| Out-of-Caste Charm | 10 | (Min. Ability + Min. Essence) days |
| Non-Solar Charms | 16*** | (Min. Ability + Min. Essence) weeks |
| Spell (Occult Favored/Caste) | 8 | (spell circle) weeks |
| Spell (Out-of-caste Occult) | 10 | (spell circle) weeks |

* Increasing Virtues after character creation does not increase a character's Willpower

** Max three per Ability, but you can purchase the same specialty multiple times

*** Eclipse Caste only: includes spirit Charms and Charms of other Exalted types

meditation and a long pilgrimage, typically to a place associated with the sun, such as a mountain (which is closer to the sun) or a desert (which is sun-blasted). There, the character must meditate and train for months. Essence cannot be increased higher than 5 in a mortal lifetime. See the "Elder Exalts" section for more details.

Charms are similar to mundane Abilities, as a Charm can be taught by a tutor who already possesses that Charm. Creating a new Charm takes four times as long as training to learn a new one, if the character has the materials and capability to do so. An Eclipse Caste cannot create a new non-Solar Charm unless he possesses at least Essence 6. Even then, doing so requires legendary artifacts, long-lost tools, ancient knowledge and access to laboratories not seen since the First Age. These details are left for the Storyteller to further develop.

Creating a Combo takes longer than learning a new Charm. Figure out the minimum training times of all the Charms involved, and add them together to determine the Combo training time if the character is tutored by someone with the Combo. If the character is not tutored but has details of the Combo's existence, double the time. If you are inventing a new Combo, quadruple the time.

To learn a spell, a sorcerer needs the text of the spell itself, as well as a quiet place to study and a private area in which to practice. If any one of these elements is missing, the sorcerer simply cannot learn the spell. Inventing a spell uses a base time of a number of months relative to the Circle of the spell. (That is, a Terrestrial Circle spell takes one month, a Celestial Circle spell takes two, and a Solar Circle spell takes three months.) Without suitable sorcerous materials or a well-stocked place to test theories, that base time is measured in years instead of months. In both cases, a character inventing a spell is incapable of being tutored, so all times are automatically doubled.

### New Characters in Old Games

Occasionally, it becomes necessary to bring a new character into an existing game. Perhaps a previous character died, or maybe you've decided to add another player to the game. Should the new character begin with the total amount of experience received by the other characters or with a lesser amount?

Talk with your players. Some might resent having a new character show up who didn't "earn the experience," and they might want the player to come up with a starting character. Others might want any new character to start on an equal footing, as Exalts often need all the help they can get. You must also be sure the player of the new character doesn't feel hobbled or powerless. Ultimately, your decision is final, but be sure you get player input before you make it. It's generally better to do this before a game begins so it doesn't cause problems later on.

The easiest decision is to add the experience you've provided as basic or story awards. Then, for every 10 points or fraction thereof, have the player of the new character roll 1d10. The player totals these rolls and receives that much banked experience prior to the character's first session. Don't worry about training times, but any new powerful sorcerers need an explanation of where they learned their spells.

If you don't track awards yourself, average the amount of total experience on the other characters' sheets and multiply that by 75% to discount any bonus or stunt awards received by your players—those should only ever be received as rewards for actual play. Have the character use the 1d10 method with this rough number.

## Elder Exalts

Not every waking moment of a character's life needs to be played out in a session. Instead, you can run an **Exalted** game that regularly spans years between stories or a game with elder Solar characters who begin with hundreds of years behind them.

## Essence and Maximums

Elder Exalts can raise their Essence, Attributes and Abilities above 5 using the same formula as described previously, but they must first increase their permanent Essence score. For example, an Essence of 6 allows characters to raise Attributes and Abilities to 6. Solar Exalts can increase Abilities and Attribute above this maximum with rare artifacts or other supernatural means, but they may never spend experience to do so without first raising the Essence score. Exalted cannot raise their Virtues above 5.

Exalted must also meet certain age requirements before raising Essence above five dots. Terrestrial Exalted may never raise permanent Essence above 7 without external wondrous means, such as strict dietary requirements, rare hearthstones, complex meditation regimens and other similar effects.

## Long-Term Experience Awards

Use the following table to determine how much experience to award to the characters, as well as the maximum Essence score. This applies to all types of Exalted, although their maximum age limits and experience costs vary between type. (Dragon-Blooded only rarely reach 300 years before dying of old age, for example, which generally limits them to a maximum Essence of 7 without the aid of artifacts or other supernatural means.)

Elder Exalts should spend long-term experience in a 4:3:2:1 ratio of Charms and Combos, Abilities and Specialties, Attributes and Virtues, and Essence and Willpower (respectively). The easiest way to break this expenditure down is to divide the total experience by 10, then multiply the result by each "column" of this 4:3:2:1 ratio to figure out how much the character should spend in each respective category. Characters can't hoard this experience in massive experience banks; they should spend most of it before the next session. No elder character should have more banked experience than her current age divided by 10. The remainder is lost unless she spends it ahead, as detailed earlier.

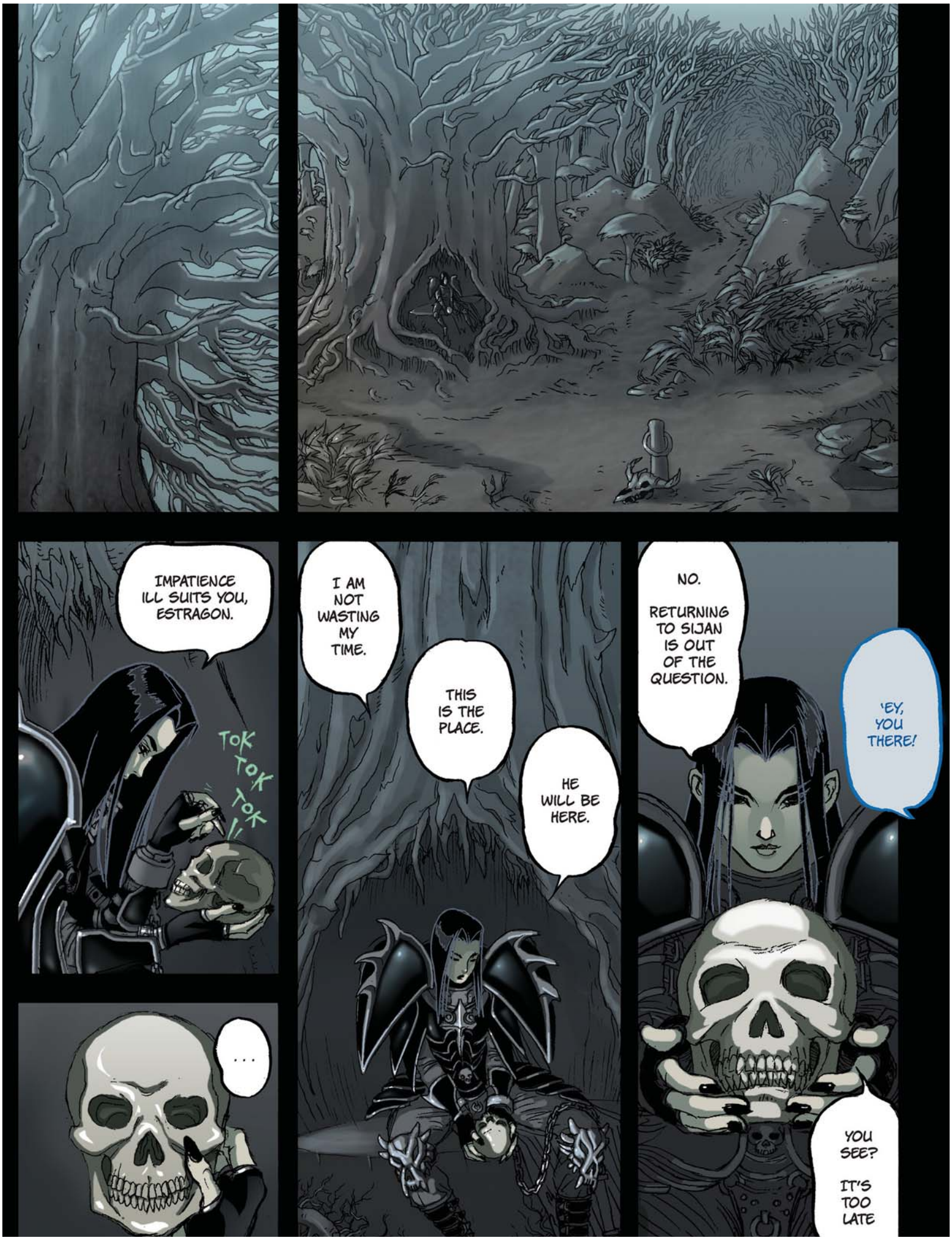
*Example: In Matt's elder Exalt game, everybody plays 600-year-old Solars who Exalted at 25 years old. Based on the long-term experience awards table, Jasmine's character would start with 1,000 + 750 + ([100 – 25] x 10) experience points—2,500 experience points. She divides this number by 10 (for 250) and then multiplies the result by each "column" of the experience ratio. Her experience is broken down as 1,000:750:500:250 respectively, to be spent toward the areas listed above. (That is, 1,000 toward Charms and Combos, 750 to be spent on Abilities and Specialties, and so on.) The maximum Essence she can currently have is 8. The most experience she should keep banked is 60.*

| Age | Max Essence | Annual Experience* | Base Experience** |
|---|---|---|---|
| Exaltation to 99*** | 5 | 10 | None |
| 100 to 249 | 6 | 5 | +[(100 – Exaltation age) x 10] |
| 250 to 499 | 7 | 4 | +750 |
| 500 to 999 | 8 | 3 | +1,000 |
| 1,000+ | 9+ | 2 | +1,500 |

* Character receives half this amount (round down) if three seasons or more pass between sessions; nothing if under three seasons.

** The number in this column is a quick, cumulative experience total if you begin with a character in this age bracket.

*** Calculate experience in this time period beginning with the age of the character at Exaltation.


IMPATIENCE ILL SUITS YOU, ESTRAGON.
TOK TOK TOK
...
I AM NOT WASTING MY TIME.
THIS IS THE PLACE.
HE WILL BE HERE.
NO.
RETURNING TO SIJAN IS OUT OF THE QUESTION.
'EY, YOU THERE!
YOU SEE?
IT'S TOO LATE

YOU THE PRINCE OF SHADOWS?
RAAR
AARGH!!!
I AM.
I'M POZZO; THIS HERE'S LUCKY. YOUR MISTRESS SENT US DOWN HERE TO HELP YOU FIND SOMETHIN'.
DIDN'T SAY WHAT.
RRRR
I'M TO RETRIEVE A COMRADE IN ARMS NAMED THE MELKIN FOOL IN RED. SHE VENTURED HEARTWARD INTO THIS BLACK CHASE, BUT NOW IS LONG OVERDUE.
LET'S GO, THEN. SOONER IN; SOONER OUT.
INDEED, BUT BE THOROUGH. I DEPLORE INCAUTIOUS HASTE.
FAREWELL, ESTRAGON.

# CHAPTER SEVEN
# ANTAGONISTS

Creation is a dangerous place, especially for the Chosen of the Sun. Slayers of the Neverborn, jailers of the Yozis, demonized Anathema to adherents of the Immaculate faith—the reborn Solar Exalted are hated and hunted by man, Exalt, god and demon alike. What follows is a chapter devoted to those beings—from animal to Exalt—with which the Solar Exalted may come into conflict in the course of their heroic odysseys. Though each of these beings is a potential threat to the Lawgivers, each is also a potential ally. It is the nature of the Solar Exalted to turn enemies into allies, be it through loyal friendship and camaraderie or violence and supernatural coercion. Therefore, any of the following can prove friend or foe to a Solar, depending on the nature and goals of the Lawgiver in question.

## Mortals

Destined to live and die in a handful of years, victims of illness and frailty, mortals are pawns in the games of the gods, but they cannot be entirely discounted. They are a part of Creation, which the Exalted are destined to rule and sworn to protect. Celestial Exalted are born of mortal blood, and ties of blood and affection can outweigh the destinies of the gods. Also, Exalts depend on mortal farmers and merchants for the wealth of their kingdoms. The bulk of their armies will be mortal born, and they depend on mortal spies and servants for information.

### Farmers/Townsmen/Citizens/Slaves

The peasantry and slaves, the bakers and hunters—those who toil offer their services in exchange for protection and security. The common folk are the source of a kingdom's wealth, whether it's farming the rice of the Eastern valleys or mining the fire gems of the South, and too much abuse will cause even these simple folk to rise up in rebellion or become sullen and passively resistant. While they are usually poorly educated, that does not mean the common people are unintelligent. A poacher knows the wild lands and safe paths in her territory, and the local healer knows of all the recent births and deaths in her village. Properly managed, the information and talents found among mortals is priceless.

Most folk dress according to their station, whether it's the rough rope sandals and cotton jackets of the Realm farm-

ing slaves or the mammoth ivory and fox furs of a Northern bond-bride. In cities, places of relative wealth and safety, ornamentation is more common: tattoos and gold, embroidered silks and fine leather. In the wilder lands, clothes are much more utilitarian—heavy leather, sturdy canvas and cotton—and weapons are never out of reach.

**Attributes:** Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 2; Charisma 2, Manipulation 2, Appearance 2; Perception 3, Intelligence 2, Wits 3
**Virtues:** Compassion 2, Conviction 1, Temperance 2, Valor 1
**Abilities:** Athletics 1, Awareness 1, Craft (Wood) 2, Dodge 1, Martial Arts 1, Melee 1, Presence 1, Socialize 1, Survival 2
**Join Battle:** 4
**Attacks:**
Punch: Speed 5, Accuracy 4, Damage 2B, Defense 5, Rate 3
Kick: Speed 5, Accuracy 3, Damage 5B, Defense 1, Rate 3
Clinch: Speed 6, Accuracy 3, Damage 2B, Defense –, Rate 1
**Soak:** 0L/2B
**Health Levels:** -0/-1/-1/-2/-2/-4/Incap
**Dodge DV:** 2 **Willpower:** 4
**Essence:** 1
**Other Notes:** This character is a noncombatant and almost always an extra.

## Soldiers/Bandits/Pirates

The bulk of any Exalt's army is made up of simple soldiers: footmen, light cavalry and archers. Turned against law and land, soldiers become bandits and pirates, serving only their greed and base desires. Though mortal soldiers will never approach even the Dragon-Blooded in skill and ferocity, they will stand and fight with stubborn courage if their leaders have gained their loyalty and respect. Even bandits and pirates, in the face of god-given strength, can be moved to serve an Exalt and her purposes at least for a time. More than a few Exalts have drawn their mortal forces from the ranks of thieves, pirates and rogues.

Weapons are a soldier's wealth and life. Even the poorest bandit keeps his machete honed and clean and his armor in good repair. In these days of strife, when supplies are short, it is sometimes difficult to tell the worn and isolated (but still loyal) legion from a raiding party.

The satrapies within the Realm are allowed a certain number of personal troops, though since the Empress's disappearance, many rulers have ignored the lawful limits on their troops and have gathered up enough skilled soldiers to create their own armies. Personal troops within the lands controlled by the Realm must be clearly marked with their lord's mon (i.e., their crest). In the wilder lands at the edges of Creation, there is no such easy way to differentiate lawful armed troops from a band of criminals. The common folk are usually forbidden weapons, to prevent uprisings and rebellions.

In the shadows of the glittering legions of the Realm, beneath the wild courage of the Northern barbarian warriors, less even than the unskilled conscripted troops found in the South are the bandits: thieves, murderers, pirates and rapists. Found in this unwholesome company are also those whose only crime was to anger those in power: political exiles, insurgents, rebels and heretics. Criminals across Creation—if they are not summarily executed— are usually marked or branded so all who encounter them know their crime. Thieves run the risk of losing their wandering fingers, escaped slaves can lose a foot or toes, brigands who assault honest citizens are usually branded across their faces, and rapists are castrated. Immaculate courts brand the forehead of convicted heretics with the symbol of Anathema.

## Green Troops/Common Outlaws

**Attributes:** Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 2; Charisma 2, Manipulation 2, Appearance 2 (1 for Outlaws); Perception 2, Intelligence 2, Wits 2 (3 for Outlaws)
**Virtues:** Compassion 2, Conviction 2, Temperance 2, Valor 2
**Abilities:** Athletics 1, Awareness 1, Craft (Water) 1, Dodge 2, Integrity (1 for Outlaws), Larceny (1 for Outlaws), Martial Arts 1, Melee 1, Resistance 1, Stealth 1 (2 for Outlaws), Socialize 2 (1 for Outlaws), Survival 1, War 2
**Join Battle:** 3 (4 for Outlaws)
**Attacks:**
Punch: Speed 5, Accuracy 4, Damage 2B, Defense 5, Rate 3
Kick: Speed 5, Accuracy 3, Damage 5B, Defense 1, Rate 2
Clinch: Speed 6, Accuracy 3, Damage 2B Defense –, Rate 1
Knife: Speed 5, Accuracy 4, Damage 4L, Defense 3, Rate 3
Short Sword: Speed 4, Accuracy 5, Damage 5L, Defense 4, Rate 2
Spear: Speed 5, Accuracy 4, Damage 6L/7L, Defense 5, Rate 2
**Soak:** 3L/6B (Buff jacket, 3L/4B, -1 mobility penalty)
**Health Levels:** -0/-1/-1/-2/-2/-4/Incap
**Dodge DV:** 3/2 **Willpower:** 4
**Essence:** 1
**Other Notes:** These are the conscripts from Chiaroscuro, desperate resistance fighters in Thorns or newly outlawed criminals from the civilized East. They are often extras.

## Regular Troops/Rebels

**Attributes:** Strength 3, Dexterity 2, Stamina 3; Charisma 2, Manipulation 2, Appearance 2; Perception 2, Intelligence 2, Wits 2
**Virtues:** Compassion 2, Conviction 3, Temperance 2, Valor 3
**Abilities:** Archery 2, Athletics 2, Awareness 2, Bureaucracy 1, Craft (Fire) 1, Dodge 1, Integrity 1, Linguistics 1, Larceny (1 for Rebels), Martial Arts 2, Medicine 1, Melee 3, Occult 1, Presence 1, Resistance 2, Socialize 1, Stealth 2, Survival 1, War 3
**Join Battle:** 4
**Attacks:**
Punch: Speed 5, Accuracy 5, Damage 3B, Defense 6, Rate 3
Kick: Speed 5, Accuracy 4, Damage 6B, Defense 2, Rate 2
Clinch: Speed 6, Accuracy 4, Damage 3B, Defense –, Rate 1
Chopping Sword: Speed 4, Accuracy 6, Damage 8L/2, Defense 4, Rate 2
Knife: Speed 5, Accuracy 6, Damage 5L, Defense 5, Rate 3
Self Bow: Speed 6, Accuracy 4, Damage 7L*, Range 150, Rate 2
Uses frog crotch arrows. Doubles soak of armor.
**Soak:** 3L/7B (Buff jacket, 3L/4B, -1 mobility penalty, and target shield, +1 difficulty to hit, -1 mobility penalty)
**Health Levels:** -0/-1/-1/-2/-2/-4/Incap
**Dodge DV:** 1/0 **Willpower:** 6
**Essence:** 1
**Other Notes:** The bulk of any army; equipped by their lords, they range from the swift-riding raiders of the South to the steady infantry of the Realm. They are often extras.

## Elite Soldiers/Raiders

**Attributes:** Strength 3, Dexterity 3, Stamina 4; Charisma 2, Manipulation 2 (3 for Criminals), Appearance 2 (1 for Raiders); Perception 3, Intelligence 2, Wits 3
**Virtues:** Compassion 2, Conviction 3, Temperance 2, Valor 4
**Abilities:** Archery 2, Athletics 3, Awareness 3, Bureaucracy 2 (1 for Raiders), Craft (Fire) 2, Dodge 2, Integrity 2 (3 for Raiders), Investigation 2, (Larceny 2 for Raiders), Linguistics 3, Lore 1, Martial Arts 3, Medicine 2, Melee 4, Occult 2, Presence 2, Resistance 3 (Disease +1), Ride 2, Socialize 2, Stealth 2 (3 for Raiders), Survival 3, Thrown 2, War 3
**Join Battle:** 6
**Attacks:**
Punch: Speed 5, Accuracy 7, Damage 3B, Defense 8, Rate 3
Kick: Speed 5, Accuracy 6, Damage 6B, Defense 4, Rate 2
Clinch: Speed 6, Accuracy 6, Damage 3B, Defense –, Rate 1
Chopping Sword: Speed 4, Accuracy 8, Damage 8L/2, Defense 6, Rate 2
Knife: Speed 5, Accuracy 8, Damage 5L, Defense 7, Rate 3
Self Bow: Speed 6, Accuracy 5, Damage 7L*, Range 150 Rate 2
* Uses frog crotch arrows. Doubles soak of armor.
**Soak:** 6L/11B (Chain hauberk, 6L/7B, -3 mobility penalty)
**Health Levels:** -0/-1/-1/-2/-2/-4/Incap
**Dodge DV:** 3/2 **Willpower:** 7
**Essence:** 1
**Other Notes:** These are the bandit kings, revolutionary leaders, special forces, commanders of mortal armies or barbarian warlords of Creation.

## Mortal Hero

The Exalted are not the only ones who stand fast in these days of chaos. Even a mortal, though without the powers and grand destinies of the Exalted, may become a hero. She might begin as a conscript from the armies of Chiaroscuro or a chieftain's daughter from the North, then rise up from the undistinguished mass of her fellows to defend the innocent, to protect the worthy and to keep the borders of Creation from collapsing into darkness. (See also page 81 for information on how to play mortal characters in the world of **Exalted**.)

**Attributes:** Strength 5, Dexterity 4, Stamina 5; Charisma 3, Manipulation 3, Appearance 2; Perception 3, Intelligence 2, Wits 4
**Virtues:** Compassion 2, Conviction 4, Temperance 2, Valor 4
**Abilities:** Archery 2, Athletics 3, Awareness 3 (Ambush +1), Bureaucracy 2, Craft (Earth) 2, Dodge 4, Integrity 3, Investigation 3, Larceny 2, Linguistics 2, Lore 3, Martial Arts 4, Medicine 2, Melee 4 (Hammer +1), Occult 2, Presence 2, Resistance 3 (Disease +1), Ride 3, Socialize 4, Stealth 3, Survival 3, Thrown 4, War 4 (Guerrilla Warfare +1)
**Merit:** Large
**Join Battle:** 7
**Attacks:**
Punch: Speed 5, Accuracy 9, Damage 5B, Defense 10, Rate 3
Kick: Speed 5, Accuracy 8, Damage 8B, Defense 6, Rate 2
Clinch: Speed 6, Accuracy 8, Damage 5B, Defense –, Rate 1
Hammer: Speed 5, Accuracy 11, Damage 13B/2, Defense 10, Rate 3
Knife: Speed 5, Accuracy 9, Damage 7L, Defense 8, Rate 3
Short Spear: Speed 5, Accuracy 11, Damage 10L, Defense 10, Rate 2
Composite Bow: Speed 6, Accuracy 6, Damage 7L*, Range 250, Rate 3
* Uses broadhead arrows.
**Soak:** 6L/13B (Lamellar, 6L/8B, -2 mobility penalty)
**Health Levels:** -0/-0/-1/-1/-2/-2/-4/Incap
**Dodge DV:** 5/4 **Willpower:** 8
**Essence:** 2
**Other Notes:** This hero has a hammer and a short spear of excellent quality and a walkaway charm (x2), which allows the hero to subtract two successes from an attacker's damage roll once per story.

## Savants/Elders/Thaumaturges

Magic is not solely the province of the Exalted. There are mortal-born thaumaturges as well.

Most villages can lay claim to a healer, a blessing-wife or a speaker for the dead. Some even serve as leaders, providing guidance gained through consultations with the local spirits or dead ancestors. In areas heavily controlled by the Immaculate Order, these mortals

are usually monks. Some mortal savants rise above these minor magics, reaching power undreamed of by their fellow mortals but still far beneath that of even a newly Exalted Lawgiver.

Mortal thaumaturges can assist young Twilight Caste Solars on the path of sorcerous initiation, and it is possible to find a young Exalt serving her first or third station with a mortal thaumaturge. Though the circles of Exalted sorcery are beyond their power, mortal thaumaturges wrest power from Creation through long ritual, the alchemy of plants, animals and minerals and draining years of study.

**Attributes:** Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3; Charisma 3, Manipulation 3, Appearance 2; Perception 2, Intelligence 4, Wits 3
**Virtues:** Compassion 2, Conviction 3, Temperance 3, Valor 2
**Abilities:** Athletics 1, Awareness 2, Bureaucracy 3, Craft (Fire) 3, Dodge 1, Integrity 1, Investigation 3, Larceny 1, Linguistics 2, Lore 4, Martial Arts 1, Medicine 3, Occult 4 (Art of Alchemy +3, Art of Elemental Summoning +3), Performance 2 (Incantation +1), Presence 1, Resistance 2 (Poisons +1), Socialize 3, Stealth 1, Survival 1
**Backgrounds**: Allies 2, Contacts 3, Followers 1, Resources 3
**Join Battle:** 5
**Attacks:**
Punch: Speed 5, Accuracy 5, Damage 2B, Defense 6, Rate 3
Kick: Speed 6, Accuracy 4, Damage 5B, Defense 2, Rate 2
Clinch: Speed 6, Accuracy 4, Damage 2B, Defense –, Rate 1
Knife: Speed 5, Accuracy 4, Damage 4L, Defense 3, Rate 3
**Soak:** 3L/7B (Buff jacket, 3L/4B, -1 mobility penalty)
**Health Levels:** -0/-1/-1/-2/-2/-4/Incap
**Dodge DV:** 3 **Willpower:** 6
**Essence:** 2
**Other Notes:** This thaumaturge's resources are tied up in an extensive alchemical laboratory. Both her summoning attempts and her alchemical attempts are at a +1 difficulty if not performed in the Eastern parts of Creation, as she specializes in summoning Eastern elementals (primarily wood elementals). She can produce various healing tinctures, draughts against disease and poisons (as well as produce effective poisons) and minor potions to temporarily increase Physical Attributes.

## God-Bloods

Half-mortal, half-spirit, the God-Blooded are children of two worlds. Born in mortal bodies, God-Bloods also have gifts from their inhuman parents. They may have the ability to change shape, the power to call the Wyld or the ability to sense demonic influence. God-Bloods can bring unique strengths and talents to an Exalt's service, or they can be a cunning and unexpectedly dangerous obstacle to her plans.

The God-Blooded are usually physically different from their mortal kin, reflecting their immortal ancestry in both mind and form. Children born of ghost parents are often sickly and pallid looking, half-faerie children share their parents deceptive, willowy attractiveness, and demon children may have iron claws, blood red eyes or serpent's tongues. The children of the little gods usually have some physical mark from their godly parent's symbology, and the half-blood children of Exalted are almost always incredibly fit, strong and beautiful.

**Attributes:** Strength 4, Dexterity 4, Stamina 3; Charisma 3, Manipulation 3, Appearance 2; Perception 3, Intelligence 4, Wits 3
**Virtues:** Compassion 2, Conviction 4, Temperance 4, Valor 3
**Abilities:** Athletics 2, Awareness 1, Bureaucracy 1, Dodge 2, Integrity 1, Investigation 2, Linguistics 1, Lore 2, Martial Arts 3, Medicine 1, Melee 4, Occult 3, Presence 1, Resistance 3, Ride 2, Socialize 1, Stealth 1, Survival 2, Thrown 2, War 4
**Backgrounds**: Artifact 1, Influence 2, Patron 1 (Elemental Parent), Resources 3, Inheritance 3 (God-Blood)
**Powers:** Elemental Expression, which allows her the control over the element of wood that any wood elemental possesses (see "Elemental Powers" on p. 302). Using this power as an attack requires a successful Willpower roll, and the attacks can be dodged or parried normally.

**Join Battle:** 4
**Attacks:**
Punch: Speed 5, Accuracy 8, Damage 4B, Defense 9, Rate 3
Kick: Speed 5, Accuracy 7, Damage 7B, Defense 5, Rate 2
Clinch: Speed 6, Accuracy 7, Damage 4B, Defense –, Rate 1
Knife: Speed 5, Accuracy 9, Damage 6L, Defense 8, Rate 3
Leaf War Fan: Speed 5, Accuracy 10, Damage 5L, Defense 10, Rate 3
**Soak:** 5L/9B (Fossil-wood armor 4L/6B, -2 mobility penalty)
**Health Levels:** -0/-1/-1/-2/-2/-4/Incap
**Dodge DV:** 4/3 **Willpower:** 8
**Essence:** 2 **Essence Pool:** 33
**Other Notes:** This God-Blood is a child of a wood elemental parent. She has innate powers to attune to the spirit world with a cost of one Willpower or three motes of Essence, and thereafter, she can sense entrances to sanctums and immaterial spirits within range of her senses for one scene. Her fossil-wood armor is a gift from her elemental parent, and her delicate looking war fans are swift and deadly weapons.

## Beastmen

Neither animal nor human nor Exalted, beastmen are the children of the Lunar Exalted. Living on the edges of the Wyld, beastmen are resistant to being warped, mentally or physically, by it. They live in bands or small tribes, worshiping their Lunar parents as gods, fighting incursions by the Fair Folk and raising the next generation of beastmen to follow after them. All adult beastmen are cunning warriors, for that is what their parents bred them for, and they are skilled at traveling and surviving on the edges of the Wyld. They are also strongly loyal to their Lunar parents, and any Exalt who seeks beastmen allies will usually have to deal with the Lunar who sired them.

See pages 288-291 for information on Wyld mutations and how to create beastmen and other mutants.

**Wolfmen**

Found most frequently in the North, wolfmen live in deep pine forests and the icy mountains, their mournful songs of worship heard miles distant when the moon is full.

They are one of the more organized and social of beastmen breeds, gathering in tribes, allying with each other, ruled by chieftains and following their Lunar gods in wars of conquest or religious frenzy. Some wolfmen tribes lead wars of horrific genocide, attempting to destroy the civilization they see in-

truding on the order of nature. Others keep human slaves and trade with unscrupulous bandits or Guildsmen.

For the most part, human slaves in wolfmen territories are allowed to live their lives much as any one else. They farm, they herd, they build, and they surrender the fruits of their fields and the hard work of their hands to their bestial masters whenever a tribe should come by. Humans in wolfmen territories have no rights, for wolfmen themselves have no law beyond obedience to their Lunar parents and the law of strength. Should a wolfmen tribe lose control of a territory, they may well slaughter the humans, along with the herd animals, and burn the fields in order to keep that wealth from falling into enemy hands.

**Attributes:** Strength 4, Dexterity 2, Stamina 4; Charisma 3, Manipulation 2, Appearance 1; Perception 3, Intelligence 2, Wits 3

**Virtues:** Compassion 2, Conviction 3, Temperance 1, Valor 3

**Abilities:** Athletics 2, Awareness 3, Dodge 2, Integrity 1, Linguistics 3, Lore 1, Martial Arts 2, Medicine 1, Melee 2 (Axe +2), Occult 2, Presence 2, Resistance 3, Socialize 1, Stealth 2, Survival 2 (Native Environment +1), Thrown 2, War 3

**Join Battle:** 6

**Attacks:**

Bite: Speed 2, Accuracy 3, Damage 4L, Defense –, Rate 1

Punch: Speed 5, Accuracy 5, Damage 4B, Defense 6, Rate 3

Kick: Speed 5, Accuracy 4, Damage 7B, Defense 2, Rate 2

Clinch: Speed 6, Accuracy 4, Damage 4B, Defense –, Rate 1

Great Axe: Speed 6, Accuracy 7, Damage 11L/2, Defense 4, Rate 2

Javelin (hand-to-hand): Speed 4, Accuracy 5, Damage 7L, Defense 5, Rate 2

Javelin (thrown): Speed 4, Accuracy 5, Damage 7L, Range 30, Rate 2

**Soak:** 8L/11B (Chain hauberk 6L/7B, -3 mobility penalty)

**Health Levels:** -0/-1/-1/-1/-2/-2/-2/-4/Incap

**Dodge DV:** 2/0 **Willpower:** 6

**Essence:** 1

**Other Notes:** Most common in the Northeast, these creatures have the Wyld mutations fangs, enhanced smell and sight (can see in the dark), fur and large. They are often extras.

## Creatures of the Wyld

Beyond the Realm, beyond all the cities and towns, beyond the barbarian lands and ragged edges of the shadowlands, Creation thins and the Wyld begins.

The changes of the Wyld begin gradually: Colors, sounds and distance may be distorted, then the beasts and plants become twisted, never appearing the same from moment to moment. Without protection, the Charms of the Exalted, the favor of the Fair Folk or the watchful eye of a god, the deeper Wyld is more than deadly—for in death, the spirit moves onto a new life, but destruction in the Wyld twists the soul as well as the body.

In the Wyld, nothing is fixed, not the hour of the day, the earth under one's feet or the purity of the air. There are places where the trees are made of human limbs or the water is made of blood or iron or laughter—where there are dogs made of fire and children of water. It is not a place for Creation's creatures. Full understanding of the Wyld eludes even the most powerful of the Exalted.

The Wyld is like a persistent tide eating away at the edges of Creation. In the West, it is the Endless Sea, the place where water and sky become one and sailors become seals and are killed by their own kinfolk. In the East it is the Forest, where branches are music and leaves may be human hands. To the North, the Wyld begins as frozen mist, still, bitter and deadly. In the South, it is the land of colorless fire. Without the stabilizing influence of the Elemental Pole of Earth, the Wyld would overrun Creation, and the world would be lost to madness.

The ignorant claim that the Anathema are part of the Wyld, dedicated to tearing down the Realm and all the security it brings to Creation. Those who study the Anathema, or the Wyld, know better. In their days of power, the Exalted fought the Wyld, as the Realm does in the Second Age. Though corrupt and wicked, the Anathema were enemies of the Wyld and those born from it. The Wyld does have its champions, however: the uncanny Fair Folk with their powers over reality and their hunger for dreams.

The Wyld is not a uniform sea of chaos. The tamest areas of the Wyld are the Bordermarches. Here, the lands, the sun, time and distance follow the laws of Creation. It is only the beasts, the strange plants and the occasional tricks of the eye that mark this land as Wyld. It is still a terrible place, however, full of degenerate savages. Those who live there are victims of frequent raids by the Fair Folk. Beyond the Bordermarches are the Middlemarches. Here, birds may fly underwater, fish swim in the air, snow can burn, or the stars shine only when the sun is in the sky. The Fair Folk travel freely here. Things in the Middlemarches are usually still recognizable as rocks or air or fish, though they may be given new and bizarre roles. Changes here usually happen gradually. The Deep Wyld lies beyond the Middlemarches, and few denizens of Creation are capable of surviving here. Nothing remains unchanged for long. Time and distance have no real meaning. A mountain might be on the horizon one moment, then a singing pig beside you the next. Things that live in the Deep Wyld cannot survive in Creation, and in turn, things of Creation cannot survive here unprotected.

The Wyld shifts according to the phases of the moon. During the nights of the full moon, the Wyld runs rampant, and those places that were once safe Bordermarches are washed into the Middlemarches (and in turn, the Middlemarches drown in the Deep Wyld). During the new moon, the Wyld is at its ebb and, for those who must travel within it, daytime during the new moon is the safest time. The Storyteller may wish to measure the tide of the Wyld depending on the phases of the moon.

Those who travel the Wyld do not return unscathed. Whether it's a lifetime of nightmares or physical or mental

### Wyld Exposure

| Terrain | Difficulty | Frequency | Success | Failure | Botch |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Bordermarches | 2 | Monthly | - | Pox | Derangement |
| Middlemarches | 3 | Weekly | Pox | Pox, Affliction | Derangement |
| Deep Wyld | 5 | Daily | Affliction | Derangement | Abomination |

mutations, the Wyld always leaves its mark. Players of characters traveling in the Wyld must make (Willpower + Essence) rolls, frequency and difficulty determined by area, for their characters to avoid mutation. Exalted are more resistant to the Wyld than others are. Dragon-Blooded add one die to their pool, Sidereal Exalted add two dice, and Solars and Abyssals add three. See "The Touch of the Wyld" on page 288 for the various mutations available.

## The Fair Folk

No village, no matter how small, and no city, no matter how great, is ignorant of the Fair Folk. Whispers of child theft and dreamy suggestions of madness frighten queens and catamites, beggars and sorcerers alike. Even the Dragon-Blooded—even the Celestial Exalted—are vulnerable to the Fair Folk.

For most, the Fair Folk never rise beyond nightmare and story. Those in the Threshold might know them better as slavers who buy unlucky children or as raiders who drive entire villages to madness. Some might even know a Fair One as a lord or mistress, one who has taken a place in Creation for his or her own reasons. Faeries that chose to live openly in human civilization learn to be subtle in their hungers, but they are as dangerous as their Wyld kindred. A few Eclipse Caste Exalted and Moonshadow Caste Abyssals may know a Fair One as an oathsworn ally, but such oaths, even sanctified by the Exalted, bind only that single faerie and its own servitors. There is no nation or empire of Fair Folk to treaty with, and any tale the Fair Folk spin to the contrary is only that—a faerie tale.

When Fair Folk come into Creation, they take on forms pleasing to themselves and useful to the tasks they wish to accomplish in the world beyond the Wyld. Most Fair Folk overwhelm the senses with their resplendent beauty. They are creatures of fluid grace, supple elegance and glorious perfection. The faerie queens and kings wear robes of iridescent feathers or of golden thread so fine it floats on the breeze like down, and their faces are strong in nobility and stamped with willful arrogance. Few mortals can meet a Fair One's eyes without suffering nightmares and visions. Jewels of spectacular brilliance and perfect shape decorate even the least of their tools, and the craftsmanship of a simple sandal lace exceeds dreams of mortal perfection. The will and the intent of its owner is stamped on every item a Fair One owns from her weapons to her clothes—even to the form of her own body and the shapes of her servants.

Fair Folk reveal their elemental associations in the forms they take, whether it's the lion-headed warriors of the South, the creeping, serpent-faced hobgoblins of the East or the seductive fox maidens of the North. Their bodies and gear also reveal their general alliances. A party of goblins might share the same blue-green-gold scale pattern as their noble master's robes for example.

The Wyld creates the Fair Folk, and it sustains them. Anywhere there is Wyld taint, a faerie can survive indefinitely. The nourishment of the Wyld is nothing, however, compared to the delight of human emotion. The Fair Folk feed on gossamer dreams, craving the spark of humanity. It is this hunger that draws the Fair Folk from their world to Creation. They buy slaves or kidnap the unwary, draining them until the humans are left dull, witless husks that are abandoned back in Creation as a warning for any who find themselves tempted by the beauty of faerie. Fair Folk feed only on the willing and the beguiled. When they do, make a Virtue roll for the Virtue they wish to feed on, and for every success, the victim loses one dot of Willpower or Virtue, attacker's choice. The Fair Folk gains 10 points of temporary Essence. Victims who reach 0 in their Willpower become zombie-like slaves, and those who reach 0 in a Virtue cannot resist any rolls against that Virtue.

The powers of the faerie are not like any other powers in Creation, for they are not part of Creation. Their abilities resemble a very refined form of thaumaturgy, and they do not depend on their traits for power like Exalted do. Faerie magics are fed from their Essence, and any individual Fair One will have a limited number of powers. Faerie powers cannot modify their own Abilities or bodies because, when they take a physical form, they have already perfected it. Part of the act of putting on flesh includes defining the types of powers the Fair One will wield while in that body, and the faerie cannot change those powers without recreating her flesh, which cannot be done anywhere less Wyld than the Marchlands or a Freehold. Most Fair Folk have Attributes well above human norms, and they neither bleed nor become ill. However, Fair Folk do have well known and deadly weaknesses. All Fair Folk take aggravated damage from iron—even the touch of it burns—and they cannot break a sworn promise.

### Fair Folk Diplomats

Sometimes seen in the courts of the outer kingdoms, these diplomats come into Creation to represent the will and voice of their own rulers. They are not rulers within the Wyld, but only powerful servants, though they may have the look of queens, the wealth of an empire or the panoply of a warlord. Diplomats are always accompanied by at least one cataphract and several hobgoblins to serve and protect them from the more obvious threats of Creation. They are quite able to manage the subtleties of politics and influence on their own.

**Attributes:** Strength 4, Dexterity 5, Stamina 4; Charisma 6, Manipulation 7, Appearance 6; Perception 5, Intelligence 6, Wits 5

**Virtues:** Compassion 1, Conviction 5, Temperance 2, Valor 4

**Abilities:** Archery 3, Athletics 4, Awareness 5, Bureaucracy 4, Craft (Glamour) 4, Dodge 5, Integrity 1, Linguistics 2, Martial Arts 4, Melee 4, Occult 2, Performance 6, Presence 6, Resistance 3 (Wyld +1), Ride 4, Stealth 5, Socialize 7, War 4

**Fair Folk Charms:**

*Beguile*—With this power, the faerie becomes utterly charming, worthy of loyalty, obedience and even love. Characters who are beguiled are vulnerable to the faerie's feeding as well as susceptible to the creature's most outrageous suggestions. Victims believe in the faerie's honesty and wisdom, and they will obey requests given to the best of their intelligence and strength. Beguile does not cloud or dull a victim's mind. She merely believes whatever the faerie says, against all logic. A beguiled character will not obey requests to commit suicide, but she will willingly put herself in overwhelming danger for the faerie's sake, such as by fighting her own friends. She will also believe the most ridiculous stories, even against the evidence of her own senses. When casting a beguilement, the Storyteller rolls the diplomat's (Charisma + Socialize), the result of which determines the number of scenes the beguilement lasts. Characters whose ([Wits or Willpower] + Essence) are greater

than the faerie's Charisma are immune to such beguilement. Beguile is a power carried in the faerie's voice and cannot be cast in the middle of battle or on characters who cannot or will not listen, such as a rampaging mob. Beguile costs 10 motes and one Willpower to use.

*Glamour*—Glamour is the power to create illusions so convincing and perfect that they are effectively real. Glamour cannot create any of the magical materials or truly magical items such as hearthstones. It can create fabulous animals, intelligent beings, winged carts and even duplicate items the faerie has never seen, such as Realm money or the "lost" third copy of *The Book of Three Circles*. How long a Glamour lasts depends on what it is "made" of. The Storyteller rolls the faerie's (Intelligence + Craft [Glamour]), and the result equals the actions/scenes/days of the Glamour's duration. If a faerie is creating a Glamour from nothing, the Glamour lasts actions. If it is using something that is inappropriate, such as pebbles glamoured into gold or beetles into war horses, the Glamour lasts for scenes. If the faerie is improving an existing item into something similar such as a farm cart glamoured into a royal coach, the Glamour lasts for days. Within the effects of the Wyld, a demesne or a manse, a Glamour lasts forever. Those with (Wits + Essence) higher than the faerie's Intelligence see through the glamour and are affected by the real item, not the illusion, for both good and ill. Fair Folk armor, weapons and items are not made of this kind of Glamour and cannot be seen through. Cold iron dispels this Glamour, and Glamour cannot survive on the Blessed Isle. This Charm costs five motes to employ.

*Wyldward*—The faerie can protect others from the mutating effects of the Wyld. The faerie spends his Willpower and motes, then the Storyteller rolls the faerie's (Manipulation + Craft [Glamor]) against the target's Essence. For every success, the target is protected for one full day, even in the Deep Wyld. The faerie must touch the target for one full action, and not incidentally, this power also allows the faerie to feed from the target as long as she is under the effects of this power. Wyldward costs 10 motes and one Willpower to use.

**Join Battle:** 10

**Attacks:**

Punch: Speed 5, Accuracy 10, Damage 4B, Defense 11, Rate 3

Kick: Speed 5, Accuracy 9, Damage 7B, Defense 7, Rate 2

Clinch: Speed 6, Accuracy 9, Damage 4B, Defense –, Rate 1

Gossamer Blade: Speed 4, Accuracy 10, Damage 7L, Defense 9, Rate 3

Gossamer Knife: Speed 5, Accuracy 10, Damage 6L, Defense 9, Rate 3

**Soak:** 8L/10B (Gossamer garb, 6L/6B)

**Health Levels:** -0/-1/-1/-1/-2/-2/-2/-2/-4/Incap

**Dodge DV:** 7 **Willpower:** 9

**Essence:** 3 **Essence Pool:** 30

**Other Notes:** Iron inflicts aggravated damage on a faerie, and he cannot soak it with Stamina. Against iron weapons, the faerie has Defense of 6L/6B, from his gossamer garb. Note that most weapons in Creation are made of steel or bronze, not iron.

## Fair Folk Cataphractoi

The warriors of the Fair Folk are creatures of beautiful destruction. Elegant, wearing armor of translucent glass and filigree, they look decorative not deadly—until they enter battle. The bells that decorate their armor shrill like children screaming, they move like court dancers, light on the battlefield, graceful as courtesans, laughing with mad joy. The cataphractoi weapons sweep aside their enemies' defenses, and their deceptively fragile armor is as hard as jade.

Cataphractoi accompany diplomats on their journeys into Creation and are usually bound to their envoy. Their armor will always show their allegiance in style and color, and troops of cataphractoi have similar, but never identical, armor. Fair Folk warriors also raid Creation, battling the beastmen and their Lunar rulers in the Wyldlands, raiding villages for children and artists, robbing palaces and mansions for the human dreams they value more highly than orichalcum. When it's not pursuing rumors of Anathema and stamping out heresy, the Wyld Hunt battles Fair Folk incursions into Imperial lands.

The warriors of the Fair Folk are made for battle, and there are few mortal heroes who can stand fast under a cataphract's attack. Even a single Dragon-Blood or Celestial Exalt had best watch her defenses when facing Fair Folk cataphractoi, for their skill in destruction rivals even that of the god-blessed warriors.

**Attributes:** Strength 6, Dexterity 7, Stamina 6; Charisma 4, Manipulation 4, Appearance 5; Perception 5, Intelligence 5, Wits 6

**Virtues:** Compassion 1, Conviction 4, Temperance 2, Valor 5

**Abilities:** Archery 6, Athletics 5, Awareness 5, Craft (Glamour) 3, Dodge 6, Integrity 2, Linguistics 2, Martial Arts 6, Melee 6 (Sword +2), Occult 3, Performance 4, Presence 6, Resistance 4 (Wyld +1), Ride 5, Socialize 5, Stealth 4, War 6

**Fair Folk Charms:**

*Fearsome Mien*—In battle, the faerie wreaths herself in terrifying illusions, similar to the battle mien of a Dawn Caste Exalt. Targets whose (Valor + Essence) is lower than the cataphract's highest combat Ability are at -2 to all dice pools when in combat. Fearsome Mien costs five motes and one Willpower for the cataphract to use.

*Glamour*—As the Fair Folk diplomat Charm.

**Join Battle:** 11

**Attacks:**

Punch: Speed 5, Accuracy 14, Damage 6B, Defense 13, Rate 3

Kick: Speed 5, Accuracy 13, Damage 9B, Defense 11, Rate 2

Clinch: Speed 6, Accuracy 13, Damage 6B, Defense –, Rate 1

Gossamer Blade: Speed 4, Accuracy 16, Damage 9L, Defense 15, Rate 3

Gossamer Knife: Speed 5, Accuracy 14, Damage 8L, Defense 13, Rate 3

Gossamer Lance: Speed 6, Accuracy 12, Damage 11L/16L, Defense 12, Rate 1

Gossamer Bow: Speed 6, Accuracy 14, Damage 8L*, Range 200, Rate 3

* Uses broadhead arrows.

**Soak:** 12L/15B (Gossamer articulated plate and target shield, 9L/9B, no movement penalty)

**Health Levels:** -0/-1/-1/-1/-1/-2/-2/-2/-2/-2/-4/Incap

**Dodge DV:** 8 **Willpower:** 9

**Essence:** 3 **Essence Pool:** 30

**Other Notes:** Iron inflicts aggravated damage upon a faerie, and she cannot soak it with Stamina. Against iron weapons, the faerie has Defense of 9L/9B, from her faerie plate. Note that most weapons in Creation are made of steel or bronze, not iron.

Clinch: Speed 6, Accuracy 7, Damage 4B, Defense –, Rate 1
Chopping Sword: Speed 4, Accuracy 8, Damage 9L/2, Defense 6, Rate 2
**Soak:** 5L/7B (Tough hide)
**Health Levels:** -0/-1/-1/-2/-2/-4/Incap
**Dodge DV:** 5 **Willpower:** 8
**Essence:** 2 **Essence Pool:** 20
**Other Notes:** Iron inflicts aggravated damage upon a faerie, and he cannot soak it with Stamina. Note that most weapons in Creation are made of steel or bronze, not iron. Some hobgoblins possess the ability to shapeshift into predatory beasts, such as wolves and lions. Hobgoblins are often extras.

## Hobgoblins

Often overlooked as the least of the Fair Folk, the hobgoblins—those who serve and fight for their more elegant masters—are more than what they appear. Hobgoblins are the foot soldiers of the Fair Folk, least in status and ever present where any faerie reside.

Hobgoblins are the most familiar faerie creatures in Creation, and there are small groups of abandoned hobgoblins isolated in many of the pockets where Wyld energy still survives. These hobgoblins were cut off from the retreating Fair Folk armies after their invasion during the Contagion. Like all faerie creatures, they take on the elemental aspects of wherever they live, whether it's the dark, red-eyed creatures haunting Southern swamps or the pale shaggy figures with ivory tusks found in isolated valleys in the North.

**Attributes:** Strength 4, Dexterity 4, Stamina 4; Charisma 2, Manipulation 2, Appearance 1; Perception 2, Intelligence 2, Wits 3
**Virtues:** Compassion 1, Conviction 4, Temperance 1, Valor 4
**Abilities:** Archery 2, Athletics 3, Awareness 4, Dodge 4, Integrity 1, Martial Arts 3, Melee 3, Presence 2 (Terrorizing +1), Resistance 2 (Disease +1), Stealth 3, Survival 3, War 3
**Join Battle:** 7
**Attacks:**
Bite: Speed 7, Accuracy 9, Damage 6L, Defense 6, Rate 1
Claw: Speed 5, Accuracy 8, Damage 6L, Defense 9, Rate 3

## Wyld Barbarians and Wyld Cults

There are mortals who live within the embrace of the Wyld. Savage tribes, terrible in their Wyld mutations, dwell in the Bordermarches. Over the generations, they have come to call the Wyld home and look at Creation with distaste. Even in more civilized lands, there are those who worship the Wyld as a source of artistic inspiration, wild passions, seductive perversions or sacred visions.

Wyld barbarians live short, brutal and savage lives. They suffer from numerous mutations, and tribes are often determined by the type of mutations the members share, while those with different mutations are driven out. Wyld barbarians live in terror of the Fair Folk who raid them, and they hate civilized folk as they are often slaughtered by them as monstrosities. Life as a Wyld barbarian is full of violence: attacks by the Fair Folk, battles between tribes over territory or at the bidding of tribal spirits and raids into the Threshold lands for civilized goods such as metal weapons or woven fabrics.

Outsiders assume Wyld barbarians are crude, but in fact, they possess an uncanny familiarity with their own territory and hew to a code of behavior as rigid as any found in the Realm. Most of the barbarian tribes worship one or more sprits. These little gods protect and advise their worshipers, keeping them safe from the worst of the Wyld and teaching them how to fight the Fair Folk. They are, in turn, placated with offerings of sweet smoke, prayers, blood, song and ritual taboos.

Scarification, tattooing and extreme body ornaments are also common to all Wyld barbarians. Frequently, newly mutated barbarians add new ornaments or self-inflicted scars as if they are seeking some way to reestablish ownership over their bodies after developing a mutation.

## Wyld Barbarian

**Attributes:** Strength 3, Dexterity 2, Stamina 3; Charisma 2, Manipulation 2, Appearance 2; Perception 3, Intelligence 2, Wits 3
**Virtues:** Compassion 2, Conviction 3, Temperance 2, Valor 3
**Abilities:** Athletics 2, Awareness 2, Dodge 2, Martial Arts 2, Medicine 1, Melee 2 (Axe +1), Presence 1, Resistance 2, Socialize 1, Stealth 2, Survival 2 (Native Environment +1), War 2
**Join Battle:** 5
**Attacks:**
Punch: Speed 5, Accuracy 5, Damage 3B, Defense 4, Rate 3
Kick: Speed 5, Accuracy 4, Damage 6B, Defense 2, Rate 2
Clinch: Speed 6, Accuracy 4, Damage 3B, Defense –, Rate 1
Axe: Speed 5, Accuracy 6, Damage 8L, Defense 3, Rate 2
Knife: Speed 5, Accuracy 5, Damage 5L, Defense 4, Rate 3
**Soak:** 3L/7B (Pangolin scale armor [buff jacket], 3L/4B, -1 mobility penalty and target shield, +1 difficulty to hit, -1 mobility penalty)
**Health Levels:** -0/-1/-1/-2/-2/-4/Incap
**Dodge DV:** 2/1 **Willpower:** 6
**Essence:** 1
**Other Notes:** Possesses a minimum of two poxes.

## Wyld Shaman

Often the leaders or advisors of a tribe, Wyld shamans usually live as hermits, communing with the spirits they serve and suffering under visions and possessions by the dead. Shamans communicate in ecstatic dances, ominous poetry and mad babble. They often trade bits of their own Essence or even their flesh to spirits in order to gain the power and wisdom necessary to protect their tribes. They barter with the spirit courts, summon the voices of the dead and create wards to stabilize their tribal lands against the Wyld. They are often filthy, stammering and disheveled figures, which means nothing in terms of the power they may possess. Shamans are valuable guides to the spirit worlds, useful sources of information on everything from the politics of the Realm to the names of the Abyssal deathknights. Used to a lifetime of barter and dealing, no shaman offers his services on "credit." For any favor he gives, a shaman will ask for one in return.

**Attributes:** Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 4; Charisma 3, Manipulation 3, Appearance 1; Perception 3, Intelligence 2, Wits 3
**Virtues:** Compassion 2, Conviction 2, Temperance 1, Valor 4
**Abilities:** Athletics 2, Awareness 2, Craft (Wood) 2 (Talismans +1), Linguistics 1, Martial Arts 2, Melee 2, Occult 2 (Art of Spirit Summoning +3, Art of Weather Control +3), Performance 1, Presence 1, Resistance 2 (Hallucinogens +1), Socialize 1, Stealth 2, Survival 2 (Native Environment +1), War 2
**Backgrounds**: Allies 2 (Tribal Ancestor), Artifact 1 (Talismans), Influence 2
**Merits:** Essence Awareness
**Join Battle:** 5
**Attacks:**
Punch: Speed 5, Accuracy 5, Damage 2B, Defense 6, Rate 3
Kick: Speed 5, Accuracy 4, Damage 5B, Defense 2, Rate 2
Clinch: Speed 6, Accuracy 4, Damage 2B, Defense –, Rate 1
Knife: Speed 5, Accuracy 5, Damage 4L Defense 4, Rate 3
Short Spear: Speed 5, Accuracy 6, Damage 6L, Defense 5, Rate 2
**Soak:** 4L/8B (Protective scars and tattoos)
**Health Levels:** -0/-1/-1/-2/-2/-4/Incap
**Dodge DV:** 2 **Willpower:** 6
**Essence:** 2 **Essence Pool:** 17 (only first 6 available unless one Willpower is spent)
**Other Notes:** The shaman has access to his Essence pool. Treat shamans as priests when performing prayers and offerings.
*Spirit Summoning:* Works as the Art of Demon Summoning on pages 138-139, but only capable of summoning the small gods of the shaman's tribe and tribal ancestors.
*Weather Control:* With a successful (Charisma + Occult) roll, minimum difficulty 2, the shaman can attempt to control the weather. Cost is two motes per level of effect. Apprentice: The shaman can foretell the weather—each success equals one day in the future. Initiate: Can create minor effects such

as a cool breeze, or a warm one, gentle mists etc. Adept: True manipulation of the weather, the shaman can modify a storm to a gentle rain, a blinding heat to pleasant summer day, et cetera. Master: The shaman can create huge changes in the weather, summoning up strong winds and storms, rain during a draught et cetera. More minor changes can take minutes, but severe ones can take up to two days.

## Wyld Cults

Even in the more civilized lands of Creation, secret worship of the Wyld exists. Wyld cults are found throughout Creation and are rising in frequency as the Second Age begins to show signs of wear.

Wyld cultists must have access to a source of the Wyld, no matter how small, to center their worship. They may obey a Wyld creature residing in such a pocket, worshiping it as a powerful spirit, but most frequently, they follow the guidance of a more "enlightened" member who has been significantly exposed to the Wyld and therefore made most worthy. Most members of a cult suffer from Wyld addiction, and many have mutations caused by exposure to the Wyld. For the cultists, the stigma of mutation is valued rather than reviled. Wyld cultists are often used as dupes or informants for the Fair Folk or curious Lunars, however they are notoriously unreliable, with alliances and interests shifting like the chaotic Wyld they worship.

In all of Creation's civilized nations, Wyld cults are illegal. It is a criminal heresy under the laws of the Immaculate Order, and the Wyld Hunt is experienced at discovering and destroying Wyld cults.

**Wyld Addiction:** Those who spend too long in the Wyld or frequently expose themselves to Wyld energies can become addicted to it. Such folk find it difficult or impossible to leave Wyld areas and may even become sick if separated from the Wyld. Players of characters who are exposed to the Wyld make a (Willpower + Temperance) roll on their characters' first exposure to each intensity of the Wyld (Bordermarch, Middlemarch and Deep Wyld) to avoid addiction. Any success prevents addiction, and the character is +1 for any further exposure to the Wyld for a number of months equal the character's Temperance. Failure means the character is addicted and will seek out the Wyld at the next opportunity. Until her player succeeds at a (Willpower + Temperance) roll, she remains addicted. A botch means the character is at -1 to her recovery rolls against Wyld addiction.

## The Touch of the Wyld

The Wyld reshapes Creation, and any creature that the Wyld touches is vulnerable to mutation. See page 284 for information on resisting Wyld mutations. Storytellers should allow players to choose the mutations their characters will suffer, with the limitation that they cannot chose the same mutation twice in a row.

### Pox and Deficiencies

These are the mildest of Wyld mutations. Creatures with a pox, or even several poxes, are usually able to survive in Creation, and most who suffer from these minor changes avoid the Wyld in hopes of preserving what humanity they have left.

**Poxes**

*Claw/Fangs* (choose one): The mutant gains short but sharp claws or fangs. Clawed punches or kicks inflict lethal damage, and a fanged mutant's bite also delivers lethal damage. Claws can be retractable or hidden under gloves, but fangs are visible whenever the mutant eats or speaks.

*Enhanced Sense* (choose one): The mutant's sense becomes unnaturally acute. The character gains two dice on all Awareness rolls relating to that sense. This pox is physically obvious in unusual eye color or shape, large pointed ears, an elongated nose and so forth.

*Fur/Feathers/Leaves/Fish scales* (chose one): The mutant's skin changes, and she is now covered in light fur, feathers (players chose colors or patterns), leaves, thin bark or delicate scales. The character gains one die in all Survival pools and does not need to wear clothing to protect her against the elements. This pox also adds 1L/1B to the mutant's soak. This pox cannot be hidden, but characters with this pox can occasionally be mistaken for Dragon-Blooded.

*Large*: The character grows to an unusual size. He gains one dot each in Strength and Stamina and an additional -0 health level. This pox is still (barely) within normal size range, and the mutant can still pass as a normal (if very large) human. (Taken more than once, this pox becomes a deficiency.)

*Skin/Hair Color:* The mutant's skin or hair changes to some unusual color or colors: tiger stripes, pure white, blood red and so forth. This is purely a cosmetic change and can usually be hidden by dye, make-up or obscuring clothing.

*Small*: The mutant afflicted with this pox loses about 25 percent of her body mass and height. She loses one dot each in Strength and Stamina as well as a -2 health level. She will also be harder to hit (+1 difficulty). Small mutants can barely pass for normal and are frequently mistaken for children. This pox can be taken multiple times until any Ability reaches 0. Then, the mutant dies. (Taken more than once, this pox becomes a deficiency.)

*Tail:* The character gains a tail. A pox tail is basically cosmetic. It may be scaly, furred, bare like a rat's or tufted, but the mutant cannot use it to manipulate things, hang from branches or attack. The mutant gains two dice in Athletics pools as the tail aids in balance. The tail can be hidden under clothes.

**Deficiencies**

*Atrophy*: The character has been ravaged by the Wyld. Reduce one Attribute by one dot. The atrophied Attribute can never rise above 4, or one less than her current score if the Attribute was over 5. Attempts to use Charms or other magic to raise this Attribute can be made, but the character takes a level of unsoakable lethal damage for every dot above his atrophied maximum the spell raises it. This damage can be healed normally. Atrophy is always visible as withered limbs, malformed craniums or other obvious physical changes.

*Mood Swings:* The character becomes afflicted with an overwhelming sense of despair and lethargy or bursts of manic energy. The depressed character's mood is always at its worst during the three nights of the new moon. The mutant's player must roll Conviction -2 in order for the character to initiate new plans during this time. Manics suffer from extreme fits of joy and distraction. Their symptoms are worst during the nights of the full moon, and their players must roll Temperance – 2 to avoid public fits of wild dancing, brawls or other bizarre actions during these times. Taken twice, the victim suffers from both symptoms.

*Ugly*: The character has been mutated into a repulsive, twisted creature. Reduce Appearance by two dots, and the character cannot raise Appearance above 3 with experience or freebie points. This pox can be hidden by Charms or magic, but these illusions will never be permanent.

### Afflictions and Debilities

These mutations can be quite severe and are often difficult to hide. Afflictions are relatively beneficial mutations, while debilities are harmful ones.

**Afflictions**

*Chameleon*: This mutant can change the color and pattern of her skin to match her surroundings. The mutant's player adds one die to Survival dice rolls and two dice to any Stealth rolls involving sight.

*Frog Tongue*: The mutant's tongue becomes very long, prehensile and sticky. If the character's Strength allows her to lift her own weight, her tongue can be used to haul herself around. Punch and grapple attacks can be made with the tongue at a three-yard range. When she attacks with her tongue, add two dots to the character's Dexterity and one dot to Strength, reflecting its speed and stickiness. The character's speech is very slurred and unclear.

*Gills*: The character has gills and can breathe comfortably underwater. When choosing this mutation, make a roll against the character's (Stamina - 2). If the roll fails her lungs atrophy, and she cannot survive out of water for more than (Stamina x 5) minutes. After that, she begins to "drown." If the roll is successful, the mutant is amphibious, functioning equally well both in and out of water. Gills are visible at the neck and shoulders.

*Prehensile Tail*: The character gains a functional tail. This agile tail can be used to manipulate objects and is treated in all ways like a third limb but at -2 dots on all Strength rolls and -1 dot on Dexterity. Usually, the tail can be hidden under clothes. Of course, it can't be used while hidden.

*Talons/Tusks/Horns* (choose one): The mutant grows long, deadly talons, savage tusks or long horns. They can be cutting bones springing from the character's arms or wide tusks from her cheeks or spikes from her knees, but they cannot be hidden. They allow the character to make lethal attacks with Martial Arts.

*Toxin*: The mutant has a poisonous bite, claw or spittle. If the character has claws or fangs, they are envenomed. If not, she spits her poison. The standard toxin is: (5L/action, 2, –/–, -2). This affliction may be taken more than once. Add one to the Toxicity and the Penalty for every toxic affliction.

**Debilities**

*Diet*: The character's diet is restricted to one type of food. It may be raw flesh or nectar or taro roots, but it must be unusual for her species. Any physical changes necessary to procure said food (long probing tongue, hollow sucking needle or fangs) accompany the mutation. It is difficult to hide this affliction for any length of time. The Storyteller decides if a substitute (honey for nectar) is acceptable or not.

*Delusions*: The mutant believes something that is absolutely not true. She may hear a "secret friend" warning her against treachery from her allies or believe that jade is made from the ground bones of Exalted children. Mild cases are merely annoying, while severe delusions can cut the victim off from reality.

*Wyld Addiction*: The mutant is hopelessly addicted to the Wyld, without hope of escaping her dependency. She will not willingly leave the Wyld and is constantly tempted to travel deeper into it. If forced from the Wyld, she loses one point of temporary Willpower every day she is away from it and, at 0 Willpower, will do anything to get back to it.

### Blights and Deformities

Severe mutations such as derangement cannot be hidden and can make it difficult for the mutant to survive away from the Wyld that created it. Blights are relatively positive changes and deformities are not.

**Blights**

*Armored Hide*: The character's skin has changed beyond any human norm. She may have an insect-like exoskeleton, heavy mammoth fur or thick plates of hide like a rhinoceros. She gains 4B/4L to her soak, and the hide adds four dice to her player's Survival rolls. Obviously, this derangement cannot be hidden.

*Glider*: The mutant has a set of gliding wings that allow limited flight. The character can clumsily take to the air and has little ability to maneuver. He flies at (Stamina x 3) yards per action in level flight. Gaining altitude reduces speed to (Stamina) yards per action, while diving allows for speeds up to (Stamina x 10) yards per action. In order to dive, the character's player must make a successful (Dexterity + Athletics) roll, difficulty (the number of actions of the dive + 1). These wings can be bat-like, feathered or scaly.

*Quills*: The character has sharp quills that can be used in unarmed attacks or launched like darts at opponents. She may grow quills all over her body (and barely pass for human) or in a limited location such as the head or arms. All punches inflict +1L Damage, with an Accuracy +1, Rate 3 and Range (if launched) 15 yards. They also add one die to any parry made by the character, and anyone who attempts to grapple the character takes 3L damage. The more times this blight is taken, the more the damage (only) increases and the more the character's body is covered with quills.

*Tentacles*: The mutant has strong tentacles about five yards long. The character gains 1d10/2 tentacles each time he takes this blight. They are strong but they suffer a -3 penalty to Dexterity for any coordinated activity. The character can grapple any target in range, and he may also throw his victim or constrict her at (Strength + 3B) damage per action. Victims can attempt to escape the tentacle's grasp like any other clinch.

*Wall Walking*: The mutant has unique hands and feet that allow her to cling to even sheer surfaces. She may have sharp, tiny claws, sticky pads or dozens of small spurs. Regardless, her hands and feet will always grow large, with long toes and fingers that are very difficult to hide. She moves at (Dexterity + 8) yards per action at full movement—half that if she wishes to take actions as well. Unusually slick surfaces (ice, glass, First Age buildings) might require a (Dexterity + Athletics) roll for her to stick, but the difficulty should never rise above 2.

**Deformities**

*Decomposing*: This horrific disability leaves the mutant trapped in the rotting shell of her body. She will slowly fall apart over a period of months or years. Every week, roll the character's Stamina. If the roll fails, a random small body part falls off. Decomposition begins with fingers and toes, then noses and ears, but it will move to more critical parts as time goes on. In the Marches and beyond, the character will regenerate one body part per full month spent in the Wyld. Otherwise, she will eventually die.

*Plague Carrier:* The deranged mutant carries a deadly disease. She is immune to the disease but she passes it on to anyone who comes in contact with her. The player of anyone who is exposed to a plague carrier must check against the disease's Virulence or his character comes down with the illness. The Storyteller determines the disease the character carries. (See pages 350-353 for diseases.)

### Abominations

Mutants with abominations cannot pass as human in any land, and even Wyld barbarians look upon them with fear and revulsion.

*Hive*: The character is a living host to numerous vermin, whether it is a hive of wasps on her back, flesh-eating beetles that crawl out of her mouth or snakes that live in hollows in her arms. She can control these animals and use them as weapons, spies or companions. If this abomination is taken more than once, the character becomes a hollow shell, consisting entirely of vermin that carry the skin shell about. Whether the character is still truly alive at that point is a question no one is willing to investigate closely.

*Multiple Limbs/Heads*: The mutant has multiple extra arms, legs or heads. One extra set of limbs or one extra head is gained every time this abomination is taken. Multiple heads often have multiple personalities and might not even physically resemble the character. Each set of legs, up to three, adds five yards per action to running speed and one die to resist knock-back, knockdown and grappling maneuvers. Multiple arms are identical in Strength and Dexterity to the original set, and the character may flurry with them. When a character splits her dice pool, compute the penalties then reduce them all by one die per set. Minimum penalty is one die. For the purposes of extra actions, a set of tentacles counts the same.

*Wings*: Mutants with this ability can fly. They might have huge functional wings or perhaps gas-filled bags of skin. The character flies at two times her normal running speed, ascends at her normal running speed and can dive at 10 times her running speed. She does not need to make checks to pull out of dives.

## Build a Beast

Storytellers can use the "Touch of the Wyld" chart to build the myriad bizarre creatures found in the Wyld. The only limitation on creating Wyld beasts is the Storyteller's imagination and the power level of the characters who will encounter it. Creating a beast far too powerful for the players' characters to overcome or interact with will frustrate both the players and the Storyteller.

*Consider the Effect:* Is the creature going to be a monstrous opponent? A horrific and mysterious beast to haunt the characters dreams? A pet? Perhaps a bizarre but intelligent encounter? Is the area in which the beast resides influenced by one of the elements (or something else like a lost Dragon King city)? A creature found in a forest is more likely to have bark-like skin rather than wings of fire. Think of descriptive adjectives such as "swift," "deadly," "hungry" or "passionate" to guide your construction.

*Pick a Base Creature:* Chose a creature from the available beasts to mutate into your Wyld creature. You can also chose a human, to create your Wyld barbarians or other vaguely human inhabitants of the Wyld. Use your desired effects as a broad guideline to build your beast.

*What Does It Look Like?:* Superficial changes such as eye and fur color have no effect on the rules but are critical to the feel of the Storyteller's game. Narrow the build of a swift racer, add luminous stripes to blend into the glowing blooms of the faerie forest in which it hunts. Does it drool?

*Mutations:* Add any appropriate changes from the "Touch of the Wyld" section. Make up more of your own if necessary. These changes affect both look and game play. Add a set of fangs and toxic saliva, maybe an extra set of limbs. The mutations provided include any rules effects they have, and if you create new mutations, use those effects as a guide.

### Gryphon

These beasts are often found in the stables of the Fair Folk. Originally a merging of hawk and lion, they have been stabilized by goblin crafters into a true species, capable of reproducing. Gryphons are intelligent creatures and savage flying hunters that will eat anything they can catch and tear apart with their cruel beaks and savage claws. In the air, they move with great speed—twice the speed of a galloping horse—while, on the ground, they slink like the great cats they partly are. Faeries use them as war-mounts but cannot use their lances in a flying charge—the impact is too great to handle.

### Buck-Ogre

Found in the northeast Threshold, the two-headed buck-ogre lives in small herds. The beast has caprine legs, a massive human chest and two goat heads, complete with curling horns and eerie square-pupiled eyes. Buck-ogres are intelligent, though uncivilized, and they often raid Threshold lands for mates, metal and any items they are too clumsy to make.

## Spirits

Spirit is a loose term used to describe individual beings made purely of Essence. The term is most often applied to any of the gods that aren't the Celestial Incarnae themselves. Savants also apply the term spirit to elementals and demons, which are also beings of Essence. The fundamental classification of spirit depends on the innate ability of the being to dematerialize or materialize at will, usually by expending motes of Essence. Spirits are functionally immortal, having no measurable life span, though

| Name | Str/Dex/Sta | Per/Int/Wits/Will | Health Levels | Attack (Spd/Acc/Dmg/Rate) | Dodge DV/Soak |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Gryphon** | 7/5/5 | 4/1/4/8 | -0/-1/-1/-1/-2/ -2/-2/-4/I | Bite: 6/10/11L/8, Claw: 9/9/9L/9 | 4/5L/8B |

**Abilities:** Athletics 6, Awareness 5, Dodge 4, Martial Arts 4, Presence 2, Resistance 4, Stealth 2 (Flying +3), Survival 4
**Mutations:** Wings, Talons, Huge (the basic creature is a great cat)

| Name | Str/Dex/Sta | Per/Int/Wits/Will | Health Levels | Attack (Spd/Acc/Dmg/Rate) | Dodge DV/Soak |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Buck-Ogre** | (7/2/6) | (4/2/4/6) | -0/-1/-1/-1/-1/ -2/-2/-2/-2/-4/I | Punch: 5/7/7B/3, Kick: 5/6/10B/2, Gore: 6/7/12L/1, Great Axe*: 6/8/14L (minimum 2)/2 | 2/9L/14B |

* The buck-ogre can split its dice pools, using an axe in each hand, see description under multiple limbs, page 290.
**Abilities:** Athletics 3, Awareness 4, Dodge 3, Martial Arts 4, Melee 3 (Axe +2), Presence 1 (Intimidation +3), Resistance 2, Stealth 3, Survival 5
**Mutations:** Enhanced Sight (Nightvision), Hair (Elk Pelt), Huge, Horns and Multiple Limbs (Heads) (the base creature is human)

their destinies are finite and are woven on the Loom of Fate by the Maidens, just as those of mortals and Exalts.

## Gods

When the Primordials built Creation, they formed the gods out of will and Essence, then gave each god a name and a purpose—a sphere of influence and a position in a hierarchy that would govern Creation. The hierarchy is called the Celestial Order, and every god, from the Unconquered Sun down to the lowliest dream fly, guardian scarab and hearth mother has a place and a purpose in it. This purpose defined the god, became its nature, so that the god would spend its time maintaining the portion of Creation over which it held dominance. Every piece and part of Creation has an embodiment in a god, however small or large. Not only objects have gods, but concepts and thoughts and feelings have gods as well. Anything that has a name in a mortal language has a god that is responsible for it, so that gods are as plentiful as the stars in the sky and can be found anywhere in Creation.

### The Celestial Order: The Hierarchy of the Heavens and Creation

The Celestial Order is divided into two categories: the Celestial Court and the Terrestrial Bureaucracy. The Celestial Court works directly under the Celestial Incarnae themselves and consists of all the gods that embody universal principles, such as the seasons, dreams, emotions and feelings—anything that can be considered common knowledge among mortals. Gods of physical objects in Creation, such as rivers, cities, other locations or of particular species of animals, became part of the Terrestrial Bureaucracy. The Terrestrial Bureaucracy is then subdivided into spirit courts based on location and related sphere of influence.

When the Primordials ruled Creation, before they were overthrown by the Exalted, the Celestial Court lived and worked on the Blessed Isle, while the Primordials resided in the wondrous Celestial City of Yu-Shan. After the Primordial War, the Celestial Incarnae granted the Solar Exalted dominion over all of Creation and retired to Yu-Shan to oversee the inner workings of the universe, as well as to play the Games of Divinity left by the Primordials. Yu-Shan is quite simply the most wondrous city ever imagined. It is the size and shape of the Blessed Isle, existing in a parallel Elsewhere beyond and beside Creation, and it is surrounded by a great wall that keeps the chaos of infinity at bay. Overhead is the dome of the sky, a perfect hemisphere upon which the current lead in the Games of Divinity is reflected—brightest day for the Unconquered Sun, a full moon against a starless sky for Luna and for each Maiden the constellations of their house in ascendance. Yu-Shan is a place of wonders and miracles, where even its most common fare would bless the table of mortal kings and its cheapest clothing would be coveted by courtesans of the Blessed Isle. All construction in Yu-Shan is a work of art, from the residences of the servants to the sanctums of the gods to the roads and arches and bridges that are traveled every day.

The Celestial Court followed the Incarnae into Yu-Shan as well, leaving the Terrestrial Bureaucracy to work under the Solar Deliberative in maintaining Creation. The Unconquered Sun ceded the rule of Creation to his trusted servants, the Solar Exalted, and decreed that no god may directly interfere with the events of Creation. All Terrestrial gods were to work as monitors, watching over their spheres of influence and reporting to their superiors in their spirit court or to the Solar Deliberative, who would then take action. Only the Celestial Censors, the gods that enforced the laws of the Celestial Incarnae, were exempt from this, but even they had to report to the nearest Solar when acting in Creation.

The Celestial Court is divided into five bureaus: the Bureaus of Heaven, Humanity, Seasons, Nature and Destiny. The Bureau of Heaven is the largest and most powerful of the bureaus, being responsible for the laws of Heaven and the concerns of the gods. All the other bureaus report to the Bureau of Heaven, which reports directly to the Celestial Incarnae. The Bureau of Humanity is the next largest and most powerful, covering all things that have to do with civilization and mortals. Therefore, it administrates the sources of wealth in Yu-Shan. During the First Age, the Bureau of Humanity worked closely with the Solar Deliberative to aid in the ruling of Creation. Since the Usurpation, the Bureau of Heaven has been split into factions that argue over whether the gods should rule in the stead of the Solars.

The Bureau of Seasons controls all weather in Creation and the mechanical aspects of the seasons. This administration is governed by Luna, and it employs not only gods, but the majority of elementals as well. The Bureau of Nature is responsible for all aspects of Creation that aren't covered by the other bureaus, including all plant life, animal life, ecosystems and geological features. All animal avatars and guardian spirits work for the Bureau of Nature, as do the elementals who do not work for the Bureau of Seasons. The Bureau of Destiny is the domain of the Five Maidens and deals with the Loom of Fate—the *what* and the *how* of the future, ensuring that Creation continues to exist. All motions in the heavens and in Creation are monitored and governed by the Bureau of Destiny.

The Celestial Order has broken down since the murder of the Solars, and now, only the framework of the bureaucracies remains. The high-ranking Celestial gods rarely concern themselves with actual events in Creation, preferring either to find entertaining distractions from their jobs or to play political games to gain wealth and power. Low-ranking Celestial and Terrestrial gods are forced to work mundane positions, to keep the semblance of Celestial Order and maintain their superiors' rank and power. Some of the most powerful Terrestrial gods scheme and plan ways to gain rank and become residents of Yu-Shan so that they may attend the Games of Divinity. Other Terrestrial gods chose to amass followers in Creation, forcing mortals to pay them tribute and enslaving lesser gods and elementals in their domains in flagrant violation of Celestial Law. At one time, the Celestial Censors, paragons of virtue and order, were charged with keeping law among the other gods, but corruption and villainy has become so rampant that many have quit their jobs and become rogues. Those who remain in their positions take little care in their work anymore and are often easily bribed to overlook transgressions. Meanwhile, the majority of the Celestial Incarnae are too involved in the Games of Divinity to notice that their Celestial Order is failing.

It is rare anymore that the Celestial and Terrestrial gods interact. Most Celestial gods are loath to leave the comfort and safety of Yu-Shan for what they consider to be the barbaric and poor mortal realm. Conversely, Terrestrial gods are rarely admitted

into Yu-Shan and have to pay hefty bribes for passes, even on the most critical of business. Most Celestial gods view anyone from Creation as a country bumpkin at best; little more than a mindless animal at worst. Terrestrial gods tend to see their Celestial siblings as haughty, rude and ignorant of the true problems and crises of the Age. In addition, it is difficult to gain admission into Yu-Shan, since most of the gates are not only hidden away in long-forgotten temples and fortresses around Creation, but guarded by great and terrible celestial lions. Only residents of the Celestial City, those with passes from the internal bureaucracy and Solar Exalts of the Eclipse Caste are permitted free entrance to one of the 61 gates. The only exception to this rule is the Carnival of Meeting, when the Calibration Gate opens at a random location in Creation and any creature, mortal or otherwise, may join in the day-long festival at Calibration's peak.

## Immortality, Death and Birth

Gods are effectively immortal: They have no measurable life spans, they do not age or suffer from illness and disease, and they come into existence fully aware and developed. Gods do not need to eat or sleep, nor do they possess bodily functions like those of mortals. Though gods sometimes mate with mortals, and these unions produce offspring with abilities and traits associated with their divine parentage, gods do not reproduce with each other. Gods who fall in battle are usually able to restore themselves at their sanctums after their defeat. Existence can become tedious and wearisome under these conditions, which may be why so many gods become obsessed with power games or wealth or hedonistic practices.

Yet gods can be irrevocably slain, despite their immortality. The Charm Ghost-Eating Technique (see p. 221) devours spirit Essence and was taught to the Solars as the primary weapon for slaying the Primordials. Even without this ability, it is still possible that a small or least god might not have a sanctum in which it can regenerate. Therefore, if it takes a fatal number of health levels of lethal damage, its will and purpose is destroyed, and its Essence will spread to the surrounding area to flow along the dragon lines like a flash flood. A god who has had its sanctum destroyed for some reason will similarly have no place to regenerate should it be slain.

Gods that are convicted of a truly heinous crime may also face a rare form of capital punishment. Every god ranked beneath the Celestial Incarnae is represented by a star in the heavens, and a god's star falls from the sky when it meets its final fate. If a god is found guilty and sentenced to death, its star is knocked from the heavens, and the metal that composes it is recovered by the Bureau of Destiny, then forged into a starmetal object of incredible power—equal in Artifact Background rating to the Essence trait of the forged god. Therefore, a god with an Essence of 3 would produce a three-dot artifact (or a two-dot artifact and a one-dot artifact or three one-dot artifacts).

Besides being slain or executed, there is one other way a god's immortal life may end: for it to be forgotten. This fate is one most feared by small gods and is one of the few reasons that the Celestial Order has not broken down completely. A god who completely fails to do its duty might find that its sphere of influence has been destroyed or erased, and even the memory of its existence wiped from Creation. This is rare for all but the most abstract of universal concepts, so Celestial deities might have to worry about a loss of

their power only should their sphere of influence become weakened or decay. Terrestrial gods who have a much smaller scope of power, however, are more susceptible. A river god whose water dries up in severe drought would find itself losing rank and privilege. Should that waterway disappear entirely and all mention of it vanish from Creation (on maps and so forth), it would fade from existence. Several gods perished when their regional spheres of influence were devoured by the Wyld following the Great Contagion, but a much larger number (especially Celestial gods) were left severely weakened and unemployed. If a spirit passes away as forgotten, the star that represents it in the sky also fades.

New gods do come into existence frequently, though most of these are small or least gods with an Essence no greater than 2. When a new house is built or a new road is finished or a new field cleared and planted, a small or least god is created and assigned duties associated with its new sphere of influence. Similarly, should a new idea or a new concept take root in the minds of mortals, this idea must have a god associated with it. Such gods come into being fully formed and representative of the place, object or idea they embody. Many of the least gods, such as hearth spirits, that form when a new home is built, do not last long as separate, willful beings unless they associate themselves with a local spirit court and register with the appropriate bureau—or if they receive direct prayers from mortals. New ideas or concepts are rare, and these beings may have even more ephemeral existences without patronage within the Celestial Order.

## Prayer and Summoning

Unlike demons and elementals, gods cannot be summoned and compelled through the use of Charms or sorcery. When they won the battle for supremacy against the Primordials, the Celestial Incarnae made sure that they and their lesser siblings could not easily be enslaved again. Demons can be summoned through sorcery and other powerful magic as a condition of their imprisonment. Elementals that are not working directly for the Celestial Order, such as the lesser elemental dragons that serve as Censors and the members of the Aerial Legion, may also be summoned and commanded because of their Terrestrial nature and origins.

A god's attention may be gained through prayer, though such a god is in no way required to respond to prayers or to act for the benefit of those who gain its interest. Normal prayers directed at a specific god are often not enough to accomplish this. Generally, it takes a whole day of devotional activities—prayer, sacrifice, rites and rituals, etc.—per dot of Essence possessed by a specific god to gain its attention. Extreme acts performed on behalf of or in the name of a god may also catch its interest. Of course, once a mortal or Exalt has the attention of a god, it must make good use of it or face severe consequences. (See "Prayer" on p. 132 for more details.)

## Divine Powers

The powers of the spirits are grand and wonderful and rightly called miracles by mortals. Spirits are beings of Essence held together by Willpower, whose existences are defined by purpose and Motivation. Gods are the living embodiments of places, items and ideas who maintain the Celestial Order. Elementals are the children of Gaia born out of the Essence that flows across Creation given form and flesh, and they responsible for the continued flow of Essence around the world. Demons are the children of the whims of the Yozis, who endlessly seek to free themselves from their eternal prison beyond the sky. Even the weakest god, elemental or demon wields magics that inspire awe and fear in mortals.

Spirits naturally exist in an immaterial state when in Creation. While immaterial, a spirit can see but cannot interact with Creation without using Charms or other magic. Also, immaterial spirits cannot be seen, touched or affected by any material creatures without the use of Charms or other magics and enchantments that specifically affect the immaterial. Spirits can see each other and other immaterial things regardless of whether or not they are materialized.

While the Charms of the Exalted are tied to their Abilities, the Charms and powers of spirits are based on their Essence trait, and most of them work through their Virtues. The Charms of spirits are much more like sorcery, with effects that are based on the spirits' nature and sphere of influence. Spirit Charms are more varied than those of the Exalted and do not come in cascades. Instead, a spirit has access to Charms that allow it to fulfill its purpose. Gods have virtually total control of whatever their sphere of influence happens to be, whether it's a field or a lake or the feeling of vertigo a mortal gets when looking up toward a great height. Elementals can manipulate Creation around them. Demons can affect the minds and souls of mortals directly to cause as much fear and torment as they can. Spirits generally don't learn their powers. They are innate and known from the moment their existence begins, and new powers and Charms come as the spirit increases in power and rank. All spirits may have First, Second or Third Excellencies in the place of other Charms.

Instead of Charm cascades, where a Charm has one or more prerequisites that may include increasing Ability traits and previous Charms in the cascade, spirit Charms are grouped into families of like powers, each classified as universal or by the Virtue with which they are associated. The only prerequisite for a spirit Charm is a certain Essence trait and the type of spirit that is using the Charm. Some Charms are common to all spirits, while others are available only to elementals, demons or gods.

## Essence and Essence Pools

A spirit's raw power is represented by its Essence trait, which is a good indication of its rank. Small gods, the majority of elementals and demons of the First Circle have an Essence of 1–2. Demons of the Second Circle, celestial gods and very large elementals have an Essence in the range of 3–5. The gods and elementals of the highest rank—just beneath the Celestial Incarnae and the Five Elemental Dragons—and demons of the Third Circle, who are the fractured souls of the Yozis themselves—have Essence traits in the 6–9 range. In general, a spirit outranks any spirit of the same type (god, elemental, demon) with an Essence lower than itself, except in the case of Celestial spirits (those with Celestial sanctums and members of the Celestial Court), who always outrank Terrestrial spirits (those without sanctums or with Terrestrial sanctums). Conversely, spirit powers and Charms that directly affect individual beings generally have no effect on creatures and spirits with an Essence higher than the spirit using the Charm, unless otherwise stated by that Charm.

Spirits have very large Essence pools because they are beings of raw power who wield tremendous magic as a matter of daily life. A spirit's Essence pool is equal to ([Essence x 10] +

[Willpower x 5]) This is one single Essence pool and is not split into personal and peripheral Essence, as for Exalts. Spirits may also take Charms that increase their Essence pool.

Spirits regain Essence at a normal rate of five motes per hour, regardless of its activity level, but they double this rate when resting (performing no actions). Spirits may also recover their Essence in a demesne or manse without attuning to it first, in which case they regain motes of Essence at a rate equal to five times the rating of the demesne or manse.

## Willpower and Health Levels

Willpower is the mortar that binds a spirit's Essence together. A spirit's Willpower trait is representative of how strong its Motivation is, how determined it is to complete its purpose and manage its sphere of influence. Many of a spirit's powers have effects measured by the Willpower of the spirit using the power. Spirits also have a minimum number of universal spirit Charms equal to their Willpower. Even the tiniest spirit will have a proportionally large Willpower trait (the minimum Willpower for a spirit is 3).

In addition to gaining automatic successes on rolls, spirits may use their temporary Willpower in a number of ways that mortals and Exalts cannot. A spirit may pay one temporary Willpower to ignore its wound penalties for a single action. A spirit may spend a temporary Willpower to give a direct order to a spirit of the same type but lower rank, and a spirit so ordered must comply with the order to the best of its ability, despite its Motivation. Spirits may also enact Divine Will, which allows them to spend a number of points of temporary Willpower equal to the number of dice it would roll in any **uncontested** action to automatically succeed at that action. (This power can be used only when the spirit has all of its temporary Willpower.)

While mortals and Exalts can regain temporary Willpower while they sleep, spirits do not need sleep and cannot gain the benefits of sleep as other beings do. To regain temporary Willpower, a spirit must do one or more of the following things:

- Complete a task appropriate to its Motivation that lasts at least a scene
- Accept and complete an order from a superior ranked spirit
- Perform the duties assigned to the spirit according to its rank and position in the Celestial Order
- Use a Charm that drains Willpower from another being
- Receive a living sacrifice performed in its name, which grants the spirit a number of temporary Willpower points equal to the sacrificed creature's Essence trait. This sacrifice may not be performed as part of sorcery, a ritual or other type of magic that has another tangible result.
- Through the Cult Background (see pp. 111-112). The benefits of this Background are cumulative with the other methods listed here.

Spirits may have permanent Charms that increase their temporary Willpower pool, for the purposes of storing up additional Willpower to be spent later. This increase does not affect other traits derived from the Willpower trait.

The number of health levels a spirit possesses is equal to its Willpower trait plus its highest Virtue trait. Spirits will generally have one -0 health level and one -4 health level, and an equal number of -1 and -2 health levels. Spirits heal from non-fatal damage at the same rate that Exalts do (see pp. 148-149).

Should a spirit take enough damage while materialized to render it Incapacitated, its temporary corporeal body is destroyed, and it becomes immaterial with only one -4 health level remaining. Spirits that take enough health levels of lethal damage when dematerialized to be rendered Incapacitated disintegrate entirely and can regenerate only if they have a sanctum.

## Universal Spirit Charms

The following are the some of the common Charms to which all spirits have access, regardless of their type or Virtue preference. All of these powers can be used regardless of whether the spirit is materialized or dematerialized.

**Essence Plethora**—A spirit may increase its base Essence pool by 10 with this Charm. This Charm may be taken multiple times, and its effects stack.

**Hurry Home**—Spirits are always in tune with their sphere of influence, and should something go horribly wrong, then the spirit needs to be able to get to its sphere of influence in time to do something about it. This power allows a spirit to return to its home instantaneously. This power costs 10 motes of Essence and one temporary Willpower. The spirit must be dematerialized when it uses this Charm, or it automatically dematerializes when the Charm is activated. The Charm cannot take the spirit beyond Creation. Hurry Home will return a spirit to anywhere in the region of Creation considered its sphere of influence, to the point where its sanctum is located (if it has a sanctum), to the nearest Celestial Gate into Yu-Shan or to the point from which it entered Creation.

**Materialize**—All spirits have the ability to materialize via the Materialize Charm. Materializing is an instantaneous action that requires a spirit to pay a variable amount of Essence to create a temporary corporeal body. Spirits of greater power must make a larger, stronger body to contain their splendor, so the cost to materialize is equal to five times the sum of its Essence and Willpower ([Essence + Willpower] x 5) motes. This corporeal body has all of the same Attributes and Abilities of the incorporeal spirit, including health levels and Essence pool, so any damage taken by the spirit while immaterial remains on the material spirit, and the remaining motes of Essence in its Essence pool remains unchanged. A spirit generally has one shape and form that its corporeal body takes, and this shape is identical or very similar to its form while intangible. Some spirits have additional Charms that give them multiple corporeal forms, and more powerful spirits may have advanced forms of the Materialize Charm that give them corporeal bodies with enhanced Attributes and Abilities, as well as attack modes, natural weapons and armor, for a greater cost.

A spirit may dismiss its corporeal form as a reflexive action, but it does not regain any of the Essence spent for materialization by doing so. A corporeal body lasts for a number of days equal to the number of motes spent to materialize, unless it is destroyed. For example, a demon with an Essence trait of 3 and a Willpower of 5 pays 40 motes to materialize and, therefore, can remain materialized in Creation for 40 days. Materialized spirits regain Essence at the same rate as when immaterial, so many spirits who plan on materializing in Creation for a time do so in a private location and spend enough time there to replenish their Essence pool before continuing on their business.

Elementals and demons who are summoned via sorcery or other magic are compelled to pay the cost of materialization at the moment they appear, unless otherwise stated by the rules of the specific spell.

Spirits may also use a lesser form of Materialize to become visible, though they remain intangible while in Creation. This does not allow them to interact with Creation without the use of Charms, but it does let their presence be known. This power costs only one mote of Essence and lasts for one scene.

**Measure the Wind**—This simple Charm allows a spirit to assess its surroundings and measure the amount of Essence near it. When a spirit spends one mote to activate this Charm, it can see the natural flow of Essence around it and immediately knows the Essence trait of all visible living things within a number of yards equal to its Willpower. The Storyteller must still make a successful reflexive (Wits + Perception) roll for the spirit to find any hidden beings, but the difficulty to find hidden creatures decreases by two when used with this Charm. Any being noticed through the use of this power is also instantly recognized as whatever type of being it is—whether it is a mortal, Exalt, god, ghost or some other thing.

**Principle of Motion**—Next to Materialize, this Charm is the most powerful magic to which a spirit has access. When five motes of Essence and one temporary Willpower is spent, the spirit gains a number of extra actions equal to its Willpower. This pool of extra actions remains active until all of the extra actions are used up. This Charm can be used only when a spirit has no pool of extra actions, so it cannot be stacked with itself. Extra actions can be used at any time the spirit can act and can be used like regular actions: to attack, dodge, parry or use non-reflexive charms. Every extra action is performed at the spirit's full dice pool, and a spirit may split its dice pools for multiple actions in an extra action (see pp. 124-125 for more information on splitting die pools).

**Reserve of Will**—This power allows a spirit to increase its temporary Willpower pool beyond its Willpower trait. Each instance of this Charm grants a spirit an additional temporary Willpower.

**Shapechange**—Many spirits have the ability to change their appearance at will. Gods often use this power to make themselves appear more fearful or impressive. This Charm does not change the spirit's traits in any way, but it can be used in combination with stunts to give a multiple-die bonus to the spirit's actions. Shapechange lasts for one scene.

## Motivation, Virtues, and Sphere of Influence

If a spirit's Essence is its body, and a spirit's Willpower is its soul, then its Motivation and Virtues are its mind. When a spirit comes into being, it is given or takes on a purpose that defines and drives it. Gods have Motivations based on their place in the Celestial Order, elementals have Motivations given to them by Gaia, and demons' motivations come from their Yozi masters. These motivations are not the short-term goals of mortals and Exalts, but more open-ended purposes. A city father's Motivation would be the growth and stability of the city it represents; a lion dog's Motivation might be to guard a temple or palace; a Demon Prince might desire to collect the souls of all mortals whom it can make fall in love with it. Motivations for spirits are highly subjective and rarely tasks that can be completed, because if a spirit were to do all there was to finish its Motivation, it would nullify its own existence. Motivations are also more binding to spirits than to mortals: A spirit cannot easily act contrary to its own Motivation. Any action that a spirit performs that is directly contrary to its Motivation costs that spirit a temporary Willpower point.

A spirit may need to change its Motivation over the course of centuries, because its sphere of influence may change or evolve. This can happen gradually, or it may occur as a sudden change when the spirit is slain in its immaterial form and regenerates at its sanctum.

The balance of the four Virtues—Compassion, Conviction, Temperance and Valor—shows the scope and tone of a spirit's sphere of influence. War gods have higher Valor and Conviction than Compassion. Fertility goddesses have high Compassion and Conviction. The First Circle demon courtesans the neomah, known as the Makers of Flesh, have higher Conviction than any other Virtue. Because these Virtues shape the personality of a spirit and a spirit is a being of will manifest, its powers are also shaped by its Virtues. Spirits have a minimum number of Charms of each type of Virtue equal to their rating in that Virtue, so a god with a Temperance of 4 and a Valor of 1 will have *at least* four Temperance spirit Charms and one Valor spirit Charm.

Compassion spirit Charms are healing powers, blessings that augment the traits of other beings or miracles that increase a spirit's Mental Attributes and sensory perception. Compassion Charms can be used only while materialized or while Elsewhere.

Conviction spirit Charms can increase Social Attributes, can increase and alter a spirit's movement, and represent powers that have global or area effects. Unless otherwise stated, Conviction Charms are useable either while materialized or dematerialized.

Temperance spirit Charms are powers of the mind and illusion, used to directly affect or control the minds and souls of other beings. Unless otherwise stated, Temperance Charms can be used either while materialized or dematerialized.

Valor spirit Charms are powers used to increase a spirit's Physical Attributes and combat Abilities and to deal physical damage to an opponent. Valor Charms can be used only while materialized or while Elsewhere.

## Dog of the Unbroken Earth

These forest spirits live in areas of wilderness that have never been touched or altered by mortal hands. Forests that have never had their trees cleared, fields that have never been tilled and hills that have never been mined or quarried are the homes that these spirits zealously protect. The spirits might also appear in areas that have remained untouched by plow or axe or other tool for more than a century and have been reclaimed by nature. Dogs of the unbroken earth are low-ranking Terrestrial spirits who have only limited affiliation with spirit courts because they have little interest in politics and bureaucracy.

At one time, these spirits watched and protected their spheres of influence from the Fair Folk and the undead only, preventing the Wyld from claiming unoccupied regions or keeping hungry ghosts from settling in. If mortals wished to utilize a dog's land, they could get permission from the local Solar lord. Since the breakdown of Celestial Order though, the dogs of the unbroken earth have taken a more ruthless stance in defending against all encroachment. These spirits will attempt to slay any

offending mortal, Exalt or other being and take their skulls for trophies afterward.

Those who wish to settle in an area that has been claimed by a dog of the unbroken earth have a few options to avoid combat with the protective spirit. Dogs enjoy sacrifices of meat or milk from livestock and can be bribed with such offerings at the change of seasons to overlook individual homesteads. Dogs will not accept offerings of meat from slain wildlife, and they will always refuse sacrifices made by road-builders, whom they hate above all other mortals. Mortals may also make prayers and sacrifices to another local god or spirit to intervene on their behalf with the dogs. Gods of humanity are natural antagonists of the dogs of the unbroken earth, and they will sometimes take up the mortals' cause in exchange for a hefty bribe (Resources 2 or greater) or for a year of regular sacrifices.

Dogs of the unbroken earth cannot be mistaken for mortal dogs or wolves. They have long brown fur that has moss, twigs and mud entwined within it. Their eyes glow red or green, depending on their mood. They stand between three and five feet tall at the shoulders, and their heads are almost a foot across. The howl of a dog of the unbroken earth causes glass to shatter and copper and tin to tarnish.

**Sanctum:** Dogs of the unbroken earth live in medium-sized dens that resemble caverns. The dens are usually lit by a few ever-burning torches or lanterns. They serve as places to sleep or trophy rooms where the dogs can mount the skulls of their victims.

**Motivation:** Preventing the encroachment of civilization into its sphere of influence.

**Attributes:** Strength 7, Dexterity 5, Stamina 5; Charisma 2, Manipulation 4, Appearance 2; Perception 4, Intelligence 2, Wits 3

**Virtues:** Compassion 1, Conviction 3, Temperance 1, Valor 3

**Abilities:** Athletics 2, Awareness 4, Dodge 5, Integrity 2, Linguistics (Native: Old Realm; Others: Forest-Tongue, Riverspeak) 2, Lore 2, Martial Arts 4, Presence 3, Resistance 4, Stealth 4, Survival 3 (Tracking +2)

**Backgrounds:** Allies 2, Sanctum 2

**Spirit Charms:**

*Bane Weapon*—For five motes of Essence, a dog of the unbroken earth may make its teeth or claws drip with an unnatural green venom. One physical attack deals aggravated damage to a mortal, causing a wound to fester and be untreatable by normal medicine. This power works only against mortals.

*Essence Plethora* (x2)—Dogs of the unbroken earth have 20 additional motes of Essence in their Essence pools.

*Hurry Home*—For 10 motes and one Willpower, the spirit may move freely about its domain or return to its sanctum instantly.

*Intrusion Sensing Method*—Many guardian spirits use this Charm to ward against intrusion by other spirits and powerful enemies. The spirit spends a temporary Willpower and commits five motes of Essence, and whenever a being with an Essence greater than

1 enters its domain or sphere of influence, the Storyteller will be able to make a reflexive (Perception + Awareness) roll, adding a number of automatic successes equal to the dog's Compassion, for the dog to note the character's presence. Almost all dogs of the unbroken earth commit the Essence necessary to maintain this Charm continuously.

*Landscape Hide*—The spirit may pay six motes and one temporary Willpower to merge its tangible body with any natural feature in its domain, such as the trunk of a tree or a rock outcropping.

*Materialize*—Dogs of the unbroken earth may materialize for 40 motes.

*Measure the Wind*—Dogs of the unbroken earth have uncanny senses and, for a cost of one mote, they frequently use this reflexive Charm to measure the strength of their enemies before ambushing them.

*Paralyze*—One of the spirit's attacks becomes charged with supernatural energy, temporarily stunning its foe. This power costs six motes to activate, and when the attack is made, instead of dealing damage, the target's player must make a (Stamina + Resistance) roll with a difficulty equal to the dog's Valor. Failure leaves the victim at -2 dice to all non-reflexive rolls until the tick when the dog of the unbroken earth next acts. This power has no effect on beings with an Essence higher than the dog.

*Principle of Motion*—This spirit will typically have a reserve of five extra actions when it is encountered.

Dogs of the Unbroken Earth possess the First and Second Excellencies for the following Abilities: Awareness, Martial Arts, Presence, Stealth and Survival.

**Join Battle:** 7

**Attacks:**

Bite: Speed 4, Accuracy 10, Damage 11L, Defense 2, Rate 1

Claw: Speed 2, Accuracy 9, Damage 6L, Defense 1, Rate 2

Charge: Speed 6, Accuracy 7, Damage 10B, Defense 0, Rate 1

**Soak:** 12L/15B (Tough hide, 10L/10B)

**Health Levels:** -0/-1/-1/-1/-2/-2/-2/-4/Incap

**Dodge DV:** 6 **Willpower:** 6

**Essence:** 2 **Essence Pool:** 70

**Cost to Materialize:** 40

**Other Notes:** The paw of a dog of the unbroken earth may be used to make a talisman that gives its wielder's player one additional die on all Survival rolls made for the character while he's in the wilderness. Creating this talisman requires a successful (Intelligence + Occult) roll, difficulty 2. Those who possess such a talisman will earn the instant enmity of any other dog they encounter.

## Gri-Fel, God of the Imperial City

One of the most important personages in the Bureau of Humanity, Gri-Fel is the God of the Imperial City, the most powerful metropolis in the whole of Creation. As a devout adherent of the Immaculate faith, Gri-Fel is convinced of the rightness of the Bronze Faction's cause (see p. 333) and of the Dragon-Bloods hard-earned right to rule. Such devotion is not surprising when one considers that the rise of the Scarlet Empress to power is directly responsible for elevating the small god of a simple farming village to the heights of power and privilege Gri-Fel enjoys today. And he does enjoy them—too much so, some might argue. Gri-Fel has transformed himself completely from the rustic pastoral deity he used to be into an urbane, witty sophisticate (or an effete, arrogant snob), fond of hosting and attending soirées both in the capital and Heaven itself.

Given his enjoyment of the status quo, the rumors of the return of the Lawgivers en masse greatly concerns Gri-Fel. Despite personal assurances from Chejop Kejak that the situation is under control (and its magnitude greatly exaggerated), Gri-Fel remembers with crystal clarity the power the Solar Anathema were capable of mustering in the First Age against their enemies, both real and perceived. He is also well aware of the losses the Realm has already suffered at the hand of the rogue Anathema known as the Bull of the North. Now, Gri-Fel fears that the Solars may strike at the heart of the Scarlet Empire itself, especially given the squabbling of the Dynasts in the Great Houses over the succession. Ignoring Kejak's platitudes, Gri-Fel might soon take it upon himself to offer his support to a candidate for Empress. Though it means overstepping his place in the Perfected Hierarchy, he reasons that maintaining the Realm benefits his betters as much as him. Besides, Mnemon has intimated that his support might well lead to his promotion into the position of his hated rival, Jagalza, the Bureau of Humanity's Satrap of the Realm.

Despite his foppish affectations, Gri-Fel is unafraid of conflict. If he was willing to fight tooth and nail to defend his tiny village centuries ago, he is even more determined to maintain the position of eminence he now enjoys. A masterful martial artist and sorcerer, Gri-Fel will use these abilities to their utmost to defend himself and to crush and humiliate anyone with the temerity to dare strike at him.

**Sanctum:** Within Gri-Fel's grand temple in the heart of the Imperial City lies a small shrine like one might find along any of the Realm's many rural roadways. The doorway to this simple shrine leads to Gri-Fel's sanctum, an opulent throne room of red jade and gold. Also, Gri-Fel maintains a small palace in

Yu-Shan (his Celestial Manse), from whose balcony one may just see the Jade Pleasure Dome some three blocks distant.
**Motivation:** To maintain the safety and prosperity of the Imperial City at any cost.
**Attributes:** Strength 3, Dexterity 6, Stamina 4; Charisma 3, Manipulation 6, Appearance 4; Perception 4, Intelligence 4, Wits 5
**Virtues:** Compassion 2, Conviction 5, Temperance 2, Valor 3
**Abilities:** Awareness 4, Bureaucracy 5, Dodge 3, Integrity 4, Investigation 3, Linguistics (Native: Old Realm; Others: High Realm, Low Realm, Riverspeak) 3, Lore 4, Martial Arts 4, Medicine 2, Occult 4, Performance 5, Presence 5, Resistance 3, Socialize 5, War 5
**Backgrounds:** Allies 4, Celestial Manse 3, Cult 1, Followers 5, Resources 5
**Spirit Charms:**
*Capture*—Gri-Fel may spend 15 motes and one temporary Willpower to move any single creature within its sight into the Imperial Prison. The Storyteller must succeed at a contested (Temperance + Essence) roll against the victim's (Stamina + Integrity) when Gri-Fel activates this Charm.
*Celestial Circle Sorcery*—Gri-Fel knows the following Celestial Circle spells: Blood of Boiling Oil, Outside Worlds Within, Sapphire Countermagic and Voices of Distant Regard.
*Essence Bite*—Gri-Fel may pay three motes of Essence, and for a scene, any being that touches or is touched by the spirit takes 1L damage, ignoring armor and soaked only by Stamina. Gri-Fel must make an appropriate attack against any being able to dodge its touch.
*Essence Plethora* (x5)—Gri-Fel has 50 additional motes of Essence in his Essence pool.
*Hurry Home*—For 10 motes and one Willpower, Gri-Fel may appear anywhere in the Imperial City.
*Materialize* —Gri-Fel may materialize for 65 motes.
*Measure the Wind*—Gri-Fel always takes stock of the beings who are near him and, for a cost of one mote, he uses this Charm to do so.
*Principle of Motion*—Gri-Fel typically has eight extra actions in his pool when encountered.
*Reserve of Will* (x2)—Gri-Fel stores two additional temporary Willpower.
*Terrestrial Circle Sorcery*—Gri-Fel knows all Terrestrial Circle spells and may teach them to others.
Gri-Fel possesses First, Second and Third Excellencies for the following Abilities: Awareness, Bureaucracy, Martial Arts, Occult, Presence, Socialize, War.
**Join Battle:** 9
**Attacks:**
Punch: Speed 5, Accuracy 11, Damage 3B, Defense 12, Rate 3
Kick: Speed 5, Accuracy 10, Damage 6B, Defense 8, Rate 2
**Soak:** 8L/16B (Invulnerable Skin of Bronze, 6L/12B; Hardness: 6L/12B)
**Health Levels:** -0/-0/-1/-1/-1/-1/-1/-1/-2/-2/-2/-2/-2/-2/-4/Incap
**Dodge DV:** 7 **Willpower:** 8 (10 temporary)
**Essence:** 5 **Essence Pool:** 140
**Cost to Materialize:** 75
**Other Notes:** Gri-Fel prefers to use spirit Charms and sorcery in combat, resorting to his martial arts skills only as a last resort.

## Sikunare, Storm Mother

Sikunare is a relatively young storm mother, one of the Western gods that creates storms and rules small spirit courts. She has worked vigorously over the past millennium to solidify her position and gain influence in the Celestial Order. Over the 1,000 years since she won control of her court, she has come to command storms over 900 square miles of ocean, including two rich and popular trade routes, and she has become one of the most noteworthy among her kind. She is proud of her accomplishments in gaining favors from more powerful spirits and the allegiance of many lesser spirits, but she does not let this pride lead her toward laziness. She is just as active a political schemer as she was when she assassinated her predecessor.

Even among other storm mothers, Sikunare is considered ugly. Her thin blue hair floats in matted clumps around her wizened face, and her muscular body is twisted and hunched. Her one vanity is to keep her fingernails long and perfect, set with diamonds and rubies. She hates all women prettier than her and makes it a priority when she sees such beings to enslave and torture them. She always has at least one siren she herself has captured chained to the wall of her sanctum, where she can torture and demean the lesser spirit in front of her court. She sinks ships that pass through her sphere of influence without covering their female mastheads, and she hunts mortal women who do not offer her bribes or sacrifices. She often sends minor storms out to test ships that are new to her domain, to see how well they are captained, then she demands tribute of them if they survive. Her tastes in tribute are those of all storm mothers: black dogs, ravens, obsidian and human babies. Once a ship has paid her tribute, Sikunare will guard it zealously, swamping other ships that threaten it or wreaking lasting revenge on any spirit that dares harm its crew.

Sikunare loves confrontation and battle, and she never turns down a challenge. She engages in duels with any visitor she deems worthy of single combat with herself. She also goes on frequent hunts for large predators and any fugitives that might enter her domain.

Sikunare treats all beings of a lower rank than herself, Exalts included, with a mild contempt unless they prove to her, either through duels or deeds, that they are worthy of her respect. She never hesitates to show that respect once it is earned though. She has a crass sense of humor, especially humor at another's expense, and she loves bawdy poetry.

**Sanctum:** The dead shell of a giant clam sits on a cliff 100 feet below the surface of the Great Western Ocean some 300 miles east of the Archipelago of the Exiles, and it is the spirit door to Sikunare's sanctum. Inside is a palace built of mother-of-pearl and gold, decorated with valuable baubles from many wrecked ships. The main room of the palace has a pearl-encrusted throne built from the skull of a whale. There are always elemental servants scurrying about the sanctum, polishing, cleaning and performing other duties.

**Motivation:** To grow her influence over the Western seas and move up the Celestial Order.

**Attributes:** Strength 6, Dexterity 5, Stamina 6; Charisma 2, Manipulation 3, Appearance 0; Perception 3, Intelligence 3, Wits 3

**Virtues:** Compassion 1, Conviction 4, Temperance 1 Valor 4

**Abilities:** Athletics 3, Awareness 5, Bureaucracy 3, Craft (Fire) 3, Dodge 5, Integrity 2, Linguistics (Native: Old Realm; Others: High Realm, Low Realm, Seatongue) 3, Lore 2, Martial Arts 3, Melee 5 (Dueling +2), Occult 3, Presence 2, Resistance 4, Sail 3, Socialize 3, Survival 1 (Tracking +3), Thrown 2, War 4

**Backgrounds:** Allies 3, Followers 4, Resources 5, Sanctum 4

**Spirit Charms:**

*Affinity Element Control*—For six motes of Essence, Sikunare can manipulate water around her, causing it to reshape itself, convert to mist or solidify into ice. She can affect the equivalent of three barrels of water with each use of this power and the effects last for one scene.

*Malediction*—Sikunare can invoke a terrible curse on any one being with an Essence rating less than her. For 15 motes and 1 temporary Willpower, the target suffers from terrible arthritis and grows boils all over its body. These physical afflictions last for one week and force the victim's player to roll one less die for every action the character takes.

*Materialize* —Sikunare may materialize for 55 motes.

*Principle of Motion*—Sikunare typically has a reserve of seven extra actions prepared.

*Weather Control*—For 10 motes, Sikunare can create a storm of varying intensity and size that lasts for three hours. She can make a mild storm that has a radius of three square miles, which blocks out the sun and adds one to the difficulty of Sail checks. Alternately, she may form a heavy rainstorm with a radius of two miles that adds three to the difficulty of Sail checks and one to the difficulty of all other actions. Finally, Sikunare may create a small storm of near-hurricane force that adds five to the difficulty of Sail checks—which will sink most ships—and three to all other actions. The radius of these storms is doubled within Sikunare's sphere of influence.

*Landscape Travel*—For four motes, Sikunare doubles her movement rate for the duration of a scene and adds two dice to all moving maneuvers performed while underwater.

Sikunare has First and Second Excellencies for the following Abilities: Bureaucracy, Martial Arts, Melee, Thrown.

**Join Battle:** 8

**Attacks:**

Punch: Speed 5, Accuracy 9, Damage 6B, Defense 10, Rate 3

Dueling Cutlass: Speed 4, Accuracy 13, Damage 9L, Defense 12, Rate 3

Javelin: Speed 4, Accuracy 8, Damage 9L, Range 30, Rate 2

**Soak:** 6L/9B (Tough hide, 3L/3B)

**Health Levels:** -0/-1/-1/-1/-1/-1/-2/-2/-2/-2/-2/-4/Incap

**Dodge DV:** 7 **Willpower:** 8

**Essence:** 3 **Essence Pool:** 70

**Cost to Materialize:** 55

**Other Notes:** Like all storm mothers, Sikunare cannot use her Charms against red-haired women, and she suffers a +1 difficulty when attacking or affecting a ship with a red-painted masthead.

## Elementals

The Primordials took Essence from the vast chaotic sea that is the Wyld and wove into it the five elements: Earth, Air, Fire, Water and Wood. Each of these elements interacts with the others, and the total result is the stuff from which Creation was born. The five elements correspond to one of the five aspects of Creation: Air is movement and progress; Water is change and the ability to adapt; Fire is the continual cycle of destruction and rebirth; Earth is the strength and solidity of all matter; and Wood is the spark of life and the drive to continued existence.

The Primordials then created the gods to manage Creation for them, while they retired to play the Games of Divinity. After some time working with the tools left behind by the Primordials, and being tutored by Gaia, the youngest of the Primordials, the gods succeeded in birthing the five original elementals. These five were living embodiments of the principles of the elements, and their primary purpose was to maintain the natural order of Creation. These elementals were of a stature that rivaled the Elemental Dragons in power, who tread the length and breadth of the world in a day and manage all the aspects of the functioning Creation.

The first elementals were bound to the will of the gods with strict magics and curses that forced these titanically powerful beings to always obey the Celestial Incarnae. When the gods rebelled, the Primordials struck first against these beings, shattering their bodies and casting their Essence across Creation. In time, this Essence collected itself and birthed the first of a new breed of elementals, far smaller and weaker than the original five but capable of wielding the same powers on a lesser scale and managing the natural order. The strictures that the gods laid upon the minds and hearts of the original elementals persists in those elementals that have been born later. Elementals are bound to the will of the gods with the purpose of maintaining the functions of a well-ordered Creation.

New elementals are born out of Creation wherever there is a surge in the flows of Essence through the dragon lines and are given the purpose of correcting the balance of Essence in that portion of Creation. Elementals sometimes appear at the sites of great battles, where Essence has been spent by multiple Exalted or where many mortals have been slain, because the great release of Essence at these locations has created an imbalance that threatens the natural order. Elementals are naturally very task oriented. The smallest and least of elementals know only their limited purview and concentrate solely on whatever task or tasks they were born to, never looking beyond the area

where they live or wondering about things greater than they are. These small elementals are often born to tasks that take little time to finish, then they are without a purpose. The gods of the Bureau of Nature collect these elementals and place them in areas that need more elemental workers or put them to work as servants of other spirits.

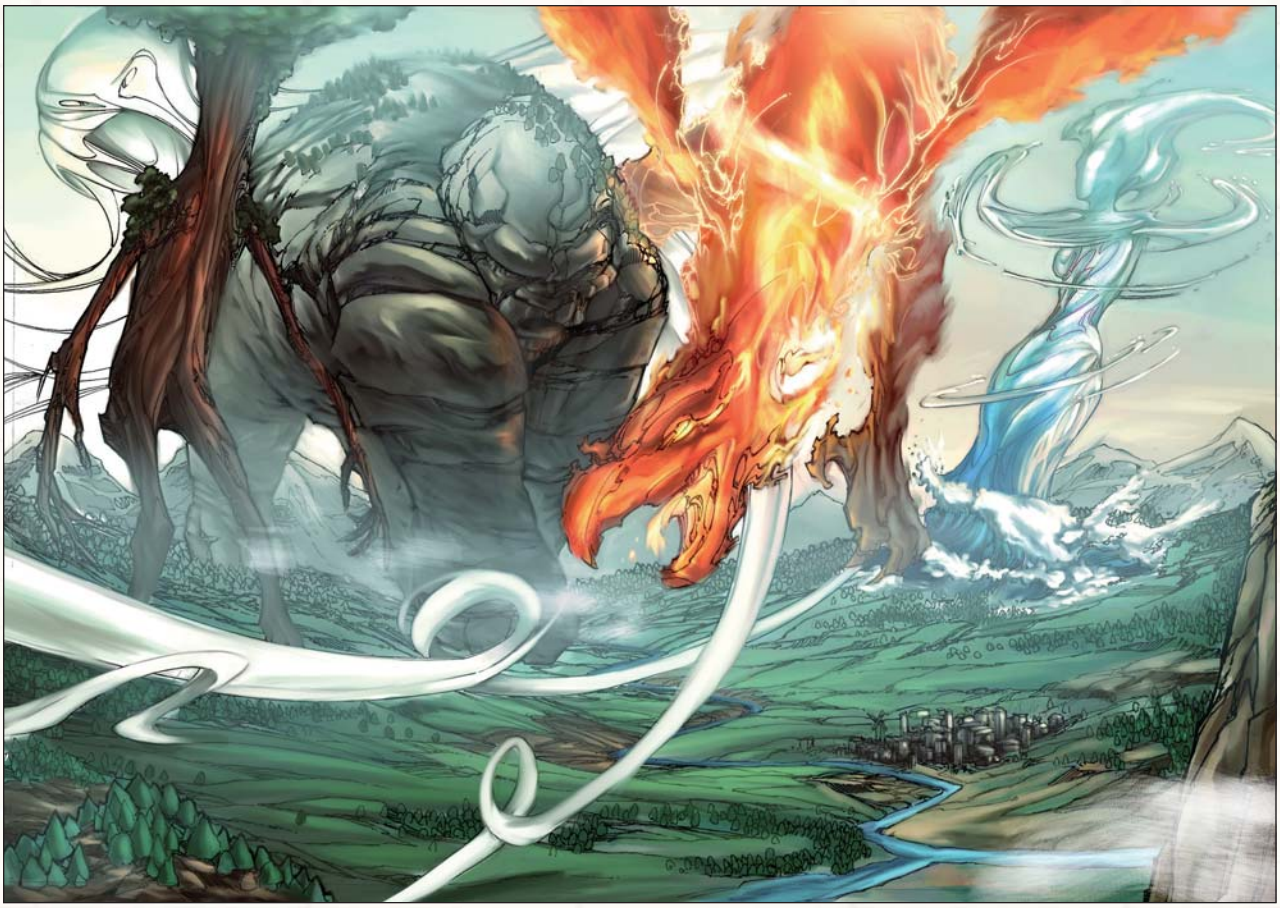
Unlike other spirits, elementals are naturally material, and must expend Essence to dematerialize. As such, they are beings whose nature and purpose is intimately tied to the mortal realm.

Though elementals are spirits, and therefore naturally immortal, their existences are touched by the fragility that is inherent in all substantial things. Elementals know a bit more about mortality than do other spirits. They can be slain more easily, not having the refuge of an inherently immaterial form that is immune to harm. Large predators, natural disasters, adventurous Exalts and cruel Fair Folk are just a few of the worst dangers elementals can face in their lifetimes.

Elementals occupy the lowest ranks in the Celestial Order. They are looked down upon by almost all gods, regardless of their rank or power, and they are laughed at for their material disposition. Elementals are considered of low origin, being spawned by seemingly random acts of nature. They are considered ill-mannered and slow witted, because they shun the trappings of court society and prefer to complete mundane tasks. Even the most powerful elementals, those great dragons whose power rivals the heads of the Celestial Bureaus and whose mere touch would destroy lesser gods, have little standing in the eyes and minds of most gods. Even the Celestial Censors, who are almost always lesser elemental dragons, rarely receive the respect due to their station.

Elementals are grouped and ranked more strictly than other types of spirits. The Essence trait of an elemental is far more indicative of its scope and sphere of influence, as well as its power and nature, than that of a god. Because elementals are naturally material, they grow and evolve more quickly than other spirits and do not require change to be forced upon them. Elementals accrue power simply by surviving in Creation and persisting in the tasks to which they were set. They do not need to play games of politics to earn new rank and be granted power by their superiors, though more powerful elementals do engage their spirit cousins in such dealings.

Elemental shapes and forms are as varied as the different species of demon, though not as plentiful as the number of unique forms little gods take. The size and shape of an elemental is often determined by its Essence trait and its purpose. Least elementals, with an Essence of only 1, are usually insects or small plants. As an elemental grows in power, so too does its size and scope. More powerful elementals take the forms of larger animals, such as birds, fish, snakes and dogs. Elementals with an Essence of 3 or greater often take humanoid forms or those of large predators such as bears and lions. Eventually, as an elemental reaches the highest echelons of rank and power, the only physical shape that can contain its Essence is that of a dragon. Lesser elemental dragons have Essence traits that range from 6–9, and greater elemental dragons can have an Essence of 10 or more.



## Elemental Powers

Elementals have access to the same universal spirit Charms that other spirits use, though the effects of these Charms often reflect the affinity of that elemental. In addition, elementals have other powers and characteristics unique to their spirit type.

**Dematerialize**—This is the exact opposite of the Materialize Charm, but it works in the same manner. An elemental must pay a number of motes of Essence equal to five times the sum of its Willpower and Essence ([Willpower + Essence] x 5) to dematerialize. Once the elemental is immaterial, it can be affected or harmed only by powers and Charms that specifically state they interact with immaterial beings. An elemental may stay immaterial for a number of days equal to the motes spent to activate this Charm. This power cannot be used while in a sanctum, Yu-Shan, the demon realm or other places designated as Elsewhere.

**Dragon's Suspire—**The elemental can make a ranged attack that emanates from its body, usually in the form of breath, that strikes its targets with an effect based on its affinity. This effect might be a gout of flame, a rain of splinters, a thunderclap, an explosion of rock or a freezing fountain of water. The elemental must pay five motes of Essence and one temporary Willpower to activate this attack, then the Storyteller rolls its (Dexterity + [Athletics, Archery or Thrown]) to hit. Dragon's Suspire has an area of effect 10 feet long and five feet wide, and it deals four lethal health levels of damage, plus extra successes on the attack.

**Elemental Expression**—All elementals' basic task is to maintain the flows of Essence through Creation so as to maintain the natural order. All natural phenomena are reflections of the flow of elemental-aspected Essence throughout Creation. An elemental can expend its own Essence to affect or control these phenomena. A mote of Essence spent either doubles or halves the effects of any natural phenomena, including wind, fog, rain, thunder, undertows, flames and earthquakes. These effects may be used to inflict damage on material beings within the elemental's sphere of influence. If so, each mote of Essence spent deals one health level of lethal or bashing damage, soaked by the target normally, at the choice of the elemental. Elementals cannot spend more motes of Essence in this manner than their Essence trait.

**Elemental Rejuvenation**—All elementals can rejuvenate themselves when in contact with the raw element with which they are aligned. This power requires full concentration to work, so the elemental may not engage in any other actions while rejuvenating. When the elemental comes into contact with the naturally occurring element with which it is aligned, it may heal one health level of damage or regain one mote of Essence per three ticks.

## Elemental Summoning

As part of the strictures placed on the elementals by the Celestial Incarnae, they may be called upon by the gods or their Chosen. The rituals and methods used to summon elementals are different from those used to call and bind demons. All summoning rituals pass a request through the Celestial Bureaucracy, which is then passed on to the appropriate elemental. A sorcerer may call upon a type or species of elemental or call upon a specific elemental by name, or he could just put in a generic request for elemental aid. The elemental receives this request and is then pulled across Creation to appear before the summoner. The test of wills that follows, in which the sorcerer engages the elemental, is highly formalized, unlike the power struggle that occurs between sorcerer and demon. Neither the elemental nor the Exalt summoner may use Charms or powers during the test of wills, lest they face punishment by the Bureau of Heaven. Many elementals seek to gain status by serving a powerful Exalt, or they find that being summoned gives them a welcome respite from an otherwise boring existence. These elementals quickly forfeit the contest of wills.

Elementals of great power who have other elementals as slaves or employees who are the recipients of a summons may choose to send one of these subordinates in their stead, so long as the subordinate is capable of fulfilling the requests of the summons.

## Fakharu, Lesser Elemental Dragon of Water, Censor of the West

Fakharu is one of the most powerful and respected functionaries in the spirit courts of the West. He is the top-ranked Celestial Censor in the entire region, the highest position a spirit may obtain and still remain part of the Terrestrial Bureaucracy. Fakharu once avidly investigated infractions against the Celestial Order throughout the Western courts, but since the Usurpation, he has grown disgusted with the corruption among his peers and superiors. Now he prefers to spend his time in solitude in his golden tower, painting and sculpting and writing obscure historical texts. He has also taken on a mortal lover, Amarel, upon whom he has bestowed great blessings and near immortality. Fakharu dotes on Amarel, fulfilling her every wish and desire to the best of his ability.

Fakharu is revolted by the corruption of his superiors and the power games they play, which has made his position as Censor difficult. When Fakharu is called on to perform some functions for the Celestial Bureaucracy, he will often turn the work over to his subordinates, if he can. When he cannot, Fakharu readily receives bribes from lesser courtiers to overlook their indiscretions, lessening his work load and freeing him to return to his favorite pastimes: art, history and Amarel. Fakharu spends most of his days laying his massive body atop the terrace-roofed tower that is the center of his sphere

of influence. He paints portraits of Amarel against the sunrise and sunset, carves sculptures out of rare stone quarried nearby or recounts obscure political events of the First Age.

Fakharu's knowledge of the inner workings of the spirit courts of the West is unparalleled. He knows all the gods and elementals of any significant rank, and most of them owe him either allegiance or favors. Fakharu has a keen sense of decorum and always has perfect manners for any situation. He delights in entertaining visiting Exalts for short periods, especially Solar savants interested in First Age history. He will let any Solar who asks—and who knows the proper etiquette—study the 50 or so works that he has written over the past several hundred years. However, since these works chronicle obscure political and social events of the First Age, finding material relevant to quests for First Age locations and artifacts incurs a +2 difficulty penalty.

Fakharu has the ability to change his shape into a human or into any medium-sized material being to make his guests more comfortable or to fit into the sanctums of lesser spirits he is investigating. He prefers to remain in his draconic body though—a green- and golden-scaled body 25 feet long, with six legs and a mane of foam-soft fur around his neck.

**Sanctum:** Fakharu has a golden palace in the heart of the Western Ocean, built on a tremendous manse. His sanctum is a library room inside this palace and is large enough to encompass his draconic body when he needs to retire from Creation, but he rarely uses it.

**Motivation:** To preserve his status quo so that he may pursue knowledge and enlightenment.

**Attributes:** Strength 8, Dexterity 5, Stamina 12; Charisma 4, Manipulation 5, Appearance 4; Perception 5, Intelligence 6, Wits 4

**Virtues:** Compassion 3, Conviction 4, Temperance 2, Valor 4

**Abilities:** Archery 3, Athletics 2, Awareness 4, Bureaucracy 5, Craft (Earth) 4 (Sculpture +3), Craft (Air) 2 (Painting +2), Dodge 4 (In Dragon Form +2), Integrity 4, Investigation 3, Linguistics (Native: Old Realm; Others: Flametongue, Guild Cant, High Realm, Riverspeak, Seatongue) 5, Lore 4, Martial Arts 4 (In Dragon Form +2), Occult 5, Performance 4, Presence 4 (Executing Duties of Office +2), Resistance 4 (Poison +3), Socialize 5, Stealth 2, War 2

**Backgrounds:** Allies 4, Backing 5, Followers 5, Influence 5, Manse 5, Resources 5, Sanctum 5

**Spirit Charms:**

*Celestial Circle Sorcery*—Fakharu knows the following Celestial Circle spells: The Battle's End, Dolorous Reflection, Sapphire Countermagic, Torrential Cascade and Wheel of the Turning Heavens.

*Dematerialize*—Fakharu may dematerialize for 85 motes.

*Essence Plethora* (x4)—Fakharu has 40 extra motes of Essence in his Essence pool.

*Form Reduction Technique*—Fakharu may shrink down his physical form and squeeze it into a new shape, though this shape does not have all of the abilities and powers of his natural dragon body. The dragon may pay 10 motes and one Willpower to reduce himself down to a human body, or an animal of similar size, for up to one day. Fakharu may dismiss this power's effects as a reflexive action, immediately returning to his dragon body and statistics.

*Geas*—Fakharu may lay a mandatory compulsion upon any target with an Essence less than his own. The geas is a simple, one-sentence command that is within the target's power and scope of influence. The target has one month to complete the task. For every day of that month she does not work toward completion of the task set upon her, she loses one temporary Willpower and one health level—costs that cannot be soaked—until she spends a whole day working on the geas again. This power costs 15 motes of Essence plus two temporary Willpower.

*Hurry Home*—For a cost of 10 motes and one Willpower, Fakharu may use this Charm to return to his tower after performing his duties throughout the West.

*Landscape Travel*—For four motes of Essence, Fakharu may triple his movement rate while underwater. This power has a duration of one scene. Fakharu may use this ability only in his dragon form.

*Measure the Wind*—For a cost of 1 mote, Fakharu uses this Charm to check the rank and power of all guests and visitors, so that he knows the proper social forms and graces to use.

*Natural Elemental Powers*—Fakharu has all the powers that are natural to elementals.

*Principle of Motion*—Fakharu typically maintains a pool of 10 extra actions.

*Terrestrial Circle Sorcery*—Fakharu knows the following Terrestrial Circle spells: Death of Obsidian Butterflies, Demon of the First Circle, Emerald Countermagic, Personal Tempest and Summon Elemental.

Fakharu has First, Second and Third Excellencies for the following Abilities: Bureaucracy, Dodge, Investigation, Martial Arts, Presence and Socialize.

**Join Battle:** 8

**Attacks:**

*Dragon Form:*

Claw: Speed 7, Accuracy 13, Damage 11L, Defense 6, Rate 4

Bite: Speed 9, Accuracy 12, Damage 15L, Defense 2, Rate 1

Dragon's Suspire: Speed 10, Accuracy 8, Damage 24L, Range 10, Rate 1

*Human Form:*

Punch: Speed 5, Accuracy 10, Damage 8B, Defense 11, Rate 3

Dragon-Tooth Dagger: Speed 5, Accuracy 10, Damage 10L, Defense 4, Rate 2

**Soak:** 6L/12B (human) or 14L/28B (Dragon hide, 8L/16B; Hardness: 10) (dragon)

**Health Levels:** -0/-1/-1/-1/-1/-1/-1/-2/-2/-2/-2/-2/-2/-4 /Incap

**Dodge DV:** 9 (In Dragon Form: 11) **Willpower:** 10

**Essence:** 7 **Essence Pool:** 160

**Cost to Dematerialize:** 85

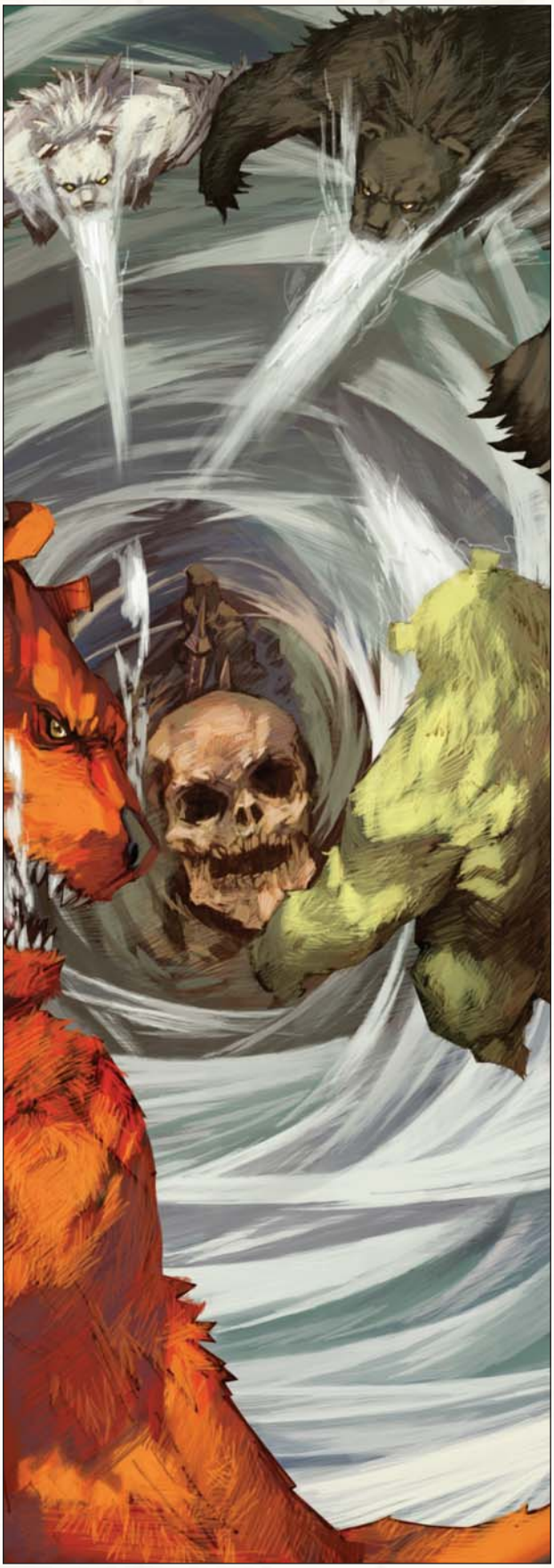
**Other Notes:** Fakharu prefers negotiation to combat, but if he is forced to fight, he will immediately assume his natural dragon form. Human statistics are included in case he might suffer a surprise attack, though that is unlikely.

Fakharu's Suspire ability is a jet of superheated steam.

Fakharu has over 100 lesser spirit and elemental servants at his command.

## Huraka

The huraka are medium-sized air elementals who take the form of tremendous bears whose breath always steams from their mouths. They stand 12 to 14 feet tall, their eyes are rich, shining gold, and their fur is as soft as a cloud. Huraka serve the Wind Masters, the five lesser elemental dragons of



air who are responsible for the five cardinal winds, and each huraka's fur is colored similar to that of the Wind Master it serves. Huraka are gentle wind-herders who manage steady breezes over a few hundred square miles. They also serve in the Aerial Legion as shock troops, for their fearsome size and terrible strength.

Huraka are limited in intelligence and readily receive orders. They rarely develop any type of personality, preferring to spend their days at menial tasks rather than in conflict or discourse. They are commonly summoned by sorcerers who require a steady wind for their experiments or to complete tasks requiring great strength but little manual dexterity. The Wind Masters are very protective of their favorite servants, and sorcerers who abuse or otherwise mistreat summoned huraka may have to face their overseer's wrath.

The breath of the huraka is famed for destroying deception. Many savants have captured this breath in jars or other clear containers. Players of those who look through these containers of huraka breath add three automatic successes to any Perception roll made to pierce an illusion or glamour, including those of the strongest Fair Folk.

**Sanctum:** Huraka live in the Great Halls of their Wind Masters when they are not working.

**Motivation:** To herd the gentle, persistent winds of Creation and loyally serve their masters.

**Attributes:** Strength 6, Dexterity 3, Stamina 5; Charisma 2, Manipulation 1, Appearance 3; Perception 3, Intelligence 2, Wits 2

**Virtues:** Compassion 3, Conviction 2, Temperance 1, Valor 3

**Abilities:** Athletics 3 (Feats of Strength +2), Awareness 2, Bureaucracy 1, Dodge 3, Integrity 2, Linguistics (Native: Airtongue; Others: Old Realm) 2, Martial Arts 4, Presence 2, Resistance 4, Stealth 3

**Backgrounds:** Backing 3, Sanctum 1

**Spirit Charms:**

*Dematerialize*—A huraka may dematerialize for 40 motes.

*Essence Plethora (x2)*—Huraka have 20 extra motes of Essence in their Essence pools.

*Landscape Camouflage*—Huraka may spend three motes of Essence to change their fur coloration to match the surrounding natural wilderness. This adds three dice to their pool when making Stealth checks.

*Landscape Travel*—Huraka may pay 4 motes of Essence to be able to fly at their normal movement rate for a scene.

*Measure the Wind*—Huraka rarely interact with other spirits, so are unlikely to use this one mote Charm unless threatened.

*Natural Elemental Powers*—Huraka have all the powers that are natural to elementals.

*Principle of Motion*—Huraka tend to have four extra actions stored and ready.

*Sense Domain*—A huraka may spend five motes and one temporary Willpower to discern the status of its sphere of influence. The Storyteller makes a (Perception + Awareness) roll for the huraka activating this Charm, adding a number of automatic successes equal to its Compassion. One success alerts the spirit to any direct danger to itself or its sphere of influence. Two successes grant the spirit a catalogue of all events in the area at that given moment—useful for checking on how the winds are blowing and the reaction of the wilderness to those winds. Three or more successes will reveal to the spirit all beings not magically hidden by sorcery or Charms.

Huraka have the First Excellency for the following Abilities: Athletics, Awareness, Dodge, Integrity, Martial Arts and Stealth.
**Join Battle:** 4
**Attacks:**
Bite: Speed 9, Accuracy 11, Damage 10L, Defense 2, Rate 1
Claw: Speed 7, Accuracy 10, Damage 8L, Defense 4, Rate 2
Dragon's Suspire: Speed 10, Accuracy 5, Damage 8L, Range 10, Rate 1
**Soak:** 6L/9B (Thick hide, 4L/4B)
**Health Levels:** -0/-1/-1/-2/-2/-4/Incap
**Dodge DV:** 4 **Willpower:** 6
**Essence:** 2 **Essence Pool:** 70
**Cost to Dematerialize:** 40
**Other Notes:** A Huraka's Dragon's Suspire ability is to breathe a stinging, freezing hail.

## Nymph

Nymphs are water elementals that swim in the deepest oceans, looking for peculiar currents and eddies to float in, for interesting species of animal to tease and torment or, occasionally, for mortals to take beneath the waves with them. Nymphs are capricious creatures whose sensuous nature leads them to search endlessly for new amusements. They are famous for their sexual nature and lustful stamina, so they are often summoned or captured to be the crown jewel in the harems of the exceedingly wealthy. Nymphs are also very vain, accepting flattery and adulation as long as it continues to be unique. Nymphs who remain in captivity are usually there not because they cannot escape, but because they have not become bored with their treatment.

Many sailors tell stories of encounters with these lovely immortal beings, exaggerating their own exploits when far from home. These are most often lies, though, because the mortals that nymphs take as lovers at sea invariably drown as a result.

Nymphs take the form of supremely beautiful human women with long hair that seems to always be flowing and floating with the current, even when they leave the water. Their skin is tinged blue-green, and their naked bodies are slightly translucent. They have pearls for eyes and whalebone teeth, and their fingers and toes are slightly webbed. Nymphs are nearly invisible when swimming underwater.
**Sanctum:** Nymphs who do not reside in another spirit's sanctum live in small sea caves where they collect trinkets and memorabilia of their best unique encounters. They only return to these sanctums to bring a new trinket there for storage or to heal injuries.
**Motivation:** To find new amusements and sensual pleasures.
**Attributes:** Strength 3, Dexterity 5, Stamina 3; Charisma 4, Manipulation 3, Appearance 5; Perception 2, Intelligence 2, Wits 3
**Virtues:** Compassion 1, Conviction 2, Temperance 1, Valor 3
**Abilities:** Awareness 2, Bureaucracy 2, Dodge 4, Integrity 1, Linguistics (Native: Old Realm; Others: Riverspeak, Seatongue) 2, Martial Arts 3, Performance 4, Presence 4, Resistance 2, Socialize 3, Stealth 4
**Backgrounds:** Sanctum 1
**Spirit Charms:**
*Dematerialize*—A nymph may dematerialize for 40 motes.
*Elemental Domain*—Nymph's bodies are made of solidified water and water-aspected Essence. For 5 motes and 1 temporary Willpower, a nymph may dissolve itself into the water around it, making it temporarily immune to damage. This power lasts for as long as the nymph concentrates and commits the motes of

Essence spent to activate the power, but this is the only activity in which the nymph may engage during that time.
*Essence Plethora*—Nymphs have 10 extra motes of Essence in their Essence pools.
*Harrow the Mind*—A nymph may create illusions in the minds of a single target, which distract and confuse her victim. The spirit must pay 10 motes of Essence and one temporary Willpower to activate this ability for a scene. The Storyteller then makes a (Manipulation + Performance) roll for the nymph against the target's Mental DV, adding a number of automatic successes equal to its Temperance. Only one success is necessary to create the illusion, but each additional success adds to the difficulty of any roll made to break free of the illusion.
*Landscape Hide*—Nymphs may pay six motes and one temporary Willpower to merge their bodies in with sea foam.
*Measure the Wind*—Nymphs use this power for a cost of one mote to take stock of beings they encounter, in order to learn if they are too powerful to trick or seduce.
*Natural Elemental Powers*—Nymphs have all the powers that are natural to elementals, except Dragon's Suspire.
*Principle of Motion*—Nymphs usually maintain a pool of six extra actions.
Nymphs have First and Second Excellencies for the following Abilities: Dodge, Performance and Socialize.
**Join Battle:** 5
**Attacks:**
Slap: Speed 5, Accuracy 9, Damage 3B, Defense 10, Rate 3
Kick: Speed 5, Accuracy 8, Damage 6B, Defense 6, Rate 2
**Soak:** 1L/3B
**Health Levels:** -0/-1/-1/-1/-2/-2/-2/-4/Incap
**Dodge DV:** 6 **Willpower:** 6
**Essence:** 2 **Essence Pool:** 60
**Cost to Dematerialize:** 40
**Other Notes:** Nymphs always prefer to flee rather than fight. The novelty of pain wears off quickly, and even these elementals have a strong sense of self preservation. If cornered, a nymph will attempt to use its Charms to seduce or confuse an opponent, then to either inflict a death blow or escape unnoticed.

## Wood Spider

Wood spiders are malicious elementals that lurk in the branches of trees overhanging roads and trails. They love nothing more than to wait for lone travelers or small groups to come near and then to move through the foliage and underbrush, shifting and changing landmarks to lead its victims astray. Wood spiders will torment travelers by leading them deep into the woods, until those travelers lay down to sleep or succumb to exhaustion and starvation. The spiders then lower themselves on drag lines of woven wood, bind their victims in cocoons of wood and leaves and inject their poison into them, slowly turning their victims into living wooden statues.

If a wood spider is spotted or caught while it is hidden, it will offer its victim advice couched in riddles or wager information on simple-seeming puzzles. Wood spiders might seem polite helpful, but this act belies their vicious nature. They are consummate liars, wrapping truth in lies like a mortal spider cocoons a fly. Their voices are as venomous as their bite. Their words are crafted as carefully as their webs. Even if the wood spider's real motives are known, its riddles and puzzles are a type of simple magic that can mislead even the most wary.

The bodies of wood spiders are tight bundles of branches, brisling with growing twigs. Each of their eight legs is a jointed limb with jagged, broken ends. Most wood spiders are the size of a grown man's head, but they can grow as large as a horse. They do not weave webs like mortal spiders do, but they can use Essence to bend plants and trees together into patterns to distract and confuse their victims.

**Sanctum:** Wood spiders dwell in hollow logs or hollow cavities in living trees, though they seldom visit these sanctums except to heal from injury.

**Motivation:** To confuse and befuddle those venturing in the woods.

**Attributes:** Strength 2, Dexterity 6, Stamina 5; Charisma 2, Manipulation 5, Appearance 1; Perception 3, Intelligence 3, Wits 4

**Virtues:** Compassion 1, Conviction 3, Temperance 2, Valor 2

**Abilities:** Archery 3, Awareness 4, Craft (Wood) 3 (Weaving +2), Dodge 5, Integrity 3, Larceny 3, Linguistics (Native: Old Realm; Others: Forest-Tongue, Low Realm, Riverspeak) 3, Lore 2, Martial Arts 2, Resistance 2, Socialize 3, Stealth 5

**Backgrounds:** Sanctum 1

**Spirit Charms:**

*Dematerialize*—A wood spider may dematerialize for 40 motes.

*Harrow the Mind*—A wood spider may create illusions in the minds of a single target, which distracts and confuses its victim. The spirit must pay 10 motes of Essence and one temporary Willpower to activate this Charm for a scene. The Storyteller then makes a (Manipulation + Perform) roll for the wood spider against the target's Mental DV, adding a number of automatic successes equal to the target's Temperance. Only one success is necessary to create the illusion, but each additional success adds to the difficulty of any roll made to break free of the illusion.

*Landscape Hide*—Wood spiders may pay six motes and one temporary Willpower to merge their bodies with leaves and branches.

*Measure the Wind*—Wood spiders assess every potential victim with this one-mote Charm.

*Natural Elemental Powers*—Wood spiders have all the powers that are natural to elementals.

*Paralyze*—One of the spirit's attacks becomes charged with supernatural energy, temporarily stunning its foe. This power costs six motes to activate, and when the attack is made, instead of dealing damage, the target's player must make a (Stamina + Resistance) roll with a difficulty equal to the wood spider's Valor. Failure leaves the victim at -2 dice to all non-reflexive rolls until the tick when the wood spider next acts. This power has no effect on beings with an Essence higher than the spider.

*Principle of Motion*—Wood spiders usually maintain a stock of four extra actions.

*Words of Power*—A wood spider may spend five motes of Essence to activate this Charm for a scene. The wood spider begins to chatter in an endless stream of nonsense words and may make attacks against its victim rolling its (Manipulation + Valor). This attack deals two levels of bashing damage plus extra successes, soaked only by Stamina. For each health level of damage taken, the victim receives a one-die penalty to all its actions for nine ticks.

Wood Spiders have the First Excellency for the following Abilities: Craft, Dodge, Larceny and Socialize.

**Join Battle:** 8

**Attacks:**

Bite: Speed 3, Accuracy 8, Damage 4L + poison, Defense 4, Rate 1

Kick: Speed 5 Accuracy 10, Damage 6B, Defense 2, Rate 2

Dragon's Suspire: Speed 10 Accuracy 9, Damage 12L, Range 10, Rate 1

**Soak:** 6L/8B (Wooden skin, 3L/3B)

**Health Levels:** -0/-1/-1/-2/-2/-4/Incap

**Dodge DV:** 7 **Willpower:** 5

**Essence:** 3 **Essence Pool:** 55

**Cost to Dematerialize:** 40

**Other Notes:** Poison [Wood Spider Venom] (4L/hour, 3, –/–, -4). Any being who dies from the damage of this poison has her body turned to a living wood statue.

Wood spiders' Dragon's Suspire is a flurry of razor sharp leaves.

## Demons

The Celestial Incarnae were ready to execute those Primordials and their servants that survived the revolution of the gods and surrendered, but Gaia interceded. She negotiated a reprieve for the offending Primordials, sparing her cousins and siblings. More importantly, Gaia knew that, if the Incarnae were to slay the remaining Primordials, it would irrevocably stain their hands and start their reign over Creation with unnecessary violence, marking them with a stigma of terror that would never fade. Instead, the gods took one of the souls of each of the Primordials and executed those, forcing their former masters to metamorphose into new forms, a change controlled by the gods. Their bodies were broken and stretched, their nature reforged, until they were unrecognizable as the makers of all that was. The Primordials thus became the Yozis, the greatest of demons, imprisoned beyond Creation for all eternity.

### The Demon Realm

Malfeas is the Demon City, the heart of the demon realm and the foundation of the prison the gods made. Malfeas is also the greatest of the Yozis, though once he was known by another name and was the King of the Primordials. When his 23rd soul was executed, he was turned inside out. His flesh became the ground and his bones the pillars that hold up the sky. His muscles and organs became the structures and edifices that rise into the skyline. His heart was torn out and hurled into the sky, where it became Ligier, the Green Sun.

The Yozi Kimbery is the vast acid sea that fills the lowest parts of the Demon City, pooling under buildings and stretching across hundreds of miles of sunken ruins. On one of her shores grows the silver forest Szoreny, whose trees spread roots in the sky instead of leaves. Cecelyne, the lawmaker of the demons and elder sister of Malfeas, is known as the Endless Desert, because her sandy body encircles the edges of the demon realm and stretches out beyond infinity. Adjoran, the Silent Wind, blows across the sands and passes through the Demon City on occasion, slaying every living thing it touches and bringing quiet to the noisy streets. Hegra, the Typhoon of Nightmares, tumbles through the sky collecting into hallucinatory clouds and psychedelic rain the fear and terror that plagues sleepers. These are just a few of the Yozis, who define their prison with their very nature.

Most of the lesser demons make their home in the Demon City, from Demon Princes to nameless wretches who caper and slave and sing and pray among tarnished metal buildings that bristle like a densely packed forest. The city is filled with music and noise, for such clamor keeps the Silent Wind away. The Green Sun never sets, and only when the Ebon Dragon passes between Ligier and the Demon City does any semblance of night come to the denizens of the demon realm. There are places in the city where the sun never reaches, though, and it is to these places that the victims of the Ebon Dragon flee so that they may escape any light, which causes them exquisite agony.

There is no reason or consistency to the architecture that makes up Malfeas. The Demon City is forever growing, shifting and struggling in torment. Layers upon layers of city have piled up over one another, crushing together, sometimes destroyed and sometimes melting into one great mass. Hordes of lesser demons work tirelessly around the city to tear down and rebuild according to the whim of Princes or their own perverse nature.

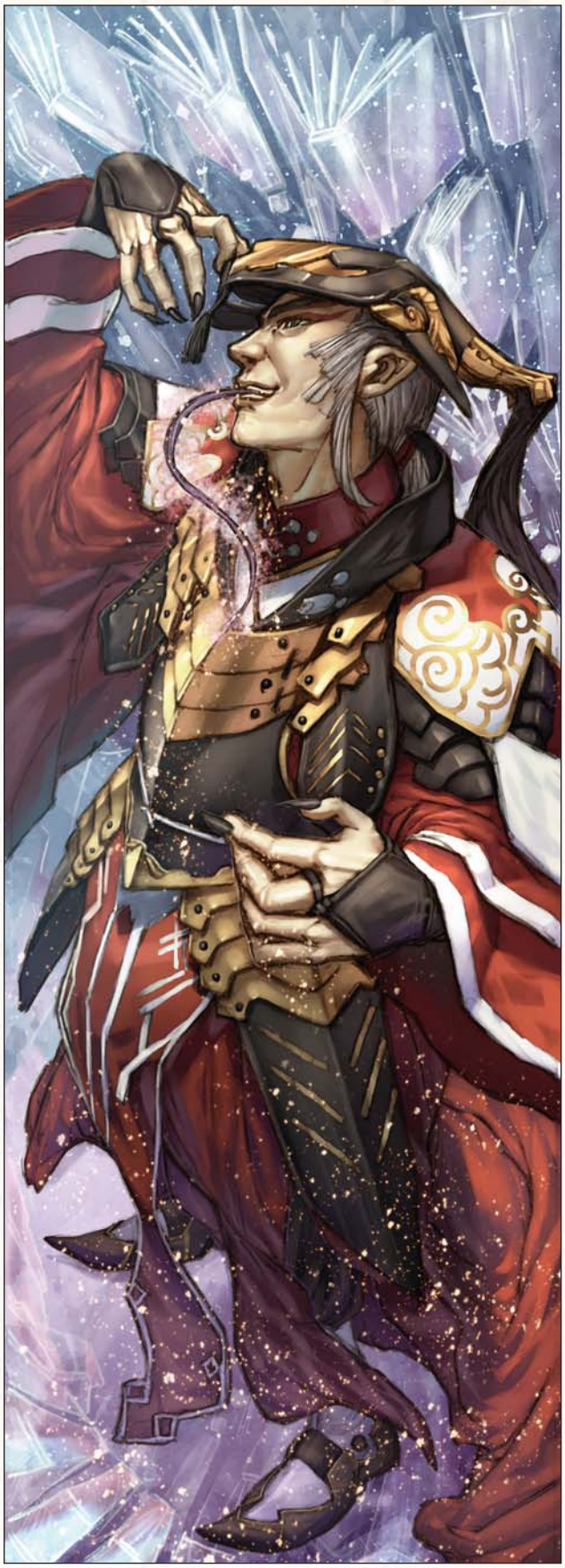
### The Demon Hierarchy

The power of the Yozis is beyond imagining. Their footsteps turn mountain ranges into seas, their breath shatters the will of an army, and their lustful gaze incinerates fields. Their words change the very laws of nature. The Yozis are so great that their souls cannot be content within their bodies, so they exist as separate entities. Each Yozi has at least a dozen souls, each of which encompasses and embodies an aspect of the greater whole. These souls are known as the Demon Princes, and they are the Third Circle demons, who can be summoned through sorcery of the Solar Circle.

The power of the Demon Princes rivals that of the most powerful gods and elementals. Ligier, the Green Sun, refuses to fight any battle in which he does not face at least an army of Dragon-Blooded or a full circle of Solar Exalted because he feels it isn't enough of a challenge. Jacint, the Prince upon the Tower, can build a road between any two points in Creation with his voice alone, regardless of borders and boundaries. The horn that belongs to Erembour, That Which Calls to the Shadows, has cursed whole cities with an unholy fear of light. Sorcerers summon Orabilis, the End of all Wisdom, to build them glass libraries with knowledge that can be found nowhere else. When Munaxes, the Ravine of Whispers, appears in Creation, she causes earthquakes for miles around, and any who fall into her cavernous maw will fall for eternity, never dying. Demon Princes have the ability to appear in multiple places at once, so summoning Ligier, for instance, does not cause the Green Sun to vanish from within Malfeas.

Each Third Circle demon has seven separate souls of its own, reflections of some facet of the Demon Prince's personality and abilities. These are the Second Circle demons, who are the lieutenants and dukes of the demon realm. Slaying a Second Circle demon does not change the form and nature of its Third Circle patron, for the Demon Princes are defined by their relationship with the Yozis. Second Circle demons all have unique names and individual natures. They scheme and plan and set themselves against each other and against Creation, all for the greater plans of their masters. Second Circle demons are summoned by powerful sorcerers for a variety of reasons, but few are ever bound to mundane tasks.

In the eons since the creation of the demon realm, the Second Circle demons have spawned countless races of nearly mindless slaves and chattel. These spawn are the First Circle demons, the least powerful and most plentiful type of demon in Malfeas. First Circle demons rarely have any individual names and are known by their species. Unlike other types of spirits, they have the ability reproduce themselves, spawning in mimicry or mockery of mortal creatures. First Circle demons are the most common types summoned by sorcerers, as they excel at manual labor and simple combat. Their abilities and Charms make them extraordinary servants, and their low intelligence and alien mindset means they are willing to perform just about any task. Those First Circle demons that have an intelligence on par with humans do not have the same mentality or outlook that humans do. Gilmyne spend almost all of their time dancing, and it seems as if that is all they can do, but they know thousands of dances, each one a form of language in itself. Angyalka are the harpists of time, and their songs evoke memories of lost moments. Left to their own devices, though, they can do nothing but play the harp or mate to bear young. Hopping puppeteers



are some of the most accomplished builders and architects of any lesser spirits, but they have the attention span of children when not building, and they move aimlessly about, looking for something, anything, to reconstruct.

## Travel Between Malfeas and Creation

As part of the terms of their imprisonment, the lesser demons were forced to agree to be summoned and bound to the will of gods and Exalts. This was one of the ways that the gods hoped to assert their dominance over these other spirits. Summoning demons is a dangerous and often fruitless task. A sorcerer must not only be able to call to a demon, but she must know what she is calling and how to properly bind it. Summoning the wrong type of demon is the most common mistake a neophyte sorcerer makes—and it is often her last.

Sorcery is not the only way to call a demon from Malfeas into Creation. The prison built by the gods from the bodies of the Yozis was purposefully left flexible and incomplete, with cracks that allow certain demons through. There are events in Creation that call to a demon that is particularly aligned to that event, and then a demon is pulled into Creation without its will being bound. First Circle demons that pass through these cracks into Creation are unable to find their way back to Malfeas, though few would ever want to try. Second Circle demons may return to Malfeas at any time they are not bound by a sorcerer, and they may carry with them objects and willing creatures when they cross Cecelyne. Third Circle demons are called into Creation rarely, being so powerful as to not fit through the cracks that admit their subordinates. However, they have no problems returning to Malfeas and carrying with them any being onto whom they can hold.

It is possible for mortals and Exalts to cross into Malfeas without the aid of a demon. At Calibration, certain paths open up in Creation, similar to spirit doors but less spectacular, that lead to the Endless Desert. Once a being has made it to Cecelyne, it takes exactly five days to cross the desert into Malfeas. Though time moves and feels different while one is in the Demon City, a mortal or Exalt who travels there is free to leave whenever she wants, and she will always find herself back in Creation before Calibration ends.

There are also stories of artifacts that lead their bearers directly to Malfeas, bypassing Cecelyne entirely. One of these is a key (Artifact 4) that fits in any lock and makes any door open up into the Demon City.

## Octavian, The Living Tower, Demon of the Second Circle

*The Defining Soul of the Ravine of Whispers*

Octavian stands 10 feet tall and six feet broad, with skin like stone and muscles like boulders. He is coated in a thin black oil that glistens as it drips from his body. His smooth, bald head is crowned by the petrified teeth of his first foe. He wears the shrunken head of a Solar Exalt on his belt, with a cracked hearthstone still set in its forehead. Among the armies of the demon hordes, he is a general and a champion. He is undefeated in battle in the demon realm, and has failed against only two beings in Creation—the Lord of Nine Falls and the Mushroom King. He has the strength of an avalanche, which he has used to wrestle down his peers and tear the wings from the backs of elemental dragons. Octavian rules the largest portion of the

Demon City, fully a quarter of one layer, and is sometimes called the Quarter Prince for his exploits.

Octavian once loved the earth, but it rejected his love and trembles ever so slightly at his touch. Where he steps, the ground weeps tears of cold gray stone, which are soft to the touch and sob when they are crushed. He is a bane to all earth elementals and spirits aligned with the earth. All but the greater elemental dragons flee in abject terror when he approaches.

The oil that Octavian's skin produces has a three-fold effect. It blinds when anointed on the eyes, it deafens when anointed on the ears, and it erases the memories of a single day when anointed on the forehead. Where it falls against the ground, it sears the ground pure white. Octavian is unable to eat a meal without the oil destroying the taste of his food.

A powerful wood elemental once granted Octavian a boon, in the form of an acorn that grants its bearer command of all the beasts that run above or burrow beneath the earth. He wears this acorn on a string around his neck and needs only press it to his lips to summon those beasts under its geas. Should the acorn be stolen, Octavian will stop at nothing to retrieve it. If it is destroyed, then a white oak tree that grows in the depths of Octavian's stronghold will grow another acorn for him.

Sometimes, Octavian is called into Creation by the challenge of a worthy opponent shouted from a mountain peak for seven days straight.

**Motivation:** To birth and expand an empire unrivaled in all of history.

**Attributes:** Strength 13, Dexterity 7, Stamina 7; Charisma 3, Manipulation 2, Appearance 1; Perception 4, Intelligence 4, Wits 6

**Virtues:** Compassion 2, Conviction 5, Temperance 2, Valor 5

**Abilities:** Archery 5, Athletics 5 (Feats of Strength +3), Awareness 4, Bureaucracy 2, Dodge 4, Integrity 5, Linguistics (Native: Old Realm; Others: Riverspeak) 1, Lore 4, Martial Arts 5, Melee 5 (Equitable Resolution +3), Occult 3, Presence 4 (Commanding in Battle +2), Resistance 5, Ride 5, Thrown 5, War 5

**Backgrounds:** Allies 2, Artifact 4, Backing 4, Cult 5, Followers 5

**Spirit Charms:**

*Bane Weapon*—For 5 motes of Essence, Octavian may make one physical attack deal aggravated damage against an earth elemental.

*Commanding the Beasts of the Earth*—This unique ability, granted by the acorn he wears, allows Octavian to spend a mote of Essence to summon an animal associated with the earth to do his bidding. He may spend up to his Essence each time he activates this ability.

*Measure the Wind*—Octavian uses this Charm, for a cost of one mote, to assess the worthiness of opponents to face him in one-on-one challenges.

*Principle of Motion*—Octavian typically maintains a stock of 10 extra actions.

*Words of Power*—Octavian keens a song of ultimate heartbreak. He pays five motes of Essence and one temporary Willpower, and for a scene, he may make attacks against a single target, with the Storyteller rolling Octavian's (Manipulation + Valor). This attack deals five levels of bashing damage plus extra successes and can be soaked using only Stamina. For each health level of damage done in this manner, the victim suffers a one-die penalty for 21 ticks.

Octavian has First, Second and Third Excellencies for the following Abilities: Archery, Athletics, Dodge, Integrity, Martial Arts, Presence, Thrown and War.

**Join Battle:** 10

**Attacks:**

Blinding/Deafening Punch: Speed 5, Accuracy 13, Damage 13B, Defense 14, Rate 3

Malfean Iron Staff (Equitable Resolution): Speed 7, Accuracy 17, Damage 23B, Defense 18, Rate 4

**Soak:** 19L/22B (Tougher than Hell, 15L/15B)

**Health Levels:** -0/-1/-1/-1/-1/-1/-1/-2/-2/-2/-2/-2/-2/-4/Incap

**Dodge DV:** 9 **Willpower:** 10

**Essence:** 7 **Essence Pool:** 120

**Cost to Materialize:** 85

**Other Notes:** Octavian uses Words of Power only against foes who insist on challenging him to single combat but he feels are unworthy of his efforts. He will render them incapacitated and leave them for his minions to devour.

Octavian wields a staff of Malfean iron named Equitable Resolution. This staff shatters any mortal weapon that it strikes or parries. If it successfully parries a weapon made from one of the five magical materials, Octavian gets a reflexive disarm attack at his full dice pool.

Octavian rides a demon wasp named Damaskenos. Summoning Octavian also summons Damaskenos, and binding Octavian also binds his steed.

Octavian's blinding/deafening punch attack targets a victim's eyes or ears. If the attack successfully deals damage, then the victim's player must make a successful (Stamina + Resistance) roll with a difficulty of 7 or the character is appropriately blinded or deafened for one day. See page 135 for rules of blinding and deafening. Octavian may also target the forehead of a mortal, causing her to lose the past 24 hours of memory. This amnesia does not affect Essence wielders.

## Erymanthoi, The Blood-Apes

*Demons of the First Circle*

Erymanthoi are the favored demons of summoners all over Creation. When they are summoned it is usually for battle, and nothing pleases a Blood-Ape more than the blood of its slain foes. Erymanthoi often put up only a token resistance to being bound, and they serve willingly for the terms of their summoning. In the demon realm, they serve as foot soldiers in the armies of the Demon Princes or as guardians to small temples and entertainment halls.

The erymanthoi resemble hulking apes with dull red fur and horny bone protrusions along their back and on the crests of their heads. They have long, grooved black claws that puncture flesh to let blood flow over their gnarled fingers. They are of low, animal intelligence, but they have a cruel sort of cunning and are quite adept at martial combat. The erymanthoi cherish fresh, hot blood and become surly and recalcitrant if they are not allowed at least some blood after every battle.

The erymanthoi are the most prone of all demons to material form. Even when they are dematerialized in Creation, physical manifestations of their presence occur. Sometimes, it the fetid smell of their blood-caked bodies or, other times, a ghostly afterimage of where they have passed or even wilted ground plants where they have stepped. Erymanthoi dematerialize only when ordered to do so, and they will return to a material form at the earliest opportunity.

Erymanthoi may find their way out of the demon realm by listening for the sound of the last drop of blood of a mortal species of creature falling to the earth.

**Motivation:** To battle and kill and consume the blood of their enemies.

**Attributes:** Strength 6, Dexterity 4, Stamina 5; Charisma 1, Manipulation 2, Appearance 1; Perception 3, Intelligence 2, Wits 3

**Virtues:** Compassion 1, Conviction 3, Temperance 1, Valor 4

**Abilities:** Athletics 4 (Feats of Strength +1) (Brachiation +2), Awareness 3, Dodge 3, Integrity 2, Martial Arts 4 (Claws +1), Melee 2 (Club +2), Presence 2 (Intimidation +2), Resistance 3, Stealth 2, Survival 2, Thrown 2

**Backgrounds:** Backing 1

**Spirit Charms:**

*Bane Weapon*—For five motes of Essence, an erymanthus may make one physical attack deal aggravated damage against a mortal.

*Essence Plethora*—An erymanthus has 10 extra motes of Essence in its Essence pool.

*Landscape Travel*—An erymanthus may pay five motes of Essence to double its movement rate while swinging from trees or vines.

*Principle of Motion*—An erymanthus will typically have five extra actions ready.

Erymanthoi have the First and Second Excellencies for the following Abilities: Athletics, Dodge, Martial Arts, Presence and Stealth.

**Join Battle:** 6

**Attacks:**

Claw: Speed 5, Accuracy 9, Damage 8L, Defense 8, Rate 2

Bone Club: Speed 7, Accuracy 8, Damage 8B, Defense 6, Rate 1

**Soak:** 6L/8B (Tough hide, 3L/3B)

**Health Levels:** -0/-1/-1/-1/-2/-2/-2/-4/Incap

**Dodge DV:** 5 **Willpower:** 7

**Essence:** 2 **Essence Pool:** 65

**Cost to Materialize:** 45

**Other Notes:** None

## Neomah, The Makers of Flesh

*Demons of the First Circle*

The neomah live by a pact, that they will perform the duties of a courtesan to any being willing to pay the neomah's price. A neomah will perform any sensual act, except those that involve the death of one of the participants, in exchange for a piece of flesh. Each neomah has within herself a tower of fire and brass and tin, which she can spin from her mouth into the shape of a nautilus shell. Inside this spiral tower, she sates the lusts and needs of any creature that comes calling. In the demon realm, these towers dot the landscape, rising over the course of a day and remaining for a week or more, until the neomah has gathered enough flesh to be stitched together into a small creature that is the amalgam of all the species that contributed to its making. Then, the neomah casts this lifeless child into the fires that burn from the tip of the tower's spiral, where it absorbs the life of the flame and takes its first breath. While it wails and screams, the neomah sucks her tower back into her mouth and moves on, leaving her strange child to fend for itself.

Neomah are humanoid female demons with pale lavender flesh. They have full, sensual lips and large, dark eyes with no pupils. Their bodies are completely hairless, and they often decorate themselves with piercings to make themselves unique. The neomah are not particularly beautiful by most standards, though they are far from ugly, and there is no creature in Creation or anywhere else that is as sexually appealing to as many species of being. With a combination of exquisite skill, a scent that is arousing to all beings and the power to alter her physical form slightly to accommodate any species, a neomah can seduce anyone who has the least interest in copulation. Neomah can alter their bodies to become male, androgynous, hermaphroditic or even some other stranger forms to accommodate rare demon species. These skills and powers are of great use in the demon realm, and many decadent sorcerers find neomah to be the perfect companions.

The neomah's skill in weaving disparate pieces of flesh is prized by beings who wish to reproduce with each other but are biologically incompatible. A neomah finds it simple to combine the donated flesh of two creatures into a composite of the best qualities of both, including making a human baby from two mothers. A neomah may even weave together bits of flesh from many different would-be parents to produce an offspring that has only the best traits of each of them, though the difficulty of doing so increases for each creature that donates the required flesh. For each piece of flesh used in the making of a child, the neomah requires an equal piece of flesh for her own uses.

The neomah may be called into Creation without summoning by the mingled tears of parents mixing with the afterbirth of a stillborn baby.

**Motivation:** To fulfill the terms of the neomah charter: exchange services for flesh and weave that flesh into unique creatures.
**Attributes:** Strength 3, Dexterity 5, Stamina 5; Charisma 2, Manipulation 4, Appearance 5; Perception 3, Intelligence 2, Wits 2
**Virtues:** Compassion 4, Conviction 5, Temperance 1, Valor 1
**Abilities:** Athletics 2 (Contortion +1), Awareness 3, Craft (Flesh) 5, Dodge 3, Integrity 4, Linguistics (Native: Old Realm; Others: Body Language) 5, Melee 2 (Hairpin* +2), Presence 4 (Seduction +3), Resistance 3, Stealth 2, Thrown 3
**Backgrounds:** Backing 1
**Spirit Charms:**
*Harrow the Mind*—Some clients prefer complete fantasy worlds, so the neomah use this Charm to aid in the experience. The demon must pay 10 motes of Essence and one temporary Willpower to activate this Charm for a scene. Then, the Storyteller makes a (Manipulation + Presence) roll for the neomah against the target's Mental DV, adding a number of automatic successes equal to its Temperance. Only one success is necessary to create the illusion, but each additional success adds to the difficulty of any roll made to break free of the illusion.
*Principle of Motion*—Neomah typically keep seven extra actions ready.
*Reserve of Will* (x3)—Neomah have three additional temporary Willpower.
*Shapechange:* Neomah use this power to alter their outward appearance and gender to be more compatible with a prospective client. This Charm costs five motes and one temporary Willpower, and it lasts for one scene.
*Weaving of Flesh*—This Charm is unique to neomah. To activate it, the neomah must spend 10 motes of Essence one temporary Willpower. Then, the Storyteller makes a (Compassion + Craft [Flesh]) roll for the demon, with a difficulty equal to the number of creatures donating flesh. The neomah may combine spirit and mortal flesh at an additional +1 difficulty. Neomah may also increase the likelihood of Dragon-Blooded Exaltation for a +1 difficulty. On a failed roll, a child is born, but without any exceptional traits or abilities. On a botch, the child is born wrong, with some kind of demonic taint.
Neomah have the First, Second and Third Excellencies for the following Abilities: Athletics, Dodge, Melee, Presence and Stealth.
**Join Battle:** 5
**Attacks:**
Spitting Fire: Speed 5, Accuracy 8, Damage 10L, Defense 2, Rate 2
Aconite-Dusted Brass Hairpin: Speed 3, Accuracy 9, Damage 5L + poison*, Defense 6, Rate 3
**Soak:** 5L/5B
**Health Levels:** -0/-1/-1/-1/-1/-1/-2/-2/-2/-2/-4/Incap
**Dodge DV:** 6 **Willpower:** 9 (12 temporary points)
**Essence:** 3 **Essence Pool:** 75
**Cost to Materialize:** 60
**Other Notes:** All neomah speak several mortal languages, but they have one of their own that is a universal form of body language, with which they can communicate with virtually any being.
* Poison [Aconite]: 6L/hour, 3M, –/–, -3.

# The Dead

In the time before the Primordial War, there were no ghosts. It was not until the death of the Primordials that the Underworld came to be, and the stubborn souls of dead mortals gathered there instead of following the dictates of Creation and re-entering the cycle of reincarnation.

As the living realized that some dead souls remained interested in the living world, and were in a unique position to help them, ancestor cults sprang up across Creation like noxious weeds. Even at the height of its power, the Immaculate Order was never able to entirely extinguish ancestor worship. Now with the appearance of the Abyssals, reverence of the dead has become a significant religion in many nations.

For the most part, the dead do not find the lands of the living very welcoming. Ghosts are immaterial and cannot affect the living world. Even the Abyssals—who are not quite dead—find Creation uncomfortable. But there are some places where the dead and the living reside together in strange harmony.

## The Underworld

The land of the dead is no place for the living, but with the existence of shadowlands, there are occasionally ignorant, mad or desperate people who pass alive into the Underworld. Those few who return to speak of their travels are usually marred by their encounters with the dead. Whether it's a ghostly, unhealing pallor or mad wanderings of the mind, the living carry the scars of their journey for the rest of their lives.

For the living, travel in the Underworld is fraught with peril. Without powerful and unique spells or Charms, no ghost will mistake a living soul for a dead one, and the taste of living blood and living passion is a temptation few ghosts can resist. In addition, the Underworld is the true home of the Abyssals and their dark masters, and they are even more powerful there than in Creation. The dead have their own alliances in the Underworld, and the rulers there fear neither the Princes of the Earth nor the gods of Yu-Shan. Even the food of the dead is dangerous the living, as it can tie the souls of the living to the land of the dead. Those who eat the food of the dead are quite likely to become ghosts when they die.

Based on what's been gleaned from those few travelers and the unreliable tales of the dead, it seems that the Underworld is a strange, dark reflection of Creation. There are dark and gloomy Eastern forests, bitter Northern snowscapes, Southern deserts and the glassy black shadow of the Great Western Ocean. Even the Blessed Isle has its own dark reflection, supposedly home to the most powerful of the dead and the greatest city in all the Underworld, the Isle of Stygia—as the dead name it—has never been seen by the living. The dead claim that, within that Isle, there are darker secrets than even they dare mention.

Within the Underworld, there is a death beyond death, a death even ghosts fear. It is not the sweet forgetfulness of Lethe, but the annihilation of Oblivion—the utter destruction of the soul. Centered within the eerie capital of the dead is a great wound, a dark Abyss that falls forever into the nothingness of Oblivion. Madness rises from it like intoxicating smoke, creating nephwracks and consuming the souls of those unfortunate enough to fall (or to be thrown) into it. It is from this place that the Deathlords draw their strength and here that they kneel down in servitude to something more terrible and greater than themselves.

## Shadowlands

Scattered across Creation, except on the Blessed Isle, shadowlands are places where the Underworld and Creation touch. Here, the living and the dead can meet on equal footing and engage in everything from commerce to affairs of passion. Stepping across a border—usually marked with tall white stone plinths—into a shadowland is unmistakable. There are many people who turn back after that first step, and most animals will not willingly cross into a shadowland either. The grass underfoot is lank, pale and vaguely greasy to the touch. The trees, if there are any at all, are scrawny, the bark black as pitch or bone white and the leaves a dull, brownish green. The sun seems to dim, as if hidden behind a pale mist. Even the air seems still, hushed and less lively. There are no birds, save rations, vultures and the occasional owl, and the other animals in a shadowland are few, sickly looking and skittish.

## Essence in Shadowlands and the Underworld

The living absorb Essence from all life in Creation. In the Underworld, however, there is no life, and the living cannot regain Essence through rest or meditation there. They must be fed living Essence or steal it. They cannot steal Essence from ghosts, for the Essence of the dead is not the same as that of the living. In turn, ghosts cannot regain Essence in Creation, for they exist on the strange Essence of the Underworld. Shadowlands, part of Creation and the Underworld, allow both the living and the dead to regain Essence, though not easily.

| Type | Place | Time | Essence |
|---|---|---|---|
| Living | Creation | all | regain normally |
| Living | shadowland | day/night | regain at half rate |
| Living | shadowland | Calibration | normal rate |
| Living | Underworld | day/night | no Essence regained |
| Living | Underworld | Calibration | half normal rate |
| Dead | Creation | day/night | no Essence regained |
| Dead | Creation | Calibration | regain at half rate |
| Dead | shadowland | day | half normal rate |
| Dead | shadowland | night | normal rate |
| Dead | shadowland | Calibration | normal rate |
| Dead | Underworld | all | normal rate |

At night, it only gets worse.

Shadowlands become part of the Underworld at night, and should a traveler pass the border at night, he will not return to Creation, but instead, enter the Underworld.

The shadowland moon is heavy, huge and red-tinted; the stars seem strange, like watchful eyes; and a land that is quiet by day seems full of whispers at night. Buildings appear, illuminated by greenish lanterns, while flowers unseen in the daylight bloom, releasing a sweet narcotic mist. There are often more people present in a shadowland at night—ghosts who have come to do business.

The largest shadowlands fall under the authority of a Deathlord or an Abyssal deathknight. Their huge pagodas tower in the centers of their shadowlands like sleeping monsters, red glass glowing like distant fires and black lacquer pillars carved with funeral glyphs. There is a large independent shadowland in Sijan, however, where the Morticians' Order holds sway, and there are many others too small to draw the attention of the Deathlords scattered over Creation.

During the day, living creatures leaving a shadowland naturally enter the land of the living, while ghosts enter the Underworld. At night, however, all beings are drawn into the Underworld if they cross a shadowland's border. Mortals with an available Essence pool (shamans, thaumaturges and the like—and, of course, Exalts) may avoid this fate with a reflexive expenditure of a single mote as they leave the shadowland. (Spending an additional mote allows a mortal to bring along her familiar or a mount she owns—the Storyteller is the arbiter of an animal's ownership.) Ghosts can also spend a single mote of Essence to cross from a shadowland into the living world at night (and the additional one-mote expenditure may be applied to their mounts and familiars). The shambling corpses of the walking dead make a unique case. As bodies completely lacking a spiritual component, they are inexorably tied to Creation, so they always enter the living world when crossing the boundary of a shadowland. Only necromantic effects can bring them into the Underworld. Hence, they are most often seen in the employ of the Deathlords or their Abyssal servants when they are seen there at all.

The living inhabitants of shadowlands are touched by the Underworld, even before death. They have the look of ghosts, pale and thin. Few children are born there, lives are short, and leprosy and other diseases of Compassion are common. All who dwell in shadowlands are familiar with ghosts and may have ghostly lovers, customers or masters. Death cults and ancestor worship are the only permitted religions for both the living and the dead in the shadowlands. Deathlords establish official death cults, which they head, and membership is required. In most of these cults, the living are treated as misguided, low-status worshipers. Death is the true initiation to these cults. All death cults preach of a final, blissful union in the Underworld, once life itself is dead.

## Living Shadowland Soldiers

Living among the dead, these soldiers are the fodder of the Abyssal armies, little better than zombies. Positions of respect and authority are reserved for the dead, so the living must endure the

purgatory of "life" before they can gain any significant rank. Living soldiers are usually found performing the least pleasant, least honorable tasks: guarding warehouses and caravans, monitoring border stations, watching prisons. For these soldiers, death is an eagerly sought promotion. Many of them look for an honorable death, to draw the attention of their dead superiors. See pages 279-280 for the soldiers available.

## Ghost-Blooded

Born with the touch of death already upon them, the Grave-Born have are born from a living mother and a dead father. Called Ghouls by the Abyssals they usually serve, they are found most often as shadowland governors or as advisers and lieutenants to deathknights.

**Attributes:** Strength 3, Dexterity 4, Stamina 3; Charisma 3, Manipulation 3, Appearance 2; Perception 3, Intelligence 4, Wits 3
**Virtues:** Compassion 2, Conviction 4, Temperance 4, Valor 3
**Abilities:** Athletics 2, Awareness 1, Bureaucracy 1, Dodge 2, Integrity 1, Investigation 2, Linguistics (Native: Sijanese; Others: Riverspeak) 1, Lore 2, Martial Arts 3, Medicine 1, Melee 2, Occult 3, Presence 1, Resistance 3, Ride 2, Socialize 1, Stealth 1, Survival 2, Thrown 2, War 3
**Backgrounds**: Allies 1 (Two Ghost Hounds), Artifact 1, Influence 2, Mentor 1 (Dead Parent), Resources 3, Inheritance 2 (Ghost-Blood)
**Merit/Flaws**: Awakened Essence, Death Walker*, Fetter Sense**
**Arcanoi:**
*Measure the Wind*—A Ghost-Blood may use this Arcanos to assess the puissance of others with this one-mote Charm.
*Transubstantiation of Flesh*—The Ghoul can suffuse her body with Underworld Essence, giving her access to the Arcanoi of the dead. She also soaks lethal damage with half Stamina and resists poison, injury, disease, etc. as the Exalted do. It costs five motes per scene (plus one Willpower in Creation).
**Join Battle:** 4
**Attacks:**
Punch: Speed 5, Accuracy 8, Damage 3B, Defense 9, Rate 3
Kick: Speed 5, Accuracy 7, Damage 6B, Defense 5, Rate 2
Clinch: Speed 6, Accuracy 7, Damage 3B, Defense –, Rate 1
Bone Short Spear: Speed 5, Accuracy 9, Damage 7L + poison†, Defense 8, Rate 2
Knife: Speed 5, Accuracy 8, Damage 5L, Defense 7, Rate 3
† Poison [Coral Snake Venom]: 6L, 3, –/–, -5
**Soak:** 6L/7B (White jade breastplate, 6L/4B, Hardness: 2L/2B)
**Health Levels:** -0/-1/-1/-2/-2/-4/Incap
**Dodge DV:** 5 **Willpower:** 8
**Essence:** 3 **Essence Pool:** 38 (40)
**Committed Essence:** 2
**Other Notes:** The Ghost-Blood is a child of a ghostly parent. With a cost of one Willpower or three motes of Essence, she can perceive the energies of the Underworld. Thus, she can sense shadowland borders and immaterial ghosts within range of her senses for one scene. Her white jade armor is a gift from her dead father.
* *Death Walker:* She senses and interacts with ghosts as clearly as she does the living, she does not need special spells to speak to, touch or battle ghosts—and neither do the ghosts.
** *Fetter Sense:* Allows the ghoul to sense if an object or location is a ghost's fetter with a touch.

| Name | Str/Dex/Sta | Per/Int/Wits/Will | Health Levels | Attack (Spd/Acc/Dmg/Rate) | Dodge DV/Soak |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Zombie*** | 5/2/3 | 2/1/3/10 | -0x2/-1x3/ -2x3/-4/I | Fist: 5/4/4L/2 | 1 /1L/3B |

**Abilities:** Athletics 1, Awareness 1, Dodge 1, Martial Arts 2, Melee 1, Presence 1, Resistance 1, Stealth 1, Survival 1

| Name | Str/Dex/Sta | Per/Int/Wits/Will | Health Levels | Attack (Spd/Acc/Dmg/Rate) | Dodge DV/Soak |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Spine Chain** | 4/2/3 | 2/1/3/10 | -0/-1/-2/ -4/I—per link | Harness: 7/5/7L/4 | 2/1L/3B |

**Abilities:** Athletics 1, Awareness 1, Dodge 2, Martial Arts 2, Melee 2, Presence 1 (Intimidation +2), Resistance 1, Stealth 1, Survival 1
***Notes**: The player of anyone fighting hand to hand with a zombie must make a successful (Stamina + Resistance) roll, difficulty 2, for his character each action, or the character suffers a –2 penalty to his dice pools due to nausea at the zombie's stench. After a few encounters, the shock of the smell wears off, and the character's player does not need to continue making rolls. Unless a battle among the Abyssals has gone badly, zombies are not found wandering loose. They are kept in pens until they are needed as the ultimate shock troops against the living.

## The Walking Dead

Most people who die in a shadowland rise again as ghosts, the natural order of things. However, necromancers can create another order of the dead—creatures with physical bodies and little intelligence. Rotting zombies, skeletons and worse are all made through necromantic arts out of the remains of the dead.

**Zombies**

Necromancy animates the dead, but it is not very effective at preserving them. Zombies do not die and cannot heal. They are in a stage of perpetual decay: eye sockets running with putrid fluids, flesh greenish with bloodless gashes revealing chipped or broken bones. They are weaponless and often naked, too stupid to either dress themselves or use weapons. Zombies are driven by an insatiable hunger for living meat. They shamble after their victims, moaning wordlessly, and once they have brought something down, they will crouch there, feeding until they are driven off or goaded away by their handlers. All zombies carry leprosy in their touch (see p. 351 for details of the disease). Zombies are often extras.

Spine Chain

A repulsive artifact of war, spine chains are constructed in flesh-smithies by necromantic crafters out of the remnants of several bodies. The bodies have been cleaved at the waist and sewn together into a chain of chests. Spine chains scamper rapidly on their multiple arms, controlled by the single head of the lead link. The heads of the other links are thrust into the empty cavity of the next chest ahead. Spine chains aren't particularly bright, but they make cheap and self-propelled scaling ladders, bridges or even parts of a structure. They are also used as formation breakers: A half-ton spine chain, covered with steel hooks and barreling at top speed into a formation is almost impossible to resist. If a torso is seriously damaged, the other links unlace it from the chain and continue on as two smaller chains. Small spine chains can also link together. The lead head of one chain will bury itself in the sticky, hollow torso of the last link in the other. Spine chains can be found scampering about the camps of the Abyssal armies, chattering nonsense and fondling bits of abandoned tack or dropped gear—or people's boots—with their pale, gashed hands.

## Ghosts

The citizens of the Underworld, and frequent travelers to shadowlands, ghosts are the souls of the dead who have escaped the wheel of reincarnation. Ghosts are tangible in the Underworld, for that is their natural home, and they can exist in a shadowland as well, but they are intangible in Creation and cannot remain in the lands of the living for long.

Ghosts appear as they did in life, though lacking any infirmities they might have once possessed, with the clothes of their station, any grave goods they were buried with and the marks of death visible upon them. Many ghosts are beautiful in a distant, chill way. (The violet tinge of drowning or the red second mouth of a cut throat are easy to overlook.) Ghosts who are beginning to fade away into Lethe's embrace are quite, pallid—almost translucent—while those who are recently dead or are clinging with stubborn will to their existence might look almost alive, full of certainty and lifelike eagerness.

Ghosts are vulnerable to the natural pull of reincarnation, the forgetfulness of Lethe that brings them back to the cycle of life and death. They cling to physical mausoleums raised in their honor and to the offerings of their living descendents to hold fast in the face of Lethe. Burial mounds, plaques of honor and memorial songs in their name provide ghosts with Essence and with Fetters to anchor them in the Underworld. Skilled ghosts are able to manipulate their dead Essence to allow them to breach the barrier between the living and the dead, communicating with their descendents during ancestral rites or even physically enter the living world. The power of the dead over the living can make ghosts valued allies or tricky enemies. Ancestor worship is a significant social and political force in many parts of Creation, despite efforts of the Immaculate Order to stamp it out or the Deathlords to turn it to their purposes. Many ghosts encountered in the living world have at least a small circle of descendents propitiating them, and such worship gives a ghost one or two motes of Essence a day. In turn, however, the ghost must provide at least occasional service to her living family.

### Exorcism and Summoning

Calling ghosts is a simple process. Anyone with fresh blood and the name of a ghost has a chance of drawing that spirit forth (if the ghost has not reincarnated). The summoner must go to the place of the ghost's death or burial location, with her full name, and make an offering. Offerings include glyphs of passage drawn in chalk (or flour), as well as blood and burnt incense pleasing to the dead. The ritual takes about 15 minutes, at the end of which the summoner's player makes a (Charisma + Occult) roll. The difficulty of this roll is 2 if the summoning ritual is performed in Creation (or 3 if the summoned doesn't possess the Occult Ability), and it's difficulty 1 if it's performed in a shadowland or during Calibration. The older a ghost is, the harder it is to summon. Add one to the difficulty for every century a ghost has been dead. In a shadowland, a failed roll does not mean that no ghosts are called. Instead, it means too many ghosts show up. For every

success short of the difficulty the roll turns up, five ghosts arrive. (For instance, if the difficulty is 3 but the summoning roll turns up only one die with a 7 or better, 10 ghosts show up.) A ghost that arrives in response to a summoning is visible and audible but intangible, unless the ghost has Arcanoi to change that or the summoning takes place in a shadowland.

Driving away stubborn ghosts is a more difficult prospect. Talismans against ghosts are quite common, especially in the North and around shadowlands. Their efficacy depends on the skill of the savant who made them. Most provide only one bonus die to defend against any attack a ghost may attempt on the holder. Salt is a well known defense against the dead. Ghosts cannot cross a line of salt, and shadowlands are destroyed when the ground is thoroughly salted. Walking dead can be created from corpses that have been salted, but the difficulty for the necromancer increases by two. For those who are battling Abyssal armies, salt has become a priceless and scarce commodity. Importing salt into shadowlands is tightly controlled, and smuggling salt into a shadowland illegally can draw a death penalty (and unpleasant servitude as a zombie or spine chain).

The Immaculate Order trains all its monks in exorcism, and most thaumaturges have the necessary skill to attempt a banishment. Exorcists may call up a ghost to attempt to placate it, providing offerings and hopefully a way to resolve the ghost's anger with the living. If that fails, he will attempt to banish the ghost. Banishment is an extended contest between the ghost and the exorcist. The exorcist's player rolls either (Manipulation + Occult) or (Willpower + permanent Essence), whichever he chooses, and the ghost resists with the sum of her two highest Virtues. In order to successfully banish a ghost, the exorcist must accumulate successes equal to the ghost's Willpower. Banished ghosts cannot return to Creation until they are resummoned. Each attempt at banishment costs the exorcist three motes of Essence and lasts five minutes. An exorcist may also attempt to

### Blood

There is power in blood. The source of life itself can call up demons and ghosts, seal oaths and stand witness. Summoners, exorcists and sorcerers of all types know the power blood holds in Creation, and many magics make use of that power. Human sacrifice is usually reserved for the most desperate—or darkest—rituals, and it is also the best source of power for the dead. Mortal blood provides one mote of Essence per health level sacrificed; limited to six for heroic mortals and only two for extras. The damage sustained cannot be soaked, but it can be healed normally. For ghosts, animal blood also provides one mote of Essence per health level sacrificed—however, animal blood cannot provide Essence for spells and rituals. All blood used in magic—including the summoning or feeding of ghosts—must be fresh and shed in a ritual manner. Blood spilled during combat or by accident is useless. Any bloodletting ritual takes a minimum of one action, and a thaumaturge may use blood from her own body, a willing victim or a screaming sacrifice—all such blood is precious. Summoners receive a one-die bonus when using blood to summon ghosts or demons.

drive away possessing ghosts such as nemissaries. Doing so is an extended contest with the exorcist's player using a (Manipulation + Occult) roll, its difficulty equal to the possessing ghost's lowest Virtue. The exorcist must accumulate successes equal to two times the ghost's highest Virtue.

The clumsiest method of exorcising a ghost is to destroy her link to the living world—her Fetter. Most often this link is her mausoleum or corpse, though sometimes it may be a treasured possession, a tree she planted and tended in life, a piece of artwork or a treasured musical instrument. The problem with destroying such items is that a ghost will inevitably arise and fight to protect her Fetter, and an enraged ghost is not something to toy with. In addition, some ghosts have more than one Fetter, and the destruction of one will not destroy the ghost—but it will inevitably bring the ghost's wrath down on those who desecrated her belongings. Professional exorcisms are a much more reliable method of driving away ghosts.

## Hungry Ghosts

Hungry ghosts are created when souls are unable to rest due to some great outrage. Vengeance and hate drive them. In the world of **Exalted**, treachery and murder may be punished by more than arrest and prison. A dead victim might just return, swollen with rot and burning for revenge.

A hungry ghost rises the first night after a murder, taking a physical form similar to the victim's living one but gruesomely marked by his violent death and subsequent decay. Hungry ghosts roam the living world at night, hunting their killers or tearing apart anyone they encounter. They return to their corpses at dawn, and their spirits sink to the Underworld. The touch of living dawn on a hungry ghost destroys it, so the creatures are careful never to roam beyond range of their corpses. For the first three nights after death, the soul of a hungry ghost is complete, and the ghost can search intelligently for its murderer, even contacting old allies for help in avenging its death.

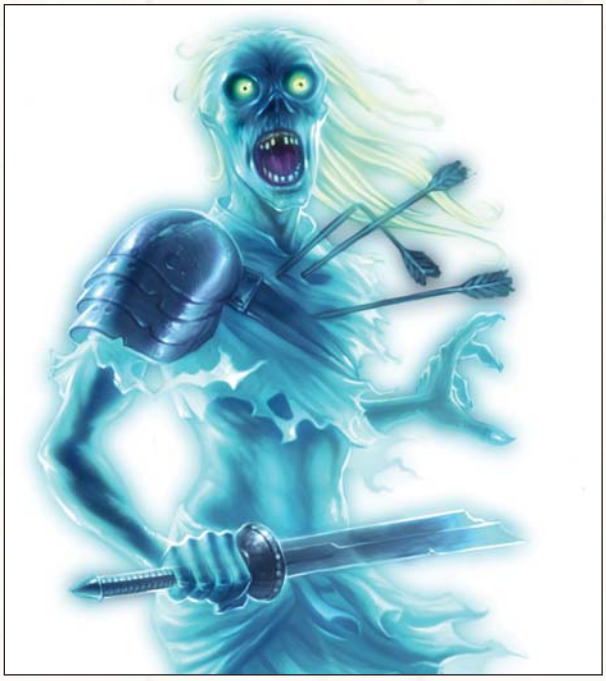
At the end of the third night, the higher soul, or hun, leaves the body, but the lower soul, or po, remains. From then on, the hungry ghost rises as a crazed, ravening monster, killing anyone it comes across and full of hatred for the living.

Necromancers sometimes create hungry ghosts by torturing victims to death and binding them into circles of salt or sprouted

## Exorcist

The exorcist is a holy man dedicated to protecting the innocent from the predation of evil spirits. Using his unwavering faith and extensive knowledge of the supernatural, an exorcist may treat with supernatural beings on behalf of mortals and try to resolve matters amicably for both parties. However, if push comes to shove, the exorcist is capable of banishing ghosts and even demons and warding areas against their return. In Realm-dominated regions, exorcists are often mortal Immaculate monks.

**Attributes:** Strength 3, Dexterity 3, Stamina 4; Charisma 2, Manipulation 3, Appearance 2; Perception 3, Intelligence 2, Wits 3
**Virtues:** Compassion 2, Conviction 4, Temperance 3, Valor 3
**Abilities:** Athletics 3, Awareness 3, Craft (Wood) 2 (Warding Talismans +2), Dodge 2, Lore 2 (Anathema +1), Martial Arts 3, Medicine 2, Melee 3 (Staff +1), Occult 3 (Art of Warding +3, Death Rituals +1), Presence 3, Resistance 2, Socialize 2, Stealth 2, Survival 1, War 3
**Backgrounds:** Artifact 2
**Merits:** Essence Awareness
**Join Battle:** 6
**Attacks:**
Punch: Speed 5, Accuracy 7, Damage 3B, Defense 8, Rate 3
Kick: Speed 5, Accuracy 6, Damage 6B, Defense 4, Rate 2
Clinch: Speed 6, Accuracy 6, Damage 3B, Defense –, Rate 1
Knife: Speed 5, Accuracy 7, Damage 5L, Defense 6, Rate 3
Staff of Intangible Mastery: Speed 6, Accuracy 9, Damage 10B, Defense 9, Rate 2
**Soak:** 3L/8B (Buff jacket, 3L/4B, -1 mobility)
**Health Levels:** -0/-1/-1/-2/-2/-4/Incap
**Dodge DV:** 4/3 **Willpower:** 7
**Essence:** 2 **Essence Pool**: 20 (must spend one Willpower to access motes beyond the first 6)
**Other Notes:** The Staff of Intangible Mastery allows its wielder to strike and defend against intangible spirits such as ghosts, demons and so on. The rune-carved weapon costs one Willpower per scene it is used to strike dematerialized beings. The exorcist will usually have protective charms against the dead and demons, that give a one-die bonus to defend against attacks by such creatures. He will also have a store of salt and other ingredients necessary to banish unwanted spirits.



grain until their hun souls have departed and they are left with less intelligent, but more manageable, ravaging ghosts. Anyone with Occult 3+ can bind a hungry ghost once the higher spirit is gone. Hungry ghosts cannot cross a line of salt or sprouted grain, and they are destroyed if their bodies are salted while they are out of them.

**Attributes:** Strength 6, Dexterity 4, Stamina 4; Charisma 2, Manipulation 1, Appearance 1; Perception 3, Intelligence 1, Wits 3

**Virtues:** Compassion 1, Conviction 2, Temperance 1, Valor 3

**Abilities:** Athletics 3, Awareness 2, Dodge 2, Martial Arts 3, Survival 3, War 3 (during the three days when the hun is with the body, the hungry ghost also possesses any Abilities the living person had)

**Arcanoi:**

*Measure the Wind*—For a cost of one mote, the hungry ghost can size up its opponents before committing to an attack.

**Join Battle:** 5

**Attacks:**

Bite: Speed 4, Accuracy 6, Damage 7L, Defense 5, Rate 2

Claw: Speed 7, Accuracy 7, Damage 6L, Defense 6, Rate 2

Clinch: Speed 6, Accuracy 7, Damage 6B, Defense –, Rate 1

**Soak:** 2L/4B (Corpus)

**Health Levels:** -0/-1/-1/-1/-2/-2/-4/Incap

**Dodge DV:** 4 **Willpower:** 5

**Essence:** 2 **Essence Pool**: 45

**Other Notes:** Ghosts cannot regain Essence in Creation through rest or meditation. They must steal it or be fed through blood sacrifice. A hungry ghost regains Essence by consuming the flesh and blood of its victims as well. A hungry ghost is not killed when brought below Incapacitated, simply dematerialized, unless its body is destroyed. Hungry ghosts are naturally physical in Creation at night. By day, they reside in the Underworld. Hungry ghosts are often extras.

## War Ghost

These powerful ghosts are able to assume a physical form in Creation. They present a form that looks nearly alive, with their deathmarks barely visible.

These ghosts make up the bulk of the Abyssal armies. They wear black armor made of iron mined from the Underworld, with bone decorations, funeral glyphs and images of torment emblazoned on their shields and armor. Their pallid, rage-twisted faces are often the last thing a living solider sees.

Like all ghosts, they cannot regain Essence in Creation unless they are fed. The Abyssals, like the generals of a living army, must grapple with the logistics of providing sustenance for their ghostly armies during war. Living prisoners are frequently sacrificed to feed the ghostly armies they battled the night before.

**Attributes:** Strength 3, Dexterity 2, Stamina 3; Charisma 3, Manipulation 2, Appearance 2; Perception 2, Intelligence 2, Wits 2

**Virtues:** Compassion 2, Conviction 3, Temperance 2, Valor 3

**Abilities:** Athletics 2, Awareness 2, Dodge 3, Martial Arts 2, Medicine 1, Melee 2 (Axe +1), Presence 1, Resistance 1, Stealth 2, Socialize 1, Survival 1, War 3

**Arcanoi:**

*Corpse-Fed Radiance*—For 2 motes, a war ghost may emit an unearthly glow for a scene.

*Hand of the Wind*—At a cost of three motes and one Willpower, a war ghost may take one action that affects the living world. For war ghosts, this Arcanos is most often used to attack the living without becoming vulnerable to their counterattacks.

*Weighted With the Anchor of Flesh*—For 20 motes and two Willpower, a war ghost may take on physical form in Creation for one hour.

**Join Battle:** 4
**Attacks:**
Punch: Speed 5, Accuracy 5, Damage 3B, Defense 5, Rate 3
Kick: Speed 5, Accuracy 4, Damage 6B, Defense 2, Rate 2
Clinch: Speed 6, Accuracy 4, Damage 3B, Defense –, Rate 1
Axe: Speed 5, Accuracy 7, Damage 7L, Defense 3, Rate 2
Knife: Speed 5, Accuracy 5, Damage 5L, Defense 4, Rate 3
Poleaxe: Speed 6, Accuracy 4, Damage 10L/2, Defense 4, Rate 2
**Soak:** 10B/7L (Chain hauberk, 6L/7B, -3 mobility, and target shield, +1 difficulty to attack)
**Health Levels:** -0/-1/-1/-1/-2/-2/-2/-4/Incap
**Dodge DV:** 4/1 **Willpower:** 6
**Essence:** 2 **Essence Pool**: 50
**Other Notes:** Ghosts cannot regain Essence in Creation through rest or meditation. They must steal it or be fed through blood sacrifice. A war ghost that is brought below Incapacitated is not dead but dematerialized. War ghosts are often extras.

## Nemissaries

Rare and unusual spirits, nemissaries are courted by Abyssal Exalted as valuable spies, assassins and saboteurs. Nemissaries are ghosts with the ability to possess the bodies of the recently dead. Most of them are old, powerful spirits and have long lost any memory of their original form and face. When not in a body, a nemissary is nothing more than a chill, hissing whisper.

Though their bodies may be decaying, nemissaries are easily distinguishable from zombies by the greenish glow of intelligence in their eyes, by their palpable sense of purpose and by their dress. Nemissary warriors dress in black-iron armor, decorated with silver glyphs of honor and authority. Those who serve as squires and scribes wear gray silk robes with silver bracers and dull garnet trim. Most nemissaries, especially those who travel in Creation, hide their decaying features behind expressionless silver masks. Nemissaries show little fear or concern for their safety; their bodies may be destroyed but their spirits endure.
**Attributes:** Strength 4, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3; Charisma 2, Manipulation 3, Appearance 2; Perception 3, Intelligence 2, Wits 3
**Virtues:** Compassion 2, Conviction 3, Temperance 2, Valor 4
**Abilities:** Archery 2, Athletics 3, Awareness 4, Dodge 2, Integrity 3 (Torture +1), Investigation 1, Martial Arts 3, Medicine 2, Melee 3, Occult 3, Presence 3, Resistance 2, Stealth 2, Survival 1, War 3
**Spirit Charms:** Cunning Thief
**Arcanoi:**
*Measure the Wind*—For a cost of one mote, a nemissary can size up its opponents before committing to an attack.
*Mortal-Shadowing Technique*—The nemissary may spend seven motes of Essence and one Willpower in order to enter the body of a living person and "ride" within for up to an hour, experiencing everything the mortal does.
*Nemissary's Ride*—With an expenditure of five motes and one Willpower, the nemissary may inhabit a corpse for one day if the Storyteller succeeds on a (Strength + Compassion) roll.
**Join Battle:** 7
**Attacks:**
Punch: Speed 5, Accuracy 7, Damage 4B, Defense 8, Rate 3
Kick: Speed 5, Accuracy 6, Damage 7B, Defense 4, Rate 2
Clinch: Speed 6, Accuracy 6, Damage 4B Defense –, Rate 1

Knife: Speed 5, Accuracy 7, Damage 6L, Defense 6, Rate 3
Poleaxe: Speed 6, Accuracy 6, Damage 11L/2, Defense 6, Rate 2
**Soak:** 5L/5B (Breastplate, 4L/2B, -1 mobility)
**Health Levels:** -0/-0/-1/-1/-1/-2/-2/-2/-4/Incap
**Dodge DV:** 5/4 **Willpower:** 7
**Essence:** 2 **Essence Pool**: 55
**Other Notes:** Ghosts cannot regain Essence through rest or meditation in Creation. They must steal it from others or be fed it through blood sacrifice. Being reduced to Incapacitated merely destroys the body the nemissary currently inhabits, driving it out to search for a new host. The touch of a nemissary is infectious. Players of those touched must roll (Stamina + Resistance), difficulty 2, for their characters to avoid infection.

## Nephwracks

Rare in Creation, these spectral servants of true Oblivion are powerful, mad ghosts. They often raise and release hungry ghosts to torment their victims and have collected servants of jade memoriam and golems to serve them. For nephwracks, death is not sufficient—only true annihilation of the soul, of every soul, is an acceptable end to Creation. Nephwracks scheme among themselves and among the dead, raising up cults to Oblivion, acting as high priests of death and bending their energies to the destruction of all life—and all death.

Nephwracks have been exposed to the cry of Oblivion, which twists their minds and their ghostly bodies. They are creatures of horror, with ravaged, bizarrely tormented forms, devouring eyes with the cold madness of Oblivion gleaming deep within them and high-pitched voices like the last cry of a dying child.
**Attributes:** Strength 6, Dexterity 6, Stamina 6; Charisma 2, Manipulation 4, Appearance 1; Perception 5, Intelligence 4, Wits 6
**Virtues:** Compassion 1, Conviction 4, Temperance 1, Valor 5
**Abilities:** Archery 6, Athletics 5, Awareness 5, Craft (Moliation) 3, Craft (Pandemonium) 4, Dodge 6, Integrity 2, Linguistics (Native: Local; Others: Old Realm, River Valley) 2, Martial Arts 6, Melee 6 (Sword +2), Occult 4, Performance 4, Presence 6, Resistance 4, Socialize 5, Stealth 4, War 6
**Background**: Necromancy 2, Spies 2, Whispers 2*
**Arcanoi:**
*Command the Hungry Devil*—For a cost of eight motes and one Willpower, a nephwrack may command hungry ghosts.

*The Ichor Cauldron*—At a cost of six motes, a nemissary may create a large volume of disgusting liquid, which lasts for one hour before fading away.
*Yielding Spirit Form*—With this Arcanos and four motes of Essence, a nephwrack decreases his vulnerability to a physical attack by making his corpus more malleable.
A nephwrack knows two necromantic spells from the Shadowlands Circle, typically Hungry Creeping Shadow** and Piercing the Shroud***, and he can teach them to others.
**Join Battle:** 11
**Attacks:**
Claw: Speed 4, Accuracy 13, Damage 6L, Defense 14, Rate 3
Kick: Speed 5, Accuracy 12, Damage 9B, Defense 10, Rate 2
Clinch: Speed 6, Accuracy 12, Damage 6B, Defense –, Rate 1
Bloodletting Knife: Speed 5, Accuracy 13, Damage 8L, Defense 12, Rate 3
Blackened Blade: Speed 4, Accuracy 15, Damage 11L/2, Defense 13, Rate 2
**Soak:** 18B/15L (Soulsteel articulated plate, 12L/14B, -2 mobility penalty, Hardness: 8L/8B)
**Health Levels:** -0/-1/-1/-1/-1/-2/-2/-2/-2/-2/-4/Incap
**Dodge DV:** 8/6 **Willpower:** 9
**Essence:** 3 **Essence Pool:** 39 (45)
**Committed Essence:** 6
**Other Notes:** Nephwracks, like all ghosts, cannot regain Essence in Creation. Nephwracks have an assortment of spells and powers, and they occasionally possess the bodies of the dead. However, they will never possess the living, finding the cage of living flesh a violation of all they believe.
* Whispers: Nephwracks have opened their soul to Oblivion, and it whispers and sings in the depths of their mind always. Whispers allows a nephwrack to take advantage of the lost knowledge and powers drowned within Oblivion. Once per scene, the Storyteller may roll a nephwrack's (Perception + Whispers) for an Ability it does not have. If the roll is successful, he may substitute the nephwrack's Whispers rating for that Ability for a single roll.
** Hungry Creeping Shadow: This necromantic spell costs 15 motes and lasts for one hour. The nephwrack opens her mouth as if to scream, and a horrid black ooze pours fourth. It gathers into the shape of a shadowy beast that will pursue any one target within the nephwrack's sight. It has Physical Attributes and Melee equal to its creator's Essence and health levels equal to its creator's (Stamina + Essence). It is immune to physical attack but vulnerable to fire and magic. It never fails Valor checks. This creeping shadow can flow up walls, under the cracks of doors and down pipes as it unerringly follows its victim. Once it catches her, the shadow will clinch and squeeze the life from its victim. The creature is dispelled by sunlight.
*** Piercing the Shroud: After spending 10 motes of Essence, the necromancer speaks an incantation that shakes the foundations of Creation. At the conclusion of the spell, the necromancer must draw a vertical slash in the air with a knife or sword. This wound splits wide to reveal the horror that is the Labyrinth. This spell cannot be performed in daylight either in Creation or in a shadowland.

## Deathlords

Neither gods nor devils, ghosts nor Exalts, the Deathlords have shaken Creation to its core as they strive to tear down the barriers between the living and the dead.

The ancient dead might call them upstarts, but they do so in hushed whispers, and no Sidereal tome or First Age lore speaks of them at all. The Deathlords are not bound by the laws of demons, nor the rulership of the gods. They hold to no sacred direction, and even wards and talismans against the dead have little effect on them. The Immaculate Order claims they are the price of corruption in the Realm, and Dragon-Blooded scholars whisper that they are the curse of the Anathema returned to Creation.

Whatever they are, and whatever their origins, the Deathlords have laid siege to life itself. Left unchecked, the Deathlords could very well drag all of Creation down into the Underworld and bring about the ultimate end of existence.

### The Mask of Winters

This monster has opened the world's eyes to the danger the Deathlords represent. The Mask of Winters arrived in Creation at the head of a conquering army, and he has taken the Eastern city of Thorns, transforming it into a shadowland. The Mask of Winters is a massive being, standing easily seven feet tall and wrapped constantly in a ragged mass of black funerary garb. Tarnished silver runes on the hems sicken mortals who look upon them and strike down most animals. The Deathlord wears soulsteel plate, which screams with the voices of dammed children whenever struck, and he carries a massive pitch-black daiklave. This weapon is rimed with frost, and it drains the life from those it strikes. The Mask of Winters is never seen without his eponymous two-faced mask of ice—one face of sublime, hypnotic beauty; the other of such

horror that many who see it flee in terror. Wherever the Mask of Winters walks, blood seeps from the ground, as if Creation itself were wounded by his presence. This effect lasts until the next full moon touches those bloody prints.

**Attributes:** Strength 12, Dexterity 9, Stamina 10; Charisma 5, Manipulation 7, Appearance 4; Perception 5, Intelligence 6, Wits 7

**Virtues:** Compassion 1, Conviction 5, Temperance 4, Valor 5

**Abilities:** Archery 7, Athletics 5, Awareness 5, Craft (Moliation) 5, Craft (Pandemonium) 5, Dodge 8, Integrity 5 (Torture Exalted +1), Investigation 5, Linguistics (All) 6, Martial Arts 6, Melee 7 (Sword +2), Occult 5 (Oblivion +1), Performance 4, Presence 6, Ride 5, Resistance 5, Stealth 4, Socialize 5, Thrown 6, War 8

**Backgrounds:** Allies (Deathknights) 5, Artifact 5, Cult 3, Followers 6, Necromancy 5, Spies 4, Whispers 5

**Arcanoi:** All mentioned in the other ghost write-ups and more, including ones that allow the Mask of Winters to forge the souls of the dead into soulsteel, to torment and corrupt the souls of the Celestial Exalted, and to manifest nightmares and horrors in Creation. He can also create, bind and summon ghosts, hungry ghosts and the walking dead. The Mask of Winters has never been known to possess the bodies of the living or the dead.

**Charms:** All Solar Charms

The Mask of Winters knows all the First and Second Circle sorcery spells presented in this book and more. He is also an accomplished necromancer, knowing many spells from the three circles of necromancy including Arisen Legion, Blood from the Slaughter, Blood Monsoon and Ivory Razor Forest (described below). He may teach any of these spells to others if he so chooses.

*Arisen Legion*—This necromantic spell creates walking dead. For every three motes of Essence spent, a zombie or skeleton is raised from the dead. The necromancer spends an action calling forth the dark energies of the Underworld, gathering them in his hands as a black sphere that pulses like a beating heart. At the end of the action, the sphere explodes into black lightning that strikes the nearest human bodies within 100 yards.

*Blood from the Slaughter*—This spell allows the necromancer to regain one level of bashing or lethal damage for every human killed within a league. During this time, a faint bloody miasma and the distant sounds of death agony surround the necromancer. The spell costs 35 motes of Essence to invoke and lasts for one scene.

*Blood Monsoon*—Committing 50 motes of Essence to the effect, the necromancer cuts his palm (suffering one unsoakable level of lethal damage) and flings the collected blood into the air. The blood rises into a column of crimson, streaming upward into the sky. Over the next hour, a disk-shaped, blood-red cloud spreads over the sky, to a diameter of (the necromancer's Essence) miles. Then a torrential downpour of blood drenches the earth in gore, which lasts hours equal to the necromancer's Stamina. Most small animals die during this downpour, and humans must make an hourly (Stamina + Resistance) check to avoid a die penalty on all actions due to nausea.

*Ivory Razor Forest*—The necromancer need only gesture in the direction of his enemies and spend 25 motes of Essence, and a ripple of invisible power flows from his hand. Like a faint distortion in the air, it seems harmless. In its wake, hundreds of great, bone-white spines erupt from the earth. Razor sharp, they cut through everything in their path, inflicting eight levels of lethal damage that can be dodged but not parried. The spell affects an area equal to ([Charisma + Occult] x 10) yards, in any shape the necromancer desires. The spikes last for a number of days equal to the necromancer's Essence, then they shatter into dry, sterile dust.

**Join Battle:** 12

**Attacks:**

Punch: Speed 5, Accuracy 17, Damage 12B, Defense 18, Rate 3

Kick: Speed 5, Accuracy 16, Damage 15B, Defense 14, Rate 2

Clinch: Speed 6, Accuracy 16, Damage 12B, Defense –, Rate 1

Dark Torment Hatchet: Speed 5, Accuracy 18, Damage 17L*, Defense 17, Rate 2

Grand Soulsteel Daiklave (Frigid Razor): Speed 5, Accuracy 20, Damage 24L/4**, Defense 14, Rate 3

* The player of a victim who received any damage with this weapon must roll a Valor check, or the character spends the next six ticks suffering horrific visions of her death and unable to act.

** This daiklave drains 2 motes of Essence per successful blow, which feeds the Mask of Winters either as motes of Essence or as health levels. Those who are killed by this weapon are consumed by Oblivion, with no chance for reincarnation and no ghostly afterlife.

**Soak:** 19L/26B (Grieving Shelter, soulsteel articulated plate, 14L/16B, -2 mobility penalty, Hardness: 10L/10B)

**Health Levels:** -0x20/-1x10/-2x10/-4x5/Incap (in this case, dematerialized, not killed)

**Dodge DV:** 14/12 **Willpower:** 10

**Essence:** 10

**Personal Essence:** 78 **Peripheral Essence:** 202 (222)

**Committed Essence:** 20

**Other Notes:** The Mask of Winters is rarely without servants, bodyguards and allies. The siege of Thorns has already become a horrific legend in Creation, and the Mask of Winters usually resides within the gigantic undead behemoth he uses as a siege engine and fortress. This horror, known as Juggernaut, currently rests on the outskirts of fallen Thorns.

*The Mask of Winters:* The eponymous Deathlord is always seen in this double-faced mask. One side is enchantingly beautiful, and the players of those who look upon it must make a successful Temperance roll at difficulty 3, lest their characters be entranced by the visage. They will follow the Mask of Winters' suggestions or take actions to please him of their own initiative. The other face is one of such horror that the players of those who look upon it must make a successful Valor check, difficulty 3, or their characters flee the area for one scene.

# The Exalted

No other being challenges an Exalt more than one of her own. From the sublime teamwork of the Dragon-Bloods to the primal fury of the Lunars and from the subtle scheming of the Maidens' Chosen to the incomparable mastery of the Solar Exalted (and their twisted reflections, the deathknights), the move and countermove of the Exalted in their never-ending games of one-upmanship have propelled the course of Creation since the fall of the Primordials.

## Terrestrial Exalted

Unlike the Celestial Exalted, who are rarely prepared for Exaltation, the Dragon-Blooded of the Dynasty are trained almost from birth for the mere possibility of it. A few Dragon-Blooded, usually referred to as "outcastes" or "lost eggs," do Exalt outside the structure of Dynastic society. For most Dragon-Blooded, however, Exaltation only confirms what the Exalt has been told since childhood: that within her lies the spark of divinity. For many, this confirmation grants the Terrestrial license to descend into depravity, but the stereotype of amoral wastrel does not define the Dragon-Blooded as a whole. For every drug-addled Cynis deviant, there is a pious Immaculate who subsists on rice and water. For every bloodthirsty warrior who rapes and pillages his way across the Threshold, there is a quiet businessman whose Exaltation has made him a god of invoices and requisition forms. For every Iselsi spy skulking in the bureaucracy, there is a patriot quietly doing what she can to preserve a dying empire without thought of reward or recompense. All of these disparate individuals share a single commonality—an almost limitless self-confidence nurtured by a society that holds them as demigods and a world in which none can oppose them save peer or Anathema.

Most Dragon-Blooded parents proceed with the assumption that each of their children will Exalt, holding all their children to rigid, almost impossibly high standards. In addition to at least minimal training in every major form of combat, Dynastic children are usually expected to learn a musical instrument, to become proficient at public speaking and to become conversant in both contemporary politics and in literary and artistic criticism even before leaving for primary school. While Dragon-Blooded parents are often bitterly disappointed in children who fail to Exalt, mortal Dynasts are still patricians and are usually far better prepared for success in life than any mortal born outside the Great Houses. Of course, for children who do Exalt, the years of preparation they have already endured are only a prelude to mortal lifetimes of training on how to be a Prince of the Earth. Early schooling is usually followed by matriculation in one of the Realm's premier secondary schools. The House of Bells takes in those who seek a military career. The Heptagram accommodates those who wish to study the occult. The Spiral Academy caters to future businessmen, civil servants or occasionally spies for the All-Seeing Eye. Finally, the Cloister of Wisdom teaches those who wish to become Immaculate monks or who simply wish the well-rounded benefits of a religious education.

Most often, a Solar Exalt will encounter a Dragon-Blooded in one of four situations. The first occurs when the Solar is indiscrete in an area under Dragon-Blooded control. The Realm's reach is quite long, and there are few places in the Threshold where an iconic anima banner flaring in the night would not be brought to the attention of local Terrestrials. The likelihood of attracting Imperial attention increases in direct proportion to how close one moves toward the Blessed Isle, of course, but the Realm still maintains many satrapies hundreds of miles inland and maintains garrisons in allied territories far beyond that. If a Solar draws such attention, he could encounter anything from one to a half-dozen Dragon-Blooded soldiers accompanied by possibly dozens of troops. Even if the Solar can overcome the initial assault, his victory is only a Pyrrhic one. Defeating any significant Dragon-Blooded force only increases the likelihood of attracting the Wyld Hunt, which usually consists of several high-ranking Immaculate monks accompanied by possibly hundreds of elite troops.

Solar Exalted who practice discretion are more likely to encounter the Dragon-Blooded by coincidence. As the Realm moves ever closer to civil war, each Great House desperately searches for any edge in the coming battle. One such edge might come from the possession of First Age artifacts currently residing in lost cities dotted throughout the Threshold. A Solar Exalt seeking some lost possession from a previous life might well come into conflict with Dragon-Blooded "tomb raiders" pursuing the same artifact. Such encounters are less likely to draw the Wyld Hunt (since none of the Great Houses want to give their rivals leads on potential finds). The Dragon-Blooded involved are more likely to be experienced, well-armed and possibly equipped with sorcerous knowledge and demonic servitors.

Solars must also beware the arrival of itinerant Immaculate monks roaming the countryside of Imperial territories and occasionally straying beyond territories officially under Realm control. Such traveling monks (and a monk rarely travels alone) usually focus on looking after the spiritual well-being of peasants not served by a local priest. Immaculates take a broad view of "spiritual well-being," however, and any itinerant monk has wide discretion in punishing heresy—suppressing the Hundred Gods Heresy and ancestor cults, and intervening when commoners have fallen under the demonic sway of the Anathema.

Finally, the fourth source of potential conflict grows out of the first three, since a Solar who slays a Dragon-Blooded must likely contend with members of her sworn brotherhood. A sworn brotherhood, the Terrestrial equivalent to the Solar circle, consists of allied Dynasts bound together spiritually by Terrestrial Circle sorcery. The spell, which is commonly used by Terrestrial Exalts across the Realm, causes members of the Brotherhood to feel an unnatural loyalty to one another, as

well as providing each of them with an intuitive sense of each member's location and condition. The specific effects of the spell depend on the personalities of the Dynasts who form the brotherhood and the skill of the sorcerer who cast the spell, but for practical purposes, a member of a sworn brotherhood is immune any attempt (supernatural or otherwise) to make him betray a brother unless Celestial or Solar Circle sorcery is used. More importantly, if a member of a sworn brotherhood is slain, her brothers will instantly be aware of the death—and possibly the circumstances surrounding it. They will also want revenge.

Regardless of the situation, any Dragon-Blood encountered by a Solar Exalt is likely to be well trained and well armed, particularly since the Dragon-Blooded have inherited the majority of the surviving First Age infrastructure. To reflect this fact, Dragon-Blooded begin with extra dots in Backgrounds, and the benefit of any dots a Dragon-Blooded has in the Artifact Background is doubled.

## Anima and Essence

The Personal Essence pool of a Dragon-Blood is equal to (Essence + Willpower). His Peripheral Essence pool is equal to ([Essence x 4] + Willpower + [the sum of his two highest Virtues]). A Dragon-Blooded's Essence pool may be further augmented by his Breeding, a Background unique to Terrestrial Exalted, which represents the purity of an Exalt's bloodline and the strength of his connection to the Elemental Dragons. Each dot in Breeding adds roughly one dot to the Dragon-Blooded's Personal Essence pool and two to his Peripheral Essence pool, as well as providing other less tangible benefits, such as a greater likelihood of producing Exalted children.

The anima banners of the Terrestrial Exalted come into existence at the same rate as Solar Exalted but generally appear as abstract representations of the Dragon-Blooded's elemental aspect instead of an iconic representation of her true nature. Therefore, instead of an animal or a towering figure, a Terrestrial's anima banner would simply be a corona of fire, a spray of water or whatever is appropriate to her aspect. Furthermore, while the anima banners of Celestial Exalted are displays of pure Essence, those of a Terrestrial Exalted actually generate raw elemental energy of the type associated with his aspect. Such energy is potentially destructive to those around the Dragon-Blooded who do not share his Exalted state. If the Dragon-Blooded's anima is at 8–10 motes, it inflicts one die of lethal damage for every minute of contact. If the Dragon-Blooded's anima is at 11–15 motes, it inflicts one die of lethal damage every nine ticks of contact. In either case, characters able to soak lethal damage with their Stamina (such as other Exalted) ignore this effect. At the 16+ level, however, the Dragon-Blooded inflict one die of lethal damage every tick (in addition to any other damage effects triggered by her anima), regardless of the nature of her opponent. These anima effects will not harm the Exalt or her gear, but they can damage surroundings and even allies if the Exalt is not careful. (The Scarlet Empire's

preference for stone construction over wood is not merely an aesthetic choice, after all.) Terrestrial Exalted also rarely enter combat on horseback for the same reasons, although certain Ride Charms can protect a mount for a while. Chariots are often used when the terrain permits.

In addition to these effects, each aspect has a unique anima power based on its connection to one of the five Elemental Dragons. These effects automatically come into play if the Dragon-Blood has spent at least 11 motes of Peripheral Essence. Otherwise, he must spend five motes of Essence to activate his anima power. The anima effects for each aspect are as follows:

**Air:** For the duration of a scene, the Exalt is surrounded by a swirling vortex of air, which functions as a weakened version of the Stormwind Rider spell. The Dragon-Blood may triple his leaping distance, and he takes no damage from falls, as the air itself buoys him and slows his descent. Finally, the Dragon-Blood may add his Essence to his Defense Value against Thrown and Archery attacks, as the winds themselves buffet ranged weapons in order to protect their master.

**Earth:** For the duration of the scene, the Exalt may soak all lethal damage with her full Stamina. She may also add her Essence to dice rolls to resist grappling attacks or to avoid knockback. Finally, she may add her Essence to her Stamina for all purposes, but only while her feet rest on either earth or stone.

**Fire:** For the duration of the scene, the Exalt is surrounded by a corona of flames, which does no damage to his body or possessions but affects anything else he touches as normal flame would. Any bare-handed or grappling attacks against the Exalt will cause the attacker to suffer a number of lethal damage dice equal to the Dragon-Blood's Essence, and any similar attacks made by the Dragon-Blood inflict an additional number of damage dice equal to his Essence as well. The Exalt may also ignite flammable materials with a touch.

**Water:** For the duration of a single day, the Exalt has complete water freedom. She can breathe water as easily as air and is incapable of drowning. She also suffers no environmental penalty for any actions taken while underwater, including such improbable actions as firing a bow or throwing a chakram. As a final bonus, the Exalt can walk across the surface of a body of water as easily as dry land.

**Wood:** For the duration of a scene, the Exalt can render himself completely immune to the effects of any plant-based poison. This is a reflexive power, and the Exalt need not know that he has been poisoned prior to activating this power. Indeed, while this effect is active, the Dragon-Blooded becomes a walking plant toxin. If the Exalt makes skin-to-skin contact with someone while this power is active, the target's player must make a successful (Stamina + Resistance) roll against a difficulty equal to the Exalt's Essence or suffer the effects of poisoning. Finally, the Dragon-Blooded can add his Essence to his Defense Value against Archery attacks and any attacks using wooden or wood-hafted weapons, as the wooden shafts themselves struggle to avoid hitting the Exalt.

## Charms Guidelines

Dragon-Blooded typically begin with only six Charms instead of 10, while Immaculate monks begin with only five, taken from one of the five Dragon Styles. Dragon-Blooded also have greater difficulty in learning new Charms. A First Excellency Charm for a Dragon-Blood is more efficient than a comparable Solar Charm, giving two bonus dice per mote spent. However, a Dragon-Blood can only add dice equal to her Ability rating plus any applicable specialties. A Second Excellency Charm allows a Dragon-Blood to purchase automatic successes on a dice roll at a cost of two motes per success, up to the maximum of half her Ability rating plus applicable specialties. Finally, a Third Excellency Charm permits a Dragon-Blooded to reroll a failed attempt to use an Ability at a cost of three motes. A Dragon-Blooded's Ox-Body Technique conveys one -1 health level and one -2 health level.

Unlike Celestial Exalted, Dragon-Blooded can freely use different reflexive Charms within the same action without the use of a Combo, and consequently, most Dragon-Blooded Charms are reflexive in nature. Dragon-Blooded also tend to surround themselves with capable subordinates through the use of Charms that allow them to temporarily augment the abilities of mortals. Therefore, in any conflict with a Solar, the Anathema might face a squad of ordinary soldiers elevated to the level of exceptional mortals.

Many Dragon-Blooded Charms also have variable effects, depending on the aspect of the Exalt using them. For example, a Lore Charm might permit a Fire Aspect to hurl a jet of flame at his opponent, while an Air Aspect with the same Charm might project a bolt of ice or even daggers of solidified air. Mechanically, these Charms will generally function the same regardless of aspect, but each might have variable "special effects." That is, the Fire-aspected version might ignite flammable objects in addition to inflicting damage, while the Wood-aspected version might subject the target to poison or perhaps entangle him in vines, in addition to the normal damage. In some situations, Dragon-Blooded of differing aspects can even combine these elemental Charms to create a greater effect, such as combining Air- and Fire-aspected versions of an advanced War Charm to create a flaming tornado to harry an opposing infantry force or combining Earth- and Water-aspected versions of a Charm to convert a dry battlefield into a muddy swamp to slow the enemy's advance.

While the Charms described here typify the types of Charms available to all Dragon-Blooded, those Exalts who receive training in the Immaculate Order have access to specialized martial-arts training. Such training begins with teaching a monk to perceive, interact with and (if necessary) destroy spirits. Following this basic instruction, Immaculate monks study one of the five Dragon Styles.

**Air Dragon Style** is a highly acrobatic style, focusing on tumbling, quick movements and incredible leaps, as well as stealth and silence. The signature weapon for an Air Dragon Immaculate is the chakram. **Earth Dragon Style** focuses on physical strength and resistance to pain. The signature weapon for this style is a large, studded club called a tetsubo. **Fire Dragon Style** trains its adherents to dodge attacks with the grace of a flickering flame and also to inflict damage like a burning brand. The signature weapon for Fire Dragon Style consists of two short, curved blades used in tandem. **Water Dragon Style** teaches the Immaculate to flow around his opponent's defenses and wear his enemy down with relentless attacks. The signature weapon consists of "dragon's claws," a pair of specially designed steel talons that strap onto the back of the Immaculate's hands. Finally, **Wood Dragon Style** is a less physical and more spiritual

path that focuses on attuning oneself to the very life force of one's opponent. Immaculates of the Wood Dragon Style are also masters of the bow.

## Sesus Nagezzer, the Decadent Noble

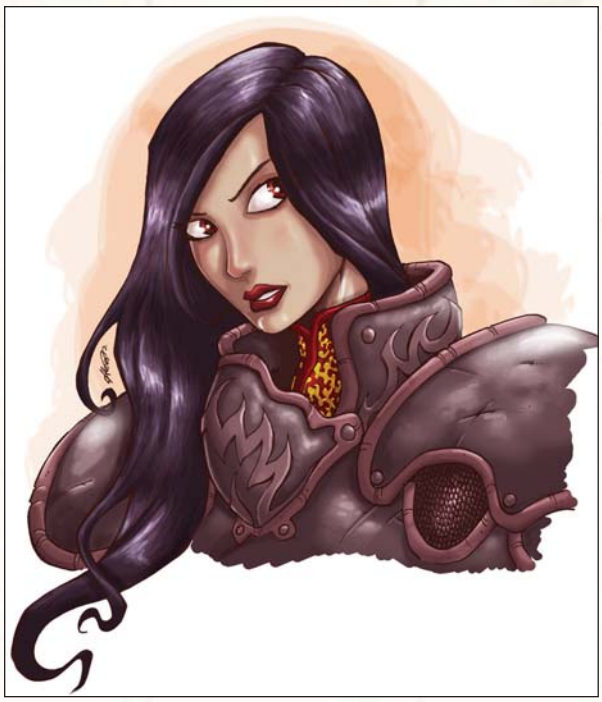
To many Dynasts, Sesus Nagezzer is considered an object lesson in how far a Dragon-Blood can fall from grace. Not that Nagezzer would object to this characterization, since he has actively cultivated it for decades. Over a century ago, not long after his Exaltation, Nagezzer was injured in a military skirmish and rendered lame in one leg. A man of prodigious appetites before being crippled, Nagezzer's weight exploded into such grotesque obesity that he was excluded from invitations to the Imperial Court and cruelly nicknamed "The Slug" by former friends. The experience embittered Nagezzer, and his self-loathing drove him to even greater depths of gluttony and debauchery. After his mother's untimely (and suspicious) death, Nagezzer inherited her manse, the Throne of Roses, which he converted into a den of iniquity to rival the pleasure palaces of House Cynis.

Realizing that he would never hold any official power in the Scarlet Dynasty, Nagezzer, who now embraced the name "Slug" as a badge of honor, chose to become lord of a shadow court, where any vice could be fulfilled and any desire could be indulged… for the right price. For the Slug, that price is usually information and favors. When he is not presiding over his main orgy chamber as the lord of sin, he is in his private boardroom. From there, he directs agents across the Realm and beyond it, using his accumulated secrets to increase his investments and his web of connections.

Not that Slug Nagezzer has any Imperial ambitions, of course. While Nagezzer's status as a grandson of the Empress by way of Sesus himself gives him a more legitimate claim to the throne than many other contenders, Nagezzer realizes that the Dragon-Blooded as a society would never accept a cripple as their ruler, a sentiment with which he fully agrees. Rather, he supports the Realm from behind the scenes, using his resources to unofficially support the depleted satrapies with mercenaries marching under the banner of a white rose on a black field. In so doing, he hopes to preserve the status quo in the Threshold so that any future ruler, regardless of House, will owe him a lot of favors. As part of his plans, he has also recruited a number of young Dragon-Bloods, both in the military and the bureaucracy, who are dismayed by the machinations of the Great Houses in the face of the many dangers with which the Realm contends. Ironically, the greatest danger to the Slug at the moment comes from some of his young allies who, awed by his acumen and charisma, secretly wish to see him on the Scarlet Throne whether he wants it or not.

**Aspect:** Wood
**Anima Banner:** A swirling mass of white rose petals and black thorns.
**Attributes:** Strength 2, Dexterity 1, Stamina 4; Charisma 4, Manipulation 5, Appearance 1; Perception 4, Intelligence 3, Wits 3
**Virtues:** Compassion 2, Conviction 4, Temperance 1, Valor 3
**Abilities:** Archery 2, Awareness 3, Bureaucracy 4, Integrity 2, Investigation 4, Larceny 3 (Drugs and Vice +2), Linguistics (Native: High Realm; Others: Guild Cant, Riverspeak) 2, Lore 3, Martial Arts 3, Medicine 2, Melee 2, Performance 3, Presence

4 (Command +1), Resistance 4, Ride 2, Socialize 5, War 2
**Backgrounds:** Allies 3, Artifact 3, Breeding 3, Command 5, Connections (The Guild) 2, Connections (The Merchant Marine) 2, Connections (Outlaw) 4, Connections (The Threshold) 3, Henchmen 2, Manse 4, Resources 5
**Charms:** Nagezzer is a Wood Aspect. For five motes, he can reflexively become immune to all plant-based toxins, can generate plant toxins from his skin (difficulty 3 to resist), raise his Defense Value by three against wooden weapons. Nagezzer's morbid obesity prevents him from using most combat Charms effectively, although he does have four levels of Ox-Body Technique. Instead, he relies on a wide variety of Bureaucracy, Socialize, Presence and Larceny Charms. Such Charms allow him to either facilitate or impede the work of bureaucratic agencies, to instantly know what it would take to bribe a specific individual or to automatically know if he is being spied upon. He can also lower the inhibitions of everyone attending a party or add five dice to an attempt to seduce another, regardless of gender and in spite of his grotesque weight. Nagezzer has First, Second and Third Excellency Charms for Bureaucracy, Socialize and Larceny. He also has four levels of Ox-Body Technique.
**Join Battle:** 6
**Attacks:**
Punch: Speed 5, Accuracy 5, Damage 2B, Defense 6, Rate 3
Jade Short Daiklave (Dragon's Fang): Speed 3, Accuracy 7, Damage 7L, Defense 4, Rate 2
**Soak:** 2L/4B
**Health Levels:** -0/-1/-1/-1/-1/-1/-1/-2/-2/-2/-2/-2/-2/-4/Incap
**Dodge DV:** Does not Dodge **Willpower:** 7
**Essence:** 3
**Personal Essence:** 13 **Peripheral Essence:** 26 (32)
**Committed Essence:** 6
**Other Notes:** At any given time (other than during actual orgies), Nagezzer is surrounded by a retinue of at least 12 personal bodyguards equivalent to elite troops. He might also be accompanied by one or two of his allies, who have traits comparable to either his own or those of Tepet Lisara.



## Tepet Lisara, Ambitious Young Officer

While the infamous "Roseblack," Tepet Ejava, is a brilliant officer on whom the entire House may soon place all its bets, her cousin Tepet Lisara is a perfect example of what happens when an inferior soldier rises to command solely through Charms and connections. Both of Lisara's parents were noted generals, so her future admission to the House of Bells was a foregone conclusion, despite mediocre grades in primary school. And to her credit, Lisara did seem to excel at the House of Bells, although few would have guessed that her high marks in military tactics classes could be attributed to simultaneous clandestine affairs with three different instructors. She later blackmailed the most respected of them into recommending her for a position as adjutant to General Tepet Tilis Mallon, then commander of the Third Legion. It was Lisara who, out of petty jealousy, persuaded Mallon to remove the Roseblack from the field, and it was Lisara who suggested the ill-fated stratagem that led to disaster for both the legion and House Tepet against the Bull of the North. Fortunately for Lisara, no one in her House fully realizes just how responsible she is for its declining fortunes. Unfortunately for her, she is nevertheless seen as a failure to be kept far from home and away from any other position of authority.

Therefore, Lisara finds herself as second-in-command of a miserable outpost in Chiaroscuro, surrounded by sweltering heat and ignorant barbarians. To pass the time, she amuses herself by reassigning up-and-coming male officers to either menial or suicidal tasks depending on her moods. Her commanding officer, who was himself assigned to this dead-end position as punishment for his habitual drunkenness, neither knows nor cares about this agenda, which is driven by Lisara's deep-seated sense of female chauvinism. Her contempt for the Tri-Khan of Chiaroscuro has threatened on several occasions to trigger a diplomatic incident, and her strange obsession with the Bull of the North (who she considers her chief "rival" even though he is thousands of miles away) has extended to all male Anathema. She constantly seeks information about such Anathema in or near Chiaroscuro, in hopes that she can defeat one without even calling in the Wyld Hunt and thus rehabilitate her reputation.

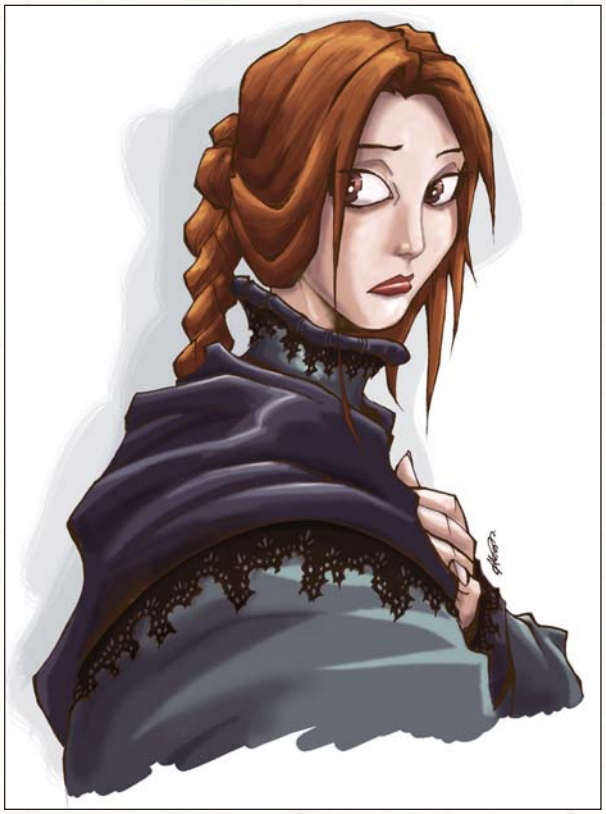
**Aspect:** Fire
**Anima Banner:** A swirling corona of yellow flames.
**Attributes:** Strength 3, Dexterity 4, Stamina 3; Charisma 3, Manipulation 3, Appearance 5; Perception 3, Intelligence 2, Wits 4
**Virtues:** Compassion 2, Conviction 3, Temperance 3, Valor 4
**Abilities:** Archery 3, Awareness 2, Bureaucracy 2, Craft 1, Dodge 3 (Unarmored +2), Linguistics (Native: High Realm; Others: Firetongue) 1, Lore 2 (Anathema +1), Martial Arts 2, Medicine 2, Melee 3 (Swords +2), Presence 2 (Giving Orders +1), Resistance 3, Ride 1, Socialize 4 (Seduction +2), Stealth 2, Survival 2, War 2
**Backgrounds:** Artifact 2, Breeding 1, Command 4, Reputation 2, Resources 3
**Charms:** Lisara is a Fire Aspect. For five motes, she can surround herself for a scene with a corona of flames that does no damage to her body or possessions but affects anything else she touches as normal flame would. Bare-handed or grappling attacks against Lisara will cause the attacker to suffer three dice of lethal damage, and any hand-to-hand attacks made by her inflict an additional three dice of lethal damage. She can also ignite flammable materials with a touch. Lisara has First and Second Excellencies for Melee, and First, Second and Third Excellencies for Socialize. She can also add five dice to any single attempt to seduce another. She can cause opponents to burst into flame with a successful Melee strike for single mote, causing an extra four levels of lethal damage for one action, and she can summon a flaming sword out of thin air for three motes and one Willpower. She can also render her steed temporarily immune to the lethal effects of her anima. Lisara has two levels of Ox-Body Technique.
**Join Battle:** 6
**Attacks:**
Punch: Speed 5, Accuracy 7, Damage 3B, Defense 8, Rate 3
Kick: Speed 5, Accuracy 6, Damage 6B, Defense 4, Rate 2
Jade Reaver Daiklave (Flame's Kiss): Speed 4, Accuracy 12, Damage 13L/3, Defense 9, Rate 2
Long Bow: Speed 6, Accuracy 8, Damage 5L, Range 200, Rate 4
**Soak:** 10L/12B (Articulated plate, 9L/9B, -3 mobility penalty, and shield, +1 difficulty to hit)
**Health Levels:** -0/-1/-1/-1/-1/-2/-2/-2/-2/-4/Incap
**Dodge DV:** 6/2 **Willpower:** 7
**Essence:** 3
**Personal Essence:** 11 **Peripheral Essence:** 23 (28)
**Committed Essence:** 5
**Other Notes:** Lisara typically travels with fellow officers in groups of two to six, usually leading detachments of possibly dozens of elite troops. These traits could be used for any young Dragon-Blooded officer. Additionally, the imperial garrison at Chiaroscuro contains a dragon of 500 troops (treat as elite troops), any number of which might accompany Lisara if she knows she is going into combat, especially against Anathema.

## Cynis Megara, Obsessed Savant

Very often, Cynis Megara has wished that she had been born into House Mnemon. It's not that she has ever been treated badly by House Cynis. On the contrary, House Cynis has doted on Megara ever since her graduation from the Heptagram made her one of the few Cynis sorcerers. In fact, it is the lack of other comparable sorcerers in her own House that has given Megara a profound sense of loneliness, as well as a certain degree of contempt for the majority of her family members. The others are all more concerned with when the next party will be thrown than with forbidden mysteries of Creation.

In order to pursue her fascination with lost secrets of the First Age (and to combat the sense of malaise that her family triggers in her), Megara has left the Blessed Isle. After much cajoling, she has finally persuaded the elders of House Cynis of the potential value in finding lost treasures on uncharted islands in the Great Western Ocean. Today, she spends her time searching the vast blue of an infinite ocean aboard her personal yacht, the *Tsunami of Roiling Waters*, accompanied by an "armada" of four Cynis merchant ships whose indentured crews increasingly fear they will never see their homes again.

Megara has been quite fortunate so far. In less than two years of searching, she has found one First Age naval installation (forgotten for centuries) and two abandoned First Age sea crafts, still largely intact. She's also recovered a significant quantity of jade from a group of pirates, who were understandably surprised when their mast was shattered and their sails ripped to shreds by Terrestrial Circle sorcery. She has also quelled two near mutinies, once by guaranteeing the freedom of the slaves among her crew upon the completion of her quest and once by summoning a half-dozen demon courtesans to attend to the crew's needs. But Megara is still not satisfied. She will tell no one what she truly hopes to find on this voyage, but whatever "it" is, she is certain it is just a little farther west.



**Aspect:** Water
**Anima Banner:** A whirling dervish of ice-cold sea spray, capable of manifesting even in the hottest deserts.
**Attributes:** Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 2; Charisma 3, Manipulation 3, Appearance 3; Perception 3, Intelligence 4, Wits 4
**Virtues:** Compassion 2, Conviction 4, Temperance 3, Valor 3
**Abilities:** Awareness 3, Bureaucracy 2, Craft (Air) 2 (Summoning Circles +2), Dodge 2, Integrity 2, Investigation 3, Linguistics (Native: High Realm; Others: Old Realm, Seatongue) 2, Lore 4 (Demons +1, Sorcery +1), Martial Arts 2, Medicine 2, Melee 3, Occult 4, Performance 1, Presence 3, Resistance 3, Ride 1, Sail 3 (Navigation +2), Stealth 1, Socialize 3
**Backgrounds:** Artifact 2, Command 3, Connections (The Heptagram) 2, Manse 1, Reputation 2, Resources 2
**Charms:** Megara is a Water Aspect. For five motes a day, she can breathe water as easily as air and is incapable of drowning. She also suffers no penalty for any actions taken while underwater, and she can even walk across the surface of a body of water as easily as dry land. She has First and Second Excellencies for Awareness, Melee and Sail, as well as First, Second and Third Excellencies for Lore and Occult. For two motes, Megara can instantly know what sort of gift or bribe is needed to secure another's loyalty, or she can make sure that her crew finds that even the stalest grog tastes like fine wine. Megara has the Terrestrial Circle Sorcery Charm and knows the following spells: Death of Obsidian Butterflies, Demon of the First Circle, Emerald Countermagic, Infallible Messenger and Summon Elemental. She also knows a few rare spells with a nautical theme that permit her to summon favorable winds, to shatter the mast of an opposing ship or to conjure a flock of enchanted metallic seagulls that will devour the sails of a targeted vessel (and sometimes the clothes off the enemy sailors' backs). Megara has two levels of Ox-Body Technique.
**Join Battle:** 7
**Attacks:**
Punch: Speed 5, Accuracy 6, Damage 2B, Defense 7, Rate 3
Kick: Speed 5, Accuracy 5, Damage 5B, Defense 3, Rate 2
Wavecleaver Daiklave (Siaka's Bite): Speed 4, Accuracy 9, Damage 10L/3, Defense 7, Rate 2
**Soak:** 4L/6B (Buff jacket, 3L/4B, -1 mobility penalty)
**Health Levels:** -0/-1/-1/-1/-1/-2/-2/-2/-2/-4/Incap
**Dodge DV:** 5/4 **Willpower:** 7
**Essence:** 4
**Personal Essence:** 11 **Peripheral Essence:** 30
**Committed Essence:** 5
**Other Notes:** Megara is typically accompanied by two to three erymanthoi and at least one neomah. The *Tsunami of Roiling Waters* has a permanent crew of eight (treat as elite soldiers). Each of the four ships accompanying her is a large merchant ship with a crew of 30 indentured servants as rowers, 10 Cynis military personal and a captain who has traits equal to Tepet Lisara but with three dots and at least one Excellency in Sail.

## Lunar Exalted

Chosen by Luna for their strength and their will to survive, the Lunar Exalted live on the border between Creation and the

chaotic Wyld, where reality begins to fail and only brave, foolhardy or spiritual mortals tread. Forced to flee there or die during the Usurpation, the threat of the Wyld Hunt has kept them from civilized lands for a millennium. Although the Lunar Exalted once had five castes, like the other Exalted, the mutating energies of the Wyld has warped their bodies, minds and Essences. It has forced the Lunars to use magical moonsilver tattoos, inspired by the moonsilver-inscribed obelisks that once barred both the Wyld and the Fair Folk from entering Creation, to stabilize their forms and bind the Wyld taint within them. Today, only three Lunar castes exist. The Full Moon Caste contains unstoppable warriors and warlords. The No Moon Caste, insuperable battle sorcerers and lore-keepers. The Changing Moon Caste is what remains of the three lost castes. The Changing Moons are tricksters, rogue socialites, irreverent priests and dark-horse politicians all rolled into one.

Nearly all Lunars belong to a society called the Silver Pact. The Silver Pact is a society created by the No Moons during the turmoil after the Usurpation, intended to reduce the number of Lunar casualties and provide a community through which the Lunars could coordinate their underground activities to maximize safety and effect. The Silver Pact's primary function after the Usurpation, one that remains important, is to retrieve newly Exalted Lunars from within the Realm-controlled Threshold and bring them to the "stronghold" of the Wyld. Once there, a young Lunar is ritually tattooed with moonsilver for his own protection and inducted into the Silver Pact. Those new Lunars who wish no involvement with Lunar society or the Pact all receive the same response: They are "mentored" by an elder Lunar of the Pact. While the elder is willing to teach skills and Charms to the youth, the real purpose of her containment is to teach her the true purpose of the Silver Pact. This continues until the elder is convinced that the young Lunar has become an asset to the Pact instead of a danger. This doesn't mean that the young Lunar has "seen the light" and become an adherent of the Pact, only that she understands the potential dangers. She sees that an unwise action on her part can end the lives of dozens of Lunars and destroy centuries of planning, so she is willing to play some part in the Pact's schemes.

Recognizable by the shining moonsilver tattoos that cover their bodies and by their animal traits, Lunars are rarely seen far from the outermost edge of the Threshold. When encountered out of her "natural habitat," a Lunar undoubtedly has a good reason for the excursion. A young Lunar is most often seen either in acts of defiance against or obedience toward the elders of the Pact. Defiance could take the form of assaulting a civilized nation's border defenses or using her newfound power to change society in the Threshold. These actions, while not individually planned or predicted, are accepted by the Silver Pact. Individuality is prized among Luna's Chosen, and such defiance is a good way for young Lunars to gain respect from their elders and prestige among their peers. Obedience takes the form of travel with more experienced Lunars, perhaps in an extraction, before being sent into events with less (but never no) danger. At an older age, Lunars will be seen raiding the Threshold for goods, slaves or wealth of other kinds. Packs of Lunars are most often seen in the Threshold in

extraction missions. Successfully reaching a new Lunar Exalt before the Wyld Hunt is another source of prestige among Lunars.

Still, such are Lunars' natures that not all can be controlled or safely accounted for. Young members of the Pact often retain stiff enough necks to return to the Threshold and pursue their own goals. Also, retrieval parties sometimes fail to reach Exalting Lunars in time, and the elders of the Silver Pact have begun to suspect the hidden presence of Creation's greatest astrologers, the Sidereal Exalted. The Wyld Hunt has beaten the Lunar packs to a new Exalt or "happened upon" Lunars operating alone in the Threshold so often that any other alternative is unlikely. Over a millennium of hunting the Lunar Exalted, the Immaculate Order has developed several functional tactics for combating Lunar threats. Combined with the puissance of the Immaculate martial artists, the Wyld Hunt has a respectable record for successfully killing the Lunars it hunts. Rightfully, few Lunars are unafraid of the repercussions of delving too deeply into the Threshold. Only desperation drives them in, whether it is the necessity to save a child of Luna from death or to rescue an operation from failure before it becomes too late.

## Anima and Essence

The Lunar Exalted are survivors. Their Essence stems from the motivation that drives them to defy adversity. A Lunar's Personal Essence pool is equal to his (Essence + [Willpower x 2]). His Peripheral Essence pool is equal to ([Essence x 4] + [Willpower x 2] + [highest Virtue x 4]). Lunar anima banners are activated at the same rate as for Solar Exalted and are dominated by the purple and silver of the night sky and the moon. When a Lunar's anima becomes iconic, it displays abstract or concrete depictions of the Lunar's totem animal. Each Lunar caste has its own anima ability appropriate to its type.

**Full Moons** may spend five motes to double their speed and leaping distances for a scene. Doing so stacks with other speed increases, but only by adding a factor equal to the original value, not continuing to multiply by two. A Lunar who increases her running speed twice moves at three times her normal speed, not four.

**No Moon** Lunars may spend one mote to reduce the Essence cost of all spells they cast by one for the scene. A No Moon cannot spend more motes than twice his Essence in this manner, and no spell's cost can be reduced by more than half.

A **Changing Moon** can spend 10 motes to appear as any one person he knows for a scene, complete with voice and smells. The imagery is accompanied the perception of trustworthiness, lending the Lunar his Essence in dice to any action that such an aura assists. These effects are instantly dispelled if the Lunar's anima banner activates at any level.

## Changing Forms

Every Lunar has two true forms. The first is the human form to which the Lunar was born. The second is the Lunar's totem animal—the natural beast that most represents his inner self. The Lunar can shift between these two forms as a reflexive action at the cost of one mote, not committed. Some Lunars have a third form: that of a beastly hybrid of the Lunar's other two forms. The hybrid form is a war machine. The Lunar gains several feet in height, additional dots in his Physical Attributes and the ability to regenerate health levels at an incredible rate. Lunars geared toward combat can increase the might of the hybrid form even more. Donning the hybrid form costs five motes; returning to another true form still costs only one.

All Lunar Exalted have a Tell, a unique marking that identifies them to those familiar with it. The Tell can be a curl of silver hair, a strong animal musk, slight claws or anything else, and it is often related to the Lunar's innate bestial nature. The Tell would make Lunars' disguises entirely ineffective if it did not magically conceal itself. To one unfamiliar with the Lunar in question, the eye slides over the lock of silver, the nose ignores the barnyard smell or blames it on the surroundings, or the mind fails to notice the scratch of claws during a handshake. Even more revealing are the Lunar's moonsilver tattoos, which show up in any form she wears. Lunar Charms can hide both tattoos and Tells.

A Lunar can take other forms as well. By tasting the heart's blood of a living creature, a Lunar may thereafter take the form of that creature at a cost of three motes. The Lunar gains the creature's Strength and Stamina but retains her other Attributes. She can use the creature's natural attacks and methods of movement. When a Lunar throws off the shape of an animal other than her totem, she returns to the last true form she wore. Some Lunars can also don the shape of a human figure. As with animals, the Lunar must have killed the human and tasted its heart's blood. This ability costs five motes and one Willpower but is otherwise identical to taking an animal form.

## Lunar Charms

The Charms Luna grants her Chosen are based upon their raw Attributes, rather than Abilities. Lunar Excellencies, therefore, are also purchased for Attributes instead of Abilities. The three Excellencies remain basically the same but can be applied to any dice roll that uses that Attribute; e.g., a Lunar with Essence Triumphant in Dexterity can gain automatic successes in a (Dexterity + Melee) or a (Dexterity + Stealth) roll, but not a (Wits + Stealth) roll. The Lunar Excellencies are as follows:

**The First Excellency, Essence Overwhelming:** One mote spent on a roll of the Attribute purchases one bonus die, to a maximum number of dice equal to the Attribute. This is the maximum number of dice a Lunar may add through any combination of Charms.

**The Second Excellency, Essence Triumphant:** Two motes spent on a roll of the Attribute purchases an automatic success. The Lunar can buy no more automatic successes than half the Attribute.

**The Third Excellency, Essence Resurgent:** Four motes spent on a roll of the Attribute allow the Lunar's player to reroll a failure. Any Charms used on the first roll must be paid for again. This Excellency is incompatible with extra action Charms.

Common Lunar Charms allow them to trade up to the applicable Attribute in dice for automatic successes. Lower-Essence Lunar Charms supplement single attacks or alter the Lunar in small ways for the duration of a combat. Higher-Essence Charms allow him to ignore lesser blows, unleash his Dexterity in attacks upon his chosen target or thunder through a crowd to bear down upon a single individual. These effects invariably end after a short duration, making the Lunar incredibly deadly in short engagements. Lunars lack persistent defenses similar to the Solars' precisely because this is Luna's way—by the time persistent defenses begin to pay off, the Lunar's enemy should be dead.

Defensively, the Lunar can supplement a dodge with a leap that removes him from his enemy's threat range, or he can use his malleability to flow around attacks in a perfect dodge. But a Lunar's strongest defense is his great resistance. The Lunar can ignore pain and wound penalties long enough to accomplish his goal. His Ox-Body Charm provides two -1 or four -2 health levels. He can increase his soak by hardening his skin or forming scales. As an ultimate defense, the Lunar can turn his skin and fur to flowing moonsilver that absorbs all but the greatest blows. This defense can stop even some attacks of the Exalted.

The Lunar can smell the sweat of fear or lies or use a heady musk to inspire warriors to battle. He can conceal himself by changing the coloration of his body. He is superior hunter, tracker and survivalist, able to find food at all times and withstand the most extreme weather conditions. The Lunar can withstand any mental assault that attempts to make him betray a mate or the Silver Pact, and he can steel his mind to ignore any coercion for the scant minutes he requires to kill or protect a single target.

## Magnificent Jaguar, Elder Warrior

Magnificent Jaguar remembers the First Age well—for him, it was not so long ago. He survived the Usurpation by fleeing from civilized lands, filled with Dragon-Blooded waiting with their jade. He helped the Lunar community form until a solution to the Wyld taint was devised. Then, ignoring the No Moons and the fledgling Silver Pact, he stealthily returned to the outer limits of the Threshold and built himself a cairn. Closing it behind him, Jaguar slowed his breathing and his heart and slept away the pain of what he had done.

Magnificent Jaguar awoke in his tomb with dust in the air and stones crumbling. Cautious, he rolled aside his entrance stone and saw a young Lunar Exalt, not yet tattooed, being attacked by Dragon-Blooded warriors. Snarling with the matchless rage of the Full Moon Caste, Magnificent Jaguar flew from his grave in a whirlwind, sending the Dragon-Bloods to their doom. Burying them beneath the tons of rock that had housed him moments before, Jaguar decided that it was time to return to the world.

He found the modern Silver Pact a powerful organization backed by elder No Moons, Full Moons and Changing Moons. Many still held a respect for Magnificent Jaguar as a warrior of the First Age and welcomed him. After he attended their council and listened to tales of the centuries he had missed, the elders of the Pact and he discussed what part he could play in their plots without impugning his honor. At his insistence, they allowed him to take the young Lunar he had rescued as a student. At their insistence, Magnificent Jaguar agreed to make his territories among the barbarian tribes of the Threshold's edge. He would begin to prepare the tribes for war.

That was 100 years ago. Jaguar's student has become his loyal friend, ruling several dozen tribes himself. Jaguar's tribes include the most effective warriors he can train, assisted by the No Moons' guided breeding. The war is almost upon them, and he will be ready.

**Caste:** Full Moon
**Anima Banner:** A black jaguar with a white aura
**Tell:** Pronounced fangs
**Attributes:** Strength 4, Dexterity 5, Stamina 5; Charisma 3, Manipulation 3, Appearance 4; Perception 4, Intelligence 3, Wits 5

**Virtues:** Compassion 4, Conviction 3, Temperance 2, Valor 5
**Abilities:** Archery 2, Athletics 4, Awareness 2, Bureaucracy 2, Craft (Wood) 2 (Carving Bone +1), Dodge 4, Integrity 3, Investigation 1, Larceny 1, Linguistics (Native: Old Realm; Others: Forest-Tongue, Riverspeak) 2, Lore 3 (First Age +2), Martial Arts 5 (Unarmed +1), Medicine 2, Melee 4 (Javelin +2), Occult 1, Performance 3 (Flute +1), Presence 2, Resistance 4, Ride 1, Socialize 3 (Military Politics +2), Stealth 4, Survival 4, Thrown 4 (Javelin +2), War 4
**Backgrounds:** Allies 1, Artifact 2, Backing 4, Cult 3, Followers 5, Manse 4, Resources 3
**Charms:** For five motes, Magnificent Jaguar can use his anima to double his running and leaping distance. Magnificent Jaguar's Charms center on finding and defeating the enemy. In combat, he can turn dice from his Join Battle roll into automatic successes for one mote per die. In his hybrid form, Jaguar increases all his Physical Attributes by two dots. He possesses all three Excellencies for all the Physical Attributes, and the Attributes of the Lunar's hybrid form are considered natural when calculating dice maximums. The Lunar also possesses two levels of Ox-Body Technique. Magnificent Jaguar can react instantly to an unseen attack for one mote. He has a Combo that makes five of his attack dice automatic successes, reduces his target's Parry DV by half and makes two damage dice automatic successes for 16 motes and two Willpower.

Magnificent Jaguar can take many animal and several dozen human forms. Three motes and a Willpower will let Jaguar track someone by scent for a full day, with foreknowledge of the quarry's smell. For five motes and one Willpower, he can detect the presence of magic or Charms and recognize the Exalt-type that used them. For one mote, Jaguar can see

perfectly in the dark. Finally, Jaguar may spend 10 motes to ignore all fatigue, whether from armor or exertion, for one day.

**Join Battle:** 7

**Attacks:**

*Human Form:*

Punch: Speed 5, Accuracy 12, Damage 4B, Defense 13, Rate 3

Kick: Speed 5, Accuracy 11, Damage 7B, Defense 9, Rate 2

Clinch: Speed 6, Accuracy 11, Damage 4B, Defense –, Rate 1

Javelin (hand-to-hand): Speed 4, Accuracy 12, Damage 7L, Defense 12, Rate 2

Moonsilver Smashfist (Bonehammer): Speed 5, Accuracy 11, Damage 11B, Defense 13, Rate 2

Javelin (thrown): Speed 4, Accuracy 12, Damage 7L, Range 30, Rate 2

*Hybrid Form:*

Punch: Speed 5, Accuracy 14, Damage 6B, Defense 15, Rate 3

Kick: Speed 5, Accuracy 13, Damage 9B, Defense 11, Rate 2

Clinch: Speed 6, Accuracy 13, Damage 6B, Defense –, Rate 1

Bite: Speed 5, Accuracy 14, Damage 11L, Defense 12, Rate 1

Claws: Speed 4, Accuracy 13, Damage 7L, Defense 13, Rate 2

Javelin (hand-to-hand): Speed 4, Accuracy 14, Damage 9L, Defense 14, Rate 2

Moonsilver Smashfist (Bonehammer): Speed 5, Accuracy 13, Damage 13B, Defense 15, Rate 2

Javelin (thrown): Speed 4, Accuracy 14, Damage 9L, Range 30, Rate 2

**Soak:** 9L/12B//9L/14B (Chain shirt, 6L/7B)

**Health Levels:** -0/-1/-1/-1/-1/-2/-2/-2/-2/-2/-2/-4/Incap

**Dodge DV:** 7 **Willpower:** 9

**Essence:** 5

**Personal Essence:** 23 **Peripheral Essence:** 40 (48)

**Committed Essence:** 8

**Other Notes:** Magnificent Jaguar bears a gem of adamant skin set in an orichalcum hearthstone amulet about his neck (a wedding present from his long-dead mate). He also has a small bell tied around his wrist, given him by a No Moon elder of the Silver Pact. When in grave danger, he will crush the bell and be teleported to the No Moon.

## Seven Devils Clever, Newly Exalted Schemer

When Orra stood face to face with Lombra Garua, the petty crime lord that had been running her street in Nexus for decades—and a Dragon-Blood to boot—she was scared but determined. She had a plan for her street that would forever put it out of reach of lecherous, power-abusing scum like Lombra. He had just drawn his green jade daiklave when the moonlight shone in through the open window and struck her to her very soul.

The next thing Orra knew, Lombra was dead—scattered about the room in several pieces, some recognizable, some not—and a crow was sitting in the window talking to her. The crow turned out to be a Lunar Exalted called Trembling Whiskers. Numb with her sudden Exaltation, Orra followed Trembling Whiskers to the East. After an interminable journey into the farthest reaches of the Threshold, Orra found herself in a whirlwind of judgment by ancient No Moons, speaking in riddles and chock-full of wisdom, who performed the painful tattooing that they claimed would save her. Then she had a brief but earnest discussion with Trembling Whiskers, who gave her a moon-name, to honor Luna: Seven Devils Clever.

Seven Devils Clever swore to do nothing to endanger the Silver Pact, but it was several weeks before the old No Moon who was watching over her would let her return to her city. He liked her plan, he said, and wanted to see it work. There was some kind of twinkle in his eye, though, that made the young Lunar suspicious.

Seven Devils Clever is a very young Lunar. That's what everyone keeps telling her. But she's not going to be a pawn. She's returned to Nexus, and it's time to do some cleaning.

**Caste:** Changing Moon

**Anima Banner:** A stylized purple fox

**Tell:** Tufted and pointed ears

**Attributes:** Strength 3, Dexterity 4, Stamina 3; Charisma 4, Manipulation 5, Appearance 3; Perception 2, Intelligence 2, Wits 4

**Virtues:** Compassion 4, Conviction 3, Temperance 2, Valor 2

**Abilities:** Athletics 1, Awareness 3, Dodge 2, Investigation 1, Larceny 3, Linguistics (Native: Riverspeak; Others: Old Realm) 1, Martial Arts 3, Medicine 1, Melee 1, Occult 1 (Gods +2), Performance 3, Presence 2, Resistance 1, Ride 1, Stealth 2, Socialize 2, Survival 1, Thrown 1

**Backgrounds:** Contacts 3, Influence 1, Mentor 3, Resources 1

**Charms:** For 10 motes of Essence, the Changing Moon may veil herself in illusion, appearing as anyone with whom she's familiar for one scene. Seven Devils Clever's Charms focus around her ability to conceal herself and act in secrecy. She can take two dozen animal forms, and several can fly or swim. To aid in her disguises, she can make small alterations to her appearance for one mote or change her gender for three, though she always eventually returns to what she considers her "real form." Seven Devils Clever can increase all Perception dice pools for a scene for one mote per die, and she always knows if she is being consciously observed—though it reflexively costs her two motes to learn this. Spending two motes

lets her understand and speak with animals for one scene, and this Charm lets Seven Devils Clever use animals as scouts and distractions. Although it gives her no power to command them, she has an animal magnetism to which they respond well. For one mote per die, she may add dice to her Dexterity pool for an entire scene.
In combat, Seven Devils Clever uses Essence Overwhelming to aid her attacks much as it aids her acrobatics and stealth otherwise. She can also make her unarmed attacks inflict lethal or bashing damage, her option, for a scene. Finally, for five motes, she can turn an enemy's attack against him if she successfully dodges it.
**Join Battle:** 7
**Attacks:**
Punch: Speed 5, Accuracy 8, Damage 3B, Defense 9, Rate 3
Kick: Speed 5, Accuracy 7, Damage 6B, Defense 5, Rate 2
Clinch: Speed 6, Accuracy 7, Damage 3B, Defense –, Rate 1
Baton (hand-to-hand): Speed 5, Accuracy 8, Damage 9B, Defense 7, Rate 2
Baton (thrown): Speed 5, Accuracy 7, Damage 6B, Range 10, Rate 2
**Soak:** 4L/7B (Buff jacket, 3L/4B, -1 mobility penalty)
**Health Levels:** -0/-1/-1/-2/-2/-4/Incap
**Dodge DV:** 5/4 **Willpower:** 7
**Essence:** 3
**Personal Essence:** 17 **Peripheral Essence:** 42
**Committed Essence:** 0
**Other Notes:** Although she possesses some combat Charms, Seven Devils Clever prefers stealth and trickery to direct confrontation.

## Sidereal Exalted

In the heights of Heaven, there exists a great engine, perhaps the first artifact ever crafted. It is called the Loom of Fate, for its workings are perhaps best likened to that of a weaver's loom, and so, it takes that form when viewed by those who come before it. Each thread is some aspect of Creation: a person, an ideal, a place. The future is a bundle of threads, each thread unconnected to others, standing separately, but potentially understood by their relation to surrounding threads. The present is the moment of weaving, where those threads of the future are merged and brought together in the brilliant pattern of Creation, flowing into the mighty tapestry of the past that tells the story of That Which Has Been, unto the beginning of the Loom's record.

But this Loom does more than track this advancement of events, for the two are inexorably intertwined. An event in Creation can alter the lay of the threads, and altering the lay of the threads upon the Loom has an affect upon Creation. Indeed, the Loom of Fate is the microcosm to the macrocosm of Creation. Unbeknownst to them, all men can see this Loom, though they do not recognize it as such. Rather, the minds of those in Creation can see only small reflections of it in the sky above them, in the twinkling of the stars. Lesser astrologers track the movements of these stars in order to understand what the future holds, but the Sidereal Exalted are as high above these astrologers as the stars are above the hearth-fires of Creation.

The constellations of the night sky are ruled over by the Five Maidens, the five brightest stars in the heavens. These Maidens, like Luna and the Unconquered Sun, occasionally Exalt a mortal, that the movement of fate may be overseen and snarls may be worked from the Tapestry of Creation.

Once before, during the First Age, the Sidereals worked to untwist a terrible snarl that they foresaw. Looking down the great threads of What Might Be, they saw that terrible potentials lay ahead and took it upon themselves to rectify these possible outcomes. They gathered among themselves and elected to overthrow the Solar and Lunar presence in Creation, raising up the Dragon-Blooded as the masters of the world. These savants, who worked to create a world bereft of gold or silver, were called the Bronze Faction. The minority, who voted against the Usurpation, was called the Gold Faction.

Engineering the Usurpation was no small task, but it was one that was keenly within the abilities of the Bronze Faction Sidereals. Following its successful execution, they crafted the Immaculate Philosophy, a faith of equal parts Heavenly truth and veneration of the Dragon-Blooded, to grant the Dragon-Blooded Host the same heavenly mandate to rule that the Solars once held by dint of their Exaltation.

Now the Sidereals rule from behind the scenes, forgotten by the Dragon-Blooded and the rest of Creation. Using clever manipulations, many Sidereals pose as simple savants and monks of the Realm, while ancient Sidereals capable of powerful manipulation of their Essence are actually able to mimic the animas of the Dragon-Blooded. They guide the Realm as revered abbots and elders.

But the Gold Faction yet exists and has taken the sudden return of the Solar Exalted as a sign of change. Hidden among the Cult of the Illuminated and bastions of First Age practice, these Gold Faction Sidereals approach any Solars they can, offering them training, assistance and information, in hopes of one day seeing the world restored to its proper order.

### The Ordained Exaltation

The Exaltation of the Sidereals isn't left to chance. Such things are tracked on the Loom of Fate, and those who are meant to Exalt are watched carefully. In some instances, Sidereals are taken away many years before they actually Exalt. Some few children are actually spirited away to Heaven, to allow them the familiarity that will serve them well when they assume their offices later in life. Most, however, are simply watched and approached by their sifus (i.e., their Sidereal mentors) just before Exaltation.

After Exaltation, each Sidereal is assigned a sifu. This individual, usually one of the Sidereal's own caste, teaches the new Exalt what he needs to know about his duties, responsibilities and powers. Through the use of special Charms and spells, nearly a lifetime of learning is compressed into the being of the newly Exalted Sidereal, allowing him to take up his duties quickly, for the numbers of the Sidereals are few, and their tasks many. Let the Lunars learn at the feet of their elders and the Solars blunder their way through past-life memories and sheerest luck into their powers—the Chosen of the Five Maidens have work to do.

### Heavenly Officials

All Sidereals have some duty or another to perform in regard to destiny, Heaven and Creation, depending on their caste. While this isn't to say that Sidereals don't pursue their own personal or nonofficial goals, most of them spend a good amount of their time carrying out their duties. (Yet it might be argued that it is in the nature of Sidereals to turn their personal

desires into the official goals of their subordinates.) The precise allegiance of any given Exalt of the Maidens isn't generally known. What faction of Sidereals they belong to, what office and duties they hold, and what their personal intentions are tend to all remain heavily obfuscated, save to the Sidereals superiors (sometimes…).

### Keepers of the Orthodoxy

The Bronze Faction maintains most of the power, both in the offices of Heaven and Creation. Those who walk the Bronze path find themselves in a situation that can make for an easy future, for the Bronze Faction enjoys most of the positions of authority, and its leaders are capable of granting those beneath them ample salaries, grants and titles. However, adherence to the Bronze Faction is strictly regulated, with little room for divergence from the wishes of one's superiors. Certainly, there is power to be had, but it is parceled out by the hand of those above the Sidereal in the hierarchy of the Bureau of Destiny.

Younger Sidereals of the Bronze Faction often find themselves assigned to Creation to work as the direct agents of those ancient Sidereals who hold important duties in Heaven. In many instances, these Sidereals must craft for themselves several cover identities in the Realm as governesses, mentors, monks, sorcerers and advisors in order to fulfill their duties.

### Bringers of Change

The Gold Faction, on the other hand, consists of those who would see the current order thrown down. To the Gold Faction, Heaven and Creation ran much more smoothly when Solars were seated in the Imperial Manse. Therefore, since Sidereals have a Maidens-given mandate to make the flow of the Loom of Fate smooth, they see it as their duty to place the Solars back in power.

Although some of the important Sidereal officials of Heaven belong to the Gold Faction, most Gold Faction Sidereals carry out their duties to Heaven in Creation while pursuing their faction's intentions as well. In general, Gold Faction Sidereals aren't as well paid, and they don't gain prestigious positions as quickly.

### Walkers of the Middle Path

Despite the general antipathy of the Gold and Bronze Factions to one another, these political concerns are considered secondary to a Sidereal's work. Most Sidereals belong to one of these factions, but they are expected to treat one another with respect and professionalism.

A number of Sidereals belong to neither of these factions, seeking simply to carry out their duties to the best of their ability. Likewise, some have other political goals that stand at odds to the stated purpose of both factions. While some of these have gathered together to discuss their intentions (such as the Lunar-supporting "Silver Faction"), these number perhaps a handful at best and hardly warrant the term "faction" to describe their numbers or influence.

## Anima and Essence

Sidereal Essence is integrally a part of fate, a small spark of the Maidens whose entire purpose is the ordering of chaos into discernable patterns. Sidereals see patterns in nearly everything

### Sidereal Anima Manifestation

| Essence Used | Manifestation |
|---|---|
| 1–3 | The character's caste mark glitters upon the forehead from certain angles; a (Perception + Awareness) roll, difficulty 3, is necessary to spot it. |
| 4–7 | The character's caste mark becomes more obvious and may be spotted with a (Perception + Awareness) roll, difficulty 1, if left uncovered. |
| 8–10 | The character's caste mark burns clearly, though it can still be hidden by covering it. Additionally, the character glows slightly, giving a +2 difficulty to Stealth rolls, though Stealth effects work normally. |
| 11–15 | The character's caste mark shines even through coverings, and he is surrounded by a soft halo the color of his Maiden. Stealth is impossible, and Stealth effects fail. |
| 16+ | The character's anima brightens to a burning halo, bright enough to read by out to a stone's throw. It has no detail, and there is no iconic image—it is simply a brilliance in the color of the Sidereal's Maiden. This remains for a scene. Stealth is impossible, and Stealth effects fail. |

and often try to divine the hand behind the formation of such patterns. The Personal Essence of a Sidereal Exalt is equal to ([Essence x 2] + Willpower), while her Peripheral Essence pool is equal to ([Essence x 6] + Willpower + [the sum of Virtues]).

There are five castes of Sidereal Exalt, one for each of the Maidens. Each has duties appropriate to his Maiden's portfolio, and is marked with the caste mark of his patroness upon his brow. At the lowest levels of anima pool use, these caste marks glitter. However, it takes a greater expenditure of the anima pool to cause their animas to manifest fully. When they do, they appear as brilliant coronas of their patron Maiden's color, lacking the iconic imagery common to the other Celestial Exalted.

*Celestial Sense:* All Sidereals can attune their animas to the emanations of Heaven for one mote, enabling them to sense gateways to Heaven within a distance of (the character's permanent Essence x 100) feet. This does not reveal the location of the gateway to the Sidereal, only its general presence. Nor does this allow the Sidereal to automatically access the gateway. She must still use the normal Charms, spells or abilities that allow her to use the gateway.

**Chosen of Journeys:** The Chosen of Mercury, the Maiden of Journeys are the travelers of the Sidereals. Often employed as messengers or scouts, the duties of Heaven's Messengers involve travel. The Chosen of the Maiden of Journeys can make the Lesser Sign of Mercury at a cost of 10 motes. For the rest of the scene, the Chosen of Journeys and all her allies within (Essence x 10) yards triple their running speeds. This applies not just to people but to horses and other steeds whose feet touch the ground as they travel. If the Sidereal's anima is manifested (in the 11–15 mote range), activating this effect costs only five motes. If the Sidereal's anima is fully manifested (in the 16+ mote range), the Lesser Sign of Mercury may be activated with a simple gesture and one mote.

**Chosen of Serenity:** The Chosen of Venus, the Maiden of Serenity, are the nurturers and lovers of the Sidereals. Often employed as diplomats and provisioners, the duties of Heaven's Courtesans involve beauty, love, fertility and prosperity. The Chosen of the Maiden of Serenity can make the Lesser Sign of Venus at a cost of 10 motes. For the rest of the scene, the Chosen of Serenity and all her allies within (Essence x 10) yards add a number of automatic successes equal to the Sidereal's permanent Essence to any Performance rolls made. If the Sidereal's anima is manifested (in the 11–15 mote range), activating this effect costs only five motes. If the Sidereal's anima is fully manifested (in the 16+ mote range), the Lesser Sign of Venus may be activated with a simple gesture and one mote.

**Chosen of Battles:** The Chosen of Mars, the Maiden of Battle, are the generals and warriors of the Sidereals. Often employed as strategists and champions, the duties of Heaven's Soldiers involve battle, protection and conflict. The Chosen of the Maiden of Battles can make the Lesser Sign of Mars at a cost of 10 motes. For the rest of the scene, the Chosen of Battles and all his allies within (the Sidereal's permanent Essence x 10) yards reduce the damage of all blows striking them by one health level, applied after the damage is rolled. This effect cannot reduce an attack's damage to less than one health level. If the Sidereal's anima is manifested (in the 11–15 mote range), activating this effect costs only five motes. If the Sidereal's anima is fully manifested (in the 16+ mote range), the Lesser Sign of Mars may be activated with a simple gesture and one mote.

**Chosen of Secrets:** The Chosen of Jupiter, the Maiden of Secrets, are the spymasters and lorekeepers of the Sidereals. Often employed as stalkers and scholars, the duties of Heaven's Eyes involve the ferreting out of information and the application of secrets and knowledge. The Chosen of the Maiden of Secrets can make the Lesser Sign of Jupiter at a cost of 10 motes. For the rest of the scene, the Sidereal and her allies within (Essence x 10) yards are immune to mind-reading and mental attacks from opponents with an Essence less than the Sidereal's own. Against mental attacks from opponents of equal or greater Essence, the Sidereal and her allies still add her Essence to their Mental DVs. If the Sidereal's anima is manifested (in the 11–15 mote range), activating this costs only five motes. If the Sidereal's anima is fully manifested (in the 16+ mote range), the Lesser Sign of Jupiter may be activated with a simple gesture and one mote.

**Chosen of Endings:** The Chosen of Saturn, the Maiden of Endings, are the assassins and the task-finishers of the Sidereals. Often employed as diplomats, martial artists and peacemakers, the duties of Heaven's Gardeners involves bringing an end to things, be they wars, institutions, individual lives or simply peace. The Chosen of the Maiden of Endings can make the Lesser Sign of Saturn at a cost of 10 motes. For the rest of the scene, any blows that the Chosen of Endings and all her allies within (Essence x 10) yards strike increase in damage by one health level, applied

after damage is rolled. This cannot augment a damage roll that results in no successes. If the Sidereal's anima is manifested (in the 11–15 mote range), activating this effect costs only five motes. If the Sidereal's anima is fully manifested (in the 16+ mote range), the Lesser Sign of Saturn may be activated with a simple gesture and one mote.

### Sidereal Charms

Sidereal Charms are manifestations of the Chosen of the Maidens' close sympathy with both Heaven and the Loom of Fate. Many Charms involve interaction of some kind with spirits and gods or draw upon a Sidereal's responsibility and duty as a servant of Heaven. Others draw upon the Sidereal connection with the Loom, granting either incredible luck and fortune or the ability to reweave the Tapestry of Creation in some small but meaningful way, such as transforming arrows into other materials.

**The First Excellency, Essence Overwhelming:** Sidereal Essence Overwhelming is somewhat limited, for it is not the Sidereal's personal prowess but his spiritual destiny that determines his manifestation of the First Excellency. For every mote spent, the Sidereal may add one die to the Ability for which this Excellency was purchased, to a maximum of the Sidereal's Essence in dice. However, should the Sidereal have any dice penalties to this roll, he may also spend Essence to negate those dice penalties to 0 before adding up to his Essence in dice to a single roll.

**The Second Excellency, Essence Triumphant:** Sidereal Essence Triumphant is limited as well, for the Chosen of the Maidens have difficulty forcing raw Essence through the disciplines of the Second Excellency. For every two motes spent, the Sidereal may purchase one success on a roll involving the Ability for which this Excellency was purchased, to a maximum of the Sidereal's Essence in successes.

**The Third Excellency, Essence Resurgent:** Sidereal Essence Resurgent, on the other hand, is a Sidereal specialty, for failure is rarely the destiny of the Chosen of the Maidens. For three motes, a Sidereal's player may reroll any roll involving the Ability for which this Excellency was purchased.

**Ox-Body Technique:** Each time this Charm is purchased, the Sidereal gains a single -0 health level.

### The Fateful Excellency, Essence Auspicious

An Excellency unique to the Chosen of the Maidens is the Fateful Excellency, Essence Auspicious. For every mote of Essence spent, the Sidereal may reduce the target number of any roll involving the Ability for which this Excellency was purchased, to a minimum of 4.

However, should the Sidereal so desire, he may invest in what is referred to as an "auspicious success." By spending enough Essence to drop the target number down to 3 and then spending one Willpower point, every die in the dice pool so altered is considered a success.

When Essence Auspicious is used to purchase an auspicious success on a defensive Ability, the character's current DV rating simply doubles against the attack Essence Auspicious is using to defend against.

### Arcane Fate

Part of Sidereal nature is the fact that they are set outside of the normal flow of Creation's understanding. As a result, it can be very difficult for those within Creation to remember that a Sidereal exists at all. Only a Sidereal's acquaintances, familiars, fellow Sidereals and a select few others are immune to this effect, as are creatures outside of fate.

The roll to remember the Sidereal is a (Wits + Occult) roll, at a -3 penalty. This check is made at the following intervals after leaving the presence of the Sidereal: one action, one minute, one hour, one day, one week, one month, one season and one year (as well as once each year after that). Failure on any of these rolls indicates that the character has forgotten about the Sidereal, though those with an Essence of 3 or more will likely remember events vaguely. (Not enough to identify the character again in the future, of course.)

The aforementioned -3 penalty applies to all rolls involving the discovery of the Sidereal once the Sidereal is no longer in the area, from Bureaucracy rolls to find out more about the Sidereal to Survival rolls made to track her. The Loom of Fate's threads shift slightly to remove traces of a Sidereal's passage.

For this reason, many Sidereals use what is referred to as a resplendent destiny, a whole new persona woven into the stars by a Sidereal. Though the details for such are beyond the scope of this description, suffice it to say that Sidereals can craft nearly perfect disguises, for they do not rely on simple makeup and acting to portray these personae. Rather, they write entirely new destinies into the stars and then step into those destinies as a lesser man might simply don a robe.

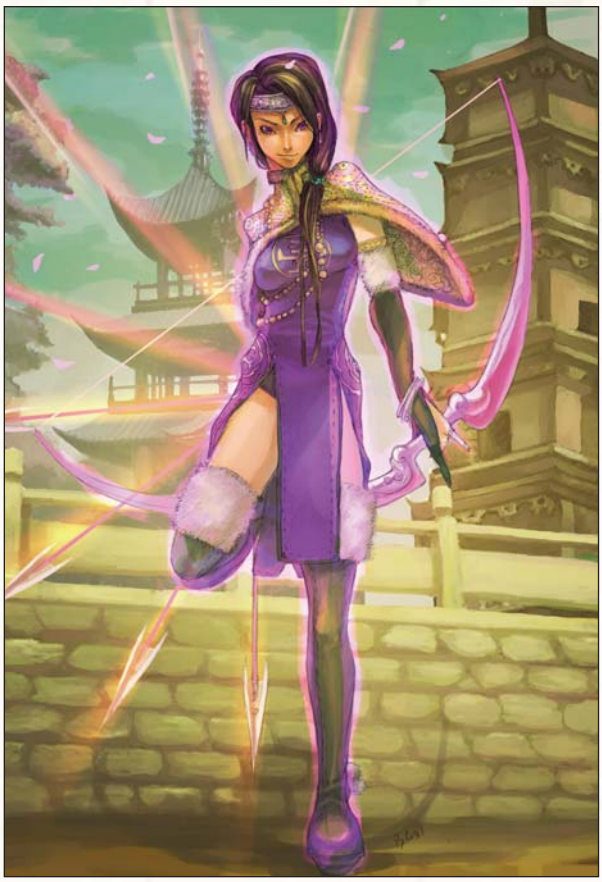
### Ahn-Aru, Bronze Faction Functionary

The young woman named Ahn-Aru, or Sad Ivory, was born in the Eastern Threshold in the chaos following the Empress's ascension to the Imperial Manse. She was taken by the Bronze Faction almost before her Exaltation, and she spent her entire early Exalted existence immersing herself in the teachings and lore of the Immaculate Order—so much so that she has lost those discerning traits that might have once betrayed her Haltan heritage. As one Chosen by the Maiden of Endings, she was trained as an assassin and executioner first and an administrator second.

This temperament suited her well for her eventual posting as the Sidereal agent in the Scavenger Lands, just as her elders knew it would. Though her official duty in the Division of Endings was that of "Righteous and Fateful Ender of Royal Lines in the River Province," she was charged with observing events and manipulating local politics. It also fell to her to carry out the Solar Purge against any newly reborn Solars and to otherwise act as the Bronze Faction's agent in violent matters.

Ahn-Aru has a number of securely warded apartments and towers spread throughout the Scavenger Lands. Protected by bound demons and hidden from sight by powerful astrological effects, these sanctums serve as bolt holes and magical workrooms. She is forever on the move and rarely lingers in one abode for more than 10 days. She also maintains a Celestial Manse in Yu-Shan in accordance with her position and degree of seniority in the Ministry of Endings. She rarely has the opportunity to visit it for more than a few days every year or so, though.

Though she has a soft, almost restless demeanor, Sad Ivory is an isolated warrior-scholar who carries out her job with ruth-



less efficiency. Yet, her heart longs for the companionship of her peers, and she holds a position that makes the company of her fellow Exalted a rare thing. Sad Ivory has never really lived outside her faction and is strongly committed to its ideals. She exists in a world where the Great Prophecy and her views on it are a matter of religious faith. Her commitment to the Bronze Faction is near-absolute, and she recently killed a Gold Faction Sidereal during a Wyld Hunt—rare bloodshed indeed—which has left her somewhat shaken, though she refuses to show this outwardly.

**Caste:** Endings

**Anima Banner:** Like all Sidereals, Sad Ivory does not have an iconic manifestation of her anima. At its brightest, it is merely a burning halo of luminous violet.

**Attributes:** Strength 4, Dexterity 4, Stamina 4; Charisma 4, Manipulation 3, Appearance 4; Perception 4, Intelligence 5, Wits 4

**Virtues:** Compassion 3, Conviction 5, Temperance 3, Valor 4

**Abilities:** Archery 4 (Surprise Shots +2), Athletics 2, Awareness 5, Bureaucracy 4 (Riverlands Governments +2), Craft (Fate) 5, Dodge 5 (Other Exalts +3), Integrity 4, Investigation 2, Linguistics (Native: Forest-Tongue; Others: High Realm, Old Realm, Riverspeak) 3, Lore 5, Martial Arts 5 (One-on-One +3), Medicine 3 (Poison +2), Melee 4, Occult 4 (Demonology +2), Performance 3, Presence 3 (Intimidation +1, Blackmail Targets +2), Resistance 4, Ride 5 (Moving Quickly +2), Stealth 5, Socialize 4 (Threshold Politics +2), Survival 4 (Finding Bolt Holes +1, When Alone +2), War 3

**Backgrounds:** Allies 5, Backing 3, Celestial Manse 1, Connections 4, Salary 4, Sifu 5

**Charms:** At a cost of 10 motes, Sad Ivory can make the Lesser Sign of Saturn, increasing the damage done by her and her allies by one health level for a scene. Ahn-Aru is a disciple of the Violet Bier of Sorrows martial-arts style, which makes use of knives, swords, staves and seven-section staves (and their Exalted equivalents) and forbids the use of armor entirely. This style has a number of benefits, including the doubling of Ahn-Aru's Join Battle dice pool when she engages in combat with her Martial Arts; a scene-length dice-adder of two motes per die (to a maximum of Ahn-Aru's [Dexterity + Martial Arts], rather than the normal Sidereal limits); a permanent Charm that permits an Essence roll, regaining two motes per success; a scene-long Form-style Charm that costs six motes to activate and causes all Martial Arts attacks to also inflict a point of Virtue damage (healing at a rate of one dot per day), plus making her minimum Martial Arts attack damage equal to her Martial Arts, rather than her Essence, after soak.

Sad Ivory is also skilled in the upper disciplines of this martial art, having mastered Charms that permit her to reduce the damage inflicted by an attack that overcame her Parry DV by one health level per two motes; a Charm that permits her to increase her Martial Arts damage by one health level per two motes; plus a Charm that allows her to make additional Martial Arts attacks, to a maximum of her Martial Arts score in attacks. (Her normal attack in an action is included in this total.) She has yet to master the ultimate Charm of the style, but she is certainly close to doing so.

Ahn-Aru also has an extra-action Archery Charm that allows her to make up to her Essence in additional Archery attacks, by spending three motes per extra arrow, rolling only once, ignoring up to 50 percent cover and applying the damage from each arrow individually. She also possesses a perfect Dodge defense, activated by spending 10 motes and rolling (Dexterity + Dodge), with a difficulty of (the attacker's Essence, or 1 against environmental effects). Success grants her a perfect defense, and failure simply adds her successes on the roll to her DV against that attack.

Sad Ivory has Resistance Charms that allow her to spend five motes to increase her bashing, lethal and aggravated soaks by her Essence, as well as forcing those with a Compassion lower than her Essence to spend one Willpower to attack her. She also has a Charm that effectively renders her immune to the damaging effects of both fire and water, or forces a spirit of fire or water to protect something, by spending five motes, one Willpower and one health level. She possesses a Survival Charm that allows her to worsen or improve the weather by her spending 10 motes and the Storyteller rolling (Stamina + Survival) with the successes equaling the difficulty to survive the new weather pattern.

Finally, she possesses Essence Overwhelming Charms for Archery, Dodge and Martial Arts; Essence Triumphant Charms for Resistance and Survival; Essence Resurgent Charms for Performance and Presence; and Essence Auspicious Charms for Archery, Craft, Dodge, Martial Arts and Melee.

**Join Battle:** 9

**Attacks:**

Punch: Speed 5, Accuracy 9, Damage 4B, Defense 10, Rate 3
Kick: Speed 5, Accuracy 8, Damage 7B, Defense 6, Rate 2
Clinch: Speed 6, Accuracy 8, Damage 4B, Defense –, Rate 1

Slashing Sword: Speed 4, Accuracy 10, Damage 7L, Defense 9, Rate 3
Starmetal Long Powerbow (Bone Rain): Speed 6, Accuracy 10, Damage 13L*, Range 350, Rate 3
* Uses frog-crotch arrows. Doubles soak of armor.
**Soak:** 2L/4B (6L/8B with Resistance Charm activated for five motes)
**Health Levels:** -0/-1/-1/-2/-2/-4/Incap
**Dodge DV:** 7 (8 vs. other Exalts) **Willpower:** 9
**Essence:** 4
**Personal Essence:** 17 **Peripheral Essence:** 60
**Committed Essence:** 6
**Other Notes:** Ahn-Aru tends to carry little in the way of artifacts and hearthstones, other than her starmetal long powerbow, Bone Rain, set with the hearthstone to her Celestial Manse, which permits her the ability to see perfectly in any lighting conditions.

## Abyssal Exalted

Anyone who lives within a month's travel of a shadowland or in a place where the ancestor cults hold prominence knows of the deathknights. Standing astride the line of life and death, deathknights are powerful warriors and necromancer-savants empowered by the forces of the Underworld. Clad in mail forged from souls, with an army of the dead and the half-living at their backs, these beings are enlightened in the ways of death. Some of them are wicked champions of murder, while others are ghost-cult saints championing forgotten ancestors.

But all of this is common knowledge, what the initiate of a ghost-cult or the farmer who has lived all his life three valleys from a shadowlands might know. In truth, these puissant beings are Exalts as well, though the nature of their Black Exaltation is a mystery even to those who have experience with them. In all of Creation, these things are an enigma, emerging from the chill of the Underworld to work the desires of the dead upon the lands of the living.

### The Black Exaltation

Abyssals are Exalted by a Deathlord, one of the mighty feudal lords of the lands of the dead. Those who will become Abyssals are chosen by a Deathlord at the moment of death, when they are neither truly living nor deceased, but instead suspended on the razor's edge between them. Those who accept the offer and swear fealty to the Deathlord undergo the Black Miracle of Abyssal Exaltation. Those who refuse are allowed to complete the transition, though most who do so are almost guaranteed to become ghosts (a state that some claim is inflicted by the Deathlord to allow the chosen one to regret his refusal until he is claimed by Oblivion).

Though the Abyssal Exalted nominally serve these god-like ghosts, each Deathlord has a different idea of what the term "service" means. Some, such as the Bodhisattva Anointed by Dark Water, take a more direct hand in the workings of their vassals. Others, such as the Lover Clad in the Raiment of Tears, Exalt their champions because they are already walking the paths that will lead them to serve the Deathlords' ends. They simply give them the power to serve more efficiently, leaving them to their own goals and purposes.

Just as each Deathlord defines the duties of its deathknights differently, so too does each deathknight determine how he will best serve. Some gratefully strip away the burden of mortal morality, embracing a disdain for life and the mores of humanity. Others reconcile their new duties with their old virtues, finding deeper meaning to their lives as walkers with the dead.

## Knights of the Dead

Perhaps the most common conception of the Abyssal Exalt is as a warrior clad in soulsteel armor, a knight in the service of a Deathlord. Indeed, this is the reason most Abyssals are also known as "deathknights." This is the case with good reason, of course, as Creation is a dangerous place, and many of the goals of the Deathlords invariably bring the Abyssal Exalted into conflict of some kind. Therefore, many Abyssals are well acquainted in violence, either as murderers or as warriors.

Some deathknights are bringers of carnage, reveling in the act of killing and the moment of death that they themselves have escaped for a time. Others are honorable warriors, champions of the dead and those who properly revere their ancestors, despite the dangers of being accused as a heretic in the Immaculate Order-dominated lands of the living.

## Deathly Saints

The ancestor cults constitute perhaps the most ubiquitous way in which the lands of the dead regularly interact with the average mortal. As such, it is little surprise that many Abyssals have some kind of influence with them. In fact, many of those who receive the Black Exaltation came to the notice of the Deathlords through their involvement with one ancestor cult or another.

Some deathknights continue their participation in the cults out of genuine faith, for Abyssal Exalts are in a particularly good situation to know the plight of ghosts in the Underworld and their reliance upon the prayers and sacrifices of the living for their continued welfare. Others simply use the cults as an easy source for income, slaves or Essence, seeing the ghosts on one side of the cult just as they see the mortals on the other side of it: as chattel, to be used for their ends and the ends of their Deathlords.

## Cultists of the Void

When some Abyssals are Exalted, they are taken to the view the Mouth of the Void, deep in the pits of the Underworld. Some of the deathknights are so moved by this experience of staring into the very face of the End of Everything that they are shaken to the core. They cling to that most human of emotions to protect their souls from the gaze of the Void: faith. To be sure, those who give their faith to Oblivion are wretched and terrible creatures, intent on feeding the Void that they revere. The sight of Creation angers them, for what exists must be unmade that the hunger of the Void be satiated.

Whether these servants of the Abyss are wicked destroyers given a purpose for their violent urges, cold murderers of men and ghosts alike or gentle madmen who wish only to assuage the suffering of all things in Creation and the Underworld, these deathknights are unsettling to most who know them. Indeed, some Deathlords even find these beings troublesome, for these deathknights are the most given to disobedience, especially when they find the goals of their overlords to be too worldly to move forward the destruction all that is.

## Necromancers

Some Abyssals are simply necromancers—that is, occultists who specialize in dealing with the dead. They attribute no great spiritual relevance to what they do. Indeed, some who were necromancers in life claim that their Exaltation was the natural progression of their increasing knowledge of necromancy, as delivered through the agency of a Deathlord.

Necromancers are common in Creation, for they find their skills in need any time the living wish to consult with the spirits of their ancestors or when the hungry dead must be warded away or destroyed outright. Abyssal Exalts are absolutely the most skilled necromancers in all of Creation, near-instantaneously performing occult operations that take their mortal peers days of painstaking effort.

## Names

Much is given to those who undergo the Black Exaltation—power, responsibility and freedom from age and natural death. But there are some things that an Abyssal Exalt loses. Among these is the mortal name by which she was known.

The Deathlord who Exalts the deathknight gives her a title instead. These are usually baroque descriptions of the deathknight's personality or intended purpose in the destruction of Creation. Often, these titles hint at the Abyssal's old name, meaning to reflect the change that she has undergone, so that Mountain Rose may become known as the Beloved of Windswept Ash and Thorns (especially if Mountain Rose nearly died in a fire).

## Anima and Essence

Abyssal Essence is a black thing that corrupts those it Exalts. Though they are certainly still the same people they once were, their understanding of the line between death and life heightens. For some, this means they become more disdainful of the living, now that death holds little mystery; for others, life becomes more precious now that they understand how fleeting and fragile it is. The Personal Essence of an Abyssal Exalt equals ([Essence x 3] + Willpower), and the Peripheral Essence of the Abyssal Exalt is ([Permanent Essence x 7] + Willpower + [the sum of Virtues]).

There are five castes of Abyssal Exalted, each one seemingly a dark reflection of the Solar castes. Even their anima manifestations are wicked parodies of Solar animas. At the lowest levels of Essence use, their caste marks appear as slight bruises on their foreheads, hardly enough to see them by, until they break open upon the skin (bleeding through anything that is used to cover them).

### Abyssal Anima Manifestation

| Essence Used | Manifestation |
|---|---|
| 1–3 | The character's caste mark appears as a bruise or black mark upon the forehead; a (Perception + Awareness) roll, difficulty 1, is necessary to spot it. |
| 4–7 | The character's caste mark splits open and bleeds, soaking the mark through anything placed over it. |
| 8–10 | The character is surrounded by a dark aura that makes other things bright by comparison, actually brightening other things enough to read by. The caste mark manifests as a bleeding wound upon the forehead. Stealth is impossible. |
| 11–15 | The character is engulfed in a chilling bonfire of black Essence, which radiates from her feet to at least a foot above her head. Objects that come in contact with the anima might begin to decay, and the character is visible for miles. The caste mark bleeds and burns with a blue, white, black or red radiance. |
| 16+ | The character is surmounted to a ghostly image totemic to his anima and personality. Blood pours from the caste mark, which appears as a portal to the ultimate Void, and may cause derangements in mortals who peer into it for too long. This effect fades on any action in which the character does not spend Essence, but it leaps back into existence if the character uses any Essence from his Peripheral Essence pool. |

When their animas reach full manifestation, they fill an area with pitch blackness. This isn't a blinding manifestation, however. In many ways, it is strangely as "bright" as that of the Solars, save that it is so black within the manifestation that everything within seems brighter in comparison to that utter darkness. Things left to the manifestation of these animas for too long do not become bleached, but instead, begin to rot and decay, being covered in a fine tomb dust or ash as though from a crematorium.

Iconic Abyssal animas are terrible, totemic symbols of death, sickness and necromantic principles, manifesting as horrible predatory, diseased or undead animals. Others appear as whirling clouds of ash, blood or bone, or as symbols of death.

*Death Sense:* All deathknights can attune their animas to emanations of the Underworld for one mote, enabling them to sense nearby shadowlands, as well as ghosts and the walking dead. At a distance of (Essence x 100) yards, an Abyssal will recognize the presence of shadowlands, ghosts and creatures of the Underworld. This sense does not reveal the location of the Underworld emanations to the deathknight, only their general presence. The sense lasts until the end of the scene.

**Dusk Caste:** Dusk Caste Abyssals are bringers of war and violence, achieving their ends through martial prowess, whether their own or that of their troops. By expending 10 motes of Essence, the Dusk Caste flares his anima, instilling fear in those who see the battlesome deathknight. A Dusk Caste gains a +2 to his Defense Value against those who have a Valor equal to or lower than his Essence. In addition, players of mortals must also make Valor rolls for their characters when they are facing one of the Dusk Caste. Mortals (and normal animals) that fail flee in terror of the dreadful apparition that confronts them. Golems, automata, the walking dead and other creatures that do not know fear cannot be affected by this anima power. This effect comes into play automatically once the Abyssal spends 11–15 motes of Peripheral Essence.

**Midnight Caste:** The Midnight Caste embody the whispers in the deepest night and act as conduits between lesser and greater powers—be that between the Deathlords and the rest of the Underworld, between the Underworld and Creation or even between the powers of the Void and everything else. Midnight Caste animas are the very power of the Void made manifest, instilling power into corpses and the shambling dead. Anytime her anima is flared (whether done deliberately for five motes of Essence or through the expenditure of 11–15 motes from her Peripheral Essence pool), a Midnight Caste grants undead within it a +1 to damage rolls against the living. Additionally, the Midnight Caste can animate any single corpse within (Essence x 10) yards by taking an action to do so and expending five motes.

**Daybreak Caste:** The Daybreak Caste are keepers of terrible lore and knowledge, using their mastery of necromancy to discover things men thought forgotten—and using them to their own ends. Daybreak Caste animas bolster up the keepers of lore, turning aside weapons and burning away poisons. At any point before damage is actually applied to the Daybreak's health levels, he may spend five motes, flaring his anima to protect him. Doing so subtracts a number of damage levels from the attack equal to the Daybreak's Essence rating. This effect comes into play automatically once the Abyssal spends 11–15 motes of Peripheral Essence.

**Day Caste:** Shadows are cast the darkest during the brightest day, and it is within these shadows that the Day Caste Abyssals are most at home. Acting as the servants and assassins of the Underworld when Creation believes it is safe, these deathknights wield terror and stealth as dual weapons. Day Caste animas are things of subtlety and concealment. For a cost of one mote, a Day Caste may prevent Essence spent from his Peripheral Essence pool from causing an anima manifestation when spending such motes on Charms that are not considered Obvious. This power may be used to mute the anima when using Obvious Charms as well, but the cost increases to double the cost of the Charm. Additionally, the anima of a Day Caste can blur and muffle the senses of those around him by spending 10 motes. For the remainder of the scene, the difficulty to detect or track the deathknight increases by half his Essence (round up). Once the deathknight spends 11-15 motes of Essence, though he is just as obvious as any other Exalt, his features are completely obscured by his anima display. Thus, assuming none saw him prior to his anima flaring, witnesses would be aware an Abyssal had been in their midst, but not his identity.

**Moonshadow Caste:** Moonshadow Caste Exalts are the cunning diplomats and emissaries of the Deathlords, speaking on behalf of the Underworld. Many Moonshadows demonstrate mastery of the powers of ghosts. The anima of the Moonshadow Caste binds the parties of an agreement, sanctifying agreements by touching the hands of those who are party to the agreement and spending 10 motes and a point of Willpower. Those who break such a sanctified oath suffer a number of terrible botches equal to the Moonshadow's Essence when the oath was sanctified. These botches invariably happen at the worst time. This sanctification may be invoked without cost once the Abyssal spends 11–15 motes of Peripheral Essence.

Additionally, Moonshadows are skilled generalists, capable of learning the Charms of other types of Exalted, or even of spirits or the Fair Folk. These Charms cost double the normal experience to learn Charms of Favored Abilities and cost an additional two motes to use.

## Abyssal Charms

Abyssal Charms have a number of traits that set them apart from the Charms that other Exalted use. Most Abyssal Charms are very visceral in manifestation, from chains of blood that burst from the body of the deathknight to the ability to throw slivers of the Abyssal's own finger bones. Many of the Charms wielded by deathknights are very similar to those of Solars—in fact, disturbingly so. Many Solar Charms have an Abyssal analog.

However, deathknights wield other Charms that are unique to them. Many of such Charms are referred to as "entropic," as they erode an opponent's ability to perform a task rather than necessarily increasing the deathknight's ability. When Comboed with their Charms that are similar to Solar Charms, deathknights wield terrible powers, indeed, capable of both hindering their foes and improving their own Abilities simultaneously.

**Excellencies:** Excellencies for Abyssals work the same way they do for Solar Exalts. They have the same limits on how many dice can be gained from any single application of an Excellency.

**Ox-Body Technique:** The Abyssal Ox-Body Technique is identical in execution to that of the Solars. Each time it is purchased, the Abyssal may choose to gain a single -0 health level, two -1 health levels or a -1 and two -2 health levels.

## The Harbinger of the Ghost-Cold Wind, White Walker of the North

Perhaps one of the best-known examples of these ancestor cult champions is known as the White Walker—an albino, ghostly seeming being clad all in funereal white—who is known throughout the North. It is said when the White Walker knocks on your door, it is best to let him in, for he bears a message from one of your dead ancestors who is now living in poverty in the Underworld while you enjoy the fruits of that ancestor's hard work in life. The White Walker is said to be a very compassionate being, but only toward ghosts, for he finds it to be a universal injustice that one lives in Creation for only a short span of years, but a ghost may remain in the Underworld for much longer than that, dependent on the memories and sacrifices of the living to assure her prosperity in the lands of the dead.

The White Walker is a deathknight of the Moonshadow Caste, properly titled the Harbinger of the Ghost-Cold Wind, with little patience for the idle rich who do not properly venerate

their ancestors. More than once, he has slaughtered entire families for refusing to properly render sacrifices to their ancestors, but not before utilizing his necromancy to make sure that they rise as ghosts in the Underworld—a fitting form of vengeance in his mind. The Immaculate Order in the North has orders to destroy him where he is seen, but he has demonstrated a mastery of the Hungry Ghost martial arts that few young Immaculates can stand against. The time may be coming when the Cloister of Wisdom is forced to dispatch one of its true luminaries to deal with this dangerous heretic.

**Caste:** Moonshadow

**Anima Banner:** A whirling blizzard in which spectres and shrieking wraiths whip past on the ice-razored winds

**Attributes:** Strength 3, Dexterity 5, Stamina 3; Charisma 4, Manipulation 2, Appearance 2; Perception 4, Intelligence 3, Wits 3

**Virtues:** Compassion 4, Conviction 3, Temperance 2, Valor 2

**Abilities:** Athletics 3, Awareness 2, Bureaucracy 1, Dodge 5 (Multiple Opponents +3), Integrity 3, Investigation 2, Linguistics (Native: Skytongue; Others: Low Realm, Old Realm, Seatongue) 3, Lore 4, Martial Arts 5 (Razor Claws +2), Melee 2, Occult 4, Performance 3 (Ancestor Cult Prayers +2), Presence 3, Resistance 4, Stealth 4, Survival 4

**Charms:** The White Walker is highly skilled in the Hungry Ghost martial art style, which disallows all armor and uses tiger claws and razor claws as a Martial Arts weapons. He is capable of seeing flows of Essence in other beings to judge their power (six motes) and, once he has done so, he can spend a point of Willpower as a reflexive action to regain Essence when opponents use Charms (to a maximum of the motes spent). He can also smother Charms by spending motes to increase the cost of the activated Charm, forcing his opponent to match the additional Essence expenditure or lose the Charm.

The Harbinger of the Ghost-Cold Wind is also able to halve the DV of an opponent against a single attack (three motes), and the Form-type Charm allows him to inflict lethal damage with bare-handed attacks, to regain one mote per health level of damage he inflicts with Martial Arts attacks or to spend three motes to strike dematerialized spirits (five motes to activate

the form). Additionally, for every mote of Essence he spends, he may reduce his opponent's soak by 2L. He may also gain a number of additional actions equal to his permanent Essence (five motes, one Willpower) or rush forward, dematerializing and reappearing behind an opponent to execute an attack, striking her from behind (four motes).

He has the Abyssal equivalent of all the Solar Dodge Charms, which cause him to become partially ghostly. When using the Seven Shadow Evasion equivalent, he actually teleports a number of meters away equal to his Essence, dispersing and reforming as a ghost might. He also has a Resistance Charm that allows him to gain +1 bashing soak for every two motes spent (to a maximum of his Stamina + Resistance), gaining half that amount as a bonus to his lethal soak. He also has the Abyssal equivalent of Graceful Crane Stance.

Additionally, the Abyssal has some knowledge of necromancy, as well as Charms that allow him to move without being seen and to survive both the wilderness and the Underworld. He is capable of performing spells that allow him to brand a living being so that, when she dies, she is assured of becoming a ghost (15 motes) or that let him rip a portal into the Underworld (10 motes). He has the Abyssal equivalent of Hardship Surviving Mendicant Spirit, as well as the ability to add his Essence as automatic successes to Survival checks to navigate the Labyrinth.

The White Walker possesses Essence Overwhelming for Dodge, Martial Arts and Occult; Essence Triumphant for Martial Arts and Resistance; and Essence Resurgent for Dodge, Occult and Survival. He also possesses the Abyssal equivalent of Dodge Essence Flow. Finally, the White Walker has purchased Ox-Body Technique twice and also has a Charm called Essence Engorgement Technique that allows him to bloat his Peripheral Essence pool with up to 10 motes of stolen Essence, taken either from drinking the blood of the living or by harvesting that stolen through Charms and soulsteel weapons.

**Join Battle:** 5

**Attacks:**

Punch: Speed 5, Accuracy 11, Damage 3L, Defense 12, Rate 3

Kick: Speed 5, Accuracy 10, Damage 6L, Defense 8, Rate 2

Clinch: Speed 6, Accuracy 10, Damage 3B, Defense –, Rate 1

Soulsteel Razor Claws: Speed 5, Accuracy 18, Damage 8L, Defense 14, Rate 3

**Soak:** 1L/3B (4L/10B with Resistance Charm activated for 14 motes)

**Health Levels:** -0/-1/-1/-1/-1/-2/-2/-2/-2/-2/-2/-4/Incap

**Dodge DV:** 7 (9 vs. multiple opponents) **Willpower:** 8

**Essence:** 4

**Personal Essence:** 20 **Peripheral Essence:** 45 (57 due to Essence Engorgement Technique)

**Committed Essence:** 12

**Other Notes:** The White Walker bears a strange artifact soulsteel compass that assists him in passing through the Labyrinth (adding three successes to Survival rolls to do so), as well as a set of soulsteel hearthstone bracers set with a hearthstone that allows him to inflict lethal damage with bare-handed attacks. Additionally, the White Walker's soulsteel razor claws drain four motes of Essence from with any attack that deals at least one health level of damage.

## Solar Exalted

The Solar Exalted come from all walks of life, Chosen by the Unconquered Sun for their supernal skill or dedication. Whether a priest, prince or pauper, anyone who excels at his craft can become a Child of the Sun. The Solars of the First Age were always well equipped to judge what life is like for the average mortal, and their position in the Second Age once again offers that advantage to the common man.

Walking the world in numbers for the first time since the Usurpation, these legends incarnate are becoming something more than myth. The stories told over empty bottles and drowsing campfires no longer feature towns or cities chosen for the romance. Instead, these tales are placed over the next hilltop or in the local city—or next door.

With few exceptions, an Exalting Solar is reviled by friends and family. Most new Solars never give their society a chance to reject them, fleeing those who knew them once they realize what they have become. Whether this is to escape the unpleasant fate of being forsaken by loved ones, to avoid cursing them with the attention of the Immaculate Order or to begin plotting revenge for mistreatment differs with the individual.

Of all the returning Solars, more inhabit the fertile East than the other four corners of Creation and, of that region, more live in the Scavenger Lands than anywhere else. Simply put, there are more people in the East than in almost any other part of the world beyond the Blessed Isle, and the mortals at the seat of the Realm's power rarely Exalt. The people of the Scarlet Empire are taught from an early age that heroics are for the Dynasts. Those with the presumption to Exalt to a Celestial rank on the Blessed Isle are quickly slain by the Wyld Hunt, even in the present turmoil.

The Scavenger Lands are a popular retreat for young, confused Children of the Sun. The region has long been all but inviolate to the Realm's legions, and the constant chaos of the Hundred Kingdoms makes it a simple matter to evade notice or capture, even for a being so puissant and often flamboyant as a Solar. Even those Solars who come into their own elsewhere, on the burning sands of the South or under the shearing winds of the North, often migrate to the Scavenger Lands. (With the areas great fertility comes great diversity and, as a result, greater tolerance.) Neither the fact that the Immaculate Order has the least influence there out of the entire Threshold nor the relative abundance of Solar tombs in the region that call to the new Exalts lessens the attraction in the least.

Once the initial shock of Exaltation wears off, Solars begin to change the world. It's hardly a matter of choice. They were Exalted for their skill and their will to use it. The Solars find ways to accomplish what is commonly described as impossible. It is rare that a Solar leaves anything but a blazed trail behind her. And people flock to them. After generations in the Threshold, with little to believe in but the nearest god that claims a young boy from the village each decade in return for letting the fields grow, the people are primed to rally behind the Solars. Only the least social or the most deviously stealthy Solars can avoid gathering the seed of a new society around them.

Nothing about the Solar Exalted is slow. They have the power to make things change *now*, and they are using it. In the populous East, several of the nebulous Hundred Kingdoms have sustained coups by the Chosen of the Sun—not a few bloodless—and the nations they now rule have are invariably stronger for the change. Several Solars live in Nexus. As populous as it

is lawless, the city makes a perfect haven for the one-time rulers of Creation. Of all the East, only Lookshy remains relatively free of the Solar Exalted. The largest concentration of Dragon-Blooded outside of the Realm still remembers the days of fire and madness that ended in the Usurpation, and the rulers of the Old Realm are unwelcome there.

Already hardened to a life in the punishing deserts, Solars of the South are some of those that most often remain or become loners. Those who don't isolate themselves or emigrate to another region gather war bands or caravans to achieve their varied goals; building such things comes naturally to them. Those who prefer a city life find Gem to be a safe enough place.

In the North, Solars often end up ruling the tribes of nomads that inhabit the coldest reaches of Creation. Not only is the region mostly insulated from the Realm and the Wyld Hunt, but even the most individualistic Solar will have difficulty ridding herself of an icewalker tribe that has seen her slay a yeddim with a single blow. Solars with a greater taste for civilization gravitate toward Gethamane.

Western Solars are rare, in proportion with the population of the Western isles. Unlike the Solar Exalted of the South or North, those Solars who grow up among the seas tend to stay. Many of them quickly rise to be captains of their own vessels or admirals of their own fleets, while others step into the rulership of local islands or archipelagos. Though there aren't many Solars in the West, those there make a greater impression on the landscape—word travels fast on the ocean, and there are fewer ears for it to reach.

Despite the ease with which they acquire new talents and how greatly they impress the mortals they touch, the Solars are in danger. They threaten those few mortals who benefit from the status quo—the merchant princes, kings and corrupt lords—simply by representing something better. They threaten the Realm and the Immaculate Order, either by marshalling troops to combat the legions or by demonstrating the holes in the Immaculate doctrine. The Children of the Sun are returning, but even a mortal's arrow may slay an Exalt, and even in these troubled times, the Wyld Hunt may ride.

## Tools of Wonder

Although some Solars do not aid their endeavors with outside magic, whether by choice or by ill fortune, many supplement their already-substantial powers with artifacts. The sources of such tools vary greatly, and an artifact's strength is strongly correlated to its source.

### Ancient Tombs

The resting places of the First Age's god-kings have largely gone untouched since the last of them were built after the Usurpation. It is often from these that the Solar Exalted of the Age of Sorrows find the weapons and tools that they bear in their current incarnations. The most common artifacts recovered from obscurity are powerful weapons, ornate suits of armor and magical tools of miscellaneous use. These artifacts are often the deceased's favorite equipment, buried with him as befits his honor (if buried in the First Age) or interred with him to prevent his bloated ghost from every rising in anger (if buried during or shortly after the Usurpation). Solars buried after the Immaculate Order began its Wyld Hunt were sunken with much less circumstance: Solars of the Second Age are significantly weaker than their forebears, and their hungry ghosts are much more easily dealt with.

A daiklave or orichalcum breastplate looted from a tomb is unlikely to be a simple two-dot artifact. The Solars who commissioned these weapons—or crafted them, in some cases—did not have simplicity in mind. If that had been the case, they would have made do with straight swords and chain shirts. Instead, these god-kings possessed the most puissant arms and armor they or their artificers could produce. An artifact rescued from the obscurity of an eternal grave will typically have a Background rating of 4 or 5. A daiklave could simply be extraordinarily deadly and a breastplate supernaturally protective. Alternatively, either could have unique and exotic powers, endowing bonuses upon its wielder when she treats with spirits, summoning great thunderstorms or letting its owner see emotions in its reflection. Miscellaneous artifacts allow their bearers to take flight, to imitate other beings near-perfectly, to send others into the Underworld or to invert a Fair Folk's nature toward a new element. Even a young Solar who has successfully raided the tomb of a First Age Solar is someone to beware.

These tombs can be found anywhere in Creation. There are more in the East because more people live there and a greater number of Solars died there in the Usurpation. There are rumors that at least one Solar tomb is hidden in the deepest recesses of Sijan, but the Morticians' Order isn't speaking. In the South, a horde of tiny metal scorpions rises from the sand when anyone approaches a small pyramid buried amid the dunes. Among the islands of the West, an entire island rises from the ocean whenever someone not of the native tribe tries to approach it. Members of the tribe say that they are guardians of the sky's daughter.

### Homemade Artifacts

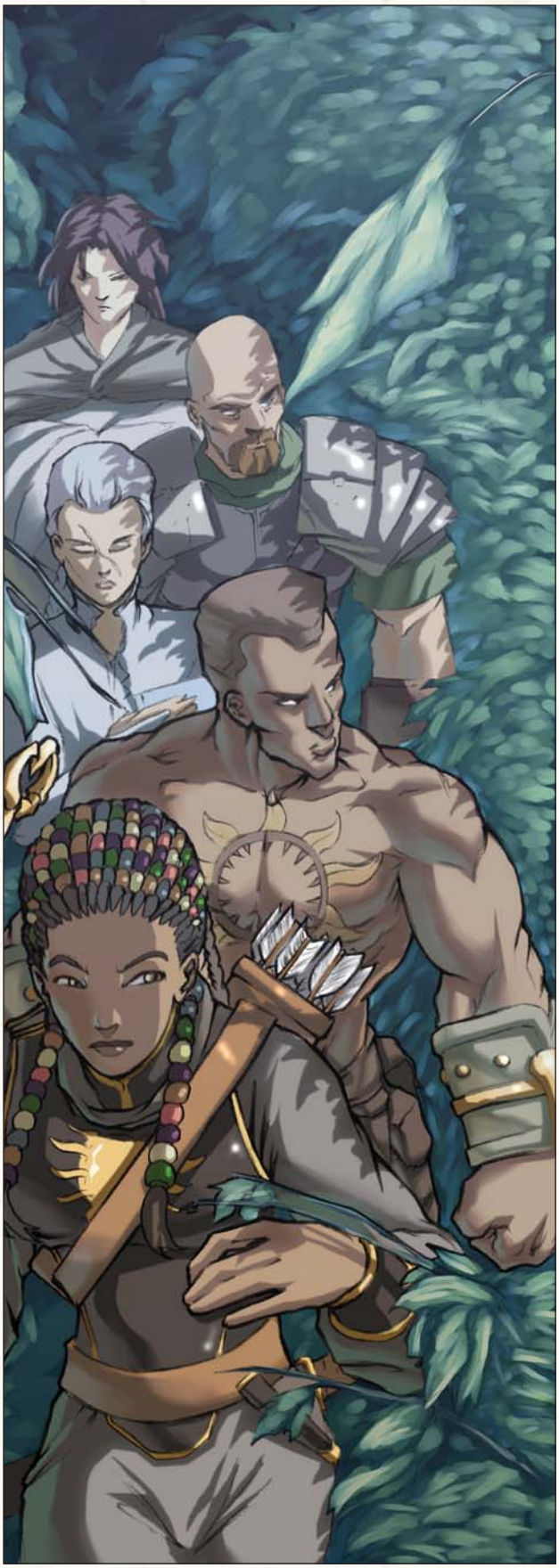
The Dragon-Blooded were very careful during the Usurpation to make Solar tombs—any they built and any they could find—difficult to access. They were not worried about the hungry ghosts they had already tried to appease. They were concerned with the Solar Exaltations, some of which would no doubt return with memory or instinct enough to seek out an artifact-laden grave. Because the Dragon-Bloods took such cautions, there are Solars in the Time of Tumult who have not been able to find powerful artifacts simply through treasure-hunting. So some, especially Twilights, choose to make their own.

With little exception, artifacts crafted in the contemporary Age are weaker than those of the First Age. Only the Sidereal and the Lunar Exalts, some of whom were alive during the height of the opulence before the Usurpation, still remember the techniques necessary to create true wonders of magic. Some few in the Underworld must also remember, because the Abyssal Exalted exhibit artifacts of great power when they venture into Creation. For the Dragon-Blooded, artifact creation is largely limited to ratings three and below. Solars who have not managed to beg such secrets from the other Exalted, recover them from vaults as well-protected as the Solar tombs or discover them anew find themselves similarly restricted.

## Companions

It is in the Solars' nature to gather coteries about them. Friends, allies, familiars and hangers-on are all a large part of the life of nearly any Solar Exalted. The most common companions for a Solar is another Solar—those who once shared circles in the First Age feel drawn to each other, as do those with other close relationships. These are the makings of circles and partnerships in the Second Age.

It is not uncommon for young Solars to seek Dragon-Blooded followers. The Terrestrial Exalted were the greatest footmen



of the Old Realm, and many reborn Solars feel subconscious urges to reclaim those who once served them. Today's Dragon-Blooded, however, have been gods among men too long to be mere aides and servants. Instead, those Dragon-Blooded open enough to accept the company of an "Anathema" become the Solars' friends, allies or lovers. The advantage of having another Exalt on his side notwithstanding, a Solar can benefit greatly from the Dragon-Blooded group-aiding Charms.

Some Solars have the fortune to befriend one of the Lunar Exalts. Perhaps they were lovers in the First Age, or rivals, or perhaps they simply met and impressed each other. Lunars who choose to companion a Solar are trustworthy and dependable—and deadly in a fight. Some Solars fall into the opposite situation: Proving himself to the Pact, the Solar is accepted as a friend of Luna. He is allowed (and often expected) to join them on raids and in celebrations, and he may call on their aid should he need it.

More common are the Solars who develop allies among the little gods and the minor spirit courts. The Celestial gods are busy in the bureaucracies of Yu-Shan, performing their duties or playing political games, but the Terrestrial gods are accessible on the face of Creation. Some of them see the return of the Solar Exalted as a long-sought blessing. These gods befriend the Solars in order to protect them from danger, to teach them the mysteries of the lost Age and to aid them in their quests. Others see them as an opportunity and join the Solars in order to use them, deviously jockeying for Celestial rank.

There are stranger companions for the Solar Exalted. In the First Age, some savants constructed artificial beings to serve the Solars. Many of these were ageless and near-indestructible, and they survive in isolation. Discovered by a Solar in the tombs or glaciers that trap them, they will gladly serve once again.

## Yurgen Kaneko, The Bull of the North

Yurgen Kaneko was a member of an icewalker tribe of the farthest North. He had been a great hunter, warrior and leader of his tribe, but now he was old. Alive beyond his time, he walked out onto the ice alone, weaponless, to find death. Instead, he found his rebirth.

A Child of the Sun, Yurgen found that his age no longer mattered. His body was strong, and his mind was sharp. His people listened when he spoke, and with his skill at war, he led them to many victories. His tribe savaged the soft men of the cities and fought off the raids of the Fair Folk and the dead. Impressed by his power, other icewalker tribes joined him. When the Wyld Hunt came, as Yurgen knew it would, he led them through the Silver Wastes and the Snow Blossom Cascades, regions that the icewalkers knew well. Weakening the Hunt with his great endurance, Yurgen assaulted the Dragon-Bloods at their moment of weakness.

That was 10 years ago. Since then, Yurgen has united nearly all of the icewalker tribes and expanded his influence greatly. Only half a year past, Yurgen met the Tepet legions on the Eastern battlefields. There, he wielded his warriors like a surgeon's knife against the legions' greater numbers. There, after months of war and blood, the legions were humbled, and Yurgen was given his title: Bull of the North.

**Caste:** Dawn

**Anima Banner:** Enormous white bull, its horns capped in gold

**Attributes:** Strength 5, Dexterity 4, Stamina 4; Charisma 4, Manipulation 2, Appearance 4; Perception 2, Intelligence 3, Wits 3

**Virtues:** Compassion 3, Conviction 3, Temperance 2, Valor 3

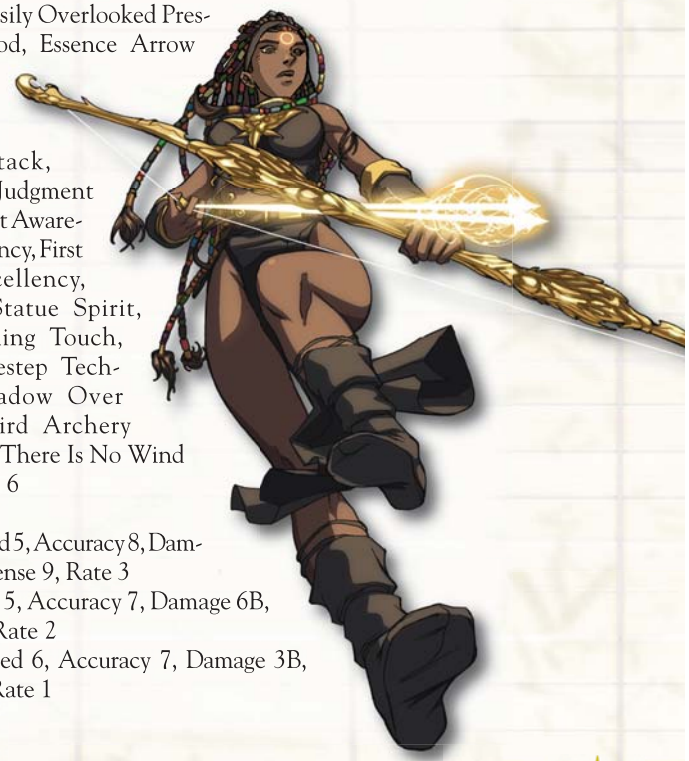
**Abilities:** Archery 5, Athletics 4, Awareness 3, Craft (Wood) 2 (Bone +1), Dodge 5, Integrity 2, Investigation 1, Linguistics (Native: Skytongue; Others: High Realm, Riverspeak) 2, Lore 3, Martial Arts 3, Medicine 2, Melee 5, Occult 1, Performance 5, Presence 3, Resistance 4, Ride 3, Socialize 1, Survival 4 (Northern Wastes +2), Thrown 1, War 5 (Icewalker Tribes +1)
**Backgrounds:** Allies 5, Artifact 2, Cult 3, Followers 5, Influence 4, Resources 5
**Charms:** Commanding the Ideal Celestial Army, Durability of Oak Meditation, Essence Arrow Attack (Dazzling Flare, Fiery Arrow Attack, Righteous Judgment Arrow), First Archery Excellency, First Dodge Excellency, Fury Inciting Presence, General of the All-Seeing Sun, Hardship-Surviving Mendicant Spirit, Mob-Dispersing Rebuke, Ox-Body Technique, Respect Commanding Attitude, Rout-Stemming Gesture, Second Survival Excellency, Second War Excellency, Shadow Over Water, Third War Excellency, Trackless Region Navigation, Trance of Unhesitating Speed, War Essence Flow
**Join Battle:** 6
**Attacks:**
Punch: Speed 5, Accuracy 8, Damage 5B, Defense 9, Rate 3
Kick: Speed 5, Accuracy 7, Damage 8B, Defense 5, Rate 2
Clinch: Speed 6, Accuracy 7, Damage 5B, Defense –, Rate 1
Jade Daiklave (Sun's Fire): Speed 4, Accuracy 12, Damage 12L, Defense 11, Rate 3
Long Bow: Speed 6, Accuracy 10, Damage 6L*, Range 200, Rate 3
* Uses broadhead arrows.
**Soak:** 6L/6B (Breastplate, 4L/2B, -1 mobility penalty)
**Health Levels:** -0/-1/-1/-1/-2/-2/-2/-2/-4/Incap
**Dodge DV:** 7/6 **Willpower:** 8
**Essence:** 4
**Personal Essence:** 20 **Peripheral Essence:** 37 (47)
**Committed Essence:** 10
**Other Notes:** Yurgen wields a red jade daiklave claimed from the Wyld Hunt that tried to kill him. He uses it as a valuable fire-starting tool as well as a weapon.

## Harmonious Jade

As a baby, Harmonious Jade was sold into slavery to the Salmalin, a cult in the South dedicated to the worship of the Yozis. Trained in the arts of assassination from the time she could walk, Jade became an accomplished killer for hire, and every murder she committed added to the coffers of the demon cult. Knowing nothing else, the assassin Jade was content doing what she was trained to do for her masters in the Salmalin, until a botched assignment led her to be Exalted by the Unconquered Sun.

Astonished by her newfound power, and unused to making decisions for herself, Harmonious Jade returned to the Salmalin for guidance. There, she was betrayed by those she'd lived, trained and worshiped with her whole life, who saw her transformation into a Sun-child as a blasphemous betrayal to their Yozi patrons. She fought her way out of the Salmalin stronghold, killing several cultists in the process.

Still unsure of what to do with her newfound power, and with no guidance forthcoming from the Unconquered Sun, Jade has continued to ply her trade as an assassin. Her services are in high demand, for there are few who can defend themselves from a Night Caste determined to bring about their deaths. However, over the course of her Exalted career, Harmonious Jade has made many enemies, from the Salmalin and their demonic patrons to the Deathlord Walker in Darkness and Nexus's Council of Entities. Unless she finds allies and direction, it seems unlikely given the strength of the enemies arrayed against her that she'll survive long enough to fulfill the purpose for which she was Exalted.
**Caste:** Night
**Anima Banner:** A shooting star; when iconic, the star appears to fire with her arrows
**Attributes:** Strength 3, Dexterity 5, Stamina 3; Charisma 2, Manipulation 2, Appearance 3; Perception 5, Intelligence 2, Wits 3
**Virtues:** Compassion 1, Conviction 3, Temperance 2, Valor 3
**Abilities:** Archery 5 (From Surprise +3), Athletics 4, Awareness 3, Dodge 4, Integrity 1, Investigation 2, Larceny 3, Linguistics (Native: Flametongue; Others: Riverspeak) 1, Lore 1 (Prehistory +1), Martial Arts 2, Melee 3, Occult 1, Resistance 2, Stealth 5, Survival 1
**Backgrounds:** Artifact 3, Manse 3, Resources 2
**Charms:** Easily Overlooked Presence Method, Essence Arrow Attack (Dazzling Flare, Fiery Arrow Attack, Righteous Judgment Arrow), First Awareness Excellency, First Dodge Excellency, Invisible Statue Spirit, Lock-Opening Touch, Reflex Sidestep Technique, Shadow Over Water, Third Archery Excellency, There Is No Wind
**Join Battle:** 6
**Attacks:**
Punch: Speed 5, Accuracy 8, Damage 3B, Defense 9, Rate 3
Kick: Speed 5, Accuracy 7, Damage 6B, Defense 5, Rate 2
Clinch: Speed 6, Accuracy 7, Damage 3B, Defense –, Rate 1



Exceptional Knife: Speed 5, Accuracy 10, Damage 6L, Defense 8, Rate 4
Orichalcum Short Powerbow (Eagle's Rain): Speed 6, Accuracy 13, Damage 8L*, Range 300, Rate 2
* Uses broadhead arrows.
**Soak:** 7L/7B (Orichalcum breastplate, 6L/4B, Hardness: 2L/2B)
**Health Levels:** -0/-0/-1/-1/-2/-2/-4/Incap
**Dodge DV:** 6 **Willpower:** 6
**Essence:** 3
**Personal Essence:** 15 **Peripheral Essence:** 32 (36)
**Committed Essence:** 4
**Other Notes:** Harmonious Jade's powerbow is set with a freedom stone (see p. 383).

# Beasts of Creation

In the eyes of the Exalted, the beasts of Creation are a bare step below mortals, and like mortals, they may be allies, enemies or sources of wealth. They are part of the warp and weft of the world, along with the flow of the tides, the burning heat of the sun; so too do the song of the wolf and the flight of the dove have their place. Omens can be read in the running of the deer or the entrails of the golden salmon, wealth can be gained in the breeding of horses, and loyalty and companionship can be found in the heart of a mongrel dog.

Some beasts are deadly enough to thwart an unprepared Exalt, while others have had their place at the side of humanity since the gods gave mortals fire. Animals serve as beasts of burden, adding their strength to their human masters. They are food and shelter. They are sources of joy. They feature in myths, legends and nightmares.

If there is one thing that Exalted and mortals have in common, it is the urge to keep pets. The poorest peasant child will have a pet rat, a favored barn cat or a wild caught crow as a friend and companion. Queens and magistrates lavish attention and favors on their lap dogs and spotted cats, some even giving the dumb beasts noble titles. Even the Abyssal Exalted may have creatures from the Underworld or shadowlands as pets, though they risk angering their Deathlord masters with such shows of affection. Loyalty between a pet and its master may transcend life itself—some ghosts in the Underworld still have their ghostly pets at their side. An Exalt may come into an empire, be queen of thousands, but the mongrel dog that followed her in the dusty years of exile, slept beside its mistress in ditches and starved as its Exalted master did will still have a favored place at her side.

In a few places, such as the Blessed Isle, there are few truly wild animals left. Most creatures, like the landscape itself, have been shaped to service. However, all throughout the Isle, the land outside of the cultivated districts has been seeded with predators by Dragon-Blooded seeking to provide themselves with sport and to control the roaming of footloose or fugitive peasants.

Abbreviation explanations for the charts on the following pages.
**S/D/S = Strength/Dexterity/Stamina**
**P/I/W/W = Perception/Intelligence/Wits/Willpower**
**Health Lvls = Health Levels**
**Atk (S/A/D/R) = Attack (Speed/Accuracy/Damage/Rate)**
**Dodge DV/S = Dodge DV/Soak**

## Austrech

The austrech is a vicious, flightless bird, found in the warm South running down wild goats, feral horses and unfortunate travelers. It hunts by leaping upon its prey and tearing at them with its heavily clawed talons and massive beak. Adults are seven feet tall and strong enough to take down a horse. They lay sand-colored eggs in dips on the ground and may attack their own young if hungry enough.

| S/D/S | P/I/W/W | Health Lvls | Atk (S/A/D/R) | Dodge DV/S |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 4/4/4 | 2/1/3/2 | 0x1/-1x2/ -2x2/-4/I | Bite: 6/6/1L/1, Kick: 5/6/3L/1 | 3/0L/4B |

**Abilities:** Athletics 4, Awareness 3, Dodge 2, Integrity 1, Investigation 1, Martial Arts 2, Presence 1, Resistance 3, Stealth 1, Survival 3

## Bear

These intelligent creatures are found across much of Creation, except for the warm South. They favor wild lands, forests and mountains, and in temperate climes, they hibernate through the winter. Fearless, strong and fast, they are dangerous if angered. Though nearsighted, their sense of smell is keen.

| S/D/S | P/I/W/W | Health Lvls | Atk (S/A/D/R) | Dodge DV/S |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 7/2/6 | 2/2/2/3 | -0x2/-1x3/ -2x2/-4/I | Bite: 4/6/8L/1, Claw: 5/5/7L/2 | 1/3L/6B |

**Abilities:** Athletics 2, Awareness 2, Dodge 1, Integrity 3, Investigation 2, Martial Arts 3, Presence 3, Resistance 3, Stealth 1, Survival 3

## Boar

Boars are wild pigs, and unlike the slow-moving farm animals, they are quick, belligerent and surprisingly dangerous. The large boars of the Northeast can grow as tall as a man's chest. They travel in small bands and are intelligent enough to work together to defend their young. Very nearsighted, they depend on their senses of smell and hearing.

| S/D/S | P/I/W/W | Health Lvls | Atk (S/A/D/R) | Dodge DV/S |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 4/2/4 | 2/1/3/3 | -0/-1x2/ -2x2/-4/I | Gore: 5/4/6L/1 | 2/2L/4B |

**Abilities:** Athletics 2, Awareness 2, Dodge 2, Integrity 2, Investigation 2, Martial Arts 3, Presence 3, Resistance 4, Stealth 1, Survival 3

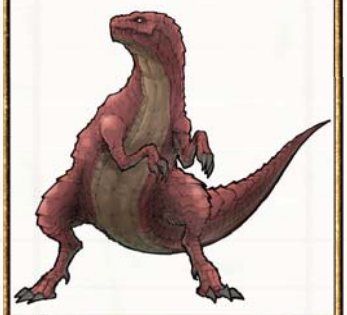
## CAMEL

These unpleasant steeds are beloved by the desert tribes of the South. They're stubborn, they're ugly, they have a habit of spitting when angry (which they usually are), and they can go for almost two weeks without food or water.

| S/D/S | P/I/W/W | Health Lvls | Atk (S/A/D/R) | Dodge DV/S |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 3/2/4 | 2/1/3/3 | -0/-1x2/ -2x2/-4/I | Bite: 5/5/1L/1, Kick: 3/5/6L/1 | 2/1L/4B |

**Abilities:** Athletics 3, Awareness 2, Dodge 2, Integrity 3, Investigation 2, Martial Arts 1, Presence 1, Resistance 3, Stealth 2, Survival 4

## CLAW STRIDER



These predators are pack hunters standing about 6 feet tall and up to 20 feet long from snout tip to tail tip. Packs hunt by running down and savaging anything that crosses their paths, and they are capable of taking down creatures such as yeddim and even tyrant lizards. Claw striders prefer open plains and savannas. Intelligent enough to be trained, these surly beasts are used by some barbarians as mounts.

| S/D/S | P/I/W/W | Health Lvls | Atk (S/A/D/R) | Dodge DV/S |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 7/4/7 | 3/1/4/7 | -0x2/-1x2/ -2x2/x2/I | Bite: 7/6/9L/2, Claw: 8/8/7L/2 | 3/5L/10B |

**Abilities:** Athletics 3 (Sprinting +1), Awareness 3 (Sharp Sight +3), Dodge 2, Integrity 2, Investigation 2, Martial Arts 3 (Bite +1, Claw +1), Presence 2 (Intimidation +2), Resistance 2, Stealth 3 (Ambush +3), Survival 3

## CORAL SNAKE

A deadly pest across much of the Eastern lands, coral snakes are small, swift and highly poisonous. All children in the East learn the rhyme "red, white, black—step on back; black, white yellow—one fine fellow" to differentiate the deadly coral snake from its nonpoisonous relatives. Assassins often keep coral snakes to milk them for their poison. Coral snake venom: (6L, 3, —/—, -5).

| S/D/S | P/I/W/W | Health Lvls | Atk (S/A/D/R) | Dodge DV/S |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1/3/1 | 2/1/2/2 | -3/I | Bite: 6/6/1L + poison/3 | 3/0L/1B |

**Abilities:** Athletics 1, Awareness 1, Dodge 4, Martial Arts 3, Presence 1 (Intimidation +3), Resistance 1, Stealth 3, Survival 2

## DOG (WAR)

Dogs are the oldest companion to humans, found in any land where people live. They serve with loyalty and devotion without any regard to class, wealth or beauty. Hundreds of breeds of dog exist, from the tiny, trembling lap pets of Chiaroscuro to the great war hounds of the Realm's legions. Dogs are sophisticated pack hunters, capable of limited strategy.

| S/D/S | P/I/W/W | Health Lvls | Atk (S/A/D/R) | Dodge DV/S |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 3/3/3 | 2/2/3/3 | -0/-1/-1/ -2/-4/I | Bite: 5/5/4L/1 | 2/0L/3B |

**Abilities:** Athletics 2, Awareness 3, Dodge 1, Integrity 1, Investigation 1, Martial Arts 1, Presence 2, Resistance 3, Stealth 1, Survival 3 (Tracking +3)

## GIANT SPIDER

Versions of this monstrous arachnid are found in forests and jungles Creation-wide, though there are two general types. The giant wolf spider hunts like a wolf, running down prey, stabbing that prey with its venomous fangs and dragging victims away to drink down their body fluids. There is also a burrowing spider that ambushes prey as they travel unknowingly near its hidden burrow entrance.

| S/D/S | P/I/W/W | Health Lvls | Atk (S/A/D/R) | Dodge DV/S |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 4/3/2 | 2/1/2/2 | -0/-1/-2/-4/I | Bite: 6/6/3L + poison (3L, 3, —/—, -3) /1 | 3/1L/2B |

**Abilities:** Athletics 3, Awareness 3, Dodge 3, Integrity 1, Investigation 1, Martial Arts 3, Presence 3, Resistance 2, Stealth 3, Survival 3

## GREAT CAT

Great cat breeds can be found everywhere in Creation, usually in deep wilderness as they do not favor civilized lands. The cats range in color and size from the knee-high spotted leopards of the Southern jungles to the huge, pale Northern sabertooth. Very quick, stealthy predators, the largest of the beasts can reach a man's shoulder in height.

| S/D/S | P/I/W/W | Health Lvls | Atk (S/A/D/R) | Dodge DV/S |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 6/3/5 | 3/1/3/5 | -0/-1x2/ -2x2/-4/I | Bite: 6/6/7L/1, Claw: 6/7/6L/2 | 3/2L/5B |

**Abilities:** Athletics 4, Awareness 3, Dodge 3, Integrity 2, Investigation 2, Martial Arts 3, Presence 3, Resistance 3, Stealth 4, Survival 3

## HORSE (RIDING)

Bred for everything from racing to farming to miniature pets, horses can be found across most of Creation's civilized lands. Horses, possessed of both intelligence and beauty, are favored riding animals in most temperate lands. Those horses bred specifically for riding are swift, light in build and frequently skittish.

| S/D/S | P/I/W/W | Health Lvls | Atk (S/A/D/R) | Dodge DV/S |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 4/3/3 | 2/2/3/3 | -0x1/-1x2/-2x2/-4/I | Bite: 5/5/2L/1, Kick: 2/2/6B/1 | 3/0L/3B |

**Abilities:** Athletics 3, Awareness 2, Dodge 2, Integrity 1, Investigation 1, Martial Arts 1, Presence 1, Resistance 2, Survival 2

## ICHNEUMON HUNTER

An insect the size of a small dog, the female ichneumon hunter seeks out large warm-blooded prey to host her eggs. Her ovipositor exudes an anesthetic so powerful that most creatures do not even feel the insect lay her eggs inside them. The fist-sized eggs hatch in five days. The larvae feed on the host, emerging three months after hatching as adults. Various herbal remedies, usually featuring the bitter herb wormwood, can kill the larvae.

| S/D/S | P/I/W/W | Health Lvls | Atk (S/A/D/R) | Dodge DV/S |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1/3/1 | 2/1/2/2 | -0/-2/-4/I | Sting: 6/6/1L + egg*/1 | 3/0L/1B |

**Abilities:** Athletics 3, Awareness 2, Dodge 3, Integrity 1, Investigation 1, Martial Arts 1, Presence 1, Resistance 1, Stealth 4, Survival 1

***Note:** Larvae inflict 1L damage (unsoakable) each day after hatching.

## MAMMOTH

Mammoths are gigantic, furred, tusked creatures of the Far North. The creatures can reach 14 feet in height, and their tusks are a source of barbarian wealth. Mammoths travel in herds of several hundred individuals, and the healthy adults defend the young and weak by forming a defensive circle of deadly stomping feet and huge tusks. The great beasts can be stampeded by fire but by little else.

| S/D/S | P/I/W/W | Health Lvls | Atk (S/A/D/R) | Dodge DV/S |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 14/3/10 | 2/1/2/5 | -0x3/-1x3/-2x2/-4/I | Trample: 3/6/15L/1 | 1/5L/10B |

**Abilities:** Athletics 4, Awareness 3, Integrity 1, Martial Arts 2, Presence 5, Resistance 4, Survival 3

## MOSPID

A scaled, medium-sized bird, with a wingspan of two feet, the mospid is favored as a forest hunting animal. Feather tufts on its thumb and tail allow for quick maneuvering, and its large yellow eyes are adapted to the dim shadows of deep forests. They are favored as hunting animals by well-heeled Dynasts.

| S/D/S | P/I/W/W | Health Lvls | Atk (S/A/D/R) | Dodge DV/S |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2/3/2 | 2/1/3/3 | -1/-2/I | Claw: 6/5/2L/2 | 4/0L/2B |

**Abilities:** Athletics 5, Awareness 3, Dodge 5, Integrity 1, Investigation 1, Martial Arts 2, Presence 1, Resistance 1, Stealth 3, Survival 3

## OMEN DOG

A wild pack hunter physically similar to the common dog, the omen dog is distinguished by its broad chest and back, small ears and enormous stature. Most stand four feet at the shoulder. A single omen dog is capable of bringing down horse-sized prey. On occasion, packs of the creatures have even attacked small caravans. Certain barbarian tribes have learned to train omen dogs, and the animals prove loyal companions.

| S/D/S | P/I/W/W | Health Lvls | Atk (S/A/D/R) | Dodge DV/S |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 5/3/4 | 4/2/3/5 | -0/-1x2/-2x2/-4/I | Bite: 5/7/6L/1 | 3/2L/4B |

**Abilities:** Athletics 2, Awareness 2, Dodge 2, Investigation 1, Martial Arts 4, Presence 2 (Intimidation +2), Resistance 3, Stealth 2, Survival 3 (Tracking +3)

## RAITON

The raiton is an omnivorous scavenger, eating everything from carrion to fruit, eggs and small animals. Found often at battlefields, it squalls and caws, watching with black, pitiless eyes as heroes and cowards alike die. The scaled birds have a three-foot wingspan, toothy beaks and black feathers.

| S/D/S | P/I/W/W | Health Lvls | Atk (S/A/D/R) | Dodge DV/S |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2/3/2 | 2/1/3/3 | -0/-1/-2/I | Beak: 6/4/2L/1 | 3/0L/2B |

**Abilities:** Athletics 3, Awareness 3, Dodge 3, Integrity 2, Investigation 2, Martial Arts 1, Presence 1, Resistance 3, Stealth 3, Survival 4

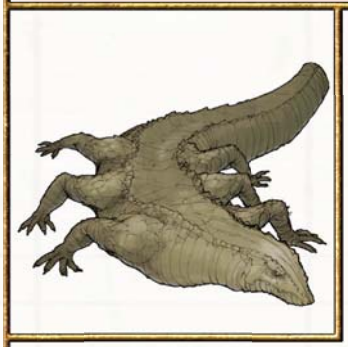
## RIVER DRAGON

The river dragon is a feared predator of river mouths and bays. It is a carnivore that hunts mostly large fish, seals and small whales, but it will hunt down fishing ships as well. With a long, serpentine neck, huge flippers and a rudder-like tail, it is capable of dragging itself onto beaches and into swamps to hunt the animals that live there as well.

| S/D/S | P/I/W/W | Health Lvls | Atk (S/A/D/R) | Dodge DV/S |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 14/3/12 | 2/1/3/4 | -0x3/-1x3/ -2x3/-4x2/I | Bite: 5/5/14L/1, Claw: 6/5/10L/2 | 2/6B/12L |

**Abilities:** Athletics 3, Awareness 3, Dodge 1, Integrity 2, Martial Arts 3, Presence 4, Resistance 4, Stealth 1 (Swimming +3), Survival 3

## SAND SWIMMER



Found only in the deepest of the Southern deserts, the sand swimmer is a three- to five-foot-long lizard, with a paddle-like tail and webbed feet. It lives under the dunes, swimming through the lose sand as a fish swims through water. The sand swimmer tracks prey through the vibration of their movements on the surface, then rises beneath them to attack.

| S/D/S | P/I/W/W | Health Lvls | Atk (S/A/D/R) | Dodge DV/S |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 6/4/5 | 5/1/3/5 | -0x2/-1x2/ -2x2/-4/I | Bite: 6/6/6L/2 | 4/5L/7B |

**Abilities:** Athletics 3, Awareness 4, Dodge 4, Integrity 2, Investigation 1, Martial Arts 2, Presence 1 (Intimidation +1), Resistance 2, Stealth 4, Survival 4

## SIAKA

Siaka are gigantic sharks that can grow to 40 feet in length. Their mouths are huge and can swallow a grown man whole. Their five rows of teeth—some over six inches long—make quick work of anything unlucky enough to cross paths with the voracious beasts. Siaka are found only in deep water, hunting whales and giant squid, and they can sense blood in water for hundreds of miles.

| S/D/S | P/I/W/W | Health Lvls | Atk (S/A/D/R) | Dodge DV/S |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 12/4/8 | 4/1/2/3 | -0x3/-1x4/ -2x4/-4x2/I | Bite: 5/7/12L/2 | 3/4L/8B |

**Abilities:** Athletics 3, Awareness 4, Dodge 2, Integrity 3, Investigation 3, Martial Arts 3, Presence 3, Resistance 5, Stealth 4, Survival 4 (Tracking +3)

## SIMHATA

Simhata, or lion-horses, are similar in build to enormous horses, but their natural weaponry, predatory gaze and vicious tempers set them apart at first glance. Simhata bond to the first person who feeds them fresh meat but remain vicious to anyone else. Bred as war-steeds for the Exalted, simhata permanently bond to Exalts who display their anima banners, even if they were previously bonded to un-Exalted masters.

| S/D/S | P/I/W/W | Health Lvls | Atk (S/A/D/R) | Dodge DV/S |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 7/3/6 | 2/2/3/5 | -0x3/-1x2/ -2x3/-4/I | Bite: 4/6/8L/1, Claw: 5/6/10L/2 | 3/2L/5B |

**Abilities:** Athletics 3, Awareness 3, Dodge 3, Integrity 3, Investigation 2, Martial Arts 3, Presence 3, Resistance 4, Stealth 1, Survival 2

## SQUID

The great squids hunt whales and are large enough to drag down a small warship. Their tentacles can reach 50 feet in length and are strong enough to easily crush a wooden hull. Squid have crushing beaks in the center of their 10 tentacles, and their skins can change into a variety of brilliant colors. Injured or frightened squid release an opaque ink into the water to cover their escape.

| S/D/S | P/I/W/W | Health Lvls | Atk (S/A/D/R) | Dodge DV/S |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 10/5/10 | 3/3/3/2 | -0x2/-1x2/ -2x2/-2x2/I | Beak: 6/6/8L/1, Grab: 5/11/10B/3 | 4/4L/8B |

**Abilities:** Athletics 4, Awareness 4, Dodge 4, Integrity 2, Investigation 3, Martial Arts 3 (Grappling +3), Presence 5, Resistance 4, Stealth 4, Survival 4

## STRANGLER'S SERPENT

The strangler's serpent is a large lizard with a red and black hide that normally lives a quiet life in the cypress swamps of the Southeast. However, assassins discovered that the strangler's serpent's instinct to grip with its long fingers and powerful tail makes it an effective and stealthy killer. The main advantage of this beast is its untraceable nature. It is far too unintelligent to betray its trainers.

| S/D/S | P/I/W/W | Health Lvls | Atk (S/A/D/R) | Dodge DV/S |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 5/3/3 | 2/1/3/2 | -0/-1x2/ -2x2/-4x2/I | Bite: 6/6/1L/1, Strangle: 6/7/5B/1 | 2/4B/2L |

**Abilities:** Athletics 1, Awareness 3, Dodge 1, Integrity 1, Investigation 3, Martial Arts 1 (Strangle +3), Presence 1, Resistance 2, Stealth 3, Survival 3 (Track by Scent +2)

## STRIX

Thought by Eastern tribesmen to be harbingers of doom, strix are enormous forest owls, with 15-foot wingspans, mottled dark-brown feathers, wicked claws and a small (for its size) but incredibly powerful beak. Their large round eyes are perfectly adapted for nighttime hunting, and the birds have been known to carry off lone travelers to devour at their leisure.

| S/D/S | P/I/W/W | Health Lvls | Atk (S/A/D/R) | Dodge DV/S |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 8/3/8 | 3/3/3/6 | -0x2/-1x2/-2x2/I | Grab: 6/9/8B/1, Bite: 6/7/6L/1 | 3/4L/8B |

**Abilities:** Athletics 3, Awareness 4, Dodge 3, Investigation 3, Integrity 3, Martial Arts 4 (Grabbing +2), Presence 3 (Intimidation +2), Resistance 2, Stealth 5, Survival 3

## TYRANT LIZARD

Found (rarely) in the Southern jungles, the rumor of a tyrant lizard is enough to panic a caravan or village. The enormous lizards are swift-moving, ravenous predators too stupid to fear anything but fire. They run on their two back legs and use their smaller front limbs and enormous mouths as weapons. Tyrant lizards are solitary predators and will pursue and attack anything if they are hungry.

| S/D/S | P/I/W/W | Health Lvls | Atk (S/A/D/R) | Dodge DV/S |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 14/3/12 | 3/1/2/4 | -0x3/-1x4/-2x4/-4x2/I | Bite: 6/9/14L/1, Claw: 5/8/8L/2 | 2/6L/12B |

**Abilities:** Athletics 2, Awareness 2, Dodge 1, Integrity 2, Investigation 2, Martial Arts 4, Presence 5, Resistance 4, Stealth 1, Survival 3

## YEDDIM

Originally found in the Southeast, yeddim have long been domesticated and are now found over most of Creation as beasts of burden. Even tempered and stoic (also dumb as posts), the huge animals can go for days without food and water and can carry hundreds of pounds of gear. Like mammoths, herds of yeddim defend themselves by circling around their young.

| S/D/S | P/I/W/W | Health Lvls | Atk (S/A/D/R) | Dodge DV/S |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 14/2/11 | 2/1/2/3 | -0x2/-1x3/-2x3/-4/I | Trample: 3/4/12L/1 | 1/5L/10B |

**Abilities:** Athletics 5, Awareness 1, Integrity 1, Martial Arts 1, Presence 2, Resistance 4, Stealth 1, Survival 3

# Disease

Since the beginning of time, disease has been one of the most feared enemies of civilization, as dreadful as war, as terrifying as the Abyssals. In some lands, children are so likely to die that they are not even given a real name until they reach a year of age. In others, healers will not treat the old when they fall sick, believing it to be a waste of time and medicine. In all lands, healers of any sort are welcomed for their compassion and their skill.

Most illness are minor things: summer fever, winter colds, a day or two of the flux. Any healer or person with medical skill can ease these common illnesses and shorten their duration to a few days. All Exalted are completely immune to these common ailments and fevers. The diseases that follow are not those simple illnesses.

There are many customs—proscribing the eating of cloven-hoofed animals, one handful from every 10th bag of grain must be tested on a hot griddle, sex with a non-virgin woman is forbidden to all but her husband—which are intended to prevent disease from taking hold in a kingdom. The Immaculate Order has extensive dietary and purity laws that all worshipers are supposed to follow, as do most other religions. These customs and laws often break down in times of war and unrest, when natural disaster strikes or in crowded, uncivilized conditions such as refugee camps or city slums.

Although the Exalted are immune to disease, the consequences of disease can be deadly. When half an army is down with the flux or the plague is decimating a nation, disease becomes as dangerous as invasion. The chaos and violence that follows an epidemic may require that the heroes of legend take a hand in returning the countryside to health and safety. While mortal healers do not have the powers of the Exalted to cure, they are very familiar with the types of disease common in their area, as well as how they spread and what medicines may assist in treatment. A wise Exalt consults with the local healers when dealing with an epidemic.

## Catching and Resisting Diseases

**Virulence**: The character's player makes a (Stamina + Resistance) roll for the character to attempt to avoid infection when exposed to the disease.

**Untreated Morbidity**: The difficulty of the (Stamina + Resistance) roll the player makes for his character to survive the illness when he is not treated by someone with the Medicine Ability or if the healer's player fails her (Intelligence + Medicine) roll.

**Treated Morbidity:** The difficulty of the (Stamina + Resistance) roll made when the character is successfully treated by someone with the Medicine Ability.

**Difficulty to Treat:** The modifier applied to the (Intelligence + Medicine) roll to successfully treat the illness. This is also the modifier applied to the difficulty to manufacture a talisman against a disease or a draught to cure it. If a patient is drinking a successfully made draught, his player rolls under the treated morbidity even if no one with the Medicine Ability is available.

## Diseases of Compassion

Disease strikes first at the most vulnerable: the weak, the young, the old. Then, those who offer aid might find themselves the next victims as disease spreads to the caretakers: mothers, healers, priests and the compassionate who cannot bear to leave someone to die. Others wrench the heart of the compassionate through deforming or crippling their victims, leaving them to suffer for weeks, months or even a lifetime.

### Leprosy

**Virulence:** 1 **Difficulty to Treat:** 3
**Morbidity:** 5 **Treated Morbidity:** 3

**Symptoms:** Sometimes called the ghost disease, leprosy is fairly common in shadowlands and otherwise rare. Lepers are a fearsome, heart-wrenching sight—the living rotting away like the dead. The early symptoms are no different from a mild illness: fever and weakness, muscle aches and exhaustion. Then, the more severe symptoms begin: numbness as nerves begin to fail, then the patient's ability to fight off illness weakens and he risks infection from every cut and bruise. Eventually, parts of the body die and fall away, leaving the victim vulnerable to secondary infections such as gangrene.

**Duration:** Leprosy begins two weeks after exposure, with gradually spreading patches of numbness, starting with the fingertips and face first. Then, over the next few months to a year, the skin goes white and bloodless. The disease takes a long time to kill its victims. Properly cared for, lepers can live for 10 or more years—leaving them to wander the world as mutilated objects of horror and pity.

**Vector:** Leprosy rises in places of despair: crowded refugee camps, the slums of the poor and the sunless shadowlands. Lepers are most likely to pass their disease to those closest to them, their loved ones and their caretakers—those who share their beds, their homes and their food. Leprosy lingers in the clothes, bedding and homes of lepers, and this is why they are often isolated in their own communities.

**Treatment:** Lepers must be kept safe from dying of secondary infections through cuts they cannot feel. Treatment is long, lasting several months, while the leper is given tinctures to purify the blood and warm the sluggish circulation. Ginseng and ginger are common ingredients found in draughts against leprosy. The skin must be kept clean with distilled alcohol or tincture of iodine. The organs of limb-regenerating lizards are included in draughts to encourage the body to regenerate lost parts. Purification rituals must be performed to cleanse the leper's home and to prevent the spread of the disease.

### Consumption

**Virulence:** 2 **Difficulty to Treat:** 3
**Morbidity:** 2 **Treated Morbidity:** 1

**Symptoms:** Consumption begins quietly, with lethargy and low fevers. It can weaken the muscles of the body, leaving the victim lame or twisted. It can also attack the lungs.

**Duration:** A wasting disease, consumption leaves its victims to suffer for weeks or months or even years as weakened, crippled and vulnerable wretches. It is a subtle slow-moving disease, taking several months to appear after exposure. Sometimes a victim can seem recovered, only to fall to the disease months or years later. Mortal analysis of the corpse reveals cysts within the muscles or lungs of a victim where the disease lies in wait.

**Vector:** Consumption is found in slums and prisons, crowded places where despair is strong and compassion weak. The poor and mistreated suffer the wasting disease in disproportionate numbers. Some carry the disease without falling ill and can pass it to their friends and loved ones. Those who have consumption in the lungs pass it readily to others. The disease does not linger in clothes or homes.

**Treatment:** Tinctures to strengthen the body and will are used to combat the disease. Goldenseal, ginseng and the seaweed hailoi are used in the draught. Mallow or licorice is used to soothe the wracking cough.

## Diseases of Conviction

These diseases steal away the will and the wit, leaving even the strongest and most determined helpless, or they pervert the very beliefs of a community, bringing death and madness instead of security.

### Hysteria

**Virulence:** 4 **Difficulty to Treat:** 2
**Morbidity:** 3 **Treated Morbidity:** 1

**Symptoms:** This disease always takes numbers of victims at once. They might turn on each other and riot or hunt down and destroy those they have decided are the enemy. The disease itself is not fatal, but the way it stirs up fears and unnatural rage usually results in death for those the hysterics target. Early symptoms are extreme agitation, strange fancies and fears, paranoia then increasing violence.

**Duration:** This disease spreads as swiftly and unstoppably as rumor. When an innocent is murdered, a famous trial is corrupted or the fear of a faerie invasion rises high, outrage and terror might call the spirits of hysteria to the population. An entire town can be infected in as little as three days.

**Vector:** There is always a single source of contagion in hysteria. It can invariably be traced to one early victim who spreads the disease through her community. From there, it takes those closest and spreads exponentially through even casual contact such as conversation. The more people infected with hysteria in a community, the worse the disease is. In times of chaos, such as the period since the disappearance of the Empress, hysteria appears more often.

**Treatment:** The mortal cure involves finding the key sufferers and curing them, usually through isolation, calm and quiet, as well as the administration of herbal remedies containing opium, marijuana or codeine designed to calm the mind and will. Zenith and Midnight Exalted have a powerful influence over those suffering hysteria, either to halt the course of the disease or to turn the delirious minds to the Exalt's use. Note: Contagion-Curing Touch will not cure hysteria.

### Sleeping Sickness

**Virulence:** 2 **Difficulty to Treat:** 4
**Morbidity:** 5 **Treated Morbidity:** 2

**Symptoms:** Found only in the dry South, and sometimes called the wanderer's disease, it steals away its victims' strength of will. Victims are first struck with fever, joint pain and itching. The physical symptoms continue but are joined by sudden and unpredictable mood swings. Victims become lethargic alternating with bouts of violence. In later stages, victims barely open their eyes, and even the most urgent drives of their oaths or conviction will not move them to raise a hand or speak. Finally, they fall into a deep stupor and die.

**Duration:** The initial symptoms appear within a month of infection, and the entire course of the disease usually takes only a few months. Particularly strong sufferers can survive for up to a year in the last, stuporous stages, though.

**Vector:** Travelers who do not heed the warnings of the locals about clean clothes and bedding are likely sufferers of this disease. Sleeping sickness usually appears in the wet season, when the air is damp and full of insects seeking blood, but the precise source of the disease is not known.

**Treatment:** Draughts made to banish parasites work well with this disease. A draught is always bitter with wormwood and the rank stink of demon-banishing incense. Natives in areas where sleeping sickness is common burn citronella in their homes day and night, and this seems to help keep the disease at bay.

## Diseases of Temperance

These diseases arise when people are intemperate in their desires, whether it's the greed of eating polluted food or water or the lust of sharing a bed with an unclean lover. The diseases of Temperance are the diseases of lax morals, unclean habits and unrestrained urges.

### Cholera

**Virulence:** 4 **Difficulty to Treat:** 2
**Morbidity:** 3 **Treated Morbidity:** 1

**Symptoms:** Cholera kills quickly through fever and a watery, constant diarrhea that dehydrates the body. Children and the elderly are particularly vulnerable.

**Duration:** The disease appears within hours of drinking contaminated water, and the course of the disease lasts for no more than a couple of weeks. It can easily incapacitate an entire army in less than a week.

**Vector:** Also known as the flux or the bloody flux, cholera is a disease that appears when the spirits of the waters have been offended. Defiling wells, allowing goats to drink directly from a river or stream, permitting criminals to bathe in open water—all of these can bring the flux to a land.

**Treatment:** Mineral salts and quantities of pure water support the patient until the disease runs its course. Draughts are made of goldenseal, comfrey root or the mucus of the giant swamp snail. Purification rituals, as well as rituals to appease the offended water spirits, will cleanse the water of the flux.

### Syphilis

**Virulence:** 3 (sexual activity only) **Difficulty to Treat:** 3
**Morbidity:** 4 **Treated Morbidity:** 2

**Symptoms:** The first symptom is a painless sore, which heals in a few weeks. Aches, pains and intermittent fever are common symptoms of the disease. Over months to a few years, it eats away at the sufferer's ability to control their limbs, resulting in a peculiar stiff legged walk, then it attacks the mind. The first effects are increased lust and decreased self control. At the end, syphilis eats away at the body and minds of the victim, leaving them paralyzed and, eventually, mad.

**Duration:** The sore appears a few weeks after exposure, but disappears within a week. The next set of symptoms can appear months later, depending on the general health of the victim. Those who are poor, frequently ill or often wounded will progress through the disease quickly. Those who lead otherwise healthy, exemplary lives might not progress in the disease for years. However, all are carriers of the disease and will spread it to those they take into their beds.

**Vector:** Sometimes called the whore's revenge, syphilis appears when people have been unchaste. The disease is prevalent in

cities—among prostitutes, adulterers and the careless—but due to its subtle nature, it is found among the homes of the wealthy and the poor alike.

**Treatment:** Prevention is the best cure for syphilis. Patients are also treated with draughts containing mercury, a treatment nearly as dangerous as the disease. The cure can be applied at any time, but any nerve damage already done, such as paralysis, will not heal.

## Diseases of Valor

The diseases of Valor can infect even the bravest souls with cowardice or berserk madness. These are the diseases found on the battlefield, in the hunter's camp and in the aftermath of war.

### Rabies

**Virulence:** 2 **Difficulty to Treat:** 4
**Morbidity:** 5 **Treated Morbidity:** 3

**Symptoms:** It begins with a bad hunt or an animal attack. The bite wound might not look infected, but soon, a fever appears, which rises to delirium. The victim begins to act as a crazed animal might, foaming at the mouth, hallucinating and, finally, dying.

**Duration:** The first symptom, intense thirst, appears within two days, and the disease moves quickly from there to high fevers. Delirium begins within a week, and most victims are dead within two.

**Vector:** All hunters know that some spirits of slaughtered prey can enter the hearts of men and drive them mad. This is why the rituals to placate the spirits of slaughtered prey are so important. But, even so, hunters, ranchers and hound masters might find themselves taken with a mad animal spirit, particularly if a hunt has gone wrong and the prey fights back or if a rancher mistreats his animals. Animals that live near the Wyld are particularly likely to carry rabies in their bite.

**Treatment:** Successful application of wound-cleansing unguent will prevent this disease from taking hold. Draughts containing wolfsbane or leopard's bane are sometimes used to drive off the animal spirits, while white willow or aspirin is used to control the fever. Strong restraints are also used to keep patients from attacking their physicians.

### Plague

**Virulence:** 4 **Difficulty to Treat:** 4
**Morbidity:** 5 **Treated Morbidity:** 4

**Symptoms:** Plague begins with fever, diarrhea, a red rash that turns black and a swelling of the glands. The fever is uncontrollable and rises until the weakened victim suffers delirium and dehydration. Eventually, the overtaxed body fails.

**Duration:** Within a day, the first symptoms appear, often mistaken for other less deadly diseases. The rash appears within a week, and the blackened glands a few days later. Death follows in about 14 days from the onset of the first symptoms.

**Vector:** The feared follower of war and woe, plague is drawn to misery and chaos, when the rats outnumber the survivors of a siege and the dead lie unburied in the streets. It is passed from person to person and also hides within blankets, clothes and other goods that a plague victim might have touched. Should the plague spread to the lungs, it becomes a swift moving and deadly disease easily transmitted through the air that can leave cities dead and kingdoms desolate.

**Treatment:** Fire and isolation are the most common treatment of plague. Draughts successful against it are rare and expensive. Very few people recover from the plague on their own. Only the Great Contagion is feared more than this disease.

### Medicine in Exalted

Mortals do not possess great Charms such as Contagion-Curing Touch or other gifts of the Exalted, but that does not mean they are helpless in the face of disease.

Even the smallest of mortal villages has access to a wise woman or spirit caller. These mortal healers include in their repertoire the ability to make alchemical healing potions as well as rituals to fight illness and purify people of disease. Many mortals have minor charms, rituals or talismans that can soothe illness and cure disease (usually a one-die bonus). Such medicines, in slightly different variations, are found all over Creation.

I THINK THAT'S FAR ENOUGH.
WELL, IT SEEMS RANKAR WAS RIGHT. HIS TUNNELS ARE FILTHY WITH SAPPERS.
ALL RIGHT THEN.

FAREWELL DIPLOMACY.
BLAM!!! BLAM!!!
FWOOSHH
WAIT HERE, LOCUST.
LEAD ON, COWARDS! I'D LOVE TO KNOW HOW YOU KEEP GETTING DOWN HERE!

# CHAPTER EIGHT
# PANOPLY

This chapter gives an overview of the monetary standards of Creation and the various goods and services available in the world of **Exalted**. Creation is a vast place and it contains many things not explicitly found in this chapter, but a Storyteller can easily extrapolate whatever else characters might desire from those items found here. Obviously, not every item is available everywhere. Characters in a small town are unlikely to get lamellar armor. Items of greater complexity, such as articulated plate armor, are rarely obtainable outside the great cities—Nexus, the Imperial City, Lookshy or the capitals of the South. Large purchases, ships or manor houses for example, might require a character to wait months or years while the item is built to her specifications.

## Wealth in Creation

Wealth exists in many forms. It can appear as a casket filled with jade coins or as a profitable iron mine with the slaves and guards to run it or as a palace filled with beautiful artwork and a suitable staff. The first of these is cash on hand, the second is capital, and the third is good credit. All three tend to surround Creation's richest and most influential the way silk moths cluster around old wardrobes and garment chests.

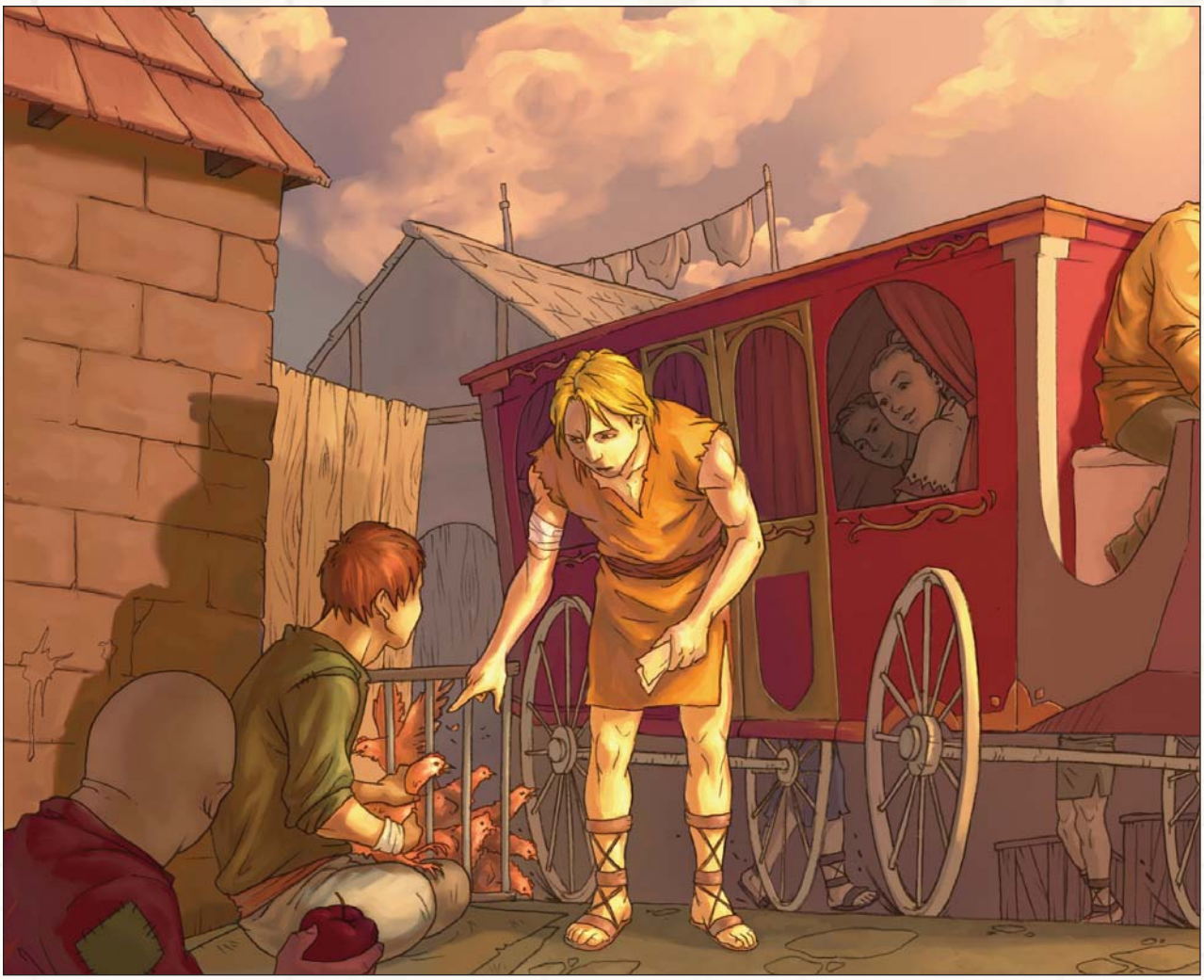
While the financial systems and instruments of the Age of Sorrows have fallen far since the days of the Shogunate, there are still banks and insurance agents and tax farmers. It is possible to pay for goods with letters of credit in places. One can buy shares in various commercial and civic enterprises or issue bonds against the future production of goods from a factory that hasn't been built yet. It is also possible to face execution for financial chicanery or be cast into slavery for debt.

## The Jade Standard

A regular system of coinage supports all of these financial institutions and ventures. This system is based on jade, and it is accepted as the cash standard by banks, tax collectors, mercenaries and courtesans alike.

For about 500 years, the Realm has promoted jade as the standard currency. On the Blessed Isle and in the satrapies, jade holds a privileged status as the sublime symbol of power—it's a magical material, a superior weapon material and the representation of fabulous wealth.

Unfortunately, jade's superior status in three such overarching aspects of life has tended to emphasize its scarcity. Jade has capabilities



in the spheres of magic and martial arts that far outstrip its usefulness as money, so a single obol of jade can be supremely valuable. In the Realm and its dependencies, it is illegal for a peasant to hold so much as a single bit of jade. Instead, a second currency operates beneath jade and is supported by it. This currency is called jade scrip.

The jade standard is backed by the Realm's Treasury, which contains more than 50,000 talents of jade. The magical, martial and financial potential of this storehouse of treasure serves as a symbolic reminder of the Scarlet Empress's ability to make things happen in Creation and tends to reinforce the power and prestige of the use of jade.

By contrast, jade scrip is not backed by the Realm's Treasury. Rather, the Private Purse of the Empress serves as the monetary pool that issues and directs the use of jade scrip. As a result, jade scrip tends to be used only in the Realm, and only by the peasantry. The Dragon-Blooded and the patrician class tend to use jade whenever possible, leaving jade scrip to the townspeople and the rural farmers who cannot hope to accrue enough wealth to hold a single obol in their lifetime.

## Jade Coinage

Jade coinage is issued in a variety of shapes and sizes. The talent (T), weighing 68 pounds, is a slab of jade roughly scored into eight rectangular bricks. The seal of the Imperial Treasury is lightly engraved into each of the resulting panels, and the minting date and an identifying number are carved into each side of the slab. Many talents, particularly those that are illegal, have no markings at all, since possession of an unmarked talent only results in confiscation and a fine, while forging the Imperial Treasury's marks carries a death sentence. The true talent has always been a rarity even in the Realm. More frequently, the talent simply appears as a "money of account," a column in the ledgers of the auditors.

There are 1,024 obols in the ledger talent, though a true talent actually contains 1,536 obols by weight. The discrepancy arises from the carving process that turns a raw talent of jade

### Jade Currency Table

1 talent (T) = 8 bars (B) = 64 minae (M) = 128 shekels (S) = 1,024 obols (O)
1 bar = 8 minae = 16 shekels = 128 obols
1 mina = 2 shekels = 16 obols
1 shekel = 8 obols*
* Obols are divided into quarters to form bits.

into coins. The resulting dust, called "Imperial boot polish," can be mixed with steel and other metals to produce the jade-steel alloy so useful for constructing weapons and armor, but it amounts to 512 obols-worth of coinage that cannot enter circulation. This dust is placed under very careful guard in the Imperial Treasury, but large amounts of it, and even completed weapons, have been disappearing from the Realm's armories of late. A talent is equal in value to the price of a new ship or the cost to hire a troop of mercenaries for several weeks.

The bar and the mina are also rarely seen in their solid forms, functioning more often as moneys of account like the talent. Each of them is a brick of jade with the seal of the Imperial Treasury scored upon its upper surface. The bar is additionally scored into eight thin strips each the size of a mina. A ledger-bar is worth an eighth of a talent, or eight minae, or 16 shekels, or 128 obols. A mina weighs about a pound and is a slab of jade about three inches wide, six inches long and a quarter-inch thick. A single line divides it in half, and the Imperial Treasury's dragon-badge is scored into each half, while a series of circles on the reverse side indicate 16 small circles. Bars can represent months worth of value in supplies for a fortress or a legion, while the mina represents the purchase price of a skilled slave.

The shekel, the obol and the bit are the most common types of actual jade seen in circulation. These three denominations represent small enough values and are distributed in small enough sizes that they can be regarded as useful sums of money for the Dragon-Blooded and their servants.

The shekel is a thin slab of jade graven with the eight circles of its eight jade obols on one side, with milling around its thin edge to discourage shaving. A single shekel weighs about nine ounces, and they are often carried wrapped in silk to keep them from breaking. A ledger-shekel represents eight obols or 32 bits.

The obol, a round coin weighing about an ounce and about an inch in diameter, is the common currency of the Realm's upper classes. Herb-sellers and drug dealers use obols as balance weights to prove the accuracy of their measurements. An obol's age can be determined by the image graven on it. The oldest bear pictures of a woman in a doorway, representing the Empress entering the Imperial Manse. More recent coins bear the crests of each of the Great Houses, announcing their inception dates. Others show a circle of faces that represents the formation of the Deliberative or various symbols or figures commemorating battles that Imperial forces have won. The most recent coins continue to show the lightning bolt from the Battle of Mishaka in RY 754. Some wits have suggested issuing coins featuring the picture of an empty throne, but no one has yet taken the step of commanding the Imperial Treasury to change the image on new obols.

The bit is an unofficial addition to the currency. Possession of bits was made illegal in RY 465 during the Unbroken Rushes Rebellion, because the rebels used them as a recognition token between the cells in various prefectures. However, they have survived official disfavor for a long time, simply because they are too useful not to persist as a permanent addition to the monetary system. A bit is literally a quarter of an obol that has been split into four pieces.

One common modification of a bit is to have a hole drilled in it for a lanyard or a chain and a word in Old Realm carved into the bit's surface. Peasants believe that bits of jade possess some magical capabilities, and they tend to wear them as magical amulets with glyphs representing longevity, prosperity or happiness. Many Dragon-Blooded officers collect these charms from the rebels during uprisings, thus proving the simplistic belief in jade's innate magical nature a dangerous illusion.

## Jade Scrip

Instead of using jade to pay for goods and services, the lower classes of the Realm make use of money based on the jade standard, where copper coins and paper bills represent fractions of the value of a single obol. Jade scrip came into existence in RY 185, when the Scarlet Empress realized that the manufactories of the Realm produced all manner of goods for the use of the peasantry, for costs that were a mere fraction of the value of a single obol. If the jade standard applied to all her subjects, the Empress realized, then most peasants would never be able to afford to buy anything. Various changes have been made to the jade scrip system over the centuries, with the Empress regularly inviting comment and advice from the Deliberative and the prefects. At present, jade scrip is minted or printed at one of nine locations on the Blessed Isle and is issued through officials in the capitals of each prefecture.

Jade scrip is backed by the Empress's Private Purse. This arrangement achieved two goals. The first was the creation of a rival bureaucracy to wrangle with the Treasury officials who had grown too powerful. The second was the removal of jade as a currency from the hands of the peasantry. The Private Purse of the Empress acts as a rival financial bureaucracy that handles the economy of the lower classes, as opposed to the Imperial Treasury that handles the economy of the upper classes and the Realm's overall financial policy. As a beneficial side effect, the peasant economy is entirely dependent upon the Empress's good will.

Jade scrip is issued in four forms: the koku, the quian, the siu and the yen. The koku, a paper bill measuring three inches by five inches, is the most valuable form of jade scrip. Printed on mulberry paper shot through with purple and gold silk threads that form a pattern of flying cranes, the koku bears an image of a black-and-green print of eagles nesting on the Imperial Mountain. On the reverse is the legend, "In the Scarlet Empress's name, one-eighth of an obol of jade." The paper also bears a watermark in the shape of the Imperial Manse. The quian is printed on similar paper, but features lions instead of cranes. The face bears the skyline of the Imperial City, while the reverse bears the inscription, "In the Scarlet Empress's name, one-sixty-fourth of an obol of jade." These paper bills were never very popular, both because their values are still too high to be useful and also because the imagery struck devotees of the Immaculate Philosophy as idolatrous.

The siu and the yen are much more useful and popular. These two sizes of copper coins are in common circulation throughout the Realm and its satrapies in the Threshold. The siu is about the same size as a jade obol and has the Imperial Treasury seal on one side and a stylized portrait of the Empress on the other. The coin is chemically treated to make the copper stay brown. The yen, by contrast, is twice as large and has a square hole in the middle. Stamped with characters that say "Scarlet Empress" on the obverse and "She Reigns Forever" on the reverse, the yen is chemically treated to make the copper turn green. The siu has a face value of 1/128th of an obol, and the yen has a face value of 1/1,024th of an obol. Both the siu and the yen can be cut into halves and quarters, and the yen can be further divided into eighths.

BAR
MINA
TALENT
QUIAN
KOKU
SHEKEL
OBOL
BIT
SIU
YEN
COWRIE
DINAR
DIRHAM

The Empress, and the Deliberative after her, have placed deliberate safeguards in the Realm's laws about what jade scrip can and cannot be used to buy. Weapons and armor cannot be purchased with jade scrip from any Realm manufactory, nor can luxury goods, ships or items of sorcerous power. Food, raw materials, pottery and cloth must be bought with jade scrip, requiring even the Great Houses to make regular purchases of jade scrip, trading in their jade stores for the Empress's private currency. Patricians and Dragon-Bloods can buy jade scrip at a rate of one and a half times its face value, so a single obol of jade buys 1,536 yen. But this transaction is entirely one-way. To purchase jade with jade scrip, one needs three times as much jade scrip, so an obol of jade can be bought only with 3,072 yen. This makes jade nearly impossible for the lower classes of the Realm to possess and, indeed, makes it economically beneficial for the peasantry to turn in jade in favor of jade scrip. Therefore, the jade scrip maintains a permanent and deliberate division between upper and lower classes in the Realm.

To help understand the scale of the jade scrip, a koku is about equal to a month's wages for a peasant. A new plough and oxen team costs this much, as does the land and trees for a small apple orchard. Three to four koku is a family's annual tax payment. A quian is a week's wages. It can purchase a dozen sheep or a couple of milk cows. A siu will buy meat for a family for a week. A yen is a day's wages for an unskilled laborer. A half-yen will feed a childless couple for several days without meat. A quarter-yen will buy a day's groceries, while an eighth-yen allows for a pleasant evening at an inn.

Of course, with the Scarlet Empress missing, the issue of jade scrip has become increasingly complicated. The Great Houses dislike the system intensely, since it stripped them of jade reserves and kept them from controlling the peasantry of the Blessed Isle directly. The peasantry is unnerved by the awareness that its financial system depends on the existence of the Empress's Private Purse—a purse that may be emptied by the next monarch of the Realm. No one really knows if the jade scrip system will survive the pressures currently afflicting the Realm and its government.

### Jade Scrip Currency Table

1 obol (O)* = 4 bits = 8 koku (k) = 64 quian (q) = 128 siu (s) = 1,024 yen (y)
1 koku = 8 quian = 16 siu = 128 yen
1 quian = 2 siu = 16 yen
1 siu** = 8 yen#
* Obols are divided into quarters to form jade bits.
** Siu are divided into halves and quarters.
# Yen are divided into halves, quarters and eighths.

## Other Money

Beyond the pale of the Realm's satrapies and dependent territories, another standard of wealth applies. In these regions near Creation's edges, where possession of jade attracts the notice of spirits, demons and the fae, it makes sense to use a material other than a magical magnet as a symbol of wealth.

### The Silver Standard

In the East, North and South, silver is the standard money, minted into coins of numerous sizes and shapes. Hacksilver, in the form of belts, neckrings and bracelets, is popular in the North, where displays of both wealth and impetuous generosity are common. In the South and East, the dinar is the coin of common value. Usually found in minted coins of about a half-ounce weight, the dinar is minted by individual cities, towns and principalities.

As a money of account for tracking large purchases in silver, accountants use the dirham, equal to 16 pounds of silver. There are 400 dinars to a dirham, but there tend not to be any dirhams in actual circulation. (There are ingots of this weight available from time to time, though.)

Different cities tend to have different levels of purity in their coins, and these variations can vary year to year. Merchants tend to assess coins by weight and silver quality as much as by city of origin. This has tended to delay the acceptance of silver as a permanent replacement of jade in the Threshold and the Realm. The Guild's standard coin is widely regarded as the purest and most reliable source of silver coinage. The coin is slightly oval and is milled around the edges to discourage shaving. Dinars can be halved or quartered, and sometimes, they are cut into eighths.

### Silver Currency Table

The following chart explains how the silver standard compares to the jade standard as of RY 768. These numbers are subject to variation as the Guild's fortunes rise and fall. The Realm is considerably more stable in people's minds, so the jade standard remains rather more stable as a result.

1 talent (jade) = 5 talents (silver)
1 talent (silver) = 64 pounds = 4 dirhams = 1,600 Dinars = 1/5 talent (jade) = 204 1/2 obols
1 dirham (silver) = 16 pounds = 400 dinars = 51 1/4 obols
8 pounds (silver) = 200 dinars = 25 3/4 obols
4 pounds (silver) = 100 dinars = 13 obols
2 pounds (silver) = 50 dinars = 6 1/2 obols
1 pound (silver) = 25 dinars = 3 1/4 obols
1/2 pound (silver) = 12 1/2 dinars = 1 3/4 obols
1/4 pound (silver) = 6 1/4 dinars = 3/4 obol

### The Cowrie

In the West, the red-shelled cowrie is the standard medium of exchange. The perfect shells are arranged according to size in three categories and set on strings of 25, 50 or 100 shells. While not recognized in the rest of Creation, the shells are highly prized by the islanders themselves. The Western islanders trade three dirhams of silver to the cowrie, and six cowries to the obol, thus rating silver very high and jade very low. As a result, it can be an intermediate investment for people doing

lots of business in the West, but its minimal usefulness elsewhere in the world has tended to discourage the purchase of cowries by any but the islanders themselves.

## Banking

In the days of the Shogunate, money was one of the types of power holding the world together. There were financial instruments called Walls of Creation War Bonds that used the threads of monetary transactions made across great distances to create the boundaries of the world.

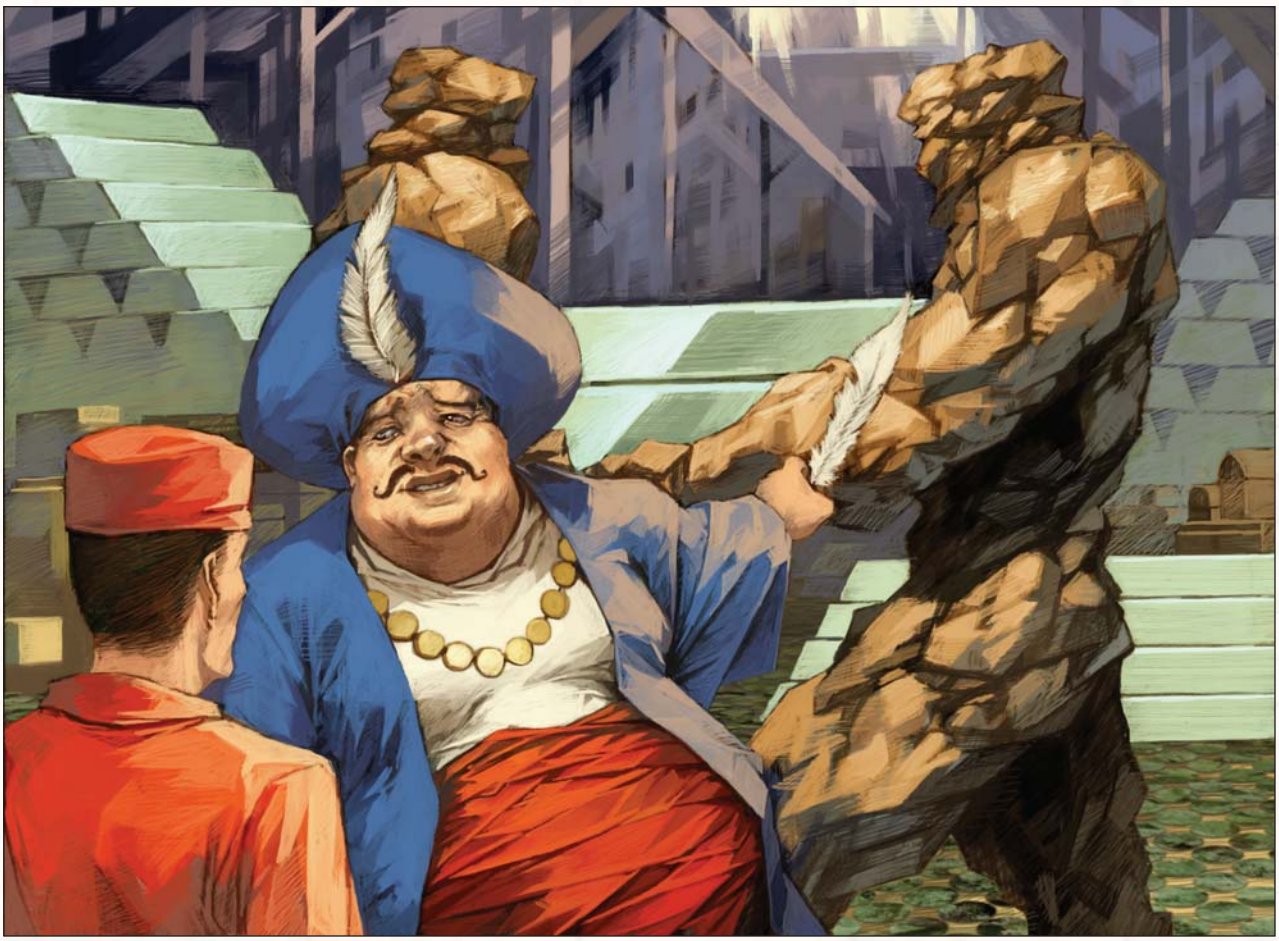
Today, the financial business seems considerably more mundane. Even so, banking in the Realm and the Threshold remains a powerful and respectable business, holding over its high reputation from the First Age. While banking is now an institutional or national concern rather than a personal one, the work of loaning or holding large sums of money in trust still carries great responsibility.

The largest bank in Creation is the Bank of the Scarlet Throne, which doles out money to the Great Houses, the Immaculate Order, the Army of the Realm and various projects and concerns on the Blessed Isle and in the satrapies. Dealing exclusively in jade, the Bank of the Scarlet Throne is controlled by Bal Keraz, the head of the Imperial Treasury. The Scarlet Bank of the Empress is controlled by the Private Purse, and it deals exclusively in jade scrip, issuing this petty cash through its agents in the Threshold and the Blessed Isle. Both of these banks can lend hundreds of talents at a time, in their respective currencies. In the Threshold are numerous national and civic banks, which try to run their respective country's or city-state's monetary policy and program. These are much smaller banks than the Throne Bank, with considerably more limited access to extra cash. As a result, their loans tend to run to dozens of talents. These banks usually lend only to the leaders of their territories or their leader's chosen institutions or individuals. Even smaller than this are individual or syndicated moneylenders, who operate as small guilds or chartered societies, and are rarely able to lend more than 10 talents at once to anyone.

## The World of Money

In the days of the Shogunate, the Realm and the nations of the Threshold made use of complex financial networks and institutions. It was possible to transfer money or information from a bank in Gem to Nexus or Arjuf in only a few days. Stocks in major corporations and bonds issued by civil authorities could be traded, bought and sold across Creation. Most citizens had accounts with banks and could join in the workings of the world's financial markets with relative ease.

The financial institutions of the present day are considerably more limited. Most individuals do not have accounts with banks but deal in hard money of various sorts—cowries, jade, jade scrip or silver. In regions that are notoriously short of actual coins, such as the Southeast, many people set up a series of individual accounts with merchants with whom they deal regularly, and the ledgers are wiped clear every few months with payments in transfers of goods or raw materials.



## The Salt Rate

Thousands of small gods watch over beaches, salt marshes, tidal pools and mines where salt is collected. Sometimes regarded as the sixth magical material by the ignorant, salt is a necessary food preservative, and it is a critical ingredient in numerous industries, from weaving to mining. Many kinds of work can be done without this substance, but it is easier to do them with salt.

As a result, most bankers use the cost of the sacrifice to the local salt gods compared with the value of the salt that is extracted, as the base rate for all financial calculations. When someone speaks of the salt rate, they mean the value of the purchased goods that must be sacrificed to the local salt god, relative to the market value of the salt gained. Salt is measured in quintals, which is an official measure of 130 pounds, and one generally sells for two bits or the equivalent in jade scrip or silver.

For several hundred years, the Realm had the lowest salt rate, thanks to the Empress, who forced all the salt gods of the Blessed Isle to negotiate together rather than separately. There, the salt rate has varied between two and eight percent of a quintal's value.

Elsewhere, the cost of salt varies widely, with the cost rising the farther one is from the Inland Sea. In the Threshold, the cost of salt and the voracity of the salt gods results in salt rates set between 10 and 12 percent. In the Far South, the salt rate can rise as high as 20 percent.

Merchants, bankers and agents of the Imperial Treasury are well-aware of how fragile these systems can be. Barter systems are notoriously easy to manipulate by transferring large quantities of goods made in manufactories into regions where most things are made by hand. For instance, cheaply made beads from a glass manufactory in the Threshold can be exchanged for a young slave in the Far East. However, the advantages of machine-aided production can be stymied by failures in the financial and trade networks. A missing caravan or a bank failure can cause manufactories to change hands or a regional economy to collapse, simply for lack of raw materials or the necessary hard cash to pay for the finished goods.

## Banks and Banking

Today, banks are national or regional entities, rather than international organizations. Most of them deal only with very wealthy individuals or mercantile houses. While in former days, banking institutions were subjected to rigorous controls and independent auditors, banks now operate independently of government oversight. Good banks maintain vaults of hard currency as proof of their solvency, while others collapse overnight, stranding their depositors without money and without credit. Sometimes, governments even aid and abet these financial collapses, in order to enrich some friend of the prince, prefect or satrap.

The banks of the Realm tend to be the most stable and reliable. With full-service branches in all the cities and towns of the Blessed Isle and at least a representative in the major satrapies, these banks make it possible to do business in many places without carrying pounds of jade or jade scrip wherever one goes. These banks suffer from political disadvantage, however, for not everyone wishes to do business on the Realm's terms; Realm banks are hampered by having to operate within the Realm's accounting practices and legal customs. The degree to which the banks abandon these precedents, however, also affects their potential clients' perceptions, since these depositors choose Realm banks at least in part because of their conservative financial programs.

By contrast, Threshold banks tend to play more fast and loose based largely on the attitudes of their host countries. Northern banks tend to be staid and serious and pay careful attention to honor and honesty since a depositor is entitled to cut off the right hand of a banker who loses her money. Eastern banks tend to be honest about the risks of deposits but fill contracts with wrangles of fine print. Southern banking houses are often little more than pawnbrokers' shops, accepting everything from actual money to slaves as deposits.

## Financial Markets

Even so, strands of the financial web of the past remain. Stock markets in Nexus, Arjuf, Paragon and elsewhere continue to exist, buying and selling shares in local and regional businesses. Most companies with stock for sale deal in genuine goods—timber harvesting syndicates, iron-mining consortiums and ship-building ventures are all common investment opportunities. It is more difficult for companies and individuals with more mobile assets to raise capital from stock markets, however. Long-distance trading firms have to form clear partnerships, and even then, the risk of loss is quite high.

In the absence of strong capital markets, the business of trading commodities and commodities futures is much more viable. Nexus's commodities market handles more than 1,500 different goods and raw materials, ranging from cows and timber to coffee and rice, to smelted iron and brocaded silk. As always, the rule is to buy low and sell high.

## Communications

If the financial world is the warp of Creation, then the communications system is the weft. The infrastructure of the postal system of the Shogunate survived intact on the Blessed Isle despite wars and the Contagion, and much of that same system survived in the Threshold. This system included roads, posting houses for the stabling of horses and their letter-carrying riders, signal towers with swinging arms for semaphore, dedicated wharves in important ports for mail ships and heliograph mirror stations. The Empress made the restoration of this system a priority in the early days of her reign, and it remains in operation to this day throughout the Blessed Isle. Most of the nations of the Threshold followed her example. Today, it is possible to send short open messages by semaphore, or longer written letters by hand, over long distances. Short messages can travel hundreds of miles while the sunlight lasts, but letters can take anywhere from several days to several weeks to arrive at their destination.

In the Realm, the Imperial Post can send a heliograph message from the Imperial City to the western prefectures in two sunny days, while letters take three to six weeks to arrive depending on the weather. The Imperial Post charges a delivery

fee to the sender and the recipient both for heliograph messages, with Imperial communications taking precedence over all other traffic. The fee is based on a sliding scale, with the sender choosing the level of urgency, ranging from a few koku up to four obols. Letters cost two quian per side of a piece of paper to deliver anywhere in the prefectures. Delivery costs to the satrapies are tripled.

Modern national borders and political disputes disrupt the mail and the old heliograph system in the Threshold far more than technical failures. Still, it is possible to send letters in most nations of the Threshold and the Realm, even if sending or receiving mail across national boundaries is considerably more difficult. Several Scavenger Lands nations formed the River Province Postal Union a few decades back, and it is a simpler process to use the mail service over long distances there than anywhere else in the Threshold.

Very local communications tend to be much easier. Most cities and towns have a dinar-post for sending messages and letters across town or within a nation for a very low price. In some places, there are actual post offices where one can rent a box. In other towns, mail is delivered to a popular central location, such as an inn or tavern. In addition, large cities have private messengers and stevedores' associations who can be hired for delivering sensitive letters and cargo around town or within a small region.

Exalts, the Dragon-Blooded and high-level government officials and merchants also have access to sorcerous communications links through the use of Charms and magic. Infallible Messenger is a common enough spell that anyone who needs access to instant communication makes sure that she can get it when she needs to. Similar magic is available at high but reasonable prices from many thaumaturges in major cities and towns—provided one is willing to tell them the message.

No nation guarantees the privacy of the mails. Postal services are widely recognized as arms of their host nation's military force, intelligence agencies and secret police. Their principal purpose is to facilitate the government's communications with its outposts, rather than for private convenience. One must, therefore, expect that the letters will be opened and read. Codes and ciphers are common in most long-distance communications, especially those dealing with financial matters.

## Accounting

The business of accounting for where money goes is just as important as where it comes from. In the Realm, accountants are trained in the one of several schools. The most famous of these academies is called the Shining Garden of Calculating and Counting. The training is thorough and takes six years. After at least three years of real-world practice, an accountant may sit for the Counters' Examination in the Imperial City. Those who pass can then be a kaja, a prefect's or satrap's accountant. These kajas ride circuit in their districts, defined as a number of villages or a larger town and keep records of tax receipts and expenditures of tax money. The kaja is responsible for bookkeeping and passing on financial information to the Imperial Treasury. Some kajas sit for the Assessors' Examination to become gongfangs in service to the Realm after at least three years of experience in the Prefectures. Those who pass join the Thousand Scales or go into private practice.

### Trading Dots for Cash

Players and Storytellers will both want to make use of actual monetary values from time to time instead of Resources dots. It is difficult to translate Resources into specific amounts of cash, since Resources is, by design, not a linear progression. The level of financial capability between one dot and the next is a significant order of growing wealth and power.

For each character in her series, the Storyteller should make a determination of what form the character's wealth takes, whether it's jade, jade scrip, silver or some other form. The division will be primarily between jade and jade scrip on the one hand and silver or cowries on the other, depending on where the characters are and what their attitudes toward the Realm are. This book assumes that characters with four or five dots in Resources are not going to be using jade scrip, but you may make other choices about how jade scrip is used in your **Exalted** game.

The following correspondences provide a rough guide to translating Resources dots into cash in the three main money-systems.

| Resources | Cash Equivalent |
|---|---|
| X | *Jade:* less than 2 obols of income a year |
| | *Jade scrip:* less than 16 koku a year |
| | *Silver:* less than 20 dinars a year |
| • | *Jade:* less than 1 mina of income a year |
| | *Jade scrip:* less than 64 koku a year |
| | *Silver:* less than 60 dinars a year |
| •• | *Jade:* less than 1 shekel of income a year |
| | *Jade scrip:* less than 128 koku a year |
| | *Silver:* less than 100 dinars annually |
| ••• | *Jade:* less than 1 talent of income a year |
| | *Jade scrip:* less than 8,000 koku a year. |
| | *Silver:* less than 5 talents a year |
| •••• | *Jade:* 4 to 6 talents a year |
| | *Jade scrip:* 16,000 to 50,000 koku a year |
| | *Silver:* 20 to 30 talents a year |
| ••••• | *Jade* 12 or more talents annually |
| | *Jade scrip:* 96,000 or more koku a year |
| | *Silver:* 60 or more talents a year |

In the Threshold, there are fewer schools for accounting and book-keeping. Most of the time, accounting practice is taught within families, and children are trained to be gongfangs or accountants by their parents, aunts and uncles. The North and the South have the most lax accounting practices, since hospitality and generosity are difficult to practice while keeping an eye on the bottom line. The East has the tightest accounting systems, and they tend to be standardized throughout the River Province in particular. The West tends to reject insurance policies and long-term planning in favor of the here and now, but the average ship captain can tell you his net worth down to bit, yen, cowrie and dinar.

# Mundane Equipment

What follows is a list of non-combat items that **Exalted** characters are likely to purchase. The Storyteller will notice a distinct lack of household goods, provisions and specific clothing articles. This lack is deliberate. **Exalted** is not a game about how many candles a character owns or if she can afford a barrel of pickled fish. The only time such things are important is when the character is far away from civilization and has only the things on her back or pack animals. Unless a character is totally destitute, she is assumed to be able to buy food, clothing and shelter of some sort. A character with Resources 2 or more can afford any reasonable number of common household objects.

## The Resources System

Items in **Exalted** do not generally have a value in game-world money attached to them. Instead, they are rated with the number of dots in Resources a character must possess in order to purchase them. Of course, the character is paying in Realm jade, Guild silver dinars or paper scrip, but most players don't enjoy painstakingly keeping track of every jade bit that changes hands.

An item with a Resources cost *lower* than the character's Resources is an out-of-pocket expense. Within reason, the character can purchase as many of the items as she wants without a strain on her purse.

An item with a cost *equal* to the character's Resources is a serious expense. When she buys it, she lowers her Resources rating by one dot until it is increased through roleplaying.

An item with a cost *greater* than the character's Resources is too expensive for her.

## Clothing and Jewelry

| Item | Resources Cost |
|---|---|
| Peasant clothes | • |
| Fine or fancy clothing | •• |
| Courtly clothing (silk) | ••• |
| Royal raiment (cloth of gold studded with gems) | •••• |
| Noble jewelry (electrum and pinhead-size gems) | ••• |
| Royal jewelry (gold and pea-sized gems) | •••• |
| Imperial jewelry (orichalcum and pigeon's-egg sized gems) | ••••• |

## Slaves and Animals

| Item | Resources Cost |
|---|---|
| Unskilled slave | •• |
| Skilled slave (healthy, smart, Craft •••) | ••• |
| Concubine (skilled, attractive, disease free) | •••• |
| Keep for a slave for a year | •• |
| Domestic animal (camel, horse, ox or yeddim) | •• |
| Fine camel/horse (war or racing) | ••• |
| Elephant or mammoth | ••• |
| Fodder for a camel/horse for a month | • |
| Fodder for a yeddim for a month | •• |
| Fodder for an elephant for a month | •• |
| Stabling and keep for a work horse (per week) | •• |
| Stabling and keep for a fine horse (per week) | ••• |
| Stabling and keep for an elephant (per week) | ••• |
| Saddle and tack (basic) | •• |
| Saddle and tack (lavishly decorated) | ••• |
| Howdah | ••• |
| Fine simhata (lion-horse) | •••• |
| Meat for a simhata for a month | ••• |
| Stabling and keep for a simhata (per week) | ••• |
| Saddle and tack (basic) for a simhata | •• |
| Fine claw strider | ••• |
| Meat for a claw strider for a month | •• |
| Stabling and keep for a claw strider (per week) | ••• |
| Saddle and tack (basic) for a claw-strider | •• |
| Fine small exotic pet (gravehound, strangler's serpent) | ••• |
| Food for a small exotic pet for a month | •• |

## Property and Ships

| Item | Resources Cost |
|---|---|
| Buy an estate | •••• |
| Build a country villa or townhouse | •••• |
| Staff a country villa or townhouse for a month | ••• |
| Furnish a townhouse or villa | ••• |
| Furnish a *posh* townhouse or villa | •••• |

| | |
|---|---|
| Build a grand palace | ••••• |
| Staff a grand palace for a month | •••• |
| Furnish a grand palace (meager) | •••• |
| Furnish a grand palace (posh) | ••••• |
| Lavish feast for two dozen | ••• |
| Grand banquet for 200 | •••• |
| Erect a manse (rating • to •••) | •••• |
| Erect a manse (rating •••• to •••••) | ••••• |
| Passage across the Inland Sea | •• |
| Buy a yacht or ship | •••• |
| Crew and provender for a ship for a month | •••• |
| Crew and provender for a yacht for a month | ••• |
| Rent a crack mercenary company for a month | •••• |
| Rent a mercenary army for a month | •••• |
| Raise a new legion | •••• |
| Keep a legion armed, fed, paid, & in the field for a year | •••• |

## Guild and Business Expenses

| Item | Resources Cost |
|---|---|
| Initial dues to join the Guild | •• |
| Cheap caravan | • |
| Small caravan | •• |
| Dozen-wagon caravan | ••• |
| Caravan of two dozen wagons, 100 guards and hangers-on | •••• |
| Caravan of 100 wagons traveling for half a year or more | ••••• |

## Realm Expenses

| Item | Resources Cost |
|---|---|
| Price of Commission (Field Command) | ••• |
| Price of Commission (Legionary Command) | •••• |
| Donatives necessary to be named an Imperial prefect | •••• |
| Donatives necessary to be named an Imperial satrap | ••••• |
| Donatives necessary to have a child accepted at a good school (per annum) | ••• |
| Dragon-Blooded salon for a couple of dozen | ••• |
| Dowry for a mortal family marrying into a Dynastic house | •••• |

## Common Drugs

| Item | Resources Cost |
|---|---|
| Coca leaves | •• (• in the East) |
| Cocaine | •• |
| Heroin | •• |
| Maiden tea | •• |
| Marijuana | • |
| Opium | • |
| Qat | • |

### Maiden Tea (Resources 2)

Produced from the bitter fruit of a low bush that grows in warm climates throughout the world, this drug renders a woman infertile for a month or a man infertile for a week. This drug is a favorite of concubines, courtesans, soldiers, travelers, adolescents and men and women who wish to avoid conception as a result of affairs. Taking three or more doses at once makes the user mildly ill (one level of unsoakable bashing damage, and subtract one from all rolls until this heals). This level of dosage also induces abortions. Large overdoses (six or more doses) make the user violently ill (two levels of unsoakable bashing damage, and increase the difficulty of all rolls by one for 12 hours) and renders the user permanently sterile.

## Superior Equipment

The items detailed in these charts are serviceable but not extraordinary. Characters with money to burn may seek to buy or have made for them truly exceptional weapons or equipment. Such items will be available only in those areas that have talented, full-time artisans—typically large cities and military foundries. Even there, such equipment is usually custom ordered and rarely found in quantity. There simply aren't enough first-rate artisans to make superior gear in bulk. A character cannot begin the game with more than one item of superior equipment per dot of Resources, even if she might be able to afford more. (See p. 134 of the Drama chapter for details on making exceptional weapons.)

**Fine Equipment**

Fine weapons add one to one of the following characteristics: Accuracy, Damage, Defense, Range (bows add 50 yards, while thrown weapons add 10) or requirements (reduces one trait minimum by one). Fine armor adds 1L/1B soak. Fine tools add one die to a single Ability roll when used in the context of a single defined specialty (e.g., fine brushes could add +1 to Linguistics rolls using the Calligraphy specialty).

**Exceptional Equipment**

Exceptional weapons gain three +1s to divide among any of the characteristics that fine weapons can improve. They can also raise Rate, but the same characteristic cannot be raised more than once. Exceptional armor gains two +1 bonuses to divide among: soak (adds 1L/1B), mobility (reduces mobility penalty by one) or fatigue (reduces fatigue value by one). Exceptional tools and gear add one die to dice pools when used. Items of exceptional equipment cost their normal value plus one more dot of Resources.

**Perfect Equipment**

Perfect weapons provide two +1 bonuses and one +2 bonus to spend on the characteristics available for exceptional weapons but cannot improve Rate by +2. Perfect armor has a mobility penalty and fatigue value each -1 normal, as well as receiving two +1 bonuses to split among the characteristics available for exceptional armor. Perfect gear and tools add two dice when used. Items of perfect equipment cost their normal value plus two extra dots of Resources.

## Weapons

The following is a general list of commonly used weapons. Obviously, not every weapon is used or manufactured everywhere. Swords particularly require special forging and craftsmanship that make them difficult to find outside of military smithies and major urban areas.

Storytellers should bear in mind that, in many areas (including the Realm), it is impossible to legally obtain military weapons or armor of any sort without being a member of the ruling elite (or the military or without otherwise making arrangements with the powers that be). Most governments keep their populaces disarmed to prevent uprisings, and any large-scale smithing of military weapons and armor will be seen as an attack against the state. Many places do permit the inhabitants of rural areas to own hunting weapons, such as bows and spears, but these are typically subject to confiscation during periods of unrest.

## Hand-to-Hand Weapons

These are weapons used in close-quarter combat. Most, but not all, use the Melee Ability. However, if the character is using a martial-arts weapon, she may substitute her Martial Arts for Melee. This applies to both attacks and parries.

### Blades

**Chopping Sword**

This weapon is a sword with a chopping blade about three feet long. Some versions have a square or angled tip, while others sport a curve with a wicked back clip. Unlike the slashing sword, chopping swords are designed not for fencing and agility, but for delivering solid blows that hack through armor and bone.

| Speed | Accuracy | Damage | Defense | Rate | Minimums | Cost | Tags |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 4 | +1 | +5L/2 | -1 | 2 | Str •• | •• | O |

**Great Sword**

A great sword is a two-handed weapon used for hacking blows. These massive swords can be either single- or double-edged. Although these weapons are slow and unsuited to fencing, a strong blow from a great sword can cut a man in half.

| Speed | Accuracy | Damage | Defense | Rate | Minimums | Cost | Tags |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 6 | +1 | +7L/2 | -1 | 2 | Str ••• | •• | 2, O, R |

**Knife**

A knife is a weapon with a chopping and stabbing blade about a foot long, which can have a single or double edge. Most adults in the world of **Exalted** carry a knife, for utility as well as personal defense. Knives are used as tableware and to cut and pry, as well as for combat. Knives can also be used as thrown weapons (using the Thrown Ability).

| Speed | Accuracy | Damage | Defense | Rate | Minimums | Cost | Tags |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 5 | +1 | +2L | +0 | 3 | Str • | – | T |

**Short Sword**

Short swords are chopping weapons with blades about two feet long. Some are single-edged, while others have cutting edges on both sides. They are typically carried as weapons by soldiers and as tools by barbarians.

| Speed | Accuracy | Damage | Defense | Rate | Minimums | Cost | Tags |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 4 | +2 | +3L | +1 | 2 | Str • | • | – |

**Slashing Sword**

A slashing sword has a long, single-edged blade about three-feet long. These swords are quick and used primarily for arcing cuts. The slashing sword is favored by cavalry, as its shape and length make it suited for use from horseback.

| Speed | Accuracy | Damage | Defense | Rate | Minimums | Cost | Tags |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 4 | +1 | +3L | +0 | 3 | Str •• | •• | – |

**Straight Sword**

A straight sword has a double-edged blade about three-feet long, usually with a narrow blade or one that tapers slightly toward the tip. The tip is either pointed or chisel-shaped. Straight swords are well-balanced, accurate weapons, capable of deadly thrusts as well as slashing attacks.

| Speed | Accuracy | Damage | Defense | Rate | Minimums | Cost | Tags |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 4 | +2 | +3L | +1 | 2 | Str •• | •• | – |

## Impact Weapons

### Axe/Hatchet

A broad-bladed weapon balanced for use in one hand, an axe is easy to manufacture and of great utility as a tool as well as a weapon. Axes can also be thrown (using the Thrown Ability).

| Speed | Accuracy | Damage | Defense | Rate | Minimums | Cost | Tags |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 4 | +1 | +5L | -2 | 2 | Str •• | • | T |

### Club/Cudgel/Baton

This weapon is a sword with a chopping blade about three feet long. Some versions have a square or angled tip, while others sport a curve with a wicked back clip. Unlike the slashing sword, chopping swords are designed not for fencing and agility, but for delivering solid blows that hack through armor and bone.

| Speed | Accuracy | Damage | Defense | Rate | Minimums | Cost | Tags |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 5 | +1 | +6B | +0 | 2 | Str • | – | T |

### Great Axe

These fearsome long-hafted weapons are typically used for striking downward blows with terrific force. The great axe is a narrow-bladed axe designed for use in both hands, and it is a favorite weapon of the Realm's heavy infantry, which uses them during sieges and assaults.

| Speed | Accuracy | Damage | Defense | Rate | Minimums | Cost | Tags |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 6 | +1 | +7L/2 | -2 | 2 | Str ••• | • | 2, O, R |

### Hammer

Better balanced but lighter than maces, hammers are slow but powerful weapons. Some hammers are sculpted into the shape of animal heads, while others have been cut so that, whatever angle they're viewed from, they depict a symbol important to the wielder.

| Speed | Accuracy | Damage | Defense | Rate | Minimums | Cost | Tags |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 5 | +1 | +8B/2 | +1 | 2 | Str •• | • | O, P |

### Mace

A mace is nothing more than a heavy weight on the end of a handle. Such weapons deliver crushing, stunning blows to targets. In the world of Exalted, the heads of maces are often elaborately decorated.

| Speed | Accuracy | Damage | Defense | Rate | Minimums | Cost | Tags |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 5 | +1 | +8B/2 | +1 | 2 | Str •• | • | O, P |

### Poleaxe

Similar to the great axe but equipped with a longer haft and a heavier blade, the poleaxe is a slow but devastating weapon. While less accurate than the great sword, the poleaxe is considerably cheaper and requires less strength to wield than that mighty weapon. As a result, the poleaxe is a popular armament for heavy infantry.

| Speed | Accuracy | Damage | Defense | Rate | Minimums | Cost | Tags |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 6 | +0 | +7L/2 | +0 | 2 | Str •• | •• | 2, O, R |

### Scythe

Used for wide sweeping blows, scythes are thick, curved blades attached to a long handle, used by farmers for cutting swathes of grain—and occasionally employed on the battlefield to do the same to troops.

| Speed | Accuracy | Damage | Defense | Rate | Minimums | Cost | Tags |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 6 | +1 | +7L/2 | -2 | 2 | Str ••• | • | 2, O, R |

### Sledge

The sledge is a two-handed mace or hammer whose powerful strikes are slow and unwieldy. Like maces, many sledges are elaborately decorated. Their huge heads are often carved with battle scenes or fabulous beasts.

| Speed | Accuracy | Damage | Defense | Rate | Minimums | Cost | Tags |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 6 | -1 | +12B/4 | -3 | 1 | Str •••• | •• | 2, O, P, R |

### Staff

A staff is a length of sturdy wood, sometimes wrapped in metal bands or leather. Many staves are clearly weapons, but more than one ruffian has been thrashed by the well-worn walking stick of a traveler.

| Speed | Accuracy | Damage | Defense | Rate | Minimums | Cost | Tags |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 6 | +2 | +7B | +2 | 2 | Str •• | – | 2, R |

### Tetsubo

The tetsubo, favored by pragmatists for its simple construction, is a massive war-club studded with iron knobs.

| Speed | Accuracy | Damage | Defense | Rate | Minimums | Cost | Tags |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 6 | -1 | +12B/4 | -3 | 1 | Str •••• | •• | 2, O, P, R |

### Whip

A whip is a handle with a coil of leather thongs or tightly woven cord, primarily used by drovers to control beasts. Whips inflict more pain than damage, but a skilled user can entangle foes or wrench weapons from their grip. If a character uses a whip for a clinch, then she must use her Martial Arts Ability for the attack. Treat a flexible rod or cane without an attached lash as a whip, but without the disarming, reach and clinch enhancements. Authorities in some regions use caning as a means of punishing petty criminals.

| Speed | Accuracy | Damage | Defense | Rate | Minimums | Cost | Tags |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 5 | +1 | +1B | +0 | 2 | Str •, Dex ••• | • | D, R |

## Spears

### Javelin

The javelin is a small, light spear designed for throwing. It can be used in close combat if necessary but is not as effective as other spears.

| Speed | Accuracy | Damage | Defense | Rate | Minimums | Cost | Tags |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 4 | +1 | +3L | +1 | 2 | Str • | •• | T |

### Lance

The lance is a strong-shafted spear designed to be used from horseback. Lances are typically not used against other cavalry, but to ride down infantry. A character who uses a lance as a jabbing weapon uses the lesser Damage value listed on the chart. However, a character increases Damage to the higher value when charging on horseback or bracing against a charging opponent. The player of a character who successfully attacks with a lance from horseback must make a (Strength + Ride) roll at difficulty 1. A failed roll typically means either the character either loses his lance or is unhorsed. The player of a character using Harmony of Spirits Style or a similar effect need not roll for his character to retain his balance. If the target of the attack is mounted, use the lesser of the target's Ride or appropriate defensive Ability when determining knockback or knockdown. Using a lance effectively when on foot, or when unable to make a mounted charge, requires two hands.

| Speed | Accuracy | Damage | Defense | Rate | Minimums | Cost | Tags |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 6 | -1 | +10L* | -3 | 1 | Str ••• | • | L, R |
| 6 | -1 | +5L** | -3 | 1 | Str ••• | • | L, R |

*Used as charging or bracing weapon **Used as stabbing weapon

### Short Spear

A short-hafted weapon used primarily for stabbing, the short spear often has a long head so that it can be used for slashing and chopping in a pinch. Short spears are versatile weapons and much-favored by warrior cultures and elite troops as a result. Short spears do not gain the charging or bracing bonuses of their longer counterparts.

| Speed | Accuracy | Damage | Defense | Rate | Minimums | Cost | Tags |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 5 | +2 | +4L | +1 | 2 | Str • | • | R |

### Spear

One of the most versatile and simple weapons ever produced, the spear is a foot-long head attached to the end of a five- to six-foot-long pole. The head of the spear typically has extensions built into the sides to prevent it from going too deep into a target. Spears are inexpensive and effective and, as a result, are one of the most common armaments of soldiers everywhere. A character who uses a spear as a jabbing weapon inflicts the lesser Damage value listed on the chart. However, a character increases Damage to the higher value when charging or bracing against a charging opponent.

| Speed | Accuracy | Damage | Defense | Rate | Minimums | Cost | Tags |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 5 | +1 | +4L/7L | +2 | 2 | Str •• | • | 2, L, R |

## Martial Arts Weapons

Characters using martial arts weapons can use the higher of their Martial Arts or Melee Abilities when attacking or defending with the weapons. When using a Melee Charm, a character must use her Melee Ability, and using a Martial Arts Charm requires her to use the Martial Arts Ability. If she is using a Combo including Charms of both Abilities or is using Charms that do *not* require Abilities (as in the case of a Lunar), then she may use the higher of the two. Certain martial arts styles may allow different weapons to be used as if they were martial arts weapons, but this will be explicitly spelled out in the rules for the relevant style.

### Cestus

The cestus is an arrangement of leather straps that fits around the hand like a fingerless glove. These straps are covered in brass or iron studs, serving to enhance the wearer's punches. A character wearing cesti cannot block lethal attacks without a stunt.

| Speed | Accuracy | Damage | Defense | Rate | Minimums | Cost | Tags |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 5 | +0 | +3B | +2 | 3 | Str • | • | M |

### Fighting Chain

Fighting chains are slender, sturdy chains with small weights on either end. Most fighting chains are between three and five yards long. In addition to making ordinary attacks, fighting chains can be used to perform clinches and stunts involving grabbing onto, swinging from and pulling objects. (Second stat bar reflects item clinched.)

| Speed | Accuracy | Damage | Defense | Rate | Minimums | Cost | Tags |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 5 | -1 | +6B | +2 | 2 | Str ••, Dex ••••, Mrt •••• | 1 | M, R |
| 6 | -1 | +4B | – | 1 | Str ••, Dex ••••, Mrt •••• | 1 | C, M, P, R |

### Fighting Gauntlet

Fighting gauntlets are either articulated metal gloves or full-hand leather gloves covered in overlapping metal plates. Though they slow the character's blows, a character using fighting gauntlets may use her Martial Arts Ability to block attacks that inflict lethal damage. (Second stat bar reflects item clinched.)

| Speed | Accuracy | Damage | Defense | Rate | Minimums | Cost | Tags |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 5 | +0 | +5B | +2 | 2 | Str •• | •• | M |
| 6 | -1 | +3B | – | 1 | Str •• | •• | C, M, P |

### Hook Sword

The hook sword is similar in appearance to a straight sword, except it ends in a J-shaped hook that curves back along the inside of the blade. These weapons are always wielded paired.

| Speed | Accuracy | Damage | Defense | Rate | Minimums | Cost | Tags |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 5 | +0 | +3L | +3 | 3 | Str •, Dex •••, Mrt ••• | ••• | D, M |

### Iron Boot

As the name implies, an iron boot is a heavy leather boot covered in brass or iron studs or small plates of metal. Iron boots are always worn in pairs. A character wearing iron boots cannot use them to block lethal attacks without a stunt.

| Speed | Accuracy | Damage | Defense | Rate | Minimums | Cost | Tags |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 5 | +0 | +6B | -3 | 2 | Str ••, Dex •• | •• | M |

### Khatar

The khatar, also known as the punch dagger, is a single-bladed knife with a hilt assembly perpendicular to the blade. Held in a closed fist, the blade juts from the front of the character's fist so that the character's punches deliver deadly stabs. Although blows delivered while wearing khatars inflict lethal damage, these weapons cannot be used to block lethal attacks without a stunt.

| Speed | Accuracy | Damage | Defense | Rate | Minimums | Cost | Tags |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 5 | +0 | +2L | +3 | 3 | Str • | •• | M |

### Razor Harness

A razor harness is a brutal and bloody wrestling enhancement, consisting of leather straps covering the wearer in spikes and blades that wound grappled foes.

| Speed | Accuracy | Damage | Defense | Rate | Minimums | Cost | Tags |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 6 | -1 | +3L | – | 1 | Str • | ••• | C, P |

### Sai

Sai are three-pronged, fork-shaped weapons as long as large daggers, which are specially designed to twist weapons out of an opponent's grasp. (Second stat bar reflects item clinched.)

| Speed | Accuracy | Damage | Defense | Rate | Minimums | Cost | Tags |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 5 | +0 | +2L | +2 | 3 | Str •, Dex •••, Mrt ••• | •• | D, M |
| 6 | +2 | +1B | – | 1 | Str •, Dex ••• | • | C, D, R |

### Seven-Section Staff

This weapon, which can actually have from three to 12 sections, is made up of a number of segments of wood or metal connected by very short lengths of chain. The weapon is wielded as a combination of staff and flail and is very difficult to master. Someone able to wield it effectively is a dangerous opponent, but botches with this weapon are likely to be very damaging to the wielder.

| Speed | Accuracy | Damage | Defense | Rate | Minimums | Cost | Tags |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 5 | -2 | +7B | +3 | 2 | Str •, Dex ••••, Mrt •••• | •• | M |

### Tiger Claws

Tiger claws consist of a glove or gauntlet with three or four curved talons extending from the back. Tiger claws are most common in cultures that live close to big cats, but their intimidating appearance and the terrifying wounds they leave have spread them throughout Creation. Characters using tiger claws may use their Martial Arts Ability to block lethal attacks.

| Speed | Accuracy | Damage | Defense | Rate | Minimums | Cost | Tags |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 5 | +2 | +3L | +0 | 3 | Str • | •• | M |

### Wind-Fire Wheel/War Fan

This weapon can be as simple as an undecorated steel ring, but it typically has handles built into it and sharpened protrusions jutting from the top, bottom and front. These weapons, which are always wielded paired, are used to deliver crushing or slashing blows and to block or catch weapons.

| Speed | Accuracy | Damage | Defense | Rate | Minimums | Cost | Tags |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 5 | +2 | +1L | +2 | 3 | Str •, Dex •••, Mrt ••• | 2 | M |

## Unarmed

### Unarmed Fighting

Uncounted styles of unarmed combat have been developed in the millennia since the Primordials created the first human beings. Nevertheless, whatever the flourishes, all feature three basic sorts of attack, limited as they are by the natural weaponry available to the human form. These are the punch, the kick and the clinch.

| Name | Speed | Accuracy | Damage | Defense | Rate | Minimums | Cost | Tags |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Clinch | 6 | +0 | +0B | – | 1 | Str • | – | C, N, P |
| Kick | 5 | +0 | +3B | -2 | 2 | Str •, Dex •• | – | N |
| Punch | 5 | +1 | +0B | +2 | 3 | Str • | – | N |

## Thrown Weapons

Thrown weapons occupy a nebulous realm between melee weapons and bows. Many thrown weapons can be used in hand-to-hand combat but are generally more effective when thrown. When a thrown weapon is used in hand-to-hand combat, the character must use her Melee Ability. Obviously, if the character is throwing the weapon, she uses her Thrown Ability.

### Axe/Hatchet

A small one-handed axe, hatchets have very short ranges, but their weight and tumbling motion makes them deadly weapons. Hatchets are favored weapons of barbarians because of their utility.

| Speed | Accuracy | Damage | Rate | Range | Minimums | Cost | Tags |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 5 | +0 | +3L | 2 | 10 | Str •• | • | * |

### Chakram/Shuriken

A chakram is a small disc or ring of steel with sharpened outer edges. Shuriken are small star-shaped blades that can be thrown easily. The shape of both chakram and shuriken allows them to fly further than most thrown weapons.

| Speed | Accuracy | Damage | Rate | Range | Minimums | Cost | Tags |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 4 | +0 | +1L | 3 | 20 | Str • | • | – |

### Club/Cudgel/Baton

A short, blunt length of wood, the thrown club is used for hunting small animals and carried by the city guards in some of the more peaceful areas. These clubs can be used in hand-to-hand combat using the character's Melee Ability.

| Speed | Accuracy | Damage | Rate | Range | Minimums | Cost | Tags |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 5 | +0 | +3B | 2 | 10 | Str • | – | * |

### Javelin

Arguably the most powerful of the thrown weapons, the javelin is a small, light spear often carried in bundles. The javelin is faster than the hatchet and has a better range than a chakram. However, this effectiveness comes at a price—unlike other thrown weapons, javelins are bulky and difficult to conceal.

| Speed | Accuracy | Damage | Rate | Range | Minimums | Cost | Tags |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 4 | +1 | +3L | 2 | 30 | Str • | •• | *, P |

### Knife

Realistically, knives made for throwing are balanced differently than hand-to-hand blades. **Exalted** assumes that the difference is negligible to its heroes. Storytellers who desire a grittier feel may give a combatant using thrown knives in melee a -1 internal penalty to her Melee dice pool, and conversely give a combatant throwing knives made for melee a -1 internal penalty to Thrown.

| Speed | Accuracy | Damage | Rate | Range | Minimums | Cost | Tags |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 5 | +0 | +2L | 3 | 15 | Str • | – | * |

### Needle

Needles are the ultimate in subtle assassination instruments. These tiny spikes are as long as a small finger and as wide as a house cat's fang. They can be thrown with the flick of a finger or even held in the mouth and spat at a target. While they inflict very little damage, most assassins will equip their needles with poison. An attack gaining even a single level of (post-soak) damage subjects the victim to the effects of the poison.

| Speed | Accuracy | Damage | Rate | Range | Minimums | Cost | Tags |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 5 | -1 | 1L | 3 | 10 | – | • | P |

### Sling

Slings are small pouches with thongs attached to either side. A stone or lead sling "bullet" is placed in the pouch, and the sling is swung in a circle at high speed, hurling its projectile at great velocity. Slings are inexpensive and can use any rock of approximately the correct size as ammunition, but they are less accurate than bows. The sling uses the Thrown Ability to attack.

| Speed | Accuracy | Damage | Rate | Range | Minimums | Cost | Tags |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 5 | -1 | +2L | 1 | 100 | Str • | • | – |

### War Boomerang

These weapons are curved, flat pieces of sharpened metal or specially hardened ironwood that spin through the air with deadly force. While not normally designed to return, highly skilled characters can perform this impressive feat. Players of characters who have two or more dots in Thrown may make a second, reflexive (Dexterity + Thrown) roll if the boomerang misses its target. If this second roll succeeds, the boomerang curves around and lands within three yards of the thrower. If the thrower's player rolls three or more successes, then the boomerang actually returns to the thrower's hands.

| Speed | Accuracy | Damage | Rate | Range | Minimums | Cost | Tags |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 5 | +0 | +3L | 2 | 20 | Str • | • | – |

## Archery Weapons

Bows are the premier ranged weapons in the world of **Exalted**. A bow must be made for the character's Strength because if it is too strong for him he will have difficulty stringing or bending it. A bow fired by a character with higher Strength than it is built to accommodate uses the bow's maximum Strength and not the character's. Further, construction techniques place an upper limit on the maximum Strength bows of any given type can accommodate—there is simply no way to build a self bow as strong as some characters.

Other weapons requiring the Archery Ability include firewands, flame pieces and crossbows. Some Charms do not work as well—or even fail entirely—when used with archery weapons other than bows, while a few rare Charms specifically favor devices such as firewands.

### Bow Types

#### Composite Bow

Composite bows are made of layers of different woods, often reinforced with layers of horn. The only weakness of a composite bow, other than its expense, is the fact that it is held together with glue. If it becomes wet, the glue weakens, and the bow can come to pieces. As a result, most composite bows are bound in waterproof leather covers. A composite bow can be made for a character of any Strength, though bows for characters with legendary Strength (above 5) require special materials and cost at least Resources 4.

| Speed | Accuracy | Damage | Rate | Range | Max Strength | Cost* | Tags |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 6 | +0 | – | 3 | 250 | ••••• | •••/– | 2, B |

* Cost after slash is for ammunition.

### Long Bow

Longer than a self bow, the long bow is harder to pull and offers considerably more power. A character can never have a Strength of higher than 4 for purposes of determining a long bow's damage.

| Speed | Accuracy | Damage | Rate | Range | Max Strength | Cost* | Tags |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 6 | +1 | – | 3 | 200 | •••• | ••/– | 2, B |

* Cost after slash is for ammunition.

### Self Bow

A stout length of spring wood about three feet long, the self bow is bent along the wood's natural shape. Of simple construction, the self bow is not very powerful. A character can never have a Strength higher than 3 for the purposes of determining a self bow's damage.

| Speed | Accuracy | Damage | Rate | Range | Max Strength | Cost* | Tags |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 6 | +0 | – | 2 | 150 | ••• | •/– | 2, B |

* Cost after slash is for ammunition.

## Arrows

Weapons with the "bow type" tag base their damage on the ammunition used. Archers desiring flexibility carry a variety of ammunition to use for different purposes.

### Broadhead

Broadhead arrows have broad triangle- or leaf-shaped heads. The arrowhead is wide, to increase the amount of tissue damage done on a successful hit, but it still tapers to allow the arrow to penetrate armor. Broad arrows inflict the firing character's Strength +2L as their base damage.

### Fowling

Fowling arrows do not have a point. Instead, they have a round wooden bulb at the tip. They are normally used to hunt birds, which would be ruined by a direct hit from a normal arrow. However, they can also be used to stun targets without killing them. Fowling arrows inflict bashing damage equal to the firing character's Strength +2B as their base damage.

### Frog Crotch

Frog crotch arrows have a Y-shaped head, with the arms of the Y facing forward, sharpened on the inside. These arrows inflict hideous damage on tissue but perform terribly against armor. Frog crotch arrows use the firing character's (Strength + 4L) as their base damage, but the lethal soak of the target's armor is doubled before applying the damage.

### Target

Target arrows have no blades on their heads, simply hardened steel tips. Target arrows do the firing character's Strength +0L as their base damage, but are piercing, treating the lethal soak of the target's armor as half its true value (rounded down) when the damage is applied.

## Other Archery Weapons

### Crossbow

Only the people of the Haslanti League, a handful of elite mercenary formations and nigh-unseen groups such as the Autochthonians and the Mountain Folk use crossbows. The Haslanti based the design of these weapons on artifacts found during their excavation of the frozen city of Crystal. They consider these weapons secret and will not sell them to outsiders. Crossbows can fire only two types of bolts, blunt-headed fowling bolts that inflict bashing damage and steel-tipped armor-piercing bolts that act as target arrows do. Exceptional crossbows may increase Accuracy and Range but cannot increase their Rate.

| Speed | Accuracy | Damage | Rate | Range | Max Strength | Cost* | Tags |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 5 | +0 | 5L | 1 | 125 | – | ** | 2, B |

* Cost after slash is for ammunition. ** Crossbows are available only in the Haslanti League for a cost of ••.

### Firewand

Firewands are one-shot flame-throwers powered by firedust, a substance that can be found only deep in the Southern deserts. Made from finely turned brass with wooden or metal stocks, these weapons are the prized possessions of any soldiers lucky enough to own one. All firewands are breechloaders. The firedust must be loaded down the front of the barrel, and the weapon can hold only a single shot. Characters must use a miscellaneous action to reload the weapon after every shot. Also, while readily available in the South, firedust can be expensive and difficult to find elsewhere (Resources 1 in the South, 2 or higher outside the South). Many soldiers fit bayonets on the ends of their firewands and use them as crude spears once the weapon has been fired (treat as a short spear). Ten yards is the maximum Range the jet of flame will reach. Firewands have no longer Range.

| Speed | Accuracy | Damage | Rate | Range | Max Strength | Cost* | Tags |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 5 | +1 | 12L | 1 | 10 | – | •••/• | 2, F, S |

* Cost after slash is for ammunition.

### Flame Piece

A flame piece is a small firewand, made for use one-handed. Most are typically wielded by elite Southern cavalry, who use them to gain the advantage in horseback skirmishes. Eight yards is the weapon's maximum range. Flame pieces have no longer range. A character wielding a flame piece in each hand may increase her Rate to 2, but after firing, a flame piece requires a miscellaneous action to reload, just like a firewand.

| Speed | Accuracy | Damage | Rate | Range | Max Strength | Cost* | Tags |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 5 | +1 | 8L | 1** | 8 | – | ••/• | F, S |

* Cost after slash is for ammunition. ** Rate 2 if wielding a loaded flame piece in each hand.

## Chart Key

**Speed:** The Speed rating of the weapon.
**Accuracy:** This value is added to or subtracted from the character's (Dexterity + Ability) total when rolling for attacks using the weapon. Clinch attacks may use Strength instead of Dexterity.
**Damage:** This value is added to the character's (Strength + successes) to determine damage when she attacks with the weapon. If the number is followed by a B, then the weapon causes bashing damage, while a L indicates lethal damage, and an A represents aggravated damage. Weapons with the overwhelming or lance type tag have two Damage ratings (see Tag Key).
**Defense:** This value is added to the character's (Dexterity + Ability) total when she parries with the weapon.
**Rate:** The maximum number of attacks the weapon can make in a single flurry.
**Minimums:** The minimum number of dots in specific Attributes or Abilities required to wield the weapon effectively. The information is presented as a letter or letters followed by a number. The letter indicates the Attribute or Ability required. Str stands for Strength, Dex for Dexterity and Mrt for Martial Arts. The number of dots required is the minimum value the character must have to wield the weapon without penalty. For each dot the character is missing from any minimum, subtract one from the Accuracy and Defense of the weapon, and add one to its Speed (to a maximum total of Speed rating 6). This penalty can cause a weapon's Accuracy and Defense to become negative and can worsen already negative values.
**Cost:** This is the minimum Resources value necessary to purchase the weapon.
**Tags:** Special rules that apply to the weapon. See the Tag Key.

## Tag Key

| | |
|---|---|
| 2 = Two-Handed | Requires both hands to wield. |
| B = Bow Type | Damage based on or modified by ammunition type used. |
| C = Clinch Enhancer | Must be used for clinching wielded through Martial Arts. |
| D = Disarming | Adds additional +2 Accuracy when used to disarm an opponent. |
| F = Flame Type | Does not add Strength to damage; listed Range is the farthest the flame jet reaches. |
| L = Lance Type | Increases damage to second Damage value when charging or bracing against a charging opponent. |
| M = Martial Arts | May be wielded with Martial Arts or Melee. |
| N = Natural | Part of the body; not subject to disarming. Must be wielded with Martial Arts. Can parry only bashing attacks without aid of a stunt or magic. |
| O = Overwhelming | Damage after the slash is the innate minimum Damage of the weapon rather than the usual one die. |
| P = Piercing | Inflicts piercing damage, halving the target's armored soak (rounded down). |
| R = Reach | Can attack mounted targets or those at higher elevation without penalty. |
| S = Single Shot | Characters must use a miscellaneous action to reload the weapon after every shot. |
| T = Thrown | This weapon can also be thrown. See the thrown weapons table for statistics. |

### Weapons and Strength

Some weapons are unwieldy and require two hands to wield properly. Usually, this means the weapon is particularly heavy, though sometimes, it is an issue of weapon length and leverage. Such weapons have a tag of "2" on the weapon chart. The Exalted, and other beings with access to supernatural power, can sometimes achieve superhuman might and potentially overcome this requirement. Should a character have *triple* the minimum Strength necessary to wield a two-handed weapon, she can use the weapon one-handed. Attempting to use a weapon one-handed with less than the necessary Strength gives the wielder a -1 external penalty per point by which she fails to meet the triple-Strength requirement.

## Armor

Although many Exalted have Charms that allow them to fight without armor, most use some sort of protective gear, even if it's no more than a shield. Mortals, without the luxury of magic, are heavily reliant on armor in battle. Armor's protection is a double-edge sword, however. Though it defends the character against blows, it is fatiguing, and its bulk makes any sort of graceful maneuver—such as running, climbing or acrobatics—more difficult.

### Body Armor

Body armor is a character's primary protection against attacks. A character without armor or protective Charms will not live long in battle.

All armor has three important statistics. The first is its soak. Soak is represented by two numbers, separated by a slash and followed by a letter (L or B). The number with the L is the armor's protection against lethal damage, and the number with the B is its protection against bashing damage. When a character wears the armor, these numbers are added to her natural soak, and the result is subtracted from the raw damage of attacks made against her.

The second important number is the armor's mobility penalty. This is the number of dice subtracted from the character's dice pools when she tries to do anything requiring agility or physical dexterity. This penalty is an internal penalty, and it doesn't normally apply to attacks or parries, but it does apply to dodges and Athletics rolls for feats that require whole-body ability. The Storyteller can also apply this penalty to anything else she deems becomes difficult in 20 or more pounds of protective gear. Mobility penalties always apply to attempts to swim, and trying to swim in armor is very fatiguing.

The third important number is the armor's fatigue value. Player's must make a (Stamina + Resistance) roll when their characters wear armor, with a difficulty equal to the armor's fatigue value. If a player fails the roll, his character takes a -1 internal penalty to all actions due to soreness and fatigue. This penalty continues to accumulate as the character continues to fail Resistance rolls. Accumulated penalties dissipate at the rate of one point of penalty per eight hours of rest outside the armor.

The frequency with which the character has to make these rolls is determined by the weather conditions and the exercise in which the character is engaging. If a character is engaging in normal activity under a partly cloudy sky on a cool day, the player will have to make a roll every four hours of game time that passes. Characters in very hot weather, characters exposed to prolonged sun or characters engaging in strenuous labor will cause their players to have to make a fatigue roll more frequently. For each of those factors (extreme heat, sun and activity), halve the time between checks. The player of a character fighting a battle in a desert under a bright sun would be making (Stamina + Resistance) rolls every 30 minutes of game time.

Characters in the shade, in cold weather, or those not exerting themselves at all, double the time between checks. These factors can offset aforementioned the negative factors. For example, the player of a character exerting himself in cold weather would make Resistance rolls every four hours of game time—four hours, halved for hard labor and doubled for cold weather. The maximum amount of time a character can go between checks is eight hours. Even sleeping in armor is tiring to some degree.

Exalted characters have access to Resistance Charms that offset the negative effects of armor, and jade artifact armor is also known for being less fatiguing.

### Donning Armor

Armor is not a simple thing. It takes a number of minutes equal to the mobility penalty of a suit of armor to put it on (-0 penalty is treated as 30 seconds). A character who rushes can do it in half that time, but any botch her player later rolls almost certainly indicates that something has gone wrong with her armor. A poorly fastened strap may have come undone, or an inadequately tightened greave may have turned around. At the Storyteller's discretion, this botch can deprive a character of the armor's benefits or cause her significant penalties as the shifting armor deprives her of full mobility. Removing armor takes half as long as donning it, which may be important if the character is busy trying to get out of her armor in a hurry, to avoid drowning or to hide armor from the guards outside in the corridor. Rushing armor removal halves the time again but creates the opportunity for unfortunate botches.

Light Armor

**Breastplate**

Nothing more than a pair of fitted metal plates that cover the character's chest and back, this armor provides excellent protection for the character's vitals. Breastplates are common among military officers and scouts, both of whom need more protection than a chain shirt offers but still need a full range of motion and an armor that can be worn without causing too much fatigue.

| Soak | Mobility | Fatigue | Cost | Tags |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| +4L/2B | -1 | 1 | •• | May be concealed under heavy jacket or cloak. |

## Light Armor

### Buff Jacket

One of the most common types of armor in the world of **Exalted**, the buff jacket is a knee-length leather garment typically made from the hide of a mammoth or yeddim. The front of the coat overlaps completely—the inner and outer layer both fasten at the opposite shoulder. This setup doubles the jacket's protection across the wearer's vitals, as well as making it impossible to slip a blade through the seam where the jacket fastens. Most buff jackets have high, overlapping collars as well, to protect the wearer's neck.

| Soak | Mobility | Fatigue | Cost | Tags |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| +3L/4B | -1 | 2 | • | |

### Chain Shirt

A chain shirt is a pullover shirt made from links of extremely fine mail. This garment protects the wearer's chest, abdomen, shoulders and back. The armor's sleeves reach only halfway down the upper arm. Because they are unobtrusive and can be worn beneath most clothing, chain shirts are common among those who have reason to fear assassins.

| Soak | Mobility | Fatigue | Cost | Tags |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| +3L/1B | -0 | 1 | •• | May be concealed under normal clothes. |

## Medium Armor

### Chain Hauberk

A long-sleeved chain shirt, covering the character's arms, chest, abdomen and upper legs, the hauberk also typically includes greaves, to protect the character's lower legs. Chain hauberks are not worn directly against the skin—they typically include a layer of padding underneath to spread the impact of blows.

| Soak | Mobility | Fatigue | Cost | Tags |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| +6L/7B | -3 | 2 | ••• | |

### Lamellar

Lamellar armor is a breastplate composed of a series of interlocking horizontal bands. Lamellar is lighter and more flexible than a standard breastplate and allows better air circulation. Lamellar armor is assumed to include greaves to protect the wearer's lower legs, a skirt to protect his upper legs and bracer's to protect his wrists and arms.

| Soak | Mobility | Fatigue | Cost | Tags |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| +6L/8B | -2 | 1 | ••• | May be concealed under heavy jacket or cloak. |

### Reinforced Buff Jacket

A heavier version of the buff jacket, the reinforced buff jacket is a common armor among light cavalry, post-riders in dangerous territory, heavy scouts, brigands and mercenary infantry. It is also the standard armor of the Realm's light infantry.

The reinforced buff jacket is cut along the same pattern as the standard buff jacket, but the shoulders, neck and vitals are armored with swatches of chain or small metal plates. The overall effect is a heavier, more protective armor that isn't much more fatiguing than the standard buff jacket.

Concealed versions of this jacket are available, with the plates and chain sewn to the inside of the jacket. This armor is considerably more fatiguing to wear (+1 fatigue rating), but it also conceals the fact that the character is dressed for conflict and muffles the inevitable clank of the armor (mobility penalty for Stealth rolls is only -1 rather than the normal -2).

| Soak | Mobility | Fatigue | Cost | Tags |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| +5L/8B | -2 | 2 | •• to ••• | |

## Heavy Armor

### Articulated Plate

Articulated plate covers the wearer in interlocking metal plates held together by hinges and pins. Chain is only used to cover areas such as the armpits, groin and the back of the knees, where there's no way to plate armor to mimic the human range of motion. Articulated plate provides superior protection and maneuverability to plate-and-chain and is less fatiguing to wear. The only disadvantages are the vast skill necessary to forge it and the absurd prices such skilled craftsmen charge for their labor. This armor is commonly available only in the Realm and in the cities of Nexus and Lookshy.

| Soak | Mobility | Fatigue | Cost | Tags |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| +9L/9B | -3 | 2 | ●●●●● | |

### Plate-and-Chain

Plate-and-chain is similar to a reinforced breastplate, except that chain and padding is added to the armor to cover the areas that would otherwise be exposed. Plate-and-chain is the strongest commonly available armor and is the standard of heavy cavalry outside the Realm.

| Soak | Mobility | Fatigue | Cost | Tags |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| +8L/10B | -4 | 3 | ●●●● | |

### Reinforced Breastplate

A breastplate with attached shoulder guards, this armor also includes a skirt that protects the character's crotch and upper thighs, a pair of greaves to protect the lower legs and a pair of long bracer's to protect the character's forearms. The reinforced breastplate offers excellent protection to the areas it covers, but this protection is balanced by the fact that significant portions of the character are totally unarmored. The reinforced breastplate is the standard armor of the Realm's heavy infantry.

| Soak | Mobility | Fatigue | Cost | Tags |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| +7L/6B | -2 | 1 | ●●●● | |

## Superheavy Armor

### Chain Swathing

Chain swathing is composed of layer upon robe-like layer of overlapping mail. The character's torso and abdomen are covered by three to five layers of chain, while her arms and legs are protected by only two or three. This armor is massively fatiguing and cumbersome. Un-Exalted characters wearing it can march only short distances and usually need assistance to climb steps. Chain swathing is occasionally used in siege warfare but is more commonly seen armoring Exalted warriors who do not have access to the skilled armorcraft needed to forge superheavy plate.

| Soak | Mobility | Fatigue | Cost | Tags |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| +11L/14B | -6 | 5 | ●●●● | |

### Superheavy Plate

Massively reinforced articulated plate, this armor is similar to articulated plate but is in all ways superior. The plates are heavier, the pins and hinges that permit the armor's articulation are thicker and more durable, and the joints are large and sturdy enough that, in many cases, chain reinforcement can be dispensed with altogether. Superheavy plate is seen very occasionally in sieges but, most often, adorns the bodies of Exalted warriors, whose magic allows them to bear the massive burden of this armor as easily as a normal mortal endures the burden of lesser armor.

| Soak | Mobility | Fatigue | Cost | Tags |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| +12L/12B | -4 | 3 | ●●●●● | |

## Helmets

In the real world, the helmet is of critical importance because it protects the warrior's brain and sense organs. However, **Exalted** is a dramatic game, not a realistic one. Helmets are largely a cosmetic matter—a substitute for a striking hair style.

If a Storyteller is running a gritty game, he may wish to penalize characters who don't wear helmets by allowing a called shot at -1 external penalty to strike an unarmored head. Storytellers should make sure players know what kind of game they'll be playing in before killing a character with a shot to his unprotected skull.

Regardless of the game's genre, all helms are considered mechanically identical.

### Masked Helm

The masked helm is the standard for completing heavy armor. The design is a thicker pot helm, usually without a spire. An armored plate is affixed in front of the wearer's face. This plate has holes for the wearer's eyes and mouth but is usually decorated with some sort of ferocious beast. In the Realm, draconic images are common, while in the Threshold, the faces are typically those of dangerous beings—war spirits or predators such as wolves and tigers.

### Pot Helm

This helm is a rounded bowl that fits over the wearer's head. Typically, it is longer in the back than in the front, protecting the wearer's ears. These helms usually have a nosepiece and a neck guard in the back. The neck guard is either an extension of the helm itself or a drape of chain or armored leather. These helms also often have a so-called spire, a point cast into the helm that slopes gently downward into the body of the helmet, to make it difficult to land a stunning blow atop the crown.

### Slotted Helmet

One of the simplest and most durable helms, the slotted helmet is a cylinder, rounded at one end and open at the other, that fits over the wearer's head. The bottom is typically fluted to allow the wearer to move her head. A T-shaped slot in the front of the helm allows the wear to see, breathe and speak clearly. Slotted helmets are usually cast as a single piece, making them very strong, and are often used in areas where the craftsmanship is not up to forging a masked helm.

## Shields

Shields are tools used to block attacks. They vary in size and shape, but they all have the same purpose and function—they are strapped to the character's arm and interposed between the character's body and attacks. Some are made of light plywood with a metal rim around them, while others are made from layered ox-hide or even from hardwood faced with metal. Sturdiness is also a liability where shields are concerned; the heavier the shield's construction, the slower it is to block attacks. Few exceptional or enchanted shields exist—by their nature, shields have short life spans. Carrying a shield adds to a character's Defense rating, but shields and cover are not cumulative.

### Buckler

A buckler is a small shield, between one and two feet across, used to actively parry incoming blows. It raises the DV against hand-to-hand combat by one but does nothing to protect the character from ranged weapons.

### Target Shield

A large shield, able to effectively block missile fire. Target shields are usually round or roundly triangular in shape, and they are often emblazoned with a device or logo significant to the character or her cause. A target shield raises the DV against hand-to-hand or ranged attacks by one, but the character using the shield suffers an additional -1 mobility penalty to her armor (or suffers a mobility penalty of -1 if she is using no other armor).

### Tower Shield

Twice as tall as a target shield and at least as wide, a tower shield offers excellent protection against missile fire. Using a tower shield gives a +1 DV against hand-to-hand combat and a +2 DV against ranged attacks.

The user of a target shield suffers an additionally -2 mobility penalty or suffers a -2 mobility penalty if he is using no other armor. Most tower shields have a series of straps that allow the user to attach the shield to his body during use. In this configuration, the shield provides the same protection as a target shield, but the character has both hands free. While this is useful, it is a cumbersome arrangement—adding one to the fatigue value of the character's armor.

## Everyday Wonders

Though mortal men have little access to the sort of magic wielded by Exalted, spirits and the Fair Folk, they are not completely without the ability to wield occult power. In a time as magical as the Second Age of Man, there is power to be found in even the smallest acts. Though the Exalted often overlook this magic as beneath them or useless compared to the power to directly shape Essence, the sorcery that men can accomplish is neither worthless nor useless. Mortal thaumaturges practice geomancy, astrology, warding, weatherworking and other crafts, and they also have access to a variety of minor wonders to ease their burden and tilt the scales of fate in their favor.

### Age-Staving Cordial (Resources •••)

Created from the sap of a vine from the jungles of the Far East and the poison of a species of clam from the Southwest coasts, this drug is sold as small packets of dark red powder. When mixed with water or wine, it creates a brew that slows aging. Anyone taking weekly doses of age-staving cordial will live 25 percent longer than someone who doesn't have regular access to the drug.

### Ghost Flower Tea (Resources •••)

This rare and unusual drug consists of the ground dried petals of the luminous, palm-sized ghost flower, which grows only in shadowlands in the temperate portions of the East. Users steep ghost flowers with water, creating a faintly luminous tea that they drink just before sleep. The first few times it is used, ghost flower tea produces vivid dreams in which the user can see and communicate with any ghosts nearby. Continued use (more doses than the user's [Stamina + Resistance] in a single season) means that the user builds up enough resistance to the drug that she can remain awake while under its influence and see and communicate with ghosts while awake. Taking more than ([Stamina + Resistance] x 3) doses in a single season allows the user to touch and be touched by ghosts. She can fight duels with ghostly opponents, or even take ghostly lovers. Frequent users appear pale and sickly, and their lips glow faintly in dim light. Ghosts can also take ghost flower tea and use it to communicate with the living in a similar way. Anyone who dies from taking ghost flower tea becomes a ghost herself.

### Seven Bounties Paste (Resources •••)

Seven bounties paste is, as its name suggests, made from the roots of seven rare plants. When mixed with alcohol, it makes an extremely hot-tasting, bitter, red paste normally mixed with rice and broth to render it palatable. The seven bounties paste can cure almost any illness, save leprosy and the Great Contagion. The player of a character imbibing the paste can make an immediate difficulty 1 (Stamina + Resistance) roll, without any penalties, for the character to overcome any ailment from which she suffers, be it a sickness or an infected wound. Each of the seven bounties affects the character once—roll once for each successive day for seven days for the character to overcome the effects of the illness. Seven bounties paste is rare to begin with—in times of plague, its price can rise to astronomical levels.

### Sweet Cordial (Resources ••••)

Brewed from orchids found only in the Southeast jungles, tubers from the slopes of the Imperial Mountain and the glands of certain deep-sea fish found only near the Elemental Pole of Water, this cordial's overwhelming sweetness is matched only by its astronomical price. Yet, despite that price, this thick purple potion is constantly on demand.

Immediately upon imbibing this elixir, the character falls into a narcotic haze for the next 12 hours. Her player may make a (Stamina + Resistance) roll at difficulty 1, without wound penalties, for the character to recover from the effect of any wound-related infections. She also automatically heals one health level while under the cordial's effects. Once the cordial has been drunk, it remains in the character's system for a full 28 days. If the potion is taken again before it passes naturally from the characters system, it acts as a hallucinatory poison. The character suffers 12 hours of horrifying narcotic hallucinations and her player must succeed in a (Stamina + Resistance) roll or the character takes four health levels of lethal damage.

### Celestial Wine (Resources •••••)

This wine comes from Yu-Shan, the city of the gods, and even there, it is reserved for the Celestial Incarnae and the highest gods. If it should be found in Creation, then it has been stolen, which carries a commensurate price. Each bottle of this Heavenly wine holds three glasses worth of liquid. A single glass of celestial wine will heal a number of health levels equal to the character's Essence trait. Alternatively, a glass will cure any poison or disease from which the character is suffering, including the Great Contagion. Drinking three glasses in one day will return a character to full health levels, and the drinker will be immune to all poisons and to all diseases weaker than the Great Contagion for a year and a day afterward.

### Prayers and Offerings (Resources Vary)

Though they are detached, the Elemental Dragons, the Maidens, and even the Unconquered Sun are not indifferent to human affairs. (And far less all the other gods, great and little, who would be glad of direct worship!) They are simply aloof from these events and little concerned with the goings and doings of individuals.

Yet, for all their distance, offerings that please them can draw the gods' favor. The gods love these things, among others: the thighbones of meat animals, wrapped in fat and burned as offerings; precious things broken in their honor; the blood of sacrificial animals or humans poured over their altars; and the smoke from burning incense and prayer papers.

In order to gain the favor of the gods, the priest must first make an offering and then beseech the gods for their attention and aid. This is a (Charisma + Performance) roll, whose difficulty is (6 – the Resources value of the offering). If the individual mak-

ing the offering is not a priest of the god prayed to, the difficulty increases by one. Though some might wish otherwise, all Zenith Caste Solar Exalted are priests of the Unconquered Sun.

The favor of the gods is a subtle thing. It comes in the shape of portents and fortunate turns of fate, not as divine resurrections and armies of Heavenly warriors. Rarely do the gods interfere so visibly in the world of men, for they are wise and know that men lose their fear of those things to which they have grown accustomed.

In mediating this, the Storyteller should keep in mind that the attention of the gods is a source of good luck. Their benevolent notice brings favorable circumstances—accurate dreams and forebodings of future events, good fortune rather than bad. They are not the sorts of things that have mechanical events, nor do they guarantee success, but they simply tilt the tables somewhat in the character's favor.

## Talismans (Resources Vary or Artifact •)

It is human nature to attempt to persuade fate and chance to change their course. Some pray to the gods, while others carry magic charms and talismans to bring them luck. In the world of **Exalted**, these methods are quite effective, if unreliable.

Most talismans are generated by a natural event—a stroke of good luck, a noteworthy deed—whose magic lingers in mementos of the incident. Individuals seek out the best mementos they can find and cross their fingers.

Talismans can also be created by thaumaturges and occultists, Exalted and otherwise. By combining materials pleasing and displeasing to the spirits and the gods, a magician may seek to make a lucky item. The raw materials for such an undertaking are often costly, and the results are uncertain, but the chances of success are better than attempting to get a talisman by gathering mementos.

Both sorts of talismans are offered for sale, though the buyer should beware of fakes. The natural sort usually have a cost between Resources 1 and 3, while the created sort begin at Resources 3 and go up from there. It requires a successful difficulty 3 (Intelligence + Occult) roll to create an effective talisman, though the difficulty decreases to 2 if the character actually has the memento of an appropriate event from which to work.

It is impossible to tell, from visual inspection, if a talisman is effective. A character with Occult 2 or higher can make certain simple tests on the item involving spoken words or passes of the hands. This testing requires a difficulty 1 (Perception + Occult) roll. If successful, the character can tell whether the talisman possesses true power.

The talismans described here represent just a small selection of the kinds available. For example, there are fertility talismans for crops, livestock and humans as well as charms for safe sea voyages and for luck in business. For every endeavor, thaumaturgy has produced a magical helpmeet, sometimes effective but often not.

It's worth noting that the effects of multiple talismans of the same type do not stack. In general, a character will benefit from only the best talisman she carries, though the Storyteller might wish to extend some additional benefit to truly prodigious talisman collections.

Each type of talisman has an effect and lists the possibility of more potent talismans with two or three times that effect. A talisman with the basic effect has a talisman rating 1, with rating 2 talismans having double the effect and rating 3 being triple. Naturally occurring talismans usually sell for Resources equal to their rating, while manufactured talismans generally cost one or two dots more. Storytellers may allow characters to gain talismans through the Artifact Background—three total points of talisman rating, whether from one potent talisman or multiple weaker talismans, is approximately equal to one dot of Artifact.

**Charms Against Disease**

One of the rarest and most valued talismans is a charm against disease. Carried on a character's person, this talisman adds one die to the (Stamina + Resistance) roll made to withstand disease and one die to the (Stamina + Resistance) roll made to overcome its effects. Used to protect a household, the talisman adds two dice to the (Stamina + Resistance) rolls made for all those within when they attempt to resist infection. However, the charm is effective only so long as the individuals are within the warded house. Very strong charms against disease have double or even triple these effects.

**Good Luck Charms**

Good luck charms don't so much give a character good luck as protect him from bad luck. Once per story, a good luck charm will protect the character from the negative effects of a botch, either one the player rolls or one another player rolls that would hurt the talisman-carrying character. This protection may have indirect effects. For example, if the character is aboard a ship that crashes into a shoal due to pilot mishap, he might be picked up by a passing ship or might find a floating spar and be cast safely ashore. Very powerful good luck charms will negate two or three botches in a single story.

**Walkaways**

Naturally occurring walkaways are created from mementos of an impressive accidents where the survivors should have been killed or maimed, but instead emerged unharmed (hence the name). Once per story, an effective walkaway will negate one success on a single, life-threatening damage roll. Very powerful walkaways can negate two or even three successes, but they must all be from the same damage roll.

**Warding Charms**

There are different talismans that protect against the Fair Folk, spirits, elementals, demons or the walking dead. These charms cause beings of the appropriate type to suffer a -1 penalty to all their dice pools when attempting to affect the wearer. Very powerful warding charms might have double or even triple this effect. Magical beings can sense when an individual is warded against their power and often react with hostility. Warding charms are the easiest sort of talismans to make—reduce the cost and difficulty of the rolls involved by one.

### Prayers, Offerings and Talismans

| Item | Resources Cost |
|---|---|
| Premade prayer papers | • |
| Special prayer papers | •• |
| Small animal sacrifices | •• |
| Large animal sacrifices | ••• |
| Burning rare incense | •••• |
| Found good luck talisman | • |
| Found disease talisman | •• |
| Found warding charm | ••• |
| Created warding charm | •••• |
| Created good luck charm | •••• |
| Created walkaway | ••••• |

## Lesser Wonders

Not all of the magic of the Exalted is of earth-shaking potency. There are many items that were created for simple utility, from hearthstones to lesser enchanted items.

Many lesser wonders are items of jewelry or ornamentation, which have been popular with the Exalted since the First Age. Not only do they serve as ornaments, but some allow hearthstones to lie against a character's skin and often provide lesser magical bonuses as well.

## The Cost of Power

Artifacts are tremendously powerful, but that power is dependent, in part, on the Exalted who wield them. The Essence required to operate such an item is not negligible, even for one of the Exalted. When a character carries or wields an artifact, she must usually commit one or more motes of Essence to the use of the item, just as if she was sustaining the magic of a Charm that cost the same number of motes to activate. Committing Essence to an artifact requires the user to attune her anima to the item.

The process of attuning an artifact to the character's anima is not instantaneous. It takes at least 20 minutes of handling and practicing with the item. Also, the attunement dissipates if the character does not make daily skin contact with the item.

In addition, items that are attuned are easier to wield, becoming light in the hand and light to carry as well. A character who does not remain attuned to an artifact weapon such as a daiklave will have a 20-pound burden strapped to her back.

If an item requires committed Essence to attune it, then its powers cannot be called upon by anyone who has no motes of Essence to commit. Most artifacts are therefore useless to mortals. If an artifact has no attunement or commitment cost, however, a mortal can use it. Indeed, the Exalted occasionally crafted occult items with mortals in mind.

### Producing Wonders

| Item | Resources Cost |
|---|---|
| Jade-working materials | ••• (•••• for a Shogunate Era set) |
| Orichalcum-forging mirrors | •••• |
| Building a mundane workshop | ••• |
| Monthly supplies for a mundane workshop | •• |
| Building a well-equipped sorcerous/alchemical workshop | ••••• |
| Maintaining a well-equipped sorcerous/alchemical workshop per month | •••• |
| Hiring a savant expert in First Age matters | •••• |

### Collar of Dawn's Cleansing Light (Artifact •)

This artifact comes in a variety of forms—studded bands, chokers, torcs, collars, delicate necklaces and the like. Any piece of neck adornment is appropriate, and these items are still quite common today. Many of the Dragon-Blooded in the Second Age own and wear them when possible, not just for their useful properties, but also to show off.

The purpose of this collar is to keep its wearer clean in every respect. She could spend weeks living beneath a rubbish heap and emerge at the end as though she had just spent hours preparing for a grand ball. The artifact negates all penalties to Social rolls that would be applied due to the character being dirty or unkempt. Attuning to the collar extends its powers beyond the Exalt's clothing to her physical body. The artifact's cleansing light adds two dice to (Stamina + Resistance) rolls made against disease or poison. The collar requires the commitment of one mote of Essence to become active.

### Hearthstone Amulet (Artifact •)

Hearthstone amulets were common in the First Age because they allowed Exalted to carry hearthstones innocuously and inconspicuously. Each hearthstone amulet contains a setting for a single hearthstone. A character wearing such an amulet against her skin gains the basic benefits of a hearthstone—that is, the ability to regain Essence more quickly. However, a character can commit one mote of Essence to the amulet, and doing so causes the amulet to resonate and activates the hearthstone. If the character removes the amulet, the benefit dissipates.

Hearthstone amulets are made in each of the five magical materials:

**Orichalcum:** Orichalcum amulets are most commonly starbursts in varying patterns, though other common shapes include leopard and eagle heads, or the shapes of the various caste marks. A Solar Exalt who is attuned to an orichalcum amulet set with a hearthstone regains one additional mote of Essence per hour.

**Moonsilver:** Most often, moonsilver amulets are designed in the "moonburst" form, a stylized moon-face that depicts both the full and crescent moon. Other common symbols are owl and wolf heads, inward-turning spirals and simple teardrops. A Lunar Exalt who is attuned to a moonsilver amulet set with a hearthstone regains one additional mote of Essence per hour.

**Jade:** Jade amulets from the First Age are typically carved in abstract elemental shapes or representations of the Elemental Dragons. Post-Contagion jade amulets are of much cruder workmanship and usually show Immaculate symbolism. A Dragon-Blood who is attuned to a jade amulet set with a hearthstone regains one additional mote of Essence per hour.

**Starmetal:** Starmetal amulets are very rare, as starmetal is not common enough to waste on items of little power. Those that exist are minimalistic, no more than drawn-wire cages for their hearthstones. A Sidereal Exalt who is attuned to a starmetal amulet set with a hearthstone regains one additional mote of Essence per hour.

**Soulsteel:** Because soulsteel was very rare until the modern Age, there are no known surviving amulets of First Age manufacture. Recent ones that have been seen are decorative or forged in death motifs (skulls, bones and the like). An Abyssal Exalt who is attuned to a soulsteel amulet set with a hearthstone regains one additional mote of Essence per hour.

## Yasal Crystal (Artifact • or ••)

This extraordinarily valuable yellow gemstone can trap minor spirits and newly made ghosts. To imprison a spirit, the user must touch the spirit and spend a point of temporary Willpower. The spirit cannot typically have an Essence greater than 2, though some very large and rare stones can imprison spirits of up to Essence 3 (these larger stones count as Artifact 2). Each stone can hold only a single spirit at a time, and anyone holding the stone can free the spirit at will.

Once imprisoned in yasal crystal, spirits can communicate with anyone who touches the stone, but they cannot escape on their own or use any of their Charms. Instead, whoever touches the stone can use a captive spirit's powers as if they were his own, if the holder of the stone has the spirit's permission. To obtain this permission, the holder must usually bargain with the spirit, typically requesting the free use of its powers for a set number of times. After exhausting all the uses, or after a set time period (rarely more than a month), the holder agrees to free the spirit. While the holder is under no obligation to keep this promise, those who break it end up with uncooperative spirits inside useless rocks. Also, spirits who break free from such an oathbreaker will undoubtedly attempt to take dire vengeance on him and might have the help of friends and allies.

## Dragon Tear Tiara (Artifact ••)

Another common decorative item during the First Age, these tiaras and circlets were forged from the magical material favored by their intended wearer and incorporate the same motifs used in hearthstone amulets. Regardless of the material from which they're crafted, all dragon tear tiaras provide the same benefits.

Each has a setting for a hearthstone located directly over the character's caste mark. Dragon tear tiaras require the commitment of two motes of Essence to activate the hearthstone and the tiara's own magical powers. When attuned, the tiara adds one die to the character's Perception pool. The character instead gains a bonus of three dice when she is attempting to perform geomancy, to use astrology, to detect spirits or to otherwise perform tasks that require occult sensitivity. This does *not* include rolls for sorcery.

## Hearthstone Bracers (Artifact ••)

Another common survivor of the First Age (and still manufactured occasionally the Dragon-Blooded), hearthstone bracers provide powerful defensive bonuses to the Exalt who wear them. These bracers come as a pair, one of which has a setting for a single hearthstone and the other of which is imbued with magical power. These powers work only for an Exalt of the appropriate type.

Hearthstone bracers require the commitment of four motes of Essence to activate them—two motes for each bracer. A bracer *must* be worn with its mate and will not activate unless worn as a pair. Regardless of construction, hearthstone bracers provide a three-die bonus to dodge attempts made by an attuned user.

**Orichalcum:** Ornately wrought in homage to the Unconquered Sun, these bracers cause the Solar Exalt who wears them to strike with the surety and power of the Unconquered Sun. All of the character's attacks have their damage increased by two dice while he is wearing the bracers.

**Moonsilver:** Almost liquid or organic in appearance, moonsilver bracers lend a Lunar wearer the bracers' own somewhat protean nature. The character's lethal soak increases by two as her body adapts to flow around attacks.

**Jade:** Carved in elaborate draconic shapes, these bracers cause Dragon-Blooded characters wearing them to move with the speed of a striking dragon. These characters gain a -1 bonus to their Speed ratings for hand-to-hand or ranged attacks.

**Starmetal:** Starmetal bracers are decorated with elaborate abstract and astrological designs. Like much else made of starmetal, they are typically of minimalistic design, so as not to waste the precious stuff. Sidereal Exalted who attune these bracers to their animas move more in accordance with destiny. They add one to their weapons' Accuracy and Defense.

**Soulsteel:** These items are uncommon, simply because the Deathlords rarely waste time forging objects of little power for their underlings. Soulsteel bracers are typically decorated with the sort of imagery common in war-tools in the Underworld—weeping faces, shrieking souls, skulls and the like. Soulsteel bracers bring the forces of entropy to bear on their target, decreasing her lethal and bashing soaks by two against the Abyssal's attacks. This effect cannot reduce a target's soak below 0.

## Mask (Artifact ••)

These seemingly plain ivory face masks have played an important part in Exalted political and emotional intrigues since the First Age. A mask can allow an Exalt to alter her appearance to look like anyone she wishes and to completely control the emotions that her face shows. This has the effect of adding four dice to her (Intelligence + Larceny) pool for any attempt at disguise. However, the artifact must be attuned to take advantage of its powers, and doing so costs five motes. When attuned, the mask also grants an extra four dice to any attempt to misdirect another as regards to the wearer's true motives, such as during social combat.

### Items of the Wrong Material

Most magical items intended for use by the Exalted are made from one of the five magical materials and provide additional bonuses to Exalted who are most closely attuned to that material. Orichalcum is the material associated with Solars. Moonsilver items usually provide extra bonuses when wielded by Lunar Exalted. Jade alloys are favored by Dragon-Bloods, and many of the Terrestrial Exalted prefer the specific color of jade matching their personal aspect. Starmetal is particularly auspicious when used by the Sidereals. Soulsteel is forged in the Underworld, and it resonates best with Abyssal Exalts.

It is possible, but not easy, for an Exalt to gain these extra bonuses even if she is not of the appropriate type. To do so, the character must commit *twice* as many motes of Essence as normal to activate the item, and her player must make a (Wits + Lore) roll at difficulty 3. If she succeeds, her character harmonizes the artifact fully with her own anima and gains the additional bonuses as if she were an Exalt of the appropriate type.

If the (Wits + Lore) roll fails, the character suffers a health level of unsoakable lethal damage from the harmonic feedback and must drop the item. This feedback also causes any hearthstones in the item to shatter, though they will reform naturally at their manses of origin over the next month. A botch on this roll can cause the damage or destruction of the item itself.

If an Exalt of the wrong type is unwilling to commit such a large amount of Essence, he may still minimally attune to the item for the standard mote cost. In this case, the Exalt gains the attunement but none of the benefits of the material's construction.

## Hearthstones

Hearthstones are the talismans of the Exalted. Where mortal men gather mementos of magic, the Exalted harvest its very fruits. From the heart of a manse grows a crystal of pure magic, usually about the size of a large chicken egg. Such crystals are of unearthly beauty, growing naturally in beautiful cuts. Yet, it is not for their luster that the Chosen prize them.

Many items made of the five magical materials have sockets in them to permit the mounting of these crystals. When an Exalt is attuned to a manse, places that manse's hearthstone into an item made with one of the five magical materials and then invests Essence in the item to attune it to himself, the hearthstone resonates as well. Such a resonant hearthstone has a beneficial effect on the Exalt who carries it. This effect is determined by the architecture of the manse that produced the stone and the nature of the demesne that forms the manse's foundation. Some provide minor bonuses, while more powerful hearthstones grant great magical powers.

### Hearthstones of Air

#### Gemstone of Surface Thoughts (Manse ••)

This round, light-blue gem allows the bearer to read someone's surface thoughts. He just has to concentrate on his target, who must be within (Essence x 10) yards, and the wind whispers her thoughts into his ear. The bearer's player rolls (Perception + Awareness). The more successes achieved, the clearer the information is. A single success will bring only words and perhaps a short phrase. Four or more successes will give a detailed idea of what the target is thinking. If the target suspects what is happening, she may resist with (Wits + Integrity), making the use of the stone a contested roll.

#### Windhands Gemstone (Manse •••)

This hearthstone is perfectly clear—so clear that it becomes invisible if submerged in clear water. A character bearing this hearthstone has his reflexes enhanced, allowing him to knock aside or dodge arrows and thrown attacks with casual ease. When this character is subject to a ranged attack, he may apply his DV (Dodge or Parry DV, at his choice) without defense penalties or onslaught penalties and can parry lethal attacks unarmed. This effect does not refresh his DV; it merely lets him ignore the relevant penalties to his DV when defending against ranged attacks.

### Hearthstones of Earth

#### Gem of Adamant Skin (Manse ••••)

This hearthstone is a glittering, flawless black ovoid. The character who bears it is difficult to cut, and her bones are virtually unbreakable. Lethal damage done to her is automatically converted to bashing before soak is applied. Bashing damage may still convert to lethal due to excess damage, as normal. This hearthstone has no effect on aggravated damage.

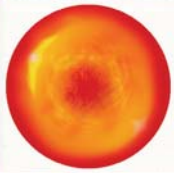
#### Gem of Immortality (Manse •••••)

This hearthstone is a smooth, darkest black, with the faintest rainbow sheen playing across its surface. While he bears the stone, the character does not age, nor does he suffer from the infirmities and illnesses of old age, should he already be old when he gets the stone. He cannot die of old age or illness, but he can be harmed and killed through other means. If he stops carrying this stone or loses attunement to the manse, he will start to age normally.

## Hearthstones of Fire

### Gem of the Calm Heart (Manse •)

This hearthstone is teardrop-shaped, and the bright red of heart's blood. It serves to bank the fires of the character's heart, allowing him to act out of reason rather than anger. The hearthstone allows the character who bears it to spend three motes of Essence, in the place of a temporary Willpower point, to suppress a Valor check.



### Jewel of the Hungry Fire (Manse ••)

This gem is bright orange-red around the edges, deepening to a glowing brick red at the center, like the coals of a banked fire. The hearthstone draws heat and flame into itself, protecting the character. Add six to the character's soak when applying damage from fire attacks. Also give him two bonus dice for rolls related to resisting heat, such as might result from being lost in the desert.

## Hearthstones of Water

### The Freedom Stone (Manse •••)

This stone is a murky blue-black, full of shifting colors. A character who bears this hearthstone can never be physically restrained. Shackles and ropes will fall away, knots and nooses will come undone. All grapple, clinch, hold and throw maneuvers attempted against her will automatically fail. Note that while the character cannot be restrained, she can still be confined—this hearthstone does nothing to counter locked doors and barred gates.

### Seacalm Gemstone (Manse ••••)

In appearance, a fist-sized drop of brilliant azure seawater caught in perfect stasis, this hearthstone brings the character incredible luck at sea. No matter how severe the weather or how poor the handling, the character's ship will never founder at sea and will, in fact, emerge unscathed. Note that this does not protect it from rocky shoals, pirates or anything of the sort—it only protects the character's ship from weather-related mishaps. Note that this is more powerful than it sounds—a character can ride before a gale with full sails and have no fear of ripped cloth or snapped masts. Storm spirits may respect, fear or hate the character bearing this hearthstone according to their temperament.

## Hearthstones of Wood

### Stone of Healing (Manse •)

This hearthstone is a healthy earth-brown, mottled with spots of green. It is round in shape and could have come from the bottom of any common streambed, were the colors not so vibrant. The stone enhances the medical talents and knowledge of any character who bears it, making an unskilled character into a skilled surgeon and a gifted physician into a brilliant healer. A character bearing this stone has three dice added to all Medicine rolls made by her player.

### The Monkey Stone (Manse ••)

This hearthstone is a rich reddish brown, with a surface that looks like bark. It gives the bearer the agility of an arboreal primate. Any character who possesses such a stone reduces the difficulty of all Athletics rolls involving balance, jumping or climbing by two (to a minimum of difficulty 1) In addition, the stone doubles the character's climbing speed and the distance she can jump.

## Celestial Hearthstones

The majority of demesnes are associated with one of the five elements, and the manses built upon them reflect this fact. However, a small fraction of manses and demesnes form from Essence attuned to one of the types of Celestial Exalted—Abyssal, Lunar, Sidereal or Solar. Abyssal manses usually lie in the Underworld, though some were once normal manses now tainted by the presence of a shadowland. Lunar manses are generally found in uncivilized regions of Creation, unfortunately sometimes in areas dangerously affected by the Wyld. Sidereal manses are most often found within the Celestial City of Yu-Shan, but some lie in hidden locations of great auspiciousness. Solar manses are universally the remnants of First Age glory, now mostly held by the power of the Realm or remaining untouched due to terrible defenses that are still intact.

## Hearthstones of the Celestials

### The Death-Speech Gemstone (Manse •••)

This Abyssal hearthstone is cobalt blue and perfectly egg-shaped. The bearer may concentrate (as a miscellaneous action) to initiate a conversation with any corpse, so long as there still some flesh left on the bones. The corpse will have no knowledge that it didn't already have when it died.

### Gem of Grace (Manse •••)

This Solar hearthstone is a cloudy white sphere. Its possessor evokes mild feelings of awe and respect in others, even other Exalted. The gem adds two dice to Charisma and Manipulation rolls provided the affected being can see the bearer.

### Dream-Stone (Manse ••••)

This Sidereal hearthstone is a smooth black stone with abstract white markings. When its bearer remembers her dreams, they will always be prophetic in some way. Once each episode, the bearer's player may make a (Wits + Occult) roll upon her character's waking. Any success at all causes her to remember a dream from the night before that gives some indication of events to come. The more successes she receives, the clearer the dream.

### Seven Leaping Dragon Stone (Manse ••••)

This Solar hearthstone is a translucent reddish-orange gemstone with a golden-orange iridescence that plays across its surface. The stone gives its bearer a better understanding of the Essence of the body. Mechanically, it adds four extra dice to any Martial Arts attack roll.

### Wilderness Gem (Manse ••••)

This Lunar hearthstone is pale purple and rough in texture. Regardless of the environment, this gem will allow its bearer to survive in the wilderness. The gem gives the Exalt an instinctive knowledge of where safe shelter and campsites can be found, what plants and animals are safe to eat and how to recognize the signs of the onset of dangerous weather. The gem adds four successes to any Survival roll the bearer's player makes, and it allows the character to take place in supernatural tracking contests.

### The Gem of Day's Light (Manse •••••)

This Solar hearthstone is a yellow gem burning with an inner light. It allows the Exalt who owns it to travel confidently, knowing that the light of the Unconquered Sun will be with her. She has only to concentrate on the gem to make it glow like a mini-sun, illuminating everything within up to a mile's radius with the light of day. The Exalt can determine how far the effect stretches by concentrating on the gem. The effect lasts for as long as needed. Concentrating to activate the effect is a miscellaneous action, though it can be ended reflexively.

### Breaking Hearthstones

Hearthstones are very durable items formed from pure magic. They're far too hard to break in the heat of combat, even with a weapon forged from one of the five magical materials. The easiest way to destroy a hearthstone is to damage the manse whence it springs. Failing that, a character with Occult 3 and Craft (Air) 3 can, with several days of study, find a natural seam down which a chisel made from one of the five magical materials will split the gem, rendering it into chunks of raw gray stone.

A player must make a difficulty 1 (Perception + Craft [Air]) roll for his character to do this. A single success destroys the stone, but a botch indicates that the stone was split along the wrong plane of fracture, releasing wild magical effects similar to the results of high-circle countermagic spells. Two characters—a sorcerer and a jeweler—can work together to split a stone, combining their skills, but the difficulty of the (Perception + Craft [Air]) roll increases to 2.

## Greater Wonders

These powerful items were never common, even in the First Age. Today, they are rare indeed. Most of the wonders that survive are war gear because such items were built to survive hard use. Most other items were long ago broken or had their magic exhausted. Yet there are still some powerful items of the First Age in use, particularly in the Realm, and others lie undiscovered in caches scattered across Creation. As the heirs to the tribute of an empire, the Dragon-Blooded are especially likely to possess artifacts.

### Artifact Melee Weapons

All of these weapons are much larger and swifter than their comparable mortal equivalents. All require the commitment of Essence to attune them, and almost all are forged with a setting for the addition of a hearthstone.

#### Daiklave (Artifact ••)

Elaborately decorated and with double-edge blades over four feet long and six or more inches wide, daiklaves are the traditional weapons of the Exalted. Daiklaves are forged from steel alloyed with one of the five magical materials and are far too large to be wielded by mere mortals. However, in the hands of an Exalt, the material of the sword resonates with the character's anima, making the blade light and easy to wield, despite its impressive size. Each daiklave is unique, its shape partly a product of the smith's desires and partly dictated by complex astrological factors. By long tradition, each is also named and treated as an honored companion to the Exalt who wields it.

A daiklave is deadly in the hands of any Exalted, but in the hands of one of the Exalted attuned to the magical material used in its construction, it is especially deadly. Such an Exalt can use the weapon as a conduit for her anima. The blade is not simply an extension of her body, but an expression of her will and her divine nature.

In addition to their inherent powers, most daiklaves have a setting for a single hearthstone. Beyond this setting and their inherent magic, most daiklaves bear no additional enchantment, and are artifacts of rating 2. However, some daiklaves, particularly those forged for nobles or noted heroes, are woven with other sorceries. Such enchantments are much more common on orichalcum relics of the First Age than on modern jade-alloy daiklaves.

| Speed | Accuracy | Damage | Defense | Rate | Minimums | Attune | Cost | Tags |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 5 | +3 | +6L | +2 | 3 | Str •• | 5 | •• | – |

#### Grand Daiklave (Artifact •••)

Sometimes called a battleblade or foecutter, the grand daiklave is the ultimate expression of the philosophy behind the daiklave—one needs no defense against a dead opponent. Two-handed weapons with blades six-feet long and over a foot wide, it is only the lightening effects of Essence that allow these weapons to be wielded at all. Even bolstered by resonance, only the physically strongest among the Exalted can wield these deadly weapons. (Even they swing them with both hands.) Though they were never popular, even in the First Age, there have always been those willing to sacrifice defense and speed for the ultimate in killing power. Most grand daiklaves bear settings for three hearthstones.

| Speed | Accuracy | Damage | Defense | Rate | Minimums | Attune | Cost | Tags |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 5 | +2 | +12L/4 | +0 | 2 | Str ••• | 8 | ••• | 2, O, P, R |

#### Reaper Daiklave (Artifact ••)

Where the reaver daiklave, with its great chopping blade, favors striking power, the reaper daiklave favors speed and accuracy. The reaper daiklave is a great slashing sword—a perfectly balanced, four-foot-long, four-inch-wide, inch-thick, gently curved razor, shaped to a fine point. Favored by those Exalted who prefer finesse and speed over raw striking power, the reaper epitomizes the ideal that the warrior who hits first rarely has to worry about how hard his opponent is going to hit him. A reaper daiklave normally has one hearthstone setting. Reaper daiklaves are popular among the Dragon-Blooded of Lookshy, who prefer the elegance and speed of the blade over the more common reaver or grand daiklaves.

| Speed | Accuracy | Damage | Defense | Rate | Minimums | Attune | Cost | Tags |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 4 | +4 | +4L | +1 | 3 | Str •• | 5 | •• | – |

#### Reaver Daiklave (Artifact ••)

Daiklaves are dual-edge weapons, and despite their size, they are agile in the hand and lightning swift. Yet, some Exalted are disinterested in fast and nimble blades, preferring instead raw killing power. The weapons favored by these Exalted are cleaver-like single-edged blades, four-feet long and, in some cases, a foot wide, with square or angled tips. Slow and clumsy compared to normal daiklaves, these weapons are brutally powerful, capable of shearing through even the heaviest armor. Like normal daiklaves, reaver daiklaves typically have a setting for a single hearthstone. During the First Age, reaver daiklaves were most popular among the Dragon-Blooded and the Lunar Exalted, and they remain favored weapons among those groups to this day.

| Speed | Accuracy | Damage | Defense | Rate | Minimums | Attune | Cost | Tags |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 5 | +3 | +9L/3 | +0 | 2 | Str •• | 5 | •• | O |

## Short Daiklave (Artifact • each, •• for a pair)

The short daiklave, often called a cunning serpent knife or a flickering silver razor, has a blade about three-feet long. Short daiklaves are small enough that mortals and unattuned Exalts can wield them as awkward chopping swords (as mundane chopping sword, but requiring Strength 3). Their best-known users, Fire-aspected Immaculate monks, generally wield short daiklaves as a pair. Each short daiklave requires three motes of Essence to attune. A matched pair incurs no offhand penalty. Short daiklaves do not generally include hearthstone settings, as they are slender and carefully balanced.

| Speed | Accuracy | Damage | Defense | Rate | Minimums | Attune | Cost | Tags |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 4 | +4 | +4L | +1 | 2 | Str • | 6* | ••* | – |

* Artifact and attunement cost is for a matched pair; no offhand penalty to wield set paired.

## Wavecleaver Daiklave (Artifact ••)

Wavecleavers are uncommon weapons, wielded mostly by Terrestrial Exalts of House V'neef and House Peleps, although they appeal to naval Exalted of many stripes. Rarely exceeding three feet in blade length, these daiklaves are perfect for work belowdecks, where cramped quarters and low ceilings are the norm. Their thick blades and strong edges make them useful tools as well as weapons, as even steel cables or chains rarely withstand more than a single hack from the curved blade of a wavecleaver. Wavecleavers typically have sockets for two hearthstones, as Exalted on the water are more likely to rely on the gem-like talismans for survival.

| Speed | Accuracy | Damage | Defense | Rate | Minimums | Attune | Cost | Tags |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 5 | +3 | +7L/3 | +1 | 2 | Str •• | 5 | •• | O |

## Dire Lance (Artifact ••)

A dire lance is a massive spear forged with an alloy of one of the Five Magical Materials. Its sturdy construction allows it to be used to make mounted charges like a lance or be wielded as a long spear in melee. If used like a lance, the dire lance may be used single-handed during a mounted charge. If used as a spear, a dire lance requires two hands to wield. Typically, a dire lance has a single hearthstone setting set at the tip of the handle.

| Speed | Accuracy | Damage | Defense | Rate | Minimums | Attune | Cost | Tags |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 5 | +2 | +8L/12L | +2 | 2 | Str •• | 5 | •• | 2, L, R |

## Goremaul (Artifact ••)

These artifact hammers and maces dwarf their mundane counterparts and inflict deadly blows, crumpling most armor. Most goremauls have one slot for a hearthstone.

| Speed | Accuracy | Damage | Defense | Rate | Minimums | Attune | Cost | Tags |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 5 | +1 | +16B/4 | +1 | 2 | Str •• | 5 | •• | O, P |

## Grand Goremaul (Artifact •••)

Particularly favored by Earth-aspected Immaculate monks, these massive two-handed sledges or tetsubos require great strength to use but deliver horrifying crushing blows. Less refined than the grand daiklave, most grand goremauls bear only a single hearthstone setting.

| Speed | Accuracy | Damage | Defense | Rate | Minimums | Attune | Cost | Tags |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 5 | +2 | +16L/5 | -1 | 1 | Str •••• | 8 | ••• | 2, O, P, R |

## Grimcleaver (Artifact ••)

A grimcleaver is a thick-bladed axe forged of an alloy of one of the five magical materials. Like its mundane counterpart, the grimcleaver can also be a very useful tool as well as a deadly weapon. Unlike the common axe, the grimcleaver is too large to be used as a thrown weapon. Usually, a grimcleaver will have one hearthstone socket.

| Speed | Accuracy | Damage | Defense | Rate | Minimums | Attune | Cost | Tags |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 5 | +2 | +12L/4 | +0 | 2 | Str •• | 5 | •• | O |

### Grand Grimcleaver (Artifact •••)

These huge two-handed great axes are easily a yard across and represent the epitome of cleaving power. Given to deadly downward blows, they are somewhat slow on defense. A grand grimcleaver usually has two hearthstone settings, one centered on either side of the axe blade.

| Speed | Accuracy | Damage | Defense | Rate | Minimums | Attune | Cost | Tags |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 6 | +2 | +14L/4 | -2 | 2 | Str ••• | 8 | ••• | 2, O, P, R |

### Grand Grimscythe (Artifact •••)

These huge two-handed great scythes are easily a yard across and represent the epitome of cleaving power. Given to deadly arcing massive swings, they are somewhat slow on defense. Grimscythes bear a single hearthstone socket between the handgrips.

| Speed | Accuracy | Damage | Defense | Rate | Minimums | Attune | Cost | Tags |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 6 | +2 | +14L/4 | -2 | 2 | Str ••• | 8 | ••• | 2, O, P, R |

## Melee with the Five Magical Materials

Artifact melee weapons (and those hand-to-hand weapons designed for use with the Martial Arts Ability) are usually forged from an alloy of steel and one of the five magical materials. When attuned by an Exalt of the correct type, such weapons are even more efficient and deadly.

**Orichalcum:** Orichalcum hand-to-hand weapons excel at no one thing but are of superlative speed and accuracy in the hands of their Solar masters. They add +1 to Accuracy, Defense and Rate when wielded by Solar Exalted.

**Moonsilver:** Moonsilver melee weapons, like their wielders, can change shape. Though they are far from protean, they strike with a fluid grace and penetrate guards with unnatural ease. They are at +2 Accuracy and +2 defense in the hands of Lunar Exalted.

**Jade:** The jade-alloy weapons of the Dragon-Blooded bind the wielder to the elements from which her powers spring. A Dragon-Blooded character wielding a jade hand-to-hand weapon strikes with the speed and might of a thunderbolt, avalanche or waterfall. Jade melee weapons gain a -1 Speed bonus and +1 Damage.

**Starmetal:** Starmetal hand-to-hand weapons are weapons of fate, destined to strike the most lethal blows. Though Sidereal Exalts are not the most warlike of the Exalted, their baleful weapons are among the most feared. Starmetal weapons add +1 Accuracy and +3 Damage in the hands of a Sidereal.

**Soulsteel:** Soulsteel melee weapons are forged from human souls alloyed with frigid black stone from the caverns beneath the Underworld. When a soulsteel weapon strikes a target, it drains her warmth to fill the endless cold that exists within itself. In the hands of an Abyssal Exalt, a soulsteel melee weapon is +2 Accuracy and drains a number of motes of Essence equal to the wielder's permanent Essence whenever it strikes a target and inflicts at least one health level of damage.

## Artifact Martial Arts Weapons

### Bloodspike Harness (Artifact ••)

The bloodspike harness appears much like a mundane razor harness except that the spikes and razors covering it are composed of fragments of alloyed magical material. The wounds caused are suitably nastier, and the jagged harness is imposing to say the least. Bloodspike harnesses do not have a hearthstone setting.

| Speed | Accuracy | Damage | Defense | Rate | Minimums | Attune | Cost | Tags |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 6 | +3 | +9L | – | 1 | Str •• | 5 | •• | C, P |

### Dire Chain (Artifact •)

As the name suggests, the dire chain is a fighting chain composed of an alloy of one of the five magical materials. The chain is thicker and would be much heavier were it not buoyed by the wielder's Essence. (Second stat bar reflects item clinched.)

| Speed | Accuracy | Damage | Defense | Rate | Minimums | Attune | Cost | Tags |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 5 | +0 | +8B | +2 | 2 | Str ••, Dex ••••, Mrt •••• | 3 | • | M, R |
| 6 | +1 | +6B | – | 1 | Str ••, Dex ••••, Mrt •••• | 3 | • | C, M, P, R |

## God-Kicking Boot (Artifact •)

Heavy boots shod with plates of a magical material rather than iron or steel, the god-kicking boots are always worn as a pair. They do not have hearthstone settings.

| Speed | Accuracy | Damage | Defense | Rate | Minimums | Attune | Cost | Tags |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 5 | +1 | +8B | -1 | 2 | Str ••, Dex •• | 6* | •* | M, P |

* Artifact and attunement cost is for a matched pair; no offhand penalty to wield set paired.

## Razor Claws (Artifact ••)

This pair of deadly weapons is a set of razor-sharp tiger claws that strap onto the wearer's hands. Although wearing them does not impair the user's manual dexterity, they are normally worn only for battle. (Few people wish to shake hands with someone whose hands are encased in lethal steel.) Razor claws always come in pairs and consist of fingerless leather gloves fitted with three slightly curved blades extending three inches beyond the wearer's knuckles. In addition to causing horrific rending wounds, these claws also add two dice to all climbing rolls made by the wearer. Attuning to a pair of razor claws costs six motes of committed Essence. Razor claws do not include hearthstone settings.

| Speed | Accuracy | Damage | Defense | Rate | Minimums | Attune | Cost | Tags |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 5 | +4 | +5L | +2 | 3 | Str •, Dex •• | 6* | ••* | M |

* Artifact and attunement cost is for a matched pair; no offhand penalty to wield set paired.

## Serpent-Sting Staff (Artifact ••)

These seven-section staves are usually made completely of metal rods composed of an alloy of the five magical materials held together by short segments of chain. They are just as difficult to master as a mundane seven-section staff, even for an attuned wielder. Attuning to a serpent-sting staff requires five motes of committed Essence. Serpent-sting staves do not possess hearthstone settings.

| Speed | Accuracy | Damage | Defense | Rate | Minimums | Attune | Cost | Tags |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 5 | +0 | +10B | +4 | 3 | Str •, Dex ••••, Mrt •••• | 5 | 2 | M, P |

## Slayer Khatar (Artifact ••)

Forged with the aid of earth elementals and made of steel alloyed with yellow jade and orichalcum, the slayer khatar is the ultimate destructive weapon. These weapons require no commitment of Essence, and indeed, can be used by any being, mortal or Exalt. Though made of imperishable materials, they have no more effect on characters, even armored ones, than normal khatars—use the statistics for a mundane khatar. However, when wielded against objects, these weapons shatter them and destroy them. All damage inflicted by a character wielding a slayer khatar against inanimate objects is doubled. This effect is compatible with Charms. For rules on attacking inanimate objects, see page 153 of the Drama chapter.

| Speed | Accuracy | Damage | Defense | Rate | Minimums | Cost | Tags |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 5 | +0 | +2L | +3 | 3 | Str • | •• | M |

## Smashfist (Artifact •)

These fighting gauntlets are composed of articulated plates of alloyed magical material or full-hand leather gloves covered with magical material alloyed plates. Smashfists are always used as a pair. Their construction does not include any hearthstone setting. (Second stat bar reflects item clinched.)

| Speed | Accuracy | Damage | Defense | Rate | Minimums | Attune | Cost | Tags |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 5 | +0 | +7B | +2 | 2 | Str •• | 6* | •* | M, P |
| 6 | +0 | +6B | – | 1 | Str •• | 6* | •* | C, M, P |

* Artifact and attunement cost is for a matched pair; no offhand penalty to wield set paired.

## Artifact Thrown Weapons

## Sky-Cutter (Artifact ••)

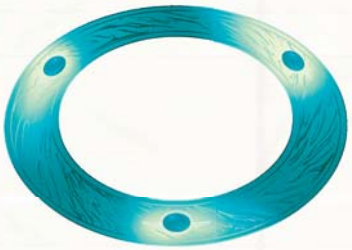
Virtually unknown outside of the East, these exquisite arcing blades transcend boomerangs in the way that powerbows shame the finest weapons of mortal archers. Each sky-cutter is fashioned from a single two-foot piece of metal that has been alloyed with one of the five magical materials, lovingly hammered or carved according to precise geomantic angles that focus Essence along its cutting edge. Unlike conventional boomerangs, a thrown sky-cutter always returns to its master's hand if it misses its target. In the hands of a skilled Exalt, these weapons may return even after a successful attack. Such a feat requires a second, reflexive (Dexterity + Thrown) roll at difficulty 2. Failure leaves the weapon where it hit. An Exalt must commit four motes of Essence to attune a sky-cutter, and he gains the appropriate ranged artifact weapon bonus if he is of the correct Exalt type.

| Speed | Accuracy | Damage | Rate | Range | Minimums | Attune | Cost | Tags |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 5 | +2 | +5L | 2 | 50 | Str •, Dex •• | •• | 4 | – |

### Sling of Deadly Prowess (Artifact •)

While many Exalts enjoy using flashy weapons such as powerbows and daiklaves, others prefer having more subtle armaments that can be easily hidden in a pocket or the side of a boot. This sling consists of a cord and pouch that appear to have been exquisitely carved or forged from a single piece of one of the five magical materials. Unless it is attuned to someone, this sling is solid and inflexible. If the character spends three points of Essence to attune herself to this item, it becomes ready to use. The bonus provided by the sling's magical material is the same as for other Artifact thrown weapons, except that the Range increases as for bows.

| Speed | Accuracy | Damage | Rate | Range | Minimums | Attune | Cost | Tags |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 5 | +2 | +4L | 2 | 150 | Str •, Dex •• | • | 3 | – |



### Infinite Jade Chakram (Artifact ••)

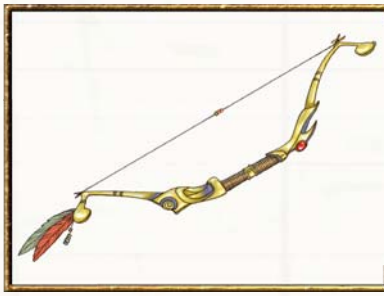
The signature Immaculate magical weapon for Air-aspected monks is the infinite jade chakram. This weapon is similar in appearance to a normal chakram and is always made out of blue jade. The chakram can be thrown again and again without ever truly leaving the character's hand. This gives the weapon an extraordinary Rate and allows Immaculate characters to make their maximum number of attacks per action without regard for ammunition. The phantom chakrams fade as soon as their flight is done and damage is inflicted. The infinite jade chakram material bonus from the jade is already included in its profile, but the jade (and the Exalt's attunement) is an integral part of the weapon's magical nature. They cannot be made out of any material but blue jade, and they cannot be used except by Exalts who are attuned to the jade's magical material bonus.

| Speed | Accuracy | Damage | Rate | Range | Minimums | Attune | Cost | Tags |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 4 | +0 | +4L | 4 | 50 | Str •, Dex ••• | •• | 5 | (returns instantly) |

## Powerbows

Beautifully ornate weapons, powerbows are to bows what daiklaves are to swords. These weapons are made from a laminate of horn, rare woods and the five magical materials. Crafted by the Exalted for their own hands, these baroque and ornate bows far overmatch any merely mortal weapon. Like daiklaves, powerbows must be invested with Essence to function—otherwise their mighty limbs are too stiff for even the mightiest of the Chosen to bend.

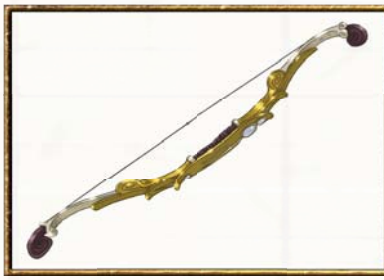
Unlike normal bows, powerbows do not have a maximum Strength. They are linked with the Essence of the firing character, and their construction is such that they yield to those who are weak and stiffen when their wielder is mighty. Instead, they *add* to the user's Strength for the purposes of determining damage.



### Short Powerbow (Artifact ••)

Short powerbows require the wielder to commit four motes of Essence. They have a setting for a single hearthstone.

| Speed | Accuracy | Damage | Rate | Range | Minimums | Attune | Cost | Tags |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 6 | +2 | +2L | 2 | 250 | | •• | 4 | 2, B |



### Long Powerbow (Artifact •••)

Long powerbows require the wielder to commit seven motes of Essence. Like short powerbows, they have a single socket for a hearthstone.

| Speed | Accuracy | Damage | Rate | Range | Minimums | Attune | Cost | Tags |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 6 | +1 | +3L | 3 | 350 | | ••• | 6 | 2, B |

## Ranged Use of the Five Magical Materials

Artifact powerbows and thrown weapons are designed to contain one of the five magical materials, whether as layered inlays or for the entire construction. When attuned by an Exalted of the correct type, such weapons are even more efficient and deadly.

**Orichalcum:** Orichalcum ranged weapons excel at no one thing, but are excellent all-around weapons. When in the hands of the Solar Exalted, these weapons are +1 to Accuracy, +1 to Damage and +50 yards to their Range value for bows (10 yards for thrown weapons).

**Moonsilver:** Moonsilver ranged weapons are fluid things, reshaping themselves as they are drawn or cast in order to more effectively launch toward their target. In the hands of the Lunar Exalted, such weapons are +1 to Accuracy and add 100 yards to their Range value for bows (20 yards for thrown weapons).

**Jade:** Jade powerbows and thrown weapons allow their wielders to fire with the fluid grace of falling water, and their trajectory is buoyed by the natural eddies of the wind. In the hands of the Terrestrial Exalted, they benefit Speed with a -1 bonus and add 50 yards to the Range value for bows (10 yards for thrown weapons).

**Starmetal:** Starmetal ranged weapons reshape the destiny of their path, fating them to strike deadly blows. When in the hands of Sidereal Exalted, these weapons add +1 to Accuracy and +2 to Damage.

**Soulsteel:** Soulsteel missile weapons can sense the life and movement of their targets and seek to cease that struggling to bring about the blessed stillness of death. When used against living targets by Abyssal Exalted, these weapons are +2 Accuracy and +2 Damage. This bonus does not apply to inanimate objects, nor animate but nonliving ones.

## Artifact Armor

Just as they forge weapons from steel alloyed with the five magical materials, the Exalted likewise craft armor. Because virtually all artifact designs must contain some of the five magical materials, the only armors that have artifact equivalents are those forged of metal.

The armor is unmistakably magical. Most of it glitters and gleams with the color of the magical material used to forge it, and the heavier armors typically have fins or long, flat spikes that protrude from the back and shoulders to prevent uncomfortable Essence buildup between the plates and the wearer's skin.

**Orichalcum:** Orichalcum is the strongest and most durable of the magical armors. When worn by a Solar, add two to both the armor's lethal and bashing soak, and add one to both the armor's lethal and bashing Hardness.

**Moonsilver:** Moonsilver shifts its shape to move with the wearer, accommodating his every need. When worn by Lunar Exalted, moonsilver armors have no mobility penalty, no matter how heavy they are.

**Jade:** The Dragon-Blooded have the endurance of the earth and the tenacity of wood, and their armor acts to emphasize these qualities. When worn by a Terrestrial Exalted, jade-alloy armor has no fatigue value.

**Starmetal:** Starmetal armor offers incredibly auspicious protection. When worn by a Sidereal, starmetal armor adds one to both the armor's lethal and bashing Hardness and reduces the attacker's damage rolls by a -1 external penalty. This can reduce the damage of a blow to 0.

**Soulsteel:** Soulsteel armor is terrifying to see, forged from moaning souls that seem to swallow attacks. Disturbingly similar in strength to orichalcum, this armor likewise adds two to lethal and bashing soak and adds one to lethal and bashing Hardness.

### Breastplate (Artifact •)

| Soak | Hardness | Mobility | Fatigue | Cost | Attune | Tags |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| +6L/4B | 2L/2B | -0 | 0 | • | 2 | * |

* May be concealed under heavy jacket or cloak.

### Chain Shirt (Artifact •)

| Soak | Hardness | Mobility | Fatigue | Cost | Attune | Tags |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| +5L/3B | 2L/2B | -0 | 0 | • | 2 | ** |

** May be concealed under normal clothes.

### Lamellar (Artifact ••)

| Soak | Hardness | Mobility | Fatigue | Cost | Attune | Tags |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| +8L/9B | 5L/5B | -1 | 0 | •• | 3 | * |

* May be concealed under heavy jacket or cloak.

## Reinforced Buff Jacket (Artifact ••)

| Soak | Hardness | Mobility | Fatigue | Cost | Attune | Tags |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| +7L/10B | 5L/5B | -1 | 0 | •• | 3 | |

## Reinforced Breastplate (Artifact •••)

| Soak | Hardness | Mobility | Fatigue | Cost | Attune | Tags |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| +10L/9B | 8L/8B | -1 | 1 | ••• | 4 | |

## Articulated Plate (Artifact ••••)

| Soak | Hardness | Mobility | Fatigue | Cost | Attune | Tags |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| +12L/14B | 8L/8B | -2 | 1 | •••• | 6 | |

## Superheavy Plate (Artifact •••••)

| Soak | Hardness | Mobility | Fatigue | Cost | Attune | Tags |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| +15L/15B | 10L/10B | -2 | 2 | ••••• | 8 | |

## Earthshaking Wonders

The most powerful magic artifacts date to the First Age, when the Solars ruled Creation. At the height of that golden era, the secrets of magic were more fully known and the Exalted crafted wonders of unmatched might. While the return of the Solars could restore some of its glory, so much of the lore of the First Age has been lost that even the god-kings would have incredible difficulty reproducing works of such power. The discovery of one of these great wonders may change the fate of nations, and wars are fought for their possession.

### Lightning Torment Hatchets (Artifact •••)

Teak-handled axes forged from moonsilver and white jade, these throwing axes are the assassin's friend. Lightning torment hatchets come in pairs, and an Exalt must commit three motes of Essence into each hatchet to activate their powers (for a total cost of six motes).

In addition to their use as deadly hand-to-hand or thrown weapons, lightning torment hatchets have two additional powers. The first is that they return to their wielder's hands after they've been thrown. However, this will not occur if their return is blocked or if they travel more than 100 yards from the wielder. In these cases, the wielder must recall them through Elsewhere as a reflexive action by spending a mote of Essence. The hatchets can be recalled until the committed Essence fades (about a day after they've last been touched), making them easy to smuggle into dangerous situations.

The second power is the one that gives the hatchets their name. A target struck by a hatchet is surrounded by crackling blue sparks until the end of the scene. The pain and muscle spasms this causes cost the target a –1 internal penalty to all her dice pools. Multiple hits from the hatchets are cumulative, but cannot exceed a -4 total penalty. Due to the weapons' construction, Exalted attuned to lightning torment hatchets do *not* gain bonuses for the magical materials they contain.

| Speed | Accuracy | Damage | Defense | Rate | Minimums | Cost | Attune | Tags |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 5 | +2 | +5L | +1 | 2 | Str ••, Dex ••• | •••••* | 6* | T |
| **Speed** | **Accuracy** | **Damage** | **Rate** | **Range** | **Minimums** | **Cost** | **Attune** | **Tags** |
| 5 | +1 | +5L | 2 | 20 | Str ••, Dex ••• | •••••* | 6* | (lightning torment) |

* Artifact and attunement cost is for a matched pair; no offhand penalty to wield set paired.

### Singing Staff (Artifact ••••)

The singing staff demonstrates the odd approach to magic taken by some First Age magicians. This man-high staff of white jade is carved in an irregular series of waves and swellings, with a knob at each end. When rubbed with a rosined bow, the singing staff emits a sweet tone, like a musical saw, with different parts of the staff playing different pitches and timbres.

If one plants the end of the singing staff on the ground and plays it correctly, the land responds to the music, rising and falling like waves or shaping itself like clay molded by unseen hands. This makes the singing staff precious as both a tool and a weapon: the staff can topple castle walls as easily as it digs canals. The staff's uses are limited only by the skills of its player.

Singing staves are immensely sophisticated devices, despite their simple appearance. Only six were ever known to exist. One is in the hands of the Empress and is stored among her personal effects, one is at the Heptagram for study, and one is held by the Immaculates of Pasiap, who use it for geomantic landscaping when building new manses. Two used to be held by the Realm military, but one was lost in battle with the Tepet legions, and the other lies at the bottom of the Inland Sea. Finally, the personal staff of the legendary Solar architect Kal Bax disappeared along with him during the Usurpation. Although the effects of the staves are functionally identical, each one has its own musical "tuning."

Attuning to a singing staff requires the user to commit five motes of Essence, and an attuned wielder treats the staff as a goremaul for the purposes of making attacks in hand-to-hand combat. The earth-manipulation power of the singing staff requires the wielder to spend one mote of Essence per three ticks. For every three ticks of use, the staff can reshape 100 cubic feet of earth, sand or clay, or 20 cubic feet of stone, provided the targeted material is within 100 yards. To use the staff to control earth, the character's player must succeed on an (Essence + Performance) roll with the difficulty set by the detail or magnitude of the task. The Storyteller may demand multiple rolls for lengthy tasks or additional Ability rolls for tasks that require specialized training—Craft (Earth) rolls to create a building or a statue, for example.

### Daiklave of Conquest (Artifact •••••)

Forged for the greatest generals of the Old Realm, this weapon is designed exclusively for use by the Dawn Caste. No other Exalted can attune themselves to this weapon, nor wield its fantastic powers.

When used in battle, the daiklave glows with a bright, unearthly light. As long as this daiklave is unsheathed, all opponents and other hostile individuals within 10 yards of the bearer must make a Valor roll at +1 difficulty or flee in fear. Those who hold their ground lose a number of dice from all attacks (even those not targeting the wielder) equal to the bearer's Valor score.

So long as the bearer is using this weapon in combat, friendly troops fight with improved morale that gives them one bonus die to all combat-related dice pools. They also automatically gain one success on all Valor rolls. In addition, all opponents suffer a -1 internal penalty to all combat-related dice pools and receive a +1 penalty to the difficulty of their Valor rolls. Both of these powers affect combatants within one mile of the Exalt wielding the daiklave. These bonuses and penalties do not apply to civilians or neutral soldiers.

A Dawn Caste Exalt must commit 10 motes of Essence to attune to this blade. Both known examples of this rare and deadly treasure act as standard orichalcum daiklaves in hand-to-hand battle, though each has a setting for three hearthstones.

| Speed | Accuracy | Damage | Defense | Rate | Minimums | Attune | Cost | Tags |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 5 | +3 | +6L | +2 | 3 | Str •• | 5 | •• | – |

MUST I ALWAYS LIVE IN INTERESTING TIMES?
WOULD YOU RATHER TIMES WERE BETTER, OR SIMPLY MORE BORING?
NARA-O, I DIDN'T HEAR YOU APPROACH.
CAN I HELP YOU?
WE HAD AN APPOINTMENT, KEJAK.
I SOUGHT YOU AT THE FORBIDDING MANSE OF IVY, BUT YOU'D SLIPPED AWAY WITHOUT TELLING ANYONE.
HOW DID YOU FIND ME?
YOUR DESIRE FOR SECRECY REVEALED YOUR DESTINATION IN MY RECORDS. I LOOKED IT UP.
OF COURSE. I KNEW I SHOULD HAVE TOLD SOMEONE.
AND NOW, HERE WE ARE.
SO, WHAT ARE WE LOOKING AT? ANYTHING, OR JUST... EVERYTHING?
EVERYTHING.
AND WHAT DO YOU SEE THAT'S SO INTERESTING?

THE ONE THING IN CREATION THAT IS NO SECRET ...
THE REEMERGENCE OF THE SOLAR EXALTED.
IT SHOULDN'T HAVE BEEN POSSIBLE FOR THEM TO RETURN. THERE WERE SAFEGUARDS IN PLACE.
BUT WITH CIVILIZATION IN DISARRAY, DUE VIGILANCE WASN'T PAID TO THEIR EXALTATIONS' PRISON.
NOW THAT THEY'RE FREE, THINGS WILL GO BACK TO THE WAY THEY WERE.

IN THE BEGINNING, THEY'LL APPEAR AS HEROES, WHICH CREATION SO DESPERATELY SEEMS TO NEED.
BUT IN THE END, THEY'LL REVEAL THEIR TRUE COLORS FOR MORTAL AND GOD ALIKE TO SEE.
THEIR POWER WILL GROW...
...AS WILL THEIR HUBRIS...
...UNTIL THEY ONCE MORE BECOME THE TERRORS EVEN I SHUDDER TO REMEMBER.
WHAT WILL BECOME OF THIS WORLD IF THEY SHOULD RISE TO POWER AGAIN?

MORE TO THE POINT, WHAT WILL BECOME OF YOU IF THEY FIND OUT WHAT YOU DID TO THEM SO LONG AGO?
WHAT? WE DID WHAT WE HAD TO DO.
SO YOU ARGUED ALL THOSE CENTURIES AGO. BUT HAVE YOU NEVER QUESTIONED YOUR DECISION, KEJAK? NEVER REGRETTED IT?
I REGRETTED THE NECESSITY, BUT I'VE NEVER DOUBTED IT WAS NECESSARY.
HAD YOU NO OTHER OPTIONS?
NO VIABLE ONES.
WE DISCUSSED OTHERS BUT EVENTUALLY RULED THEM OUT.
AND NOW, HERE WE ARE.
WHAT ARE YOU GETTING AT?
NOTHING.
JUST THE ANSWER TO THE QUESTION I ASKED YOU EARLIER —
WHETHER YOU WOULD PREFER A BETTER WORLD OR ONE LESS INTERESTING.
IT WASN'T THE ANSWER I THOUGHT.
WHAT DO YOU MEAN, NARA-O?
NARA-O ...?

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EXALTED
SECOND EDITION

Name: _____ Concept: _____
Player: _____ Motivation: _____
Caste: _____ Anima: _____

## Attributes

Strength _____ ●OOOO
Dexterity _____ ●OOOO
Stamina _____ ●OOOO
Charisma _____ ●OOOO
Manipulation _____ ●OOOO
Appearance _____ ●OOOO
Perception _____ ●OOOO
Intelligence _____ ●OOOO
Wits _____ ●OOOO

## Abilities

### Dawn

☐ Archery _____ OOOOO
☐ Martial Arts _____ OOOOO
☐ Melee _____ OOOOO
☐ Thrown _____ OOOOO
☐ War _____ OOOOO

### Zenith

☐ Integrity _____ OOOOO
☐ Performance _____ OOOOO
☐ Presence _____ OOOOO
☐ Resistance _____ OOOOO
☐ Survival _____ OOOOO

### Twilight

☐ Craft _____ OOOOO
☐ Investigation _____ OOOOO
☐ Lore _____ OOOOO
☐ Medicine _____ OOOOO
☐ Occult _____ OOOOO

### Night

☐ Athletics _____ OOOOO
☐ Awareness _____ OOOOO
☐ Dodge _____ OOOOO
☐ Larceny _____ OOOOO
☐ Stealth _____ OOOOO

### Eclipse

☐ Bureaucracy _____ OOOOO
☐ Linguistics _____ OOOOO
☐ Ride _____ OOOOO
☐ Sail _____ OOOOO
☐ Socialize _____ OOOOO

### Specialties

☐ _____ OOOOO
☐ _____ OOOOO
☐ _____ OOOOO
☐ _____ OOOOO
☐ _____ OOOOO

## Advantages

### Backgrounds

_____ OOOOO
_____ OOOOO
_____ OOOOO
_____ OOOOO
_____ OOOOO
_____ OOOOO
_____ OOOOO
_____ OOOOO
_____ OOOOO
_____ OOOOO

### Charms

| Name | Cost | Name | Cost |
|---|---|---|---|
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| | | | |
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| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
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| | | | |

## Weapons

## Anima

## Limit Break

☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐

## Virtue Flaw

## Willpower

O O O O O O O O O O

☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐

## Soak

B_____ L_____ A_____

## Health

| | |
|---|---|
| -0 | ☐☐☐☐☐ |
| -1 | ☐☐☐☐☐ |
| -2 | ☐☐☐☐☐ |
| | ☐☐☐☐☐ |
| -4 | ☐ |
| Incapacitated | ☐ |

## Virtues

Compassion ●OOOO ☐☐☐☐☐
Temperance ●OOOO ☐☐☐☐☐
Conviction ●OOOO ☐☐☐☐☐
Valor ●OOOO ☐☐☐☐☐

## Essence

● O O O O O

Personal ____ | ____
Peripheral ____ | ____
Committed _____

## Experience

Diamond Hearth
The White Sea
Icehome
Gethamane
Fella
Inara
Whitewall
Rubylak
The Great Western Ocean
Cherak
The Isle of Voices
Chanos
Eagle's Launch
The Imperial Mountain
Pangu
Sijan
Port Calin
Great Forks
Juche
The Imperial City
Lookshy
Nexus
Lord's Crossing
Sdoia
The Blessed Isle
Celeren
Denandsor
Arjuf
Thorns
The Inland Sea
Kirighast
City of the Steel Lotus
Yane
Chiaroscuro
Bluehaven
The Lap
Paragon