PHOENIX
DAWN COMMAND
What Kills You Makes You Stronger.
CREATED BY KEITH BAKER AND DAN GARRISON

PHOENIX: DAWN COMMAND

GUIDELINES
FOR THE NEWLY INDUCTED
MARSHAL

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Dedicated to the memory of every RPG character who has died a tragic death.

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To our amazing community of friends and colleagues, who rallied and encouraged us to pursue our creative vision. No Challenge can stand against the strength of a Wing. ~ Keith & Jenn

Special thanks to Alison, who was the first person to hear what a Phoenix was and encouraged and supported me ever since. ~Dan

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CHAPTER ONE: WELCOME TO THE STRUGGLE

Gren the smith howled as he clutched at his bloody arm. It began as a cry of pain, but deepened into a full, bestial bellow. Fur was spreading around the wound, and Drake could hear the snap and crack as the blacksmith's bones twisted and reshaped themselves. Now Drake knew why there hadn't been corpses in the hamlet: The skinchangers' victims strengthened the pack. Winterford was a large community, full of people to be turned; if Drake and his Wing couldn't stop the pack tonight, its power would grow exponentially.

All around him, Drake's allies were doing their best to contain the creatures. A wolf's teeth shattered against Shepherd's impenetrable skin; she caught the beast by the scruff of its neck and crushed it against the stone well. The Elemental Ash wove a massive serpent of flame in the midst of the pack, and wolves yelped and whined as the blazing wyrm tore through them. Drake hadn't seen the Shrouded Elegy since the battle began, but a number of corpses bore the mark of her blades. It wasn't enough. The wolves were claiming too many innocents, their numbers swelling even as the Phoenixes brought them down. A few minutes more and there'd be no mortals left in Winterford.

As the others fought, Drake studied the pack…looking beyond the flesh for the savage spirit driving it. Now he could see it, a writhing mass of fury and hunger spread between its victims. Calling on the shamanic traditions of his people and the power of his Flame, Drake opened his arms and drew the foul thing into his body. The pain was blinding, and he could feel his blood boiling and his bones breaking. But the wolves had stopped fighting, and the most recent victims were already regaining their human forms. Drake was dying, but he would drag the spirit down into the darkness with him. His death would save hundreds of lives.

"I'll see you soon, my friend," Shepherd whispered, as Drake's body dissolved into ash.

WHAT IS PHOENIX: DAWN COMMAND?

Phoenix is a roleplaying game and a collaborative storytelling experience. The players assume the roles of newly reborn Phoenixes facing the enigmatic threat of the Dread. Working together, you will guide them through this struggle and through their triumphs and defeats.

HOW MANY PEOPLE CAN PLAY?

Phoenix: Dawn Command requires a **Marshal,** who will guide the Phoenixes through their missions. If you're the Marshal, you'll describe the situations the Phoenixes encounter and take on the roles of allies, enemies, and strangers they may face. You'll evaluate the actions your Phoenixes want to take and determine the difficulty of success. This isn't a competition: You are working together with your players to create a story you all can enjoy. You should challenge your players, and you may well kill their characters: The risk of death and failure is part of what defines *Phoenix*. But the goal is to create a dramatic story together. The players will be relying on

you to explain the rules and to guide them through confusing situations; the more familiar you are with the system, the easier this will be.

The game works best with a Marshal and three or four players, and the core game only includes enough cards to support four Phoenixes. It's possible to play with more than four players if you acquire additional cards, but we don't recommend it. *Phoenix* has a strong narrative focus, and more players means less story time for each individual player. In addition, the limited resources of a four-person group help to maintain suspense.

WHAT'S GOING ON?

For the last three years, the Empire has been harrowed by the Dread. The attacks began with no warning, and they take hundreds of terrifying forms. Hungry ghosts howl in the night. The dead rise up to slaughter the living. A simple song can turn loved ones into killers and bring down an entire city. The people of the Empire know almost nothing about the Dread; they only know that mortal soldiers are no match for these terrors. Humanity is at war, and it is losing. Over a third of the Empire has fallen to the Dread, and the situation gets worse every day.

In this dark time, there's still one hope: **Phoenixes**. When a remarkable mortal dies, they may be pulled into an afterlife known as the **Crucible**. There, they undergo a series of spiritual and physical trials. If they triumph and prove their determination to fight the Dread, they are reborn and infused with supernatural power. This process can be repeated up to seven times before a Phoenix dies their final death. Phoenixes aren't bound to the Imperial Army; they serve **Dawn Command**, an independent force based on the island of Pyre. Through powerful magic, Dawn Command can dispatch Phoenixes to the places they are needed the most. But with so little known about the Dread, every mission is a mystery. Absolute victory is rarely an option, and any Phoenix who battles the Dread will eventually fall. The challenge is to make each sacrifice count, to uncover the secrets of the enemy, and to learn the lessons that can eventually turn the tide.

LEGENDS FROM THE PAST

The first Phoenixes appeared hundreds of years ago, when a legion of champions rose up to combat the chaos and strife of a troubled world. Through conquest and charisma, these Phoenixes united scattered tribes, fierce reavers, and warring city-states into a single prosperous Empire. This Empire brought law and security to all, putting an end to the practice of dangerous magics and other threats of the past. It should have been a utopia, but the rule of the first Phoenixes lay heavy on the land. Their accomplishments were great, but in their zeal, the Phoenixes held too tightly to their vision of universal order. Mortals began to resent their Phoenix rulers. Armed conflicts escalated into a bloody civil war. Though the Phoenixes were never defeated, the Empress chose to lay down her crown to preserve innocent lives. The Phoenixes retreated to the volcanic island of Pyre, and there they established Dawn Command to protect and serve the Empire they had once ruled. Over time, their numbers dwindled, and no new heroes returned from death to replenish their ranks; this golden age needed no champions. As centuries passed, Dawn Command was forgotten and the Phoenixes became legends—stories told to inspire courage in children. And then the Dread began, bringing that golden age to a sudden and terrible end.

Now Phoenixes are returning. Dawn Command is rebuilding, but it has limited resources and fewer than one hundred Phoenixes; it's a desperate resistance that hasn't been officially recognized by the leaders of the Empire. The common people don't yet know if these Phoenixes are what they claim to be—if they can be trusted, or if this is hoax or madness. Many battles lie ahead, and the heroes won't win them all. But each defeat is a lesson, and each death makes a Phoenix stronger.

TO BOIL IT DOWN...

The world is being ravaged by nightmares. The players are heroes who have died and been granted the chance to return with the power to fight these terrors. They may not survive the battles ahead, but they have the opportunity to make a difference in a desperate time.

WHAT'S IN THIS BOOK?

This book is your guide to the rules and the world of *Phoenix: Dawn Command*. Beyond this introduction, the book contains the following sections.

Chapter Two: A Brief Guide To The Daylit World provides an overview of the setting of *Phoenix: Dawn Command*, including the world of Dalea, a glimpse of the Dread, and the nature and history of the Phoenixes.

Chapter Three: How to Play explains the rules of the game: how to resolve player actions, combat, rebirth, and more.

Chapter Four: Marshal's Tools What do you do next? This section walks you through the answer, explaining how to guide your players through character creation and advice on running missions and creating your own stories.

Chapter Five: The Dread includes more in-depth information about the secrets of the world and the Dread. It includes details on twelve manifestations of the Dread that you can use as the foundation of your stories.

Missions One through Seven. These seven chapters are stories ready to be told. Individually, these missions introduce players to a range of challenges and manifestations of the Dread. Together, they form a narrative arc that takes a group of Phoenixes on a journey over multiple lives and requires them to face a major manifestation of the Dread.

The **Appendixes** include a glossary, overview of condition effects, and other information.

As a player, you *can* read Chapters One through Three, though you don't have to read any of it if you don't want to. Chapter Four and everything that comes after are intended for Marshals only; players who read these sections will spoil elements of the story that will be more interesting if discovered over the course of the game.

HOW DO I GET STARTED?

If you're going to be the Marshal, start by reading Chapter Three and Chapter Four. *Phoenix* is a simple system, but it's important to have one person at the table who really understands the rules—and as Marshal, that's your responsibility. Take a little time to figure out how things work. Next, find three or four friends who want to play! If you go to **twogetherstudios.com**, you can download the *Handbook for the Recently Reborn.* This free PDF includes a brief overview of the story and rules of *Phoenix*, along with the questions people need to answer to create characters. In addition, you can download a set of demo characters. Playing one session with these

pre-generated characters is an easy way for players to give the game a try without knowing anything about the world…and even if you want to make characters at your first session, looking at these pre-generated characters may help your players develop their own ideas.

Once everyone is together, Chapter Four guides you through the process of starting a session. Mission One, "The Harvest" (found on page 236), is a simple, short story that gives people a taste of *Phoenix* without requiring a lot of preparation. After you've completed your first session, it's up to you whether you want to proceed with the pre-written missions or develop your own stories.

HOW LONG DOES IT TAKE?

Generally it takes three to four hours to complete a single session of *Phoenix: Dawn Command*. However, you'll need to play multiple sessions to fully experience the world and game. This book includes seven missions that are ready to use, along with numerous ideas and hooks you can use to create additional stories.

WHAT'S IN THE BOX?

Phoenix: Dawn Command doesn't rely on dice. Instead, each player has a deck of **Action** cards that represent their character's traits and abilities along with a set of **Lesson** cards that provide ongoing abilities. **Health** and **Sparks** are consumable resources, and a Phoenix dies when they run out of either one of these. As the Marshal, you have **Challenge** cards representing the threats the Phoenixes will face and **Conditions** and **Afflictions** that you assign when the Phoenixes suffer these effects.

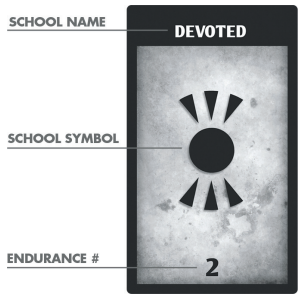
Health Levels (HL)

These round counters represent a Phoenix's physical health. The green side, which shows an intact Dawn Command symbol, represents **Health.** When a Health Level is flipped over to show the red side with the fractured Dawn Command symbol, it becomes a **Wound.** *A Rank 1 Phoenix begins play with five Health Levels.* When no Health remains, that Phoenix dies.

Sparks

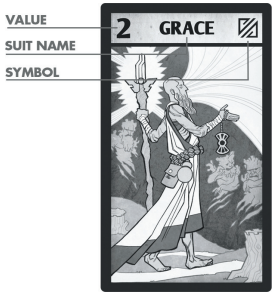
These are black tokens marked with a symbol of a flame. Sparks represent a Phoenix's reserve of mystical energy—when no Sparks remain, that Phoenix dies. *A Rank 1 Phoenix begins play with ten Sparks.* Sparks are used to power the special effects of many Lessons and Traits. In addition, a Phoenix can always burn one Spark to add one to the total of any **Attack** or **Skill Spread**. This is cumulative, so a Phoenix could burn five Sparks to add five to an Attack Spread. This is a critical part of Phoenix: You can essentially buy success, but you might kill yourself in the process.

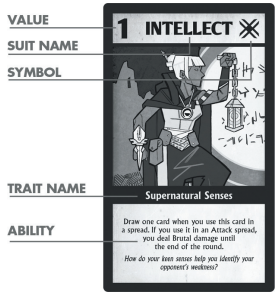
School Card



This is a card with a School symbol and name on one side, along with an Endurance value; this is how much damage each of your Health Levels can absorb: The opposite side of the card includes basic information about that School. Normally these cards sit in front of each player and serve to identify their characters. During combat, these cards are moved to the center of the table and represent the characters and track their positions.

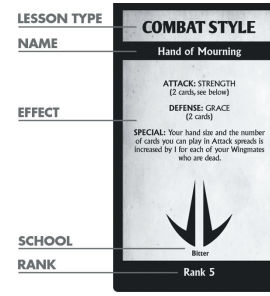
Action Cards





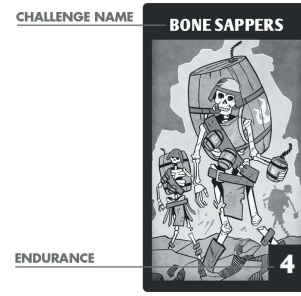
Action cards have a **suit** and a *value*. There are three suits: Grace, Strength, and Intellect. Each Phoenix has Grace cards and either Strength or Intellect cards, based on their School. Certain Action cards also have **Traits** and **abilities**. These are the primary tool players use to perform actions, as described in Chapter Three. Each player has their own deck of Action cards and a hand of cards that determines their current options. A player starts with a hand of five cards, and draws back up to five cards at the end of their turn.

Lesson Cards



These cards represent abilities that a character can use at any time. The six Schools each have a series of unique Lessons, and each of these Lessons has a **Rank**, representing the minimum Rank a player must have in order to acquire the Lesson. A beginning Phoenix receives three **Core Lessons**, which provide the fundamental abilities of a particular School, and then chooses a Rank 1 Lesson from those available. Lessons are placed face up in front of each player.

Challenge Cards

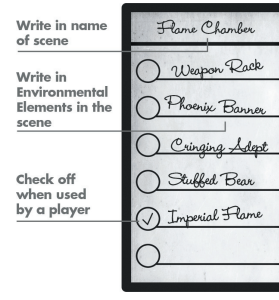


The double-sided cards each feature a picture of a threat and a Defense value on the front, with additional information about the Challenge on the back. You'll use these cards in combat to represent the challenges the Phoenixes must overcome. You'll also use **numbered tokens** to represent the Health Levels of the challenge.

Conditions

These are round tokens that can be placed on a School card or Challenge to indicate an ongoing effect affecting that card. Conditions include things such as being hidden, stunned, or even set on fire. A full list of condition effects is found on page 446.

The Torch



The Torch card is a doublesided card with the symbol of a torch on one side. The other side has a space for you to write a list of words: The **Environmental Elements** found in a particular scene. The Torch is passed between players—whoever currently has the Torch is the active player and can use an Environmental Element as part of their action. You can find more details about this on page 113. You can write on a Torch card with a pencil or erasable marker. If you prefer not to damage the card, keep track of the Environmental Elements elsewhere and just use the Torch card to track the active player.

FOUR THINGS THINGS TO REMEMBER

PHOENIX IS A STORYTELLING CARD GAME.

When a player wants to take action, success isn't determined by a random roll. It's based on making the best use of the cards in their hand, telling a good story, and using limited resources. Looking at their hand, a player usually knows if they can succeed at a task. The question is always whether that success is worth the cost.

PHOENIX IS A WAR STORY.

This isn't a game about wandering the world in search of loot or fame. It's not about battling wandering monsters or who's going to take first watch around the campfire. *Your world is at war, and your people are losing.* Every adventure is a vital mission. Time is always of the essence. The threats are dire, and failure is always a possibility. But every mission *matters*. You have a chance to make a difference.

As a war story, *Phoenix* emphasizes teamwork. Players need to work together to succeed, and their abilities are designed to complement one another. In combat, players choose the order they act, and this spirit flows throughout the system; players work together to create the story. There's always room for friendly rivalries, but this isn't a game where anyone is going to stand alone or stab comrades in the back. The Phoenixes are the world's last hope—and if they're going to have any chance at victory, they need to work together.

DEATH IS PART OF THE STORY.

In many games, the story ends if the heroes die. Failure is never truly an option, because who wants the story to end? In *Phoenix*, character death is a part of the story. The threats are simply too vast to defeat without a price. It's a game where *sacrifice for the greater good* is often necessary; rather than simply surviving, it's a game about making death mean something. If a Phoenix isn't willing to make a sacrifice when the time is right, they may doom their entire team to both death and failure. Because failure *is* a possibility—and because you have to live with the consequences of your failures—victory truly feels like victory.

Death and rebirth is actually the mechanism by which a character grows stronger. *Phoenix* isn't a game about killing things and taking their stuff. It's about making a sacrifice to save your world…and thinking about *why* you died and what lessons you will take with you into your next life. While each rebirth makes you stronger, you can only return seven times. Each death gives you strength…but it also brings you closer to the true end of your personal story. This is a game in which you need to make every life count.

THIS IS YOUR WORLD.

Phoenix is driven by a particular story: The struggle between Dawn Command and the Dread. There is a mystery at the heart of this: *What is the Dread?* This guide will give you an answer to that question. It gives you stories to tell. But ultimately, both the story and the world belong to you and your players. Follow your own inspiration. If you don't like an idea, change it. If you want another country in the world, add it. If you have your own answer to the mystery of the Dread, explore it. This guide is a toolbox to help you build a compelling story; it's always up to you to decide which tools to use and which to leave behind.

Think about these things as you learn the game. These are ideas to remember as you prepare your stories, and things to share as you guide your players.

CHAPTER TWO: A BRIEF GUIDE TO THE DAYLIT WORLD

Playing *Phoenix: Dawn Command* is about creating a story with your friends. Whether you're playing a Phoenix or taking on the role of Marshal and guiding others through the story, it's good to know the story's foundation. This chapter provides a basic grounding in the world of Dalea. It covers Phoenixes, the modern world, and the history leading up to the Dread.

As you read through this, think about how it applies to you. What did you do in your first life? Where were you from? In which point of history did you live and die? Were you killed by the terrors of the Dread, or did you die in an earlier conflict and linger in the Crucible until the present crisis? Which Phoenix School appeals to you the most?

The material in this chapter is aimed at both Phoenixes and Marshals. It reflects common knowledge and opinion within the Empire. As a player, this is the Chapter you're *supposed* to read. Just don't go flipping to the end of the book.

THE CRUCIBLE

The world of *Phoenix* is called **Dalea**, which means "The Daylit World" in the common tongue of the Empire. The people of Dalea believe that the Universe is divided into four levels. **Dawn** is the source of life and light. **Daylight** is the reality that mortals inhabit. **Dusk** is the world of spirits. Below this lies **Darkness**, the end of existence. According to the common faith of the Empire, life is a journey. Our spirits are born in the Dawn and descend into Daylight, passing on through the Dusk to end in Darkness. Most people believe this is a cycle…when your spirit drops into the Darkness, it eventually finds its way back to the Dawn and begins the journey again. No mortal being has traveled to the Dawn or the Darkness and returned to tell the tale; their existence is a matter of faith. All things have a beginning and all things have an end: This is the Dawn and the Darkness.

The Dusk is the realm of spirits, and some believe we glimpse it in our dreams. Here the Fallen Folk have their domains, and restless ghosts linger and howl at the Daylight. When barriers are thin, it's possible for things to pass from Daylight to Dusk, and vice versa. Skavi warlocks bargain with the Fallen, and Shadovar mystics reach across the veil to speak with ghosts.

As a Phoenix, you also linger in the Dusk between your lives. When you die, you're drawn into a unique pocket of the Dusk, a dream designed to test and teach you. This is called the **Crucible**, and you return there each time you die. Your Crucible is unique to you and your Flame. It can take any shape you can imagine. In your first trials, you proved you were prepared to fight the Dread, and you learned the

skills and lessons you'd need to do it effectively. It's up to you to decide exactly what you're fighting for, but if you were driven solely by greed or self-interest, you'd never have made it through; the fact that you've been reborn means you have something worth fighting for.

Time in the Dusk has no bearing on time in the Daylit World. You might have spent years training in the Crucible and returned to find that only days passed since your death…or you might have died in the Conquest or the Civil War, and discovered that centuries have passed in Daylight after what seemed like only days in the Crucible.

WHAT IS A PHOENIX?

A Phoenix is someone who's returned from death imbued with supernatural power. A Phoenix can die and return up to seven times. These things are common knowledge, but what else is involved? What are your limits and strengths?

Bound to a Flame

Flames are pools of mystical energy that exist within the Dusk. The common faith of the Empire maintains that these are pieces of the Dawn dropped down to guide and protect the innocent, but that's speculation; no one knows for certain where the Flames came from or if they are sentient. Your Crucible exists within one of these Flames, and when you passed through your first trials, your spirit was bound to your Flame. Now its energy sustains and empowers you, reflected in your Sparks and Lessons.

Your Flame contains the spirits of all the Phoenixes who have been bound to it before you. One of these chose you and helped to guide you through the Crucible. This is your **Mentor**. What is your relationship with them? Is your Mentor an inspiration or a gruelling taskmaster? Do you look forward to speaking with them or dread the experience? Each time you die, you return to the Crucible and face a new set of trials. You can be reborn up to seven times, but not every Phoenix can make it through the Crucible; it is always a challenge, and you have to decide what gives you the strength and determination to fight your way back to life. However long the Crucible seems to take, you generally return at dawn on the day following your death. After your final death, your spirit merges with your Flame; if you wish, you can choose the next Phoenix to be bound to it and serve as a Mentor yourself.

As a Phoenix, you are part of a unit called a **Wing**, which can include one Phoenix from each School. This decision isn't made by Dawn Command; it's based on a mystical connection between the Flames. You may have Lessons or Traits that only work with other members of the Wing, such as the Devoted Phoenix's power to channel strength to any Wingmate. You will serve with your Wingmates until you or they die…and if they die first, you will serve with the next Phoenixes to channel

their Flames. While in the Crucible, you were taught a language called **Pyrean**. No culture in the Empire speaks Pyrean, though some warlocks use it in their dealings with the Fallen; generally it allows you to have private conversations with other Phoenixes.

Tough, But Not Immortal

As a Phoenix, you are suffused with the energy of your Flame. This allows you to push yourself beyond mortal limits, as reflected by your Traits, Lessons, and the abilities of your School. All Phoenixes possess astonishing resilience and resistance to pain, and you can fight on after sustaining wounds that would send any mortal into shock. When you take a **Wound**, you are suffering an injury that could kill or cripple a normal human. You could be dealing with broken bones, a collapsed lung, or similarly severe situations; but as long as you have **Sparks**, you can continue to act normally until you lose your final Health Level. At this point, your body dissolves into ash. If you have Sparks left, you can bond with a Wingmate as an **attendant spirit**. If you ever run out of Sparks, you instantly die, and your spirit returns to the Crucible.

You are sustained by your Flame. You can eat or drink, but you don't have to. You never have to sleep or rest. You're immune to most mundane poisons and diseases, and you are highly resistant to any sort of possession; this allows Phoenixes to face threats that would instantly overwhelm mortals. Phoenixes do breathe, and you can drown.

At dawn, you recover one Health Level and a number of Sparks equal to twice your Rank. When you die and are reborn, you are restored to full health.

Physical Appearance

Your physical appearance is set when you're reborn, and it is based on your vision of yourself. Some Phoenixes look exactly as they did at the end of their first lives. Others are more idealized versions of themselves—how they were at their peak, or how they wished they could be. You're not bound to any element of your past; age, gender, and any other aspect could change. Your physical attributes are drawn from your Flame, not your muscles. You could look like a child or an elder and still possess the power to tear an enemy apart with your bare hands. You can also have inhuman features—unusual coloration, eyes of fire, metal skin. These unnatural features are more common among high-ranking Phoenixes, typically occurring as a Phoenix starts to lose touch with their original identity. Overall, appearance is entirely up to you, but it doesn't have any *mechanical* effects on your character. You could decide that your Durant Phoenix appears to be an empty suit of armor, but

this won't give you extra Health Levels or Defense. However, when you make a Defense Spread, you might describe it as shrugging off an enemy attack with no damage, while a Forceful Phoenix would describe their Defense as dodging out of the way.

A few things identify you as a Phoenix. You possess a unique tool called a **Talon**. Most Talons are weapons, but yours could be some other tool or ornament—a cloak, a book, a crown. A Talon is virtually indestructible, and if you lose it, it is restored to you at dawn. Regardless of its form, all Talons possess a distinctive element made from Pyrean steel that resembles the symbol of Dawn Command… the brooch on your cloak, the hilt of your sword, a steel symbol embossed on the cover of your book. Beyond this, every Phoenix has a **Uniform**. This is the clothing and equipment that returns with you each time you're reborn. Thus, a Shrouded might always have a set of lockpicks while a Devoted always has a pouch of healing herbs. While every Uniform is unique, it always displays the symbol of your School in a prominent location.

As a Phoenix, you can use anything you find. Some Phoenixes rely solely on their Talons in battle; others grab whatever is around or fight with their bare hands. However, your Talon and Uniform are what you always possess upon rebirth, and they are always restored at dawn. You can burn one Spark to make a ranged attack using your Talon (Do you throw it? Project energy through it? Write an enemy's name in your book?), and your Talon gains an additional ability when you reach Rank Two.

SHROUDED

FORCEFUL

DEVOTED

DURANT

ELEMENTAL

BITTER

THE SIX SCHOOLS

When a Phoenix dies, they are drawn into their Flame and cast into a Crucible created specifically to train and test them. Their only companion is their Mentor… the spirit of a Phoenix uniquely suited to teach them the lessons they need to learn. These lessons fall into six broad categories. These are the Schools: Bitter, Devoted, Durant, Elemental, Forceful, and Shrouded. These Schools and their symbols weren't created by the Dawn Legion. They are embedded in the Flames themselves, and all Phoenixes are bound to one of the Schools.

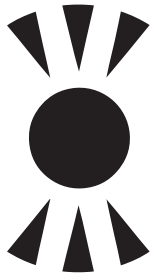
While a Phoenix can learn lessons from many Schools over the course of multiple lives, it is their first death that defines them. In the transition from mortal to Phoenix, they learn things that shape them for the remainder of their existence. This is when they acquire their Talon, learn their Specialties, and form their most vital connection to their Flame. This core School is the School whose insignia appears on the Phoenix's uniform, and henceforth they will always be referred as that school… for example, "The Durant Phoenix Aegis" or "The Shrouded Winter."

During the days of the Phoenix Imperium, the Schools were recognized as fraternities; these were considered to be divisions of the Dawn Legion, and the traditional form of address would be "Winter of the Shrouded Legion." While the bond of a Wing was important, members of a particular School had specific roles and duties within the Empire. The *Dawn Codex* presents the Schools as the "Five Virtues of the Dawn"—only five, as Bitter Phoenixes were unknown at the time—and provided guidance to those who wished to follow the path of a particular School in their mortal lives.

In the present day, Dawn Command is too busy fighting the Dread and gathering recruits and resources to reestablish these ancient fraternities. There are only 15–20 members of each School, and at any given time, most are spread across the Daylit World fighting the Dread or returning from a mission. Despite that, there is an unspoken bond between members of a particular School. This may not be as primal as the connection between members of a Wing, but members of a School have learned the same lessons and use the same tools to overcome challenges. It's possible Dawn Command will call on all members of a particular School to accomplish a particular task. When the Dawn Legion fought the Talu, it took all of the Devoted Phoenixes working together to sever the connection between the Talu and their House Gods. Similar challenges could easily arise in the struggle against the Dread.

The following section examines each School, looking at their Specialties, their unique attributes, and the roles they play. School **Archetypes** are examples of characters who would fit into the School, but these are just a few ideas; there are many other stories to explore.

DEVOTED



"What strength we have, we have to share."

The Devoted sigil shows six points around a circle. It represents the Phoenixes of a Wing and the greater whole of the Wing itself. As a Devoted, you know that unity is power—that a Wing working together can accomplish things no lone champion can achieve. Your powers allow you to strengthen the Wing as a whole—to give of yourself so others may triumph. You can heal others by taking on their injuries. You can throw away your own cards to push your allies across the threshold of success. You can facilitate communication, using your own strength to allow the Wing to communicate over vast distances. To some, this seems like a passive role. You know better. You aren't one person: You are the Wing. Your Talon isn't your weapon, you Wingmates are—and you make your attacks through them.

Those who underestimate the Devoted are often surprised by their power. You take the wounds of others onto yourself…but you can pass those injuries to your enemies, regaining your strength even as you cripple your foes. If you wish, you can learn to call on the power of your allies in times of need. As the heart of the Wing, you can channel the strength of many Phoenixes to accomplish a task no one could perform alone.

In your first life, you died for others. You might have fought an unbeatable enemy to give others time to escape or shielded an innocent with your body. Perhaps you exposed yourself to a plague so you could learn how to cure it or gave your life to a Fallen for its promise to spare your people. Whatever it was, your sacrifice saved innocent lives at the cost of your own. As a Devoted Phoenix, sacrifice is your greatest gift: Your pain can give strength to the weak, save the dying, and turn failure into triumph.

ACTION SUITS: Grace, Intellect. Grace is your primary suit. You possess empathy and charisma; you can command spirits and soothe fears. Any time you make a spread, you may use any one card as a Grace card regardless of its actual suit.

SKILL SPECIALTIES: Diplomacy, Healing, Spirits, and **Tradition**. You know how to soothe the pain of mortals and spirits alike, how to mediate disputes, and how to convince with calm words. Your talent for healing encompasses both mundane medicine and minor rituals. The only way you can heal the Wounds of Phoenixes is through Lessons, but you can use Skill Spreads to fight plagues and save injured mortals. Your knowledge of spirits applies more to ghosts and totemic nature spirits than to the Fallen Folk, and you can use spreads to communicate with spirits or try to drive them away. Tradition reflects your knowledge of the stories and superstitions

of people across the Empire; you know many old customs that are no longer part of everyday life.

SPECIAL ATTRIBUTES: Devoted Phoenixes are vessels of the Dawn. As a Devoted Phoenix, you may emit light at will, illuminating up to a forty-foot radiance with the equivalent of daylight. Your presence has a slight calming effect on mortals, and your touch soothes minor pains. Nature often flourishes around Devoted Phoenixes; flowers may bloom, or wilted vegetation may be restored. As a Devoted, one important thing to decide is how your *Shared Strength* manifests. When you discard a card from your hand and enhance someone's spread, what are you actually *doing*? Are you infusing them with the light of the Dawn? Are you channeling a minor nature spirit to give them the strength of a bull or the speed of a cat? Do you verbally encourage them, or is it a purely mystical effect?

DEVOTED ARCHETYPES

- **The Shaman.** A healer or wise woman from a Grimwald tribe or Skavi clan. You may use salves or herbs as part of your healing effects, and channel totemic spirits when you strengthen your allies. You could have died your first death battling malevolent spirits or a Dread plague.

- **The Noble.** In your first life, you might have been a Skavi noble, a Talu aristocrat, or a chieftain in the Grimwald. Despite your privileged position, you always considered it your duty to protect and guide those below you. Your *Shared Strength* reflects your ability to encourage and inspire others. As a Talu noble, you might exchange the Tradition Specialty for The Empire; if you're a Skavi lord, you could trade Spirits or Tradition for The Arcane.

- **The Champion of the Dawn.** You have always been a devotee of the Dawn and may have been a priest at a Dawn Temple in your first life. You believe Phoenixes are the Dawn's champions in the battle against the darkness, and your Lessons and Traits often manifest with a burst of radiance. If you're especially zealous (and your Wing lacks a Durant), you might exchange the Diplomacy Specialty for Leadership or Tradition for War.

- **The Curmudgeon.** You've seen it all and you're tired of having to look after the kids. But at the end of the day, it's your wisdom and your magic that'll give them the push they need. They better not get use to it, though; you're just seven lives away from retirement, and you're getting too old for this.

WHY PLAY A DEVOTED? The Devoted Phoenix is a team player. As a Devoted, you can keep your allies alive and turn their failures into successes. Your ability to add a card to the spreads of allies is weak at Rank 1, but as you grow in Rank, it becomes an extremely powerful tool. You can be more effective playing through the other members of the Wing than attacking on your own; focus on the group triumphs as opposed to your personal actions. If this appeals to you, be sure to acquire the *Dawn's Touch* Lesson when it becomes available.

With that said, a Devoted can be a powerful champion of the light. Your ability to give your Wounds to your enemies can be a powerful weapon. Use the *Shining Mirror* Combat Style until you are injured, then shift to *Passing Pain* to give the Wounds to your foes. *Painbearer* enhances your offensive power, while *Woundbinding* allows you to take Wounds meant for an ally. The aggressive Devoted has two weaknesses. The first is that you can't give Wounds to undead enemies unless you have the *Exorcist* Trait. The second is that woundshifting uses a significant amount of Sparks. It can be difficult to sustain this style of play unless you have an Elemental in the Wing with *Elemental Bond*.

DURANT

"I am the dam that stems the flood, the wall that holds back the storm. I will not falter and I will not fall."

In your first life, you died because you weren't tough enough. The Lessons you learned in the Crucible have taught you how to survive hardship and pain, to shake off damage that would kill any mortal and cripple another Phoenix. You can stand your ground in dire situations, offering inspiration to those who might otherwise fall prey to fear. You lack the fury of the Bitter or the speed of the Forceful, but you can stand your ground in the face of threats that would sweep your Wingmates aside.

Many of your Lessons focus on survival, allowing you to shake off conditions and ignore minor injuries. However, you can also learn to guide your allies in battle. *Vanguard* lets you expose the weaknesses of an enemy, *Tactical Genius* strengthens those who follow your plan of attack, and *Guiding Hand* allows you to directly enhance the attacks of your allies. Abilities such as *Valiant* and *Turn the Tide* force an enemy to strike at you instead of your Wingmates, letting them benefit from your impenetrable guard. If you aren't the last Phoenix to fall, it will be because you put yourself in harm's way to shield those in need.

Durant Phoenixes are trained in the arts of war and leadership. In the Phoenix Imperium, Durant Phoenixes served as warlords and commanders, directing the actions of mortal soldiers. At the moment, Dawn Command has limited military forces, but should that change, you are trained to lead. In these dark times, your confident voice can be an inspiration to frightened mortals; your talent for leadership is often an asset when you're interacting with with the people of the Empire.

ACTION SUITS: Grace, Strength. Your primary suit is **Strength**, reflecting your remarkable endurance. Any time you make a spread, you may use any one card as a Strength card regardless of its actual suit.

SKILL SPECIALTIES: Athletics, Endurance, Leadership, and **War.** Your endurance allows you to resist torment and push through hardships that would exhaust even Phoenixes. Athletics reflects your exceptional physical conditioning and can apply to jumping, climbing, swimming, lifting heavy objects, smashing through doors, or any other athletic action. You may have been a soldier in your first life; either way, you studied the arts of war extensively in the Crucible. You are familiar with almost every weapon ever used in the Daylit World, and you are an expert tactician. Your Leadership Specialty helps you to inspire and convince others, and it applies to most social situations in which you are presenting yourself in a commanding or inspiring way.

SPECIAL ATTRIBUTES: As a Durant, you are innately tougher than your allies. Your base Endurance value is three, meaning it takes three points of damage to inflict a Wound on you instead of the normal two. Why is this? Is your skin resistant to cuts, or your bones unbreakable? You can use your core Talent to reduce the damage you take from an attack…what does this look like? Many Durant Phoenixes are simply able to shake off small wounds without injury, or are able to continue fighting even when they have sustained damage that would kill any other Phoenix. With others, this supernatural durability has a more visible manifestation. A Durant could have skin of steel or stone, either all the time or simply when attacked. Others are never seen without their armor; over the course of many lives, some Durant Phoenixes literally *become* suits of armor.

DURANT ARCHETYPES

- **The Soldier.** You were a warrior in your first life. You might be an Imperial soldier who died fighting the Dread, or you could have served long ago and died in the Civil War. You could be a *Seasoned Veteran*, a *Commander*, or both. The other Phoenixes may have the skills, but you've seen war, and you're going to show them how it's done.

- **The Peasant Hero.** You might have been a farmhand or even a child in your first life. Your village was destroyed by the Dread, and you're going to make sure no one suffers as your village did. Your Leadership is more about passion and common sense than strict discipline, and you might replace your War Specialty with Nature. In terms of Traits, you're more likely to be a *Hunter* than a *Commander*, and you might be *Crude But Effective*…or even *Small & Quick* if you're a child.

- **The Survivor.** You overcame more hardships in your first life than most Phoenixes will in seven. You've suffered every tragedy imaginable, but nothing can keep you down from long. Traitwise, you're a *Survivor*, and you might be *Tough as Nails* or *Too Big To Fail.* Whatever you face, you've seen worse…make sure everyone knows it!

WHY PLAY A DURANT? The main reason to play a Durant is because you *don't want to die*. Of all the Schools, Durant is the hardest to kill. With Lessons such as *Impenetrable Hide* and *Bulwark of the Dawn*, your durability dramatically increases; if you pair these with the Talon *Bastion*, you can literally ignore attacks that will cripple your allies. Beyond sheer durability, the Durant is an excellent team player. Many of your Lessons allow you to create openings for your allies or to enhance their actions. If you choose abilities such as *Valiant* and *Turn The Tide,* you can use your durability to protect your allies. Your Leadership Skill Specialty is a positive approach in many social situations, giving you a strong role off the battlefield.

Overall, Durant is a fairly simple School to play. Your Lessons are straightforward, and your durability means you can make a few mistakes and still walk away from it. It can be an excellent School if you're relatively new to roleplaying games, and you're worried about dying too quickly. Of course, death is how you grow stronger in *Phoenix*; as times, it may seem as though your durability is holding you back. Remember you can always choose to lower your guard when you're ready to advance in Rank. You can also talk to your Marshal about having a dramatic death scene that occurs between missions…perhaps you're overwhelmed on an important solo mission.

ELEMENTAL

"My blood is fire, and if I must spill my blood to burn the enemies of the Empire, so be it."

All Phoenixes are reborn from the Imperial Flame. Elemental Phoenixes maintain a direct connection to the Flame, and they can channel its energy as a weapon. Some are content to blast their enemies with gouts of fire; others are artists, creating elaborate beasts of flame that wreak havoc among their foes. As an Elemental grows in power, they can drain heat to produce deadly chills or shock their enemies with lightning and buffet them with winds. No other School wields such pure, direct force; further, Elemental is the only School whose core Combat Style allows ranged attacks. This power comes with a high price in Sparks, and an Elemental can quickly burn through their reserves. However, the Elemental can draw on their own lifeforce to power their attacks, directly converting Health Levels into Sparks.

Elementals die for duty, and the classic image of the Elemental is the sorcerer burning their own life away to bring down a terrible foe. In the past, "duty" generally meant "duty to the Empire"; during the Phoenix Imperium, Elemental Phoenixes were the strong hand of the Empire. However, duty can take many forms. Your death may have been a duty to your family, to your loved ones, or even to a promise made to a Fallen patron. Whatever it was, you served a cause you valued more highly than your life. The question is, how you have integrated that with your duty to Dawn Command?

The role of the Elemental is tightly focused. Destruction is your function, burning down the enemy and blasting through barriers. Your eldritch knowledge may prove useful when you face the Fallen or other arcane mysteries, but you are first and foremost a weapon. If you want to be more of a team player, there are a few Lessons that help you restore the Sparks of your Wingmates.

ACTION SUITS: Grace, Intellect. Your primary suit is **Intellect**. Any time you make a spread, you may use any one card as an Intellect card regardless of its actual suit.

SKILL SPECIALTIES: Fire, Destruction, The Arcane, and **The Empire**. Within the Wing, your primary role is Destruction, whether through fire or other forces. In battle, you will rely on your Combat Styles and Attack Spreads to burn your foes. If you ever need to blow up a door…or a bridge…or anything else, you can attempt it with as Skill Spread. The *Firestarter* Talent expands the scope of the Fire Specialty, allowing you to make a spread to extinguish flames as well as start them. Beyond your talent for destruction, you're well versed in arcane knowledge. In addition to Ash Sorcery and the mystical techniques practiced by the adepts of

Dawn Command, this also encompasses anything that has to do with the Fallen Folk and Dusk realm. Finally, as Elementals were always the backbone of the Phoenix Imperium, you are well versed in everything connected to the Empire. From law and etiquette to the intricacies of the Imperial Philosophies, you are an expert in all things Imperial.

SPECIAL ATTRIBUTES: As an Elemental, your default weapon is flame. However, this is largely cosmetic. With your Marshal's approval you could shift Fire Shaping to produce blasts of lightning or bolts of pure force; a Shadovar Elemental might unleash hungry ghosts to devour an enemy. If you do this, shift your Fire Specialty to something more appropriate. In addition, you have the power to burn your Health Levels to restore Sparks. How does this manifest? Do flames wreath your body? Does your blood glow in your veins as you're suffused with mystical power?

ELEMENTAL ARCHETYPES

- **The Warlock.** You studied the arcane arts in your first life, though you never wielded the powers you possess today. As a Warlock, you delved into the mysteries of the Fallen Folk; what bargains did you make with the spirits you encountered? *Warlock* is an obvious Trait, but you could justify *Astonishing Luck*, *Brilliant Deduction*, or even *Supernatural Senses* as being provided by familiar spirits that aid and advise you.

- **The Talu.** Despite the infamous reputation of some Talu Houses, the Talu are the backbone of Ilona and the Empire. You take honor and duty very seriously, both to your family and the Empire; once you give your word, you never break it. As Talu, your Traits depend on your House. If you're tied to the criminal Deo Talu, you might be *Sneaky* and have a *Misspent Youth* or *Killer Instincts*. If you're part of the Dol Talu—the line of the Emperor himself—you might be *Noble* and *Inspiring*, or possibly *Charming*. Did you die on good terms with your family, or were you killed by another member of your House?

- **The Force of Nature.** You were a shaman in the Grimwald in your first life. Your Flame allows you to touch the spirits of the wild on a primal level, calling on the pure spirits of storm and fire. You should swap your *Empire* Specialty for *Nature* or *Spirits*, and you should definitely take the *Shaman* trait.

- **The Alchemist.** You were an alchemist in your first life, fascinated by the science of fire and the weapons developed by the Humanists in the Civil War; you could even be the person who originally designed these weapons, reborn now after spending centuries in the Crucible. While your power still comes from your Flame, you manifest it through grenades, dragon flamethrowers, and other physical tools. Despite your knowledge of the Arcane, you are a dedicated scientist; you might be *Resourceful* and the *Smartest Person In The Room*.

WHY PLAY AN ELEMENTAL? The strength of the Elemental is its firepower. At Rank One, no other School can match the sheer size of the Attack Spreads you can unleash. Elemental is also unmatched in its ability to generate Sparks, though you may kill yourself in the process. If you enjoy reckless destruction, this is the School for you. Elemental is less versatile than many other Schools. This makes it an easy School to play, but make sure you like blasting things with fire and lightning; you'll be doing a lot of it.

As an Elemental, your primary choice is the balance between destructive power and the ability to generate Sparks. By combining *Elemental Bond* and *Well of Power* with *Frostbite* and *Consume Heat*, you can generate an impressive number of Sparks without even drawing on your Health Levels. If you prefer to focus purely on destruction, you can decide whether to emphasize Lessons that set enemies on fire and burn them over time (*Firestarter*, *Shield of Flames*, *Bound To The Flame*), or options that maximize the damage you can deal in a single spread, such as *Incinerate* and *Consuming Force.*

FORCEFUL

"I am wind and water. I flow around any obstacle, melt away from any attack—but when I strike with full force, nothing can stand against me."

In your first life, you died because you weren't fast enough or because you faced a barrier you couldn't overcome. Whether you were fleeing from an enemy or racing to save a loved one, you weren't quick enough, and it cost you your life. The powers you gained in the Crucible enhance both speed and precision. You are a blur on the battlefield. You can make half a dozen attacks in the blink of an eye, or a single perfect attack that can bring down the most powerful foe. Your speed and your techniques allow you to turn an enemy's attack against them, and you are deadly opponent even when you don't attack at all.

Forceful Phoenixes are the masters of melee combat, but your talents are equally useful off the battlefield. In the Dawn Legion, Forceful Phoenixes served as unmatched scouts and couriers, and your keen senses will serve your Wing well. The one arena you're weak in is social interaction. You prefer to speak with your actions, and to leave negotiations to the Devoted and Durants.

The techniques of the Forceful Phoenix are more complex than those of other Schools. Some of these are derived from Skavi and Atonic martial arts, while others are based around your supernatural abilities. Forceful Phoenixes have a number of techniques that build momentum over time; as a result, you often make a flurry of small attacks. Certain Lessons require you to temporarily *commit* Sparks, focusing your power through a particular technique. Other Lessons benefit when you play a particular combination of cards. When all these pieces work together, no School can match you for pure offensive power; but you have to work a little harder than most to get these pieces in place.

ACTION SUITS: Grace, Strength. Your primary suit is **Grace**. You possess uncanny reflexes, and any time you make a spread, you may use any one card as a Grace card regardless of its actual suit.

SKILL SPECIALTIES: Acrobatics, Resolve, Scouting, and **Traveler**. You approach physical obstacles with speed and precision, overcoming them with acrobatic grace instead of brute force. Your resolve reflects your mental discipline and determination, and it allows you to overcome fear or other effects that would slow you down. Traveler reflects your knowledge both of the many provinces of the Empire and of the wilderness itself. Scouting is your most versatile Specialty, encompassing keen senses, an eye for detail, and the ability to move swiftly and quietly. Whether it's spotting a hidden enemy or sneaking up on a sleeping beast, your experience with scouting can make a vital difference. This is especially important because spreads

related to Perception are typically tied to Intellect…but because of this Specialty, you can use Grace whenever Scouting comes into play.

SPECIAL ATTRIBUTES: Speed is the defining element of the Forceful, and you can run indefinitely at the pace of a swift horse. One question is whether you primarily fight with weapons (your Talon or mundane weapons) or if you strike your enemies with feet and fists. *Rolling Stone* deals additional damage with each attack, and *Percussive Strikes* gives you the potential for a massive single attack. Are these based purely on momentum and skill, or do you sheathe your weapons in mystical energy that builds in intensity?

FORCEFUL ARCHETYPES

- **The Ranger.** You were a scout in your first life, whether a forester in the Grimwald, an Aton vault runner or a Skavi nomad. You prefer the wilds to the city. You're most likely a *Hunter*; are you *Sneaky* as well?

- **The Warrior Monk.** The Voices of the Deep are an order of monks in Kor Aton. They protect the people above from the dangers that lurk in the deepest vaults, but they also work to honor and placate the spirits themselves. You never left Kor Aton in your lifetime, but in your new life you strive to protect the entire world from the darkness. As you're not well-traveled, you should replace the Traveler Specialty with Spirits or The Arcane. *Absolute Conviction* and *Never Gives Up* can represent your mental discipline, while *Astonishing Luck* could be derived from the favor of the spirits.

- **The Celebrity.** You were a renowned entertainer in your first life. You may have been an acrobat or gymnast, or you could exchange Resolve or Traveler for a Specialty reflecting your talents (Athletics? Bard?). In your first life, you had wealth and fame; how are you acclimating to the serious duty of Dawn Command? Are you still recognized by your fans? *Superhuman Reflexes* and *Makes It Look Easy* are all logical Traits; are you *Charming* or *Inspiring*?

WHY PLAY A FORCEFUL? The Forceful Phoenix can be a challenging School. Where a Bitter just needs to make the biggest Attack Spread they can, a Forceful will often want to spread their best cards out among multiple attacks, or hold cards so they can trigger an exponential combination with *Arrow's Flight* or *Furious Storm*. However, when things line up, a Forceful can play more cards in a single turn than any other School. The ability to draw an additional card when you play a card with a value of two lets you set up strings of attacks…and *Quick Study* gives you the chance to make Skill Spreads in combat (such as a Scouting Spread to examine an enemy or an area) without wasting your combat potential.

As a Forceful, you shine in combat. You can play more cards than anyone else, and with the proper Lessons in place, you can deal more damage than any other Phoenix. The price of this is you aren't as engaged outside of combat. Your Scouting Specialty is a versatile skill that helps you uncover secrets and spot enemies, but you lack the mystical skills of the Intellect-driven Phoenixes or the social Specialties of the Devoted and Durant. There will be times when you're waiting for something to hit…but when it's time for a fight, you're in your element.

Rolling Stone and *Percussive Strikes* are a powerful combination if you like the idea of making flurries of small attacks. If you prefer to focus on your Scouting abilities, *Quick Study* and *Living Whirlwind* are a good path to follow.

CHAPTER TWO: A BRIEF GUIDE TO THE DAYLIT WORLD

SHROUDED

"There is no secret I cannot uncover."

In your first life, you died because of a secret. It could have been a secret you pursued—the identity of a murderer or arcane knowledge mortals weren't meant to know. It could be a secret that was revealed; perhaps you were a spy exposed during a covert operation. Or perhaps you died because of a secret you *didn't* uncover—the fact that a friend was actually a murderer or the way to break an ancient curse. Regardless of the specifics, secrets defined your life and your death.

Shrouded Phoenixes excel at uncovering secrets while remaining hidden themselves. No other School can match the Shrouded when it comes to stealth, and no one else has the breadth of knowledge of a Shrouded. In the Crucible, Shrouded Phoenixes study all manner of lore. History, obscure languages, arcane secrets; all of these are arrows in your quiver. Shrouded Lessons are split between uncovering secrets and being secretive. Is it more important for you to strike from the shadows or to have the ideal skill to solve an unexpected problem? Traits like *Psychometry* and *Painful Truth* give you the power to learn things no other Phoenix could discover; if you want to get to the bottom of every mystery, Shrouded is the school for you.

During the Phoenix Imperium, the Shrouded Legion served as the eyes and spies of the Empire…and when necessary, as its assassins. A love of conspiracy is woven into the School. As a Shrouded, think carefully about your Mentor in the Crucible; do they still have secret agendas they'd like you to complete on their behalf? If not, you may find the Shrouded Marshal of Dawn Command has a few special missions for you. Shrouded feed on secrets, and when everything is known, they create them.

ACTION SUITS: Grace, Intellect. Your primary suit is **Intellect**. Any time you make a spread, you may use any one card as an Intellect card regardless of its actual suit.

SKILL SPECIALTIES: Deception, Lore, Observation, and **Spycraft.** Skills are your strength, and your Specialties are exceptionally broad. Lore is at the core: If a thing can be studied, you've studied it. When it comes to spirits and arcane lore, you're not as specialized as the Elemental or Devoted; but if neither of them are available, you can often fill in. Spycraft covers stealth and shadowing, breaking and entering, and anything else that could serve a spy or assassin well. Observation and Deception fill any gaps in Spycraft. You can disguise yourself or recognize a disguise; hide in the shadows and spot a hidden enemy.

SPECIAL ATTRIBUTES: When Shrouded are first reborn, most traces of them are wiped from history. Memories are blurred, pictures are smudged. It's not that all of their deeds are forgotten; it's just very difficult to connect anything that happened in a Shrouded's first life to their identity as a Phoenix. Beyond this, the physical appearance of a Shrouded is more fluid than that of other Phoenixes and can be altered every dawn. Some Shrouded Phoenixes maintain a consistent appearance throughout their lives, while others have a new face every day. This can't be used to perfectly impersonate another individual, but many Shrouded Phoenixes have wardrobes of identities that shift to suit their moods. Gender, race, and apparent age can all change, but the Phoenix's Talon remains the same; this is how members of Dawn Command recognize their Shrouded comrades.

Any Shrouded with the Lore Specialty knows every language ever spoken in the Empire. In addition to allowing you to communicate with anyone you may meet, this also allows you to have private conversations with other Shrouded by using obscure languages and dialects.

SHROUDED ARCHETYPES

• **The Investigator.** In your first life, you made your living getting to the bottom of mysteries. You may have been a spy, a law enforcer in one of the great cities of the Empire, a muck-raking chronicler working to expose corruption, or a conspiracy theorist pursuing a shadowy cult. *Psychometry* will help you unearth secrets as a Phoenix; *Brilliant Deduction* and *Supernatural Senses* could also prove useful.

• **The Assassin.** Were you a Talu enforcer in your first life? A secret killer in the service of the Empire? A Shadovar guardian avenging crimes against your people? Are you seeking redemption for your mortal deeds, or did you learn the assassin's arts in the Crucible so you could make your enemies suffer? *Killer Instincts* and *Sneaky* will serve you well, as will *Supernatural Senses* and a *Master Plan*.

• **The Scholar.** In your first life, you were an academic; you may have been a Skavi sage, an Imperial Philosopher, or an archaeologist investigating Old Kingdom ruins. Now you have an opportunity to explore the world firsthand. While you're devoted to the fight against the Dread, you're also thrilled with every new discovery you make. You're probably the *Smartest Person In The Room* and you may well have *Seen This Before*. Alternately, you may have been studying the long-forbidden paths of magic; if so, you could be a *Shaman*, a *Warlock*, or both.

WHY PLAY A SHROUDED? If you want to charge into combat and meet your enemies head on, play Bitter or Durant. The Shrouded slips into the shadows at the first sign of danger, appearing to strike a lethal blow against an unwary foe. While these sneak attacks make you a dangerous force, you shine when you're out of combat. Few tasks fall outside your areas of expertise, and you have tools that let you uncover secrets no other Phoenix would ever find. Play a Shrouded if you want to learn the answers to every question…and if you want secrets others may never discover.

If you want to focus on assassination, *Shadow Knife*, *Shadow Dancer*, and *Soon Forgotten* are excellent choices. However, part of the fun of being a Shrouded Phoenix is always having the perfect tool to deal with a situation. *Borrowed Memories* gives you an additional Trait that you can swap out whenever you need a specific skill, while *Rune Ink* gives you an additional hand of Traits to use once each day. *Psychometry* provides information while also exposing an enemy's weaknesses, and it can be an invaluable tool both in and out of combat.

BITTER

"I don't care if I live or if I die, so long as I take a hundred of the enemy with me."

Your first life ended in failure. Whether you faced impossible odds or lacked the skills you needed, your death accomplished nothing. You're driven by anger and regret, and that rage gives you power…and the more you're hurt, the stronger you become.

The Bitter Phoenix is driven by wild recklessness and fury. Your pain increases the power of your attacks, and you are at your best when on the very edge of death. Odds are good you'll be the first Phoenix to die in any mission, but you'll leave a bloody path in your wake. As you increase in rank, you have stranger and darker Lessons. Will you learn how to animate your own corpse or to feed on the energy of the Wing? Your powers make you a force to be feared by your enemies, but even your allies may be wary around you.

The origin of Bitter Phoenixes is a mystery. There's no record of any Bitter Phoenixes in the Dawn Legion or the Phoenix Imperium; it seems the first Bitter Phoenix appeared after the Civil War. Some scholars fear that Bitter Phoenixes represent some sort of corruption of the Phoenix Flames; others believe the Phoenixes of the past were simply so arrogant they never saw themselves as failures. One aspect of this is that many Bitter Phoenixes don't have Mentors in the Crucible; they have to solve their trials without guidance. This is a question for you to answer when you make a Bitter Phoenix: Do you have a Mentor? If so, is your Mentor a respected ally or a cruel taskmaster? Does your Mentor hunt you to make you stronger? Some fear Bitter Phoenixes will become monsters. Does your Mentor help you channel your rage, or are they an example of what you fear you could become?

ACTION SUITS: Grace, Strength. Your primary suit is **Strength;** you can always draw on a hidden reserve of power. Any time you make a spread, you may use any one card as a Strength card regardless of its actual suit.

SKILL SPECIALTIES: Athletics, Death, Fear, and **Shadows.** You are strong and fast, and you can take on almost any Athletic challenge. You are comfortable in darkness, and your Specialty with Shadows helps you when you wish to hide from others or fight without light. Likewise, you understand all aspects of Fear. You can inspire it when you wish to intimidate your enemies; but you can also resist it or aid an ally who's been paralyzed by terror. You are equally familiar with Death in all its forms…including the undead.

SPECIAL ATTRIBUTES: Bitter Phoenixes inspire fear in mortal creatures. It's a subtle effect, unless harnessed and channeled using the Fear Specialty; but both humans and animals can sense your predatory nature. Beyond this, one of your greatest assets is how your strength increases as you're injured. How does this manifest? Do you actually swell in size as you're hurt? Does your blood form runic patterns? Or do you simply strike with greater speed and precision despite your fearsome wounds?

BITTER ARCHETYPES

- **The Barbarian.** You've been dead for a long time. In your first life, you were the warlord of a clan of Skavi nomads, or the chieftain of a Grimwald tribe. You may have been a brutal raider, or you may have fought to defend your people from Fallen or other unnatural threats. The world has changed since you died, but your people still need you. The Empire is weak and corrupt; you will show them what a true warrior can do. *Endless Rage* is a good Lesson, increasing the power of your attacks. You may be *Terrifying* and *Crude But Effective*, but you might also be a capable *Commander* and even *Inspiring*; in your day, you were a great leader.

- **The Avenger.** You didn't die alone. Your loved ones were butchered, and you were powerless to stop it. The Crucible gave you power, and you're going to see your enemies pay. The challenge with the Avenger is your missions will involve fighting the Dread; you can't go and pursue a mortal vendetta. The simplest option is to have your vendetta be against the Dread or a specific aspect of it: You are determined to destroy the Chant once and for all or defeat the Bone Legion that has overrun your homeland. Alternately, you could be watching for a threat: Your family was killed by careless Phoenixes, and you're going to make sure no other Phoenix allows such collateral damage…and any who do will answer to you. You are surely *Vengeful*, and you might well be *Ruthless*. The skills of a *Hunter* could help you track your prey, and you'll *Never Give Up* until your enemy is defeated.

- **The Quest for Redemption.** You are haunted by the actions of your first life. You may have been corrupt or cruel. Perhaps you set some aspect of the Dread in motion, or made a foolish deal with one of the Fallen. Whatever you did, the Crucible has given you a chance to redeem yourself…but is redemption possible for one such as you? You may be *Reckless*, or hiding a secret *Death Wish*; perhaps your misdeeds are related to your *Misspent Youth*. Do you reveal your crimes to your Wing, or is it a secret burden you carry alone?

WHY PLAY A BITTER? As a Bitter, you are at your best when you're close to death. In many ways, this lets you fully embrace the unique aspects of Phoenix; you want to take risks and charge into certain death. As a Bitter you won't live long, but you have the ability to inflict tremendous amounts of damage on your foes. The Bitter is also the darkest of the Schools in its tone. If you enjoy being an antihero, Bitter may be the School for you.

DAWN COMMAND

Since the days of the Dawn Legion, one principle has held true: *Your first life is your own. The rest belong to the Empire.* Even before the Dread, it was understood that the lives of a Phoenix would be devoted to the common good. Every Phoenix has their own reasons for fighting. You don't have to like the structure of the Empire or support its government, but if you aren't willing to lay down your life to protect its people, you'd never have made it through the Crucible. Your Mentor in the Crucible is the spirit of a former Phoenix, and you learned about the structure and traditions of Dawn Command before you were reborn. You learned to speak Pyrean, the dead language Phoenixes use for private conversations. When your training was complete, you went to the heart of your Crucible and walked into a pillar of fire…and out of the Imperial Flame in the Grand Aerie of Pyre, ready to join the fight.

During the Phoenix Imperium, the Dawn Legion was the foundation of the Empire. After the Civil War, it became Dawn Command, serving only to defend the Empire in times of need. Dawn Command began as a massive institution with thousands of mortals supporting a hundred Wings of Phoenixes. Every Aerie maintained a corps of Guardians, mortals trained by Phoenixes to protect their communities. The Devoted taught the arts of healing and mediation. Elementals trained students in the only approved arts of magic, the traditions of the adept and Flamekeeper. Durants maintained the militias, ready to deal with brigands or other threats. The Phoenixes directed this from the Grand Aerie on Pyre, dispatching Phoenixes to any Aerie that called for assistance. As time passed, these calls became rare. The Phoenixes stopped returning from death, and as the Phoenixes dwindled, so did their support. In 330 IC Dawn Command was disbanded. Aeries were converted to Dawn Temples or abandoned, and the Phoenixes became legends.

In 593 IC, the last surviving Phoenixes returned to Pyre. They began restoring the Grand Aerie and re-established the Imperial Flame. Within days, new Phoenixes were reborn—but a handful of Phoenixes can't face the Dread alone. Dawn Command needs mortals to maintain Aeries, to serve as adepts and Flamekeepers, to learn the arts of healing and war. In this dark time, few people are willing to believe heroes from stories can be real; most people of the Empire believe the Phoenixes are delusional at best, or at worst some cruel trick of the Dread itself. But some have held to the Dawn Faith, and surely more are out there. For the last year, Dawn Command has searched for mortals willing to serve, gathering resources and re-establishing Aeries. Today, fourteen Aeries are active in addition to the Grand Aerie on Pyre. There are approximately one hundred Phoenixes, split into 18 active Wings, along with a number of lone Phoenixes who don't have full Wings—waiting for a new Phoenix to channel a specific Flame can take one day or several years. The Grand Aerie has a support staff of 95 mortals, and there are over four hundred humans spread across the Empire working in support of Dawn Command. Nonetheless, it

is a rag-tag resistance movement. The Emperor and the Imperial Army have yet to acknowledge it. Common folk don't know if Phoenixes can be trusted. Resources are spread thin, and at any given time most Wings are out in the field.

This is the situation you're coming into: a desperate struggle to protect innocents from the Dread while continuing to expand operations and regain the trust of the Empire. Every mission may be different from the one before: Your challenge is to do all you can to help the innocent and unravel the mystery of the Dread.

COGS

Your first life ended when you died. Phoenixes can't hold property or lead normal lives. From now until you die your final death, it's your duty to serve with your Wing and protect the innocent. To symbolize this, each Phoenix takes a new name when they're reborn. This your cognomen, traditionally shortened to **cog**. A cog is typically descriptive, often related to your School—so Ash is a fiery Elemental, Shepherd a protective Durant, and Wolf a predatory Bitter. However, nothing prevents you from having a traditional name as a cog; it simply can't be the name you had in your first life. This has been true since the Dawn Legion; Savant, Aegis, and Justice are cogs, not birth names.

SAMPLE COGS

Aegis, Anima, Ash, Badger, *Bastion*, Birch, Blaze, Bloom, Book, Cage, Cat, *Cinder*, Dawn, Drake, Dusk, Elegy, *Ember*, Faith, Forgotten, Genial, Grim, Hearth, *Honor*, Hope, *Joy*, Judge, *Justice*, *Kestrel*, Lock, *Mercy*, Nemesis, Noose, *Omen*, Page, Pierce, Preacher, Quill, Reaper, Regret, Royal, Rue, Rust, *Savant*, Shadow, Shepherd, Slate, Smith, Summer, Steel, Stone, Storm, Swift, Teacher, Thorn, *Verity*, Willow, *Winter*, Zephyr. *Italicized names appear in history or over the course of the provided missions.*

THE STRUCTURE OF DAWN COMMAND

The **Marshals** are the heart of Dawn Command. Traditionally, each School has a Marshal to oversee activities tied to the Specialties of that School. The Durant Marshal *Honor* manages mortal troops and military strategy. The Shrouded *Winter* studies intelligence and plans most missions. The Devoted Marshal *Joy* runs the infirmary in the Grand Aerie, teaching mortals and developing solutions to plagues and other serious medical concerns. *Cinder*, the Elemental Marshal, maintains the Imperial Flame and the communications network. The Forceful Marshal *Kestrel* directs scouts and obtains resources. Collectively, they are the oldest Phoenixes still living; each served with the original Dawn Command and fought alongside Justice in the Civil War. All of them are on their last lives, and each is the last surviving

member of their Wing. Despite their considerable personal power, their knowledge and experience are vital resources. Many of the Marshals have critical strategic roles: the Shrouded Marshal Winter conceals the Grand Aerie from the eyes of the Dread, while the Elemental Marshal Cinder maintains the Imperial Flame, enabling communication and transportation. Losing any of the Marshals would be disastrous, so they coordinate from the Grand Aerie and do not enter the field.

Beyond the Marshals, all Phoenixes are equals. "Rank" refers to the number of times a Phoenix has been reborn; it gives an indication of power but doesn't actually reflect position in a hierarchy. Phoenixes who aren't attached to a Wing are referred to as "lone" and assigned vital tasks. Thus players could encounter a lone Forceful on a scouting mission or a lone Devoted fighting an outbreak.

Mortals have three critical roles. A **captain** commands militia forces. An **adept** has mastered the basic techniques of Ash sorcery (see below). A gifted adept can become a **Flamekeeper**, serving both as the leader of an Aerie and maintaining its hearth. Igniting an Aerie hearth involves binding the flame to the life-force of an adept. From that point on, a Flamekeeper is bound to the hearth and can't go more than a few miles from their post. Each shares the fate of the other; if the Flamekeeper is killed, the hearth is extinguished, and vice versa.

The Bitter School is a new development. While there may have been isolated Bitter Phoenixes in the past, they weren't recognized as a School. There are no elder Bitters in Dawn Command and no Bitter Marshal. The position could be created once there's a Phoenix qualified to take it on.

AERIES

The two greatest assets Dawn Command has in the war against the Dread are communication and transportation; the ability to learn about a new manifestation of the Dread and dispatch a Wing of Phoenixes within an hour. Both of these depend on **Aeries**, the fortresses established by the Dawn Legion during the Conquest and reinforced during the Phoenix Imperium.

The Grand Aerie on Pyre is the seat of Dawn Command. It is built in the shell of an ancient volcano. The literal and figurative heart of the Grand Aerie is the **Imperial Flame**. This is a massive column of mystical fire. Every Phoenix emerges from this flame when they are first reborn. Every Aerie has a **hearth**, a relic forged from Pyrean steel and embedded into the floor of the Aerie. When a hearth is properly ignited—a process that requires Phoenix ashes and a Flamekeeper willing to maintain it with their life—it is linked to the Imperial Flame. The Elemental Marshal Cinder can form a bridge between the Grand Aerie and any other active hearth, allowing Phoenixes to instantly travel from Pyre to the distant location. Unfortunately, this ritual can only transport Phoenixes, and only from Pyre (though see page 138

for exceptions to this rule). Phoenixes can leap into danger, but once a threat is neutralized, they must make their way back to Pyre using mundane methods…so they can respond instantly, but it may take a week for the Wing to return to the Grand Aerie. A dead Phoenix can always be reborn at the Grand Aerie, but they can choose to return at any Aerie within twenty miles of a Wingmate; during a lengthy mission, this is what allows Phoenixes to rejoin their allies.

Each Aerie has a set of five **message candles.** Made with Phoenix ashes, these candles are mystically linked to a matching set in the Flame Chamber of the Grand Aerie. When the proper rituals are used, lighting or extinguishing a candle in one location has the same effect on the matching set. A system of codes allows communication between the Aerie and Pyre; the simplest uses one to three candles to establish the severity of a threat, with an additional candle lit if the Aerie itself has been compromised. Using these candles requires an active hearth and basic knowledge of Ash sorcery; every adept knows the rituals and codes, and any Phoenix with Intellect in their deck has received this training.

Aeries were built as fortresses. Each Aerie has a barracks for troops, an infirmary to treat the injured, and an armory to supply reborn Phoenixes with any tools or weapons they could possibly need. The heart of an Aerie is the **Flame Chamber;** this is usually on an upper level in the center of the building. This is where Phoenixes enter the Aerie, and it traditionally has a rack of weapons ready for use.

At the height of the Phoenix Imperium, there were sixty Aeries in operation. Today there are fourteen. A typical Aerie is capable of supporting hundreds of soldiers, but now most have twenty people in residence: A Flamekeeper, two adepts (who may also serve as healers), ten guardians, and up to seven additional support staff. The primary duty of an Aerie is to monitor the region and warn Pyre of any signs of the Dread, though most will do what they can to support their community. Sadly, most people consider agents of Dawn Command to be delusional Dawn fanatics and want little to do with them.

Dawn Command is actively seeking to restore additional Aeries, but it's not a simple process. Even if ashes and a Flamekeeper are available, many Aeries have been repurposed over the centuries. Others have simply been abandoned and lost. Of the eight Aeries constructed in the Grimwald, five are entirely unaccounted for.

CANDLE CODES

The message candles are the heart of Dawn Command's communication network. Activating the sympathetic link between the local candles and the candles in Pyre requires mystical talent and basic training, but any adept can accomplish this. Initial contact follows a simple protocol. Lighting the first candle (on the left) indicates a request for communication. The next three candles are used to indicate an immediate threat. One candle is a problem a single Phoenix could handle; two candles calls for a Wing; three indicates an entire city or region could be at risk. The last candle indicates that whatever the threat is, the Aerie itself has been compromised and anyone responding to the alarm will face immediate danger. So "Two candles, Aerie compromised" means *send a Wing and they may face danger.*

Once an adept in Pyre acknowledges the message by extinguishing the candles, there is a **second set of codes** used to indicate the nature of a threat and requested action. Again, an adept acknowledges the signal by extinguishing the candles and possibly sending a response message—"Assistance is coming." If necessary, there is also a spelling mode with a candle code for each letter of the alphabet; however, since every code requires a separate ritual to enter, even a short message can take hours to send. Often a base code is all the information a Wing will have going into a mission.

Here are a few of the common codes; feel free to complete this list with codes that fit your needs. A zero indicates an unlit candle, and a one is a lit candle, so 0-0-1-0-0 means only the center candle is lit.

0-0-0-0-1	Assistance is coming
0-0-0-1-0	Assistance is currently unavailable
0-0-0-1-1	Provide additional information
0-0-1-0-0	Enter Spelling mode
0-0-1-0-1	Phoenixes on site, investigation is ongoing
0-0-1-1-0	Quarantine: Do not send anyone until further notice
0-0-1-1-1	Unidentified Threat
0-1-0-0-0	Bones
0-1-0-0-1	Haunting
0-1-0-1-0	Chant Outbreak
0-1-0-1-1	Plague (biological environmental effect)
0-1-1-0-0	Curse (mystical environmental effect)
0-1-1-0-1	Dusk incursion (Fallen)
0-1-1-1-0	Beast attack
0-1-1-1-1	Mortal populace infiltrated by Dread threat
1-0-0-0-0	Uprising (panic, riot, rebellion)
1-0-0-0-1	Criminal activity (brigands, pirates)
1-0-0-1-0	Rogue Mystic
1-0-0-1-1	Natural Disaster (earthquake, flood, fire)
1-1-1-1-1	Situation resolved, Phoenixes returning to Pyre

THE DEEP
Lostwall
SKAVIA
Hafsbridge
KOR-ATON
Harrowgate
Greygarden
Blackstone
Stairs to the Sky
The Field of Masks
The Cloudspire
Talus
Darium
THE RED MARCHES
THE INNER SEA
Torica
ILONA
Farmanse
The Grand Aerie
THE TEETH
PYRE
Haven
Mardonford
The Capital
Westergate
THE WYNDERI ISLES
THE VERDANT COAST
First Harbor
Cartacia
Hadon's Fall
THE SUMMER SHORE
Sunset
Baroch
Harvest
Olvarica
The Bloody Mire
Talmouth
Ashfort
THE FENS
Myrn
The Gathering Stones
THE DEEP
THE GRIMWALD
The Scorched Lands
LEGEND
Cities
Lost Cities
Landmarks
Unaffected Lands
Lost to the Dread
N

THE WORLD AS WE KNOW IT

Dalea is the name of both the continent and the world, and as far as people of the Empire know, these are one and the same. Where saltwater is surrounded by land, it is known as *the Inner Sea*; where it is unbound, it is *the Deep*. No ship that has ever sailed past the horizon into the Deep has returned. Some scholars believe the world is flat; others say Dalea is surrounded by a ring of violent storms. Wynderi myth holds that the Deep is filled with monsters from the first days of creation. Optimists believe there's a wondrous land across the sea no one ever wants to leave; pessimists say there's a nation across the Deep that sinks any ships that discover it. Whatever the truth, at this point in time, Dalea is the extent of the known world.

The Empire encompasses the bulk of Dalea. It is divided into four provinces: *Skavia*, *Ilona*, *the Grimwald*, and *the Wynderi Isles*. Only one significant region remains outside the Empire: *Kor Aton*, a subterranean nation that exists within and below the Golden Mountains. There is one additional point of interest: *Pyre*, the island home of Dawn Command.

The map on the opposite page calls out a number of cities, ruins, and other important sites. These cities have been highlighted because most contain active Aeries and are thus places Phoenixes can be sent; many of them are among the largest or most vital hubs in the Empire. However, a host of villages and lesser communities are not shown at this level of resolution. In developing a Phoenix, you could chose to be from a named community, but you should also feel free to develop a hometown that suits your story; just be sure to work through the details with your Marshal, so your home can be drawn into future events.

This section provides a broad picture of the Empire: what daily life is like, and what tools and resources are available to people. This is followed by overviews of the provinces and other primary cultures of Dalea.

LIFE IN THE EMPIRE

The Empire is founded on a guiding set of principles called the *Imperial Philosophies*. The complete text of the Philosophies is longer than this book, but a few critical principles affect everyday life:

- Oppose tyranny and slavery. The Philosophies lay the groundwork for the Imperial government and establish that every individual must be free to choose their path and fairly compensated for their labor.

- Oppose the use of magic; supernatural forces are dangerous and disruptive, and a harmonious society shouldn't go down such paths.

- Encourage unity and cooperation, both between communities and within a community.

- Encourage hard work and duty. People should be compensated for their labor, but they should always work to the best of their ability, showing respect and loyalty to those providing shelter and sustenance.
- Encourage the spread of knowledge, including literacy.
- Provide all citizens with recourse to justice.

As cities and states were assimilated into the Empire, they were allowed to maintain their current traditions as long as they conformed to the Philosophies. The Phoenixes didn't tear down the Talu and redistribute their wealth; it's simply the case that people who would have once been slaves are compensated for their work and have the choice to walk away. The Talu Houses still dominate Ilonan society, and the nobles of Skavia hold sway over their Bulwark cities. It's not a perfect society or a world of full equality. Corruption has always been an issue, and few people truly live up to the lofty goals of the Philosophies…especially now, as fear of the Dread fuels base instincts. But the guiding principles remain as the blueprint of society.

Measuring Time

The Imperial Calendar was adopted at the start of the Phoenix Imperium; dates are noted as IC (Imperial Calendar) or BE (Before the Empire). The Imperial Calendar splits the year up into twelve months of thirty days. The year is divided into four seasons (Spring, Summer, Autumn, Winter) with three months each (Early, High, Late); so the year begins with Early Spring, continuing with High Spring, Late Spring, and then into Early Summer.

Each month is split into five weeks of six days each. The days of the week are *Deoday*, *Pelsday*, *Araday*, *Darsday*, *Culsday*, and *Dolsday*. Deoday begins the week and Dolsday ends it; Dolsday is traditionally a day of rest and reflection. These days are based on old Ilonan tradition, representing the greatest Talu houses.

Education

All citizens of the Empire are entitled to basic education, specifically literacy, the Philosophies, and the Ilonan language. Talu houses and Skavi nobles are required to provide programs for their servants, and the Empire maintains additional schools. However, just because people are entitled to education doesn't mean they have to take advantage of it. The goal of universal education was never fully achieved in the Grimwald; there are schools in the outer villages, but the Treefolk of the deep Grimwald are typically illiterate.

Languages

Ilonan is the common language of the Empire, and in the modern age it's all most citizens speak. Each province had its own language long ago, but the Empire was so diligent in its efforts that even the Treefolk of the deep Grimwald speak Ilonan. The Wynderi tongue is still occasionally used by sailors, and the free clans of Skavia sometimes speak Old Skavi, but both will also know Ilonan.

Two languages are particularly relevant in the modern age. *Atonic* is the language of Kor Aton. As Kor Aton is outside the Empire, its people never adopted Ilonan, and merchants who deal with the subterranean realm often learn Atonic. *Pyrean* is a language of unknown origin. All Phoenixes learn it in the Crucible, and it allows Phoenixes to speak privately in public spaces. It's never been spoken by any of the modern nations, but it's used in the magical traditions of the Skavi warlocks and Shadovar necromancers, leading some to call it "the language of the Dusk."

Communication

Lacking magic, the Empire relies on mundane methods for delivering messages over long distances. The Imperial Post sends messages by horse and is the typical tool of communication. The Empire also maintains a system of messenger birds, which fly in relays between the major cities; this system is typically only used for official Imperial communications, though a few Talu houses also have their own networks of birds. The Dread has played havoc with this system; aside from the many ways the Dread might kill a bird, whenever a major city is lost, it disrupts communications that used it as a relay point. Communication is a major limitation in the ability of the Empire to respond to manifestations of the Dread. It also means that news travels slowly. The Cul Talu of Ilona developed the printing press in 220 IC, and pamphlets and books exist within the Empire; however, there is no equivalent to the newspaper.

Dawn Command uses a system of magical communication based on sets of linked candles, described on page 43. These candles only operate in an Aerie with an active hearth, so there's no easy way for Phoenixes to communicate with Pyre while out in the field.

Travel

The Talu established an impressive network of roads during the Dark Ages, and under the Phoenix Imperium, this system was extended throughout the Empire. The horse and horse-drawn carriage are the primary means of inland transportation, and the Ara Talu run passenger coaches along the Imperial roads. The only region lacking Imperial roads is the deep Grimwald; any path is quickly overgrown, any pavement shattered.

Boats sail along the coasts and rivers, carrying passengers and freight. The Wynderi are the finest sailors in the Daylit World, and typically Wynderi ships are the only vessels that travel from the inner coast to Pyre. Phoenixes can be sent instantly from Pyre to any active Aerie, but must find their own way back. Dawn Command has retained the services of a number of Wynderi vessels that serve as ferries for returning Wings.

Medicine

Medicine is one of the few fields in which the Grimwald is ahead of the other provinces. The Grimwald is home to a host of plants with medicinal properties. The techniques of the Grimwald healers are spreading across the Empire, but many Ilonan chirurgeons still prefer to employ Fen leeches and encourage patients to meditate on specific passages of the Imperial Philosophies. Medicinal herbs are one of the primary exports of the Grimwald, and the Dread has restricted supplies.

Warfare

The Imperial Army has made few advances over the course of the last three centuries. If anything, they are weaker now than they once were. During the Civil War, the Humanist forces employed alchemical explosives and **dragons**, siege engines capable of flooding an area with liquid flame. One of the terms of the Phoenix surrender was that alchemical weapons would be destroyed and their use banned to future generations. While there have been a few periods of unrest, the Human Imperium has been remarkably peaceful and there has been no need to develop new tools of war. A typical soldier of the Imperial Army wears a light breastplate and helm, carries a large shield, and is equipped with javelins, spears, and short sword. The army employs short bows and javelins for ranged combat; Skavi clans make use of the longbow, but this hasn't spread to the south. The army makes use of phalanx formations. Discipline is good, but there hasn't been a serious conflict in centuries. Initially, the army was completely unprepared for the Dread, and soldiers would often break ranks when faced with Bones or similar terrors. The army is adapting, but all too many manifestations of the Dread either can't be defeated with simple weapons or quickly overwhelm mortal troops.

Currency and Trade

The standard currency of the Empire is based off the gold *imperial*. There are ten copper *virtues* to a silver *speaker*, and four speakers to the imperial. Large transactions are conducted using trade bars, whose value is measured in imperials. A secondary currency in circulation are *dragons*, the coins of Kor Aton. Also called *wyrms*, these are larger and use finer base metals than the Imperial currency; a dragon is generally worth five times the value of an Imperial coin of the same metal.

As of 590 IC, trade was flourishing across the Empire. The south is rich in medicinal herbs, spices, and lumber; Ilona is known for fruit, grains, wines, books, and manufactured goods; Skavia for furs, leather, wool, honey, and ale; and Kor Aton is the source of the finest ores and jewels. Wynderi trading vessels plied the coasts and rivers, and the Ara Talu ran large caravans along the Imperial roads alongside a host of lesser merchants. The Dread has shattered trade routes and left merchants afraid to travel long distances; prices are rising and many foreign goods are difficult to obtain. These problems will only increase as more cities fall and as farmers flee their lands.

THE IMPERIAL GOVERNMENT

Despite the name, the Empire has effectively been a republic since the end of the Civil War. The Dol Talu were established as the Imperial Line and have ruled ever since, but the Emperor is little more than a symbol. The Senate is the true heart of the Empire. Each province appoints senators, and each delegation of senators appoints a Speaker who serves as the primary voice of their province in the Empire. In theory, the Speakers advise the Emperor, but in practice they have more power than he does. The Emperor does have the power to break deadlocks within the Senate and is the ultimate commander of the military, but that authority has rarely been invoked.

Ministers are appointed by the Senate and oversee the key functions of the Empire, including the courts, roads, treasury, and Imperial Army. Beyond this, each province follows different traditions, as described later in this chapter. Skavi nobles and Talu houses pay their taxes and abide by Imperial law and the Philosophies, and in theory any military forces they maintain can be commandeered by the Imperial Army; in practice, many nobles continue to maintain personal forces.

The current Emperor is *Maelan Dolanti*. He ascended to the throne in the very first days of the Dread, and some say that it was the mysterious death of his mother—the Empress Malita—that set the Dread in motion. Traditionally, a young heir is always appointed to the throne so they can be shaped by the Empire; at the time, there was no obvious reason to break with this custom. While young, Maelan is charismatic and intelligent, and has done his best to inspire the people while staying out of the way of the Speakers and Ministers.

THE IMPERIAL SPEAKERS

The Speakers are the most influential senators, appointed by their delegation to speak on behalf of their provinces. Most Speakers are also Ministers, charged with overseeing a critical element of the Empire. While they are officially Imperial advisors, in practice this simply means they tell the Emperor what's going on as opposed to asking for his opinion. Speakers serve a five-year term. Often they are career politicians, but occasionally a young prodigy has risen to the role.

- The Speaker for Ilona is *Cassala Deosa*. Though young, Cassala is celebrated for her skills as an orator and philosopher, and she also serves as the Minister of Philosophy—an important role, as it establishes her as the absolute authority on interpreting the Imperial Philosophies. Her house, the Deo Talu, is said to be deeply involved in organized crime, and there are those who say she obtained her position through family connections. However, her achievements and actions suggest otherwise, and she has been an important voice in maintaining morale.

- The Speaker for Skavia is *Crios Ruin*. The scion of a proud Skavi family, Crios has held his office for over forty years. He is the Minister of Secrets—the Empire's expert on all things arcane—and following Skavi customs, conceals his lower face behind a red and black mask. Rumors say he's been urging the Speakers to relax the Philosophies and allow active research into arcane means of combatting the Dread; others say he wants Skavia to secede from the Empire so it can return to its old ways.

- The Speaker for the Grimwald is *Avissa*. She's from the outer Grimwald, though she has earned the respect of many Trees. She's known for being sensible and pragmatic, and she has focused on maintaining trade routes and the flow of medical supplies.

- The Speaker for the Wynderi is *Haki Baada*, a retired captain with an elaborately carved wooden leg. Loud and passionate, Haki wants vengeance for his people and to reclaim the Wynderi Isles. At this point, such a thing is simply impossible, and with the loss of his homeland, he has the least influence of the Speakers. Baada is a Wynderi village, now lost to the Dread.

RELIGION

Most Dalean cultures share the same basic model of the universe. There are a few exceptions; the Wynderi believe that life rises from the Deep Waters and returns to it in death, and there are Grimwald tribes that depict reality as a giant tree. But most cultures use the model of Dawn, Dusk, and Darkness described on page 11. Beyond this, religion was a powerful force in the Dark Ages, but it plays only a minor role within the modern Empire. Many of the old faiths were tied to mystical practices now forbidden, and most citizens of the Empire place knowledge of the Imperial Philosophies over superstitious beliefs. However, there are followers of the old faiths spread throughout the Empire, and in the dark days of the Dread, many people are seeking new hope.

The Dawn Faith

When the Empire was first established, the Emperor added the *Dawn Codex* to the Imperial Philosophies. This establishes the Phoenixes as servants of the Dawn, empowered to protect the innocent from the forces of Dusk and Darkness. The *Codex* encourages all citizens to emulate the virtues of one of the original five Phoenix Schools (all except Bitter), saying that this is the most likely path to rebirth as a Phoenix. It includes a broad directive to oppose evil and pursue justice and the greater good…and also exempts Ash sorcery from the ban on magic imposed by the Imperial Philosophies.

The *Dawn Codex* was removed from the Philosophies in the wake of the Civil War. However, there were those who still believed in the divine origin of the Phoenixes and wished to live in the light of the Dawn. When Dawn Command was disbanded, many Aeries were maintained as temples of the Dawn where people would gather to honor the Phoenixes and commune with the light. Over the centuries, this faith has waxed and waned. There have been periods when "Dawn Crusaders" have dressed as Phoenixes and engaged in vigilante action; this is one of the main things weakening Phoenix credibility in the modern age, as most people assume the current Phoenixes are simply such pretenders. However, followers of the Dawn are quick to support Phoenixes, and this has been the source of most existing mortal recruits of Dawn Command.

The Talu Gods

In the Dark Ages, the ancestors of the Talu made contact with the spiritual entities they called *House Gods*. While powerful, these beings could only touch the world by bonding with mortal hosts...and they could only bond with specific bloodlines. The Talu used the power of their House Gods to dominate Ilona and establish powerful city-states, and they ruled as tyrants until the House Gods were banished by the first Phoenixes.

Every House God had a unique identity and attributes. A number of Shrouded Phoenixes have asserted that the Talu likely shaped these identities, building the spirits into the gods they wanted. Nonetheless, every Talu house was defined by its gods. Some Talu secretly still venerate their House Gods and pray for their return. This has always been particularly strong in the Fens, the most remote region of Ilona; however, Talu cults could appear anywhere in the Empire.

The Fallen Folk

The people of Skavia never worshipped gods; instead, they made deals with the enigmatic spirits known as *the Fallen Folk*. Even in the old days, only a handful mastered the art of Duskcraft. Still, everyone told stories of the Fallen and followed rituals designed to placate them or earn their favor. Every Bulwark city had its own Fallen patrons, typically closely aligned with the ruling family. Like the Skavi House Gods, the Fallen were banished by the Phoenixes—but the stories remain, and some in Skavia wonder if the Fallen could protect them from the Dread.

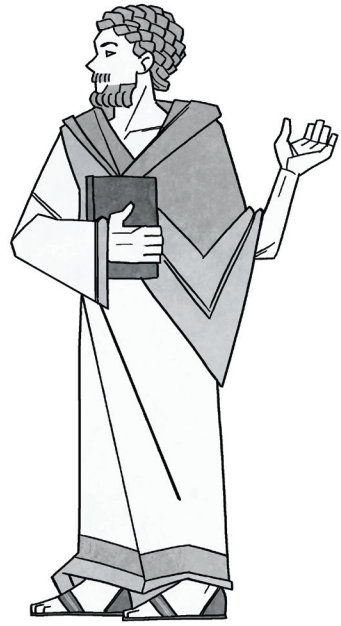
The Spirits of the Wild

The Treefolk of the Grimwald have always venerated the Spirits of the Wild. While the Dawn Legion forbade the active practice of shamanic magic, this didn't change the beliefs of the people. Most Treefolk believe in spirits of storm and tree, in the voice that guides the wolf pack and the wisdom within the river. They believe the Grimwald is split between the domains of different guiding spirits, and they continue to honor these spirits to this day. The people who live in the outer Grimwald are less committed to these beliefs, but many are still familiar with the customs.

The Dread

As the power of the Dread grows, there are a few troubled souls who hope that they can escape doom by embracing the darkness. There is no common creed for these cults, but it is something that will surely spread unless people find some source of hope.

ILONA



Major Cities
The Capital, Cartacia, Farmanse, Talus

Primary Environments
Fertile plains, Marshland (The Fens)

Exports
Books, Wine, Grain, Fruits, Incense

Mystical Traditions
Ash Sorcery, House Gods

Ilona is the heart of the Empire and the cradle of its culture. It is a land of lush valleys and rivers, a source of fine wines and succulent fruit. Ancient walls protect proud cities, home to institutes of learning and galleries of art. Most of the first Phoenixes were Ilonan, and much of what is considered to be Imperial culture is actually Ilonan culture. The people of Ilona are justifiably proud of their achievements…some might say arrogant.

While the common image of an Ilonan is the robed scholar, the majority of Ilonans are farmers who work the fields and vineyards. These rural communities are based around small villages and hamlets, each tied to one of the great walled cities where farmers bring their crops to market and export. In the Dark Ages, these cities were independent states, each ruled by one of the Talu Houses. Ilona is united under the Empire, and each city has an Imperial governor who enforces the laws. But the Talu Houses remain the driving force of the largely feudal culture. In the Dark Ages, the Talu had slaves; today they have tenant workers. In some ways little has changed, but Talu tenants have access to education and the right to leave if they choose… and the lowliest farmer can call a House lord before an Imperial justice if laws are broken. The Talu have wealth, power, and land; but the people have pride. While the majority of the people are Talu tenants, there is a growing class of independent citizens: artisans, merchants, and those who make their living in the Imperial service.

The Talu Houses ruled through the transcendent power of their House Gods, and many relics remain from this time. The walls of the great cities were shaped and reinforced by this divine power and have withstood centuries of conflict. A number of remarkable monuments remain, such as the Deo Beacon of Cartacia. Unlike the Old Kingdom wonders of Skavia, these monuments no longer have any mystical properties. However, godforged walls retain their strength, and the monuments are a reminder of the proud history of the Talu.

Thanks to its fertile fields and gentle climate, Ilona is the most populous province of the Empire. It is also the administrative heart; both the Senate and the Imperial House are based in the Capital on the Verdant Coast. The bulk of the Imperial Army is drawn from Ilona, and its largest garrisons are in the great cities.

Ilona has been hard hit by the Chant, and it's all too common to find a village full of bloody corpses. The bulk of the Summer Shore has been lost to the Bone Legion, which is now pressing into the Verdant Coast. Hauntings, warped beasts, and other threats are all dangers, but the Bones and the Chant are the faces of the Dread that Ilonans are most familiar with.

GEOGRAPHY

Ilona is split into four distinct regions. When most people think of Ilona, the image they call to mind is **the Verdant Coast**. Running along the eastern coast of the Inner Sea, this is wine country and the most fertile region of Ilona, home to the Imperial Capital and many of the major trade cities. The Verdant Coast is crossed by small rivers, and ferries and barges are an important part of commerce and trade.

The Red Marches run along the northern coast of the Inner Sea. During the Dark Ages, this was the primary source of aurincense, an aromatic used in rituals involving House Gods and the Fallen Folk. The incense trade has declined since the Godfall, but the Cul Talu have countered with a focus on printing, cartography, and bookbinding. Before the Conquest, the Red Marches were frequently pillaged by Skavi raiders coming down the Verge. While this hasn't been an issue for centuries, there's no love lost between the people of the Marches and the Skavi clans.

The Summer Shore runs along the southern coast of the Inner Sea. It used to be a cosmopolitan region with a mix of native Ilonans, Wynderi, and Grimwald immigrants and merchants. Over the course of the last three years, the entire region has been lost to the Bone Legion. The Bones continue to march on the Verdant Coast, but they've left forces in the cities they've destroyed. To date, every Imperial engagement with the Bones has ended in defeat, and all scouting missions sent into the Summer Shore have failed to return; no one knows if any survivors are still holding out in the region.

The Fens are a peninsula to the south-east of Ilona. Long valued for its lumber and leeches, this marshland region has a stronger connection to the Dusk than the mainland. The House Gods of the Fen Talu were especially powerful, and many of the Fenfolk continue to venerate the old gods despite their long absence. The Fens have largely been overrun by manifestations of the Dread, but the Bar Talu and the people of Baroch refuse to abandon their ancestral lands.

POINTS OF INTEREST

Baroch. The last stronghold of the Fenfolk, holding out against the darkness that has swallowed their home.

The Capital. Once the neutral ground where the Talu Houses gathered, this city was established as the seat of the Empire in the first days of the Phoenix Imperium. It includes the Senate, the Imperial Palace, the Grand University, and the Redoubt (the seat of the Imperial Army). The seat of the Dol Talu.

Cartacia. A major hub for commerce, and the seat of the Deo Talu. Renowned for its grand market and for the Deo Beacon, a remarkable spire.

Darium. The "City of Shrines," this was the center of the aurincense trade and retains shrines and temples to all the Talu gods.

Farmanse. The seat of the Cul Talu, home to the finest library and university in the Empire.

Hadon's Fall. The site of the final bloody battle of the Civil War.

Mardonford. Once the seat of the Mar Talu and a major trade city, Mardonford was lost to the Chant just two weeks before the story begins. Refugees are flooding nearby communities, and the Imperial Army has sealed off all approaches to the city.

Talus. The gateway to Kor Aton, this industrial city is a stronghold of the Imperial Army and the Ara Talu.

THE TALU

The Talu Houses ruled the city-states that once comprised Ilona, dominating their subjects with the power of their House Gods. The Dawn Legion broke the power of the Talu and banished the House Gods. The Talu were forced to comply with Imperial laws and the tenets of the Philosophies, but they remained as the basic backbone of Ilonan society. Many of the first Phoenixes were from Talu Houses; the Phoenixes sought unity and justice, but didn't want to completely shatter the framework of Ilonan culture.

As a result, the Talu remain the cornerstones of Ilona. The majority of the population have some connection to a Talu house. Many are *tenants*, farmers or artisans who receive land and tools from the Talu in exchange for a significant share

of the profits from their work. Others are independent citizens who ally with a house in exchange for opportunities, resources, or education. Many Talu houses have become upstanding pillars of the Empire; scions of these houses pride themselves on embodying the Imperial Philosophies and doing their duty to support those above and below them. Other houses resent the Empire, skirting Imperial law or maintaining the traditions of their House Gods.

The Talu houses have wealth and land, and each has focused on developing a particular sphere of influence. They don't rule the Empire, but many houses are closely tied into its infrastructure. A few of the most powerful houses are described below, but there are many smaller houses or branches of the families; feel free to develop your own.

The Ara Talu are the *House of Horses*. They maintain the Imperial roads and run caravan trains and passenger coaches across Dalea. The Ara breed the horses used by the Imperial Army and Post. They're often accused of profiteering, though they claim the dangers of the Dread have simply raised their operational costs. A Phoenix from this house might have been a merchant, a courier, or an expert equestrian (whether a cavalry officer, professional athlete, or a dilettante).

The Cul Talu are the *House of Secrets*. Once they ran the incense trade—a critical resource in the days of the House Gods. Now their focus is knowledge. They are the foremost printers in the Empire and maintain its finest library and university. A Phoenix from this house might have been a sage, an archaeologist, an information broker, or a spy traveling Dalea in search of secrets.

The Deo Talu are the *House of Coin*. Officially, they trade in exotic goods, selling rarities from across the Empire; they also engage in moneylending. It's a poorly kept secret that they're the backbone of organized crime in Ilona. Fences, thieves, smugglers, and rogues of all types have ties to the Deo. Many smaller Talu families are tied to specific areas of the underworld, but the Deo are at the top of the ladder. A Phoenix from this house might have been an assassin, a gambler, a crime boss, or a smuggler.

The Dol Talu are the *Imperial House*. This is the house of the Emperor, and most members of the house serve in Imperial administration or some other form of public service. A Dol Phoenix might have been a senator, minister, justice, or even a former Emperor.

The Pel Talu are the *House of War*. While the Imperial Army answers to the Emperor, the Pel Talu provide most of its officers, strategists, and engineers. The Pel Talu are deeply devoted to the Empire and committed to principles of honor and duty. A Phoenix from this house could have been a simple soldier, a commander, a siege engineer, or an officer within the law enforcement of a particular city.

IF YOU'RE FROM ILONA...

You could have been a farmer, a philosopher, a senator, or a soldier. You might have been slain by the Bones in the Summer Shore or caught in the Chant outbreak in Mardonford. You could have been a Cul Talu researcher who risked everything in pursuit of knowledge, or you might have been entangled in the criminal web of the Deo Talu. As you develop your character, consider the following questions:

Which region were you from? Where are your family and friends now? Do you hope to recover family relics from the Summer Shore or help the people of Baroch hold onto the Fens?

Were you from a rural community or one of the big cities? Did you live a simple life, or did you debate fine points of the Philosophies and follow developments in culture and art? Did you travel, or did you spend your life in one place?

Ilona is the cultural and geographical heart of the Empire. **Did you believe in the Empire?** Did you have a sense of honor and civic duty? Or were you a cynic, malcontent, or criminal? How do you feel about people from other provinces? Do you have a cosmopolitan view, or do you consider Skavia a backwater and the Grimwald a haven for barbarians?

Did you have a connection to a Talu house? If so, do you believe in and support your house, or were you always at odds with it? Was your death tied to the Dread, or was it actually connected to your house?

What do you believe? Did you follow the Dawn Faith or the Talu gods? Or were you more interested in the Imperial Philosophies than any religion?

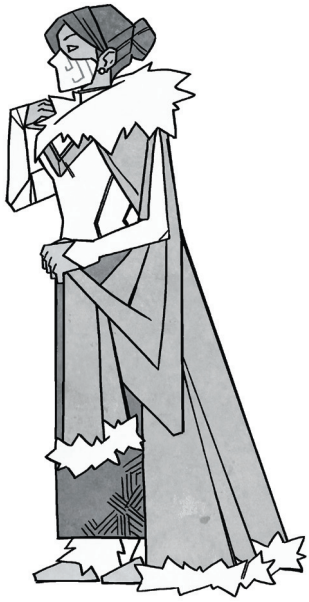
ILONAN NAMES

Many Ilonans have some sort of connection to one of the Talu houses, and this is indicated by surname. Tenants use the house name, either in place of or in addition to a personal surname. A member of the family adds the suffix *–asa* (if female) or *–agi* (if male): *Milena Dolasa*. Additional suffixes can be used to indicate particular positions; *–agius* indicates a military leader, while *–anti* is the head of the household.

Male Names: Acaetius, Balius, Brutus, Dalius, Dotian, Eldan, Hadon, Holan, Jades, Jonan, Jotius, Laetus, Maelan, Mikan, Natius, Niman, Orlan, Phanes, Rolan, Sevatius, Shades, Taelius, Tiban. Male names that end in *-an* are often shortened to *-o,* so Niman could be Nimo.

Female Names: Adria, Ariala, Cassala, Cyra, Dalia, Daria, Eudokia, Hadria, Halena, Jasria, Lassala, Milena, Nerena, Nyra, Rassala, Sera, Seresta, Shyra, Talassa, Tiriala, Tyra, Vesta, Xatia

SKAVIA



Major Cities
Greygarden, Hafsbridge, Harrowgate, Lostwall

Primary Environments
Taiga, Tundra, Mountains

Exports
Ale, Fur, Leather, Wool

Mystical Traditions
Duskcraft

Skavia is a land of stone and barren plains, a place of long nights and cold winters. It's a realm of unusual wonders, filled with strange ruins, vast craters, and inexplicable relics of a forgotten age. Since civilization began here, people have come up with stories to explain these mysteries, and some say it's these tales that drew the Fallen Folk. The Fallen are deeply tied to Skavi culture, and during the Dark Ages, they were an integral part of life in Skavia. Matrons left milk out for tiny shoemaker spirits that cared for their houses. Noble warlocks bargained with Fallen patrons for wealth and power, and clan raiders spilled blood for the Harvesters. Witches and warlocks perfected the arts of summoning the Fallen and negotiating with them, but anyone could leave a crust of bread for a house spirit or make a deal with the masked tinker they met at the crossroads. It was in this time the Skavi custom of masks took root. Common wisdom held *you should never let the Fallen know your face*. Simple folk would hide their lower face behind a scarf or strip of cloth, while warlocks and nobles preferred ornate masks. Many Skavi masks do little to conceal the wearer's identity. The custom is that the full face isn't seen, but nobles wish to be known; the mask is in some ways a symbol of status and power.

Over the course of the Conquest, the Dawn Legion drove the Fallen Folk into the Dusk and brought an end to the practice of Duskcraft. However, the Fallen have left their scars upon the land. People still tell stories in the firelight, whispering about the hungry Harvesters and the promises of the Tinker at the Crossroads. When the wind howls at night, someone will surely say it is the cries of the Weeping Widow, foretelling a death soon to come. Many families still believe they are bound by the promises of their ancestors, and some nobles of the Bulwark cities claim that the Dusk runs in their blood. It's a harsh land, and people are expected to seize opportunities and make their own luck…but bargains are taken very seriously, and no Skavi breaks a sworn vow.

Skavia is home to two distinct cultures: the settled folk of the Bulwark cities and the clans that wander the plains. During the Dark Ages, the clans lived by raiding and pillaging, both in Skavia and along the Red Marches of Ilona. The Empire put a stop to this practice, though there have always been clans that have turned to brigandry in hard times. Cityfolk and clans share the same stories, but little else. The clans value freedom and change, even at the cost of a hard life on the plains. The cityfolk bargain for shelter and food, trading freedom for comfort and security. Skavi society is considerably more flexible than the rigidly feudal structure of the Ilonan Talu, but the laws of the Empire can't stop people from making their own bargains.

Skavia has faced a wide range of manifestations of the Dread. Bone raiders strike in the night and vanish with the dawn. Hauntings spread terror and hysteria. Strange beasts roam the plains. And many believe the Fallen will return…or that they already have.

GEOGRAPHY

While Skavia is a large region, it's far less hospitable than Ilona and supports a far smaller population. The majority of Skavia is rocky tundra and mountains, interspersed with sparse taiga. However, Skavia is strangely unpredictable. It has a number of massive craters and crater lakes, along with canyons and chasms that have no logical reason to exist. It also has small pockets of fertile land. These oases are typically the locations of the main cities of Skavia, as they are the best places for agriculture. However, there are also a few pockets of dense forest scattered across the tundra. While the clans hunt in these woods, no one lives in them. Since the Dark Ages, the darkwoods have been recognized as the domain of the Fallen Folk, and even in these more enlightened times, no one wants to anger the Fallen.

The clans of Skavia are small nomadic bands. Most breed sheep, with a few clans that specialize in horses. Primarily hunters and gatherers, they trade furs and rare herbs from the darkwoods with the cityfolk. Skavia has few cities, but those few are remarkable. These Bulwarks occupy the most fertile regions of of Skavia and are surrounded by small farming communities, though these are sparse when compared to the farms of Ilona.

POINTS OF INTEREST

Hafsbridge. This Bulwark city is built into the foundation and span of a massive shattered bridge, which extends a mile out across the water. It's unclear who built it, how it was destroyed, or how it remains structurally sound. Even before the Dread, rumors claimed the ruling Countess Ashmyra practiced forbidden Duskcraft; now it's said she's on the verge of breaking ties with the Empire.

Greygarden. The name of this Bulwark comes from a stone garden at the heart of

the city. The ruler of the city is called the Grey Duke; according to stories, he traps children in the stone garden, and their dreams are what keep the surrounding fields green.

Lostwall. This Bulwark city is built into a fragment of a massive wall. It's the only known source of a narcotic called dream-moss. It's home to a number of noble families, and the balance of power shifts with each generation.

Harrowgate. Located at the western end of the passage that runs through Kor Aton to Talus, Harrowgate is a center for trade and commerce. It takes its name from the massive gate carved into the Golden Mountains and the harsh justice of its nobles. The lords of Harrowgate frown on any sort of crime, and those who break the laws end up hanging from the great gate.

The Field of Masks. The most infamous battlefield of the Conquest, where hundreds of Phoenixes faced a massive army of clan raiders and Fallen; this was the turning point in driving the Fallen from Dalea. It's said that old curses still linger here, and the clans shun this place.

The Cloudspire. A mysterious Old Kingdom relic, the Cloudspire is a stone column at least a mile in height. Approximately two hundred feet in diameter, it appears to be made of polished red stone. There are no markings on it—it's impossible to mark or mar it. To date, its purpose remains unclear.

The Verge. The natural border between the Red Marches and Skavia, the Verge is a slope that runs from the western coast all the way to the Golden Mountains in the east. The Verge averages a thousand feet in height, with a fairly steep grade. There are a number of paths and ascents scattered along its length, with the largest being just north of the city of Darium.

THE BULWARKS AND THE NOBILITY

Each Bulwark city is unique and miraculous. Lostwall is built into a small section of an ancient wall…two thousand feet high, one thousand feet wide, and nearly five miles long. Greygarden is an ancient fortress surrounded by the most fertile farmland in all of Skavia and contains a well whose waters are said to convey youth and health. Many such minor miracles are scattered through the Bulwarks, said to be gifts gained through bargains with the Fallen Folk. While the Fallen have been banished and such bargains forbidden, gifts already given still remain.

While the lords and ladies of Skavia maintain the trappings of feudal society, the truth is considerably more flexible. The first noble families were those who discovered the wonders of the Bulwarks and found ways to exploit them. They used cunning, courage, and charisma to win mortal followers…and made clever bargains with the

Fallen. Unlike the House Gods of Ilona, the Fallen Folk aren't bound to any one bloodline. Anyone can bargain with them, and this made the political landscape of Skavia quite unpredictable; one day a Duke sits on a throne, the next he's a beggar on the streets as farm boy sits in his place. It was a place where the fortunes and mishaps of faerie tales were commonplace. The Bulwarks themselves were the only constants: the Bridge, the Gate, the Wall, the Garden.

Once the Fallen were banished, the Dawn Legion sought to work with the Skavi nobles as they had with the Talu. Those who welcomed the Empire kept their holdings and titles. Imperial governors and justices maintained order and ensured the principles of the Philosophies were maintained (specifically: no more Duskcraft!). This provided nobles with far more stability than they'd ever had in the past. The noble families had always lived by their wits, and most were quick to adapt to this new situation. Thus, the power of a Skavi noble comes from three things: the recognition of the Empire, the holdings of their family (gold, land, mystical relics), and their reputation among the people. This last is in some ways the most important. Every Skavi family is tangled in a skein of stories—tales of their ancestral bargains with the Fallen and magic that still flows in their veins. The Duke of Greygarden is said to be immortal, sustained by his magical well and dreams of the children he keeps in his garden; it's said that the fertility of the region is tied directly to his life force, and that if he dies, Greygarden dies with him. It's likely that his family has perpetuated this myth using body doubles; the Grey Duke is reclusive and always masked, after all. But who would take the chance of murdering the Duke and dooming the region, especially in these darkest of times?

A critical point here is the class system is exceptionally fluid and noble titles are all but meaningless. Greygarden is ruled by a Duke. There may be a Duchess in Hafsbridge, but everyone knows that the Countess Ashmyra rules the city. Anyone with sufficient wealth, influence, or reputation can give themselves a title; it's simply a question of whether they can make it stick. Each Bulwark has noble families surrounded by stories. The Grey Duke has ruled Greygarden since before the Civil War, while the nobles of Lostwall are constantly shifting position.

Whenever you develop a Skavi noble family, develop the story behind it. What relics does it possess? A scrying pool that sees the future? A bottomless cauldron of coins? What Fallen are they said to have bargained with? What titles do they hold, and how long have they held them? Are they feared, loved, or both?

IF YOU'RE SKAVI...

You might have been a shepherd in the wilds, an urchin living in the shadows of Greygarden, a baker who died attempting to be a hero, or a storyteller who got too close to the terrors from your tales. You could have been a kind and just noble, slain

by a rival family who used the Dread to conceal their bloody coup. You might have died saving a relative who foolishly summoned one of the Fallen without knowing what they were doing. Or perhaps you yourself raised one of the Fallen and made a bargain you've yet to repay. As you develop your character, consider the following questions:

City or Clan? Are you from one of the Bulwark cities, or were you tied to one of the roving clans? If you're from a clan, are you from the current peaceful incarnation, or did you die back in the Conquest when the Fallen were active and the first Phoenixes were conquering the land?

Noble Blood? Are you connected to a noble family? If so, what is the tale of your family's success? What bargains are they said to have made, and what treasures do they possess? Do you know if these stories are actually true? Does your family rule a Bulwark, or are they simply well placed in society? Are they still alive, and if so, how do you feel about them? If you're not part of a noble family, did you deal with nobles in another way? Were you a child kidnapped and stripped of your dreams by the Grey Duke? Were you murdered by the Countess of Hafsbridge after learning a terrible secret about her…and do you remember what that secret was?

Do you have any connection with the Fallen Folk? While the Fallen Folk are often malevolent, in some stories, they simply provide opportunities. Have you had any dealings with the Fallen—either directly, or somewhere earlier in your family line? Is there a promise you need to keep, a curse you need to break, or a prophecy you may fulfill?

What's your favorite story? Even if you know the Fallen only through tales, every Skavi learns stories as a child. What's your favorite? Does a hero triumph with wits and courage, or is it a cautionary tale with a terrible ending?

Do you wear a mask? Masks and veils are a common part of Skavi fashion, especially among the nobility. Often these are half-masks that only cover the lower face. Do you wear one? If so, what's it made of and what's the story behind it?

SKAVI NAMES

Skavi often prefer not to share their names with strangers. They use nicknames, diminutives, or titles. A woman named Razamira might go by Razi or Rose. Sharing a true name is a sign of trust or necessity.

Male Names: Alesai, Boras, Casamar, Capalai, Crius, Doladar, Hasamir, Horas, Isadar, Kosrad, Olexandi, Rodias, Tomandar, Tosarad, Vadalan, Vladasi

Female Names: Alysara, Ashkara, Belamira, Criotara, Daradya, Doramina, Kadzya, Olyzarya, Razamira, Razya, Soramena, Tashka, Vasalara

THE GRIMWALD

Major Cities
Harvest, Olvarica, Talmouth

Primary Environments
Dense rainforest

Exports
Medicinal herbs, furs, lumber

Mystical Traditions
Shamanic magic

The Grimwald covers southwestern Dalea. The elder trees are hundreds of feet tall, and canopies of vines and branches form layers between sun and soil. The forest floor is a maze of undergrowth. Villages lie on the very edge of the vast wood, Illonan-style settlements blended with the traditions and materials of the forest. The Empire has a steady demand for lumber and herbs found only in the Grimwald, and over the last few centuries the region has prospered. However, humans were living in the Grimwald long before these villages were established. The people of the Deep Grimwald are split into cultural factions called **Trees**. During the Conquest, the Dawn Legion conquered and united the Treefolk, putting a stop to their practice of totemic magic. During the Phoenix Imperium, the Empire made an effort to tame the Grimwald, building roads and Aeries in the depths of the forest—but this was a war they couldn't win. The relentless growth of the Grimwald shattered roads and swallowed Aeries, and as troubles grew elsewhere, the Empire abandoned its efforts. Imperial customs held for a time, but many of the Treefolk soon returned to their ancestral ways; they still honored the spirits of the wild, even if they no longer drew on their power directly.

This has been the state of things since the end of the Civil War. The people of the Outer Grimwald are a blending of Ilonan settlers and Treefolk whose ancestors embraced Imperial traditions. Their villages are worked into the woods, often incorporating living trees and natural stone. They use herbal remedies of Treefolk shamans; they share stories of the spirits and celebrate the changing seasons, and the elders wear antlers in their hair. But they also know the Imperial Philosophies, and they sell their lumber and salves to the Ara Talu. These Grim are actively part of the Empire and send representatives to the Imperial senate. They've been hard hit by the Bone Legion and have lost their largest city; however, the army of the Dead has only struck the outermost villages so far, moving east through the Summer Shore instead of pressing into the Grimwald. Nonetheless, the region is almost completely

cut off from the rest of the Empire; only a few bold captains are willing to make the long journey to Talmouth.

In the Deep Grimwald, the people of the Trees follow their old ways and care little for the world beyond the wood. In theory, they are Imperial citizens, and there have been times when justices led expeditions into the deep woods to enforce the traditions of the Empire—but for the most part, settled Grim keep to their villages, and the Trees keep to the Trees. The villagers consider the Treefolk barbarians, and the Treefolk think the northerners are fools. The Dread preys on them both. While the Bone Legion has avoided the forest, the Grimwald is beset by skinchangers, strange and savage beasts, corrupted spirits, and undead with ties to the history of the woods.

GEOGRAPHY

The Grimwald is a vast, untamed rainforest. The elder trees can reach a height of three hundred feet, with twisted layers of bioluminescent vines and branches. The forest floor is dark and damp, covered with moss, vines, and rotting wood. A few explorers have spoken of ancient ruins in the Deep Grimwald, structures from the Old Kingdoms that have been completely overgrown and buried, but none of these have ever been excavated and explored. The Treefolk believe each region of the Deep Grimwald has its own guardian spirit, and some evidence suggests this is true. When the Phoenix Imperium sought to colonize the deep forest, they found it all but impossible. Vegetation in the Grimwald can grow at an unnatural rate, and plants and animals can flourish in the most unlikely places. It proved impossible to maintain any sort of road or village, and most of the Aeries built during the Conquest are as lost as the ancient ruins. The Treefolk are hunters and gatherers, and they never become too attached to any one location; when they settle, they make their homes in and around the trees, stretching hammocks and vines through the boughs to create their own canopies.

The Deep Grimwald has always been dangerous. It's home to powerful megafauna and hosts of deadly predators, along with poisonous plants, tar pits, and many other hazards. The Dread has magnified these threats, warping natural predators or twisting their spirits. It has never been a safe place to travel, but now it may be the most dangerous region in Dalea.

Beyond the heart of the Grimwald, the woods become more manageable and the predators less frequent. This is the Outer Grimwald, and small villages are scattered through these woods.

POINTS OF INTEREST

Harvest. The largest town remaining in the Outer Grimwald, Harvest was a center for trade with the Summer Shore. It's a center for the production of medicinal salves and narcotics, and the supplies there could surely be of great value to the people of the Empire. However, it's cut off by the Bone Legion, and its people have no easy path north.

Olvarica. Lying on the very edge of the Grimwald, Olvarica was the gateway between it and Ilona. When the Phoenix Imperium fought to tame the Grimwald, Olvarica was their bastion. It contains the largest Aerie in southern Dalea, though that Aerie lies dormant and possibly destroyed. Olvarica was sacked by the Bone Legion, and is presumed lost with no survivors.

Talmouth. This is a harbor village, catering to the rare boats that make the trip down the Tal to the Red Lake. Many of its people have fled with the few boats that made the trip, but some remain to keep the path open.

The Ashfort. This was an Imperial fortress established during the Conquest. It played a crucial role in the initial effort to defeat the Treefolk and bring the Grimwald into the Empire. While it included a few full Wings, the conquest of the Grimwald involved extensive use of Elemental Phoenixes, and the Ashfort was a stronghold of the Elemental Legion. The Ashfort Aerie was abandoned long ago, and the fortress fell to the Dread. No one knows how it fell or what's there now.

The Gathering Stones. This ring of monoliths is where the chieftains and shamans of the Trees gathered whenever a matter required all the Trees to come together. It's where they met to decide whether to fight the Phoenixes and where they met to discuss the terms of surrender.

THE TREES

The inhabitants of the Deep Grimwald are divided into factions they refer to as Trees. Each Tree includes multiple communities called branches. A Tree is led by a chieftain, while each branch has a first warrior and a shaman to guide it in times of trouble and elders to turn to in times of peace. A branch can range from twenty people to around two hundred. Each Tree has a rough territory based on the primal spirits it respects, but this is loosely defined, and branches cross paths in many regions. Treefolk are hunters and gatherers; they may settle for a time, but their communities are mobile and they can easily shift to move away from trouble.

Shamans are an important part of Treefolk culture. While shamans no longer practice active magic, they are healers and herbalists thought to be closely attuned to the spirits of the Grimwald. The Treefolk believe placating the spirits and showing respect for the beasts they kill spares them the anger of the wilds. There is no consensus on the Dread. Some shamans blame rival Trees, saying they have corrupted the wild. Others blame the Ashmen (their term for Phoenixes). Some Trees are so deep in the woods, all they know of the Empire are ancient legends, and they don't know Phoenixes have long vanished. Some feel it's a time of trials, when the world itself must overcome its darkest dreams.

The Treefolk have a number of practices considered barbaric by the Empire. It's common for branches of different Trees to fight, raiding one another for supplies and status. Captives taken in raids are held as slaves. This is a highly ritualized form of slavery, with a well-established code concerning the treatment of captives. Slaves perform menial labor, but they receive shelter and sustenance and aren't mistreated so long as they abide by the code. In time, they may be adopted into the Tree or rescued by their own. Nonetheless, it is unquestionably a form of slavery.

Many Trees are spread across the Grimwald, but many smaller Trees have been wiped out by the Dread or subsumed by more powerful Trees. A few major Trees are described below.

The **Olvari** were the first Tree to ally with the Phoenixes during the Conquest. Many Olvari abandoned their roots to settle the Outer Grimwald. Those who remained in the Deep Grimwald have been staunch supporters of Imperial order; in particular, they have always persecuted any Tree to begin practicing shamanic magic. As they were well supplied by the Empire, they have always been one of the strongest Trees. They favor the color red and red feathers.

The **Kandari** Tree was once the most powerful nation within the Grimwald. They bitterly opposed assimilation into the Empire and were the fiercest opponents the Phoenixes faced during the Conquest. They rose up in revolt multiple times during the Phoenix Imperium; these uprisings were largely contained by the Olvari Tree. Today, the Kandari are scattered and many have been bound to other Trees as slaves. They favor dark green clothing.

The **Moviri** Tree has always sought to escape any trouble by moving away, slipping deeper into the heart of the woods. They have largely avoided contact with the Empire and seek to flee from the Dread as well. They prefer grey clothing with animal motifs.

The **Bavari** Tree is more settled than the others, preferring to stay in one place and create permanent encampments in the canopy. Their shamans carve warding stones, which are supposed to fend off evil. They traditionally wear brown clothing.

IF YOU'RE FROM THE GRIMWALD...

You might be a solitary hunter, a shaman concerned about the ailing spirit of the world, the champion or even chieftain of a Tree, or a child stunned to discover the wide world beyond the woods. You might have fallen to the forces of the Dread currently slaughtering your people, or you might have died in the Conquest; only now do you see that the Phoenixes you once fought are the only hope to save your people. As you develop your character, consider the following questions:

Outer Grimwald or Deep Grimwald? Did you live in a village on the edge of the woods, or were you one of the Treefolk who lived in its depths? Or were you a wanderer, merchant, or storyteller who traveled between the two worlds?

Which Tree? If you were from the Deep Grimwald, which Tree were you from? Feel free to develop new Trees in addition to the ones mentioned. Did you view the Empire as an ally or an enemy...or had your people avoided all contact with it? You wouldn't have made it through the Crucible unless you were willing to fight and defend all the people of the Empire from the Dread, so if you do see the Empire as an enemy, how do you reconcile this? Do you hope after you save the innocents of the world from the Dread, you can bring down the Empire and create a more perfect world?

Spirits of the Wild? What is your relationship with the spirits of the wild? As a Phoenix, do you use the power of your Flame to help you channel these primal spirits? Do you view the entire structure of Dawn Command through the archetype of the wild, believing that Phoenixes are champions of the natural world? Do you feel your people should return to practicing shamanic magic, or do you agree such forces are too dangerous to be channeled by fragile mortals?

What Killed You? Were you slain by savage beasts infused with the evil of the Dread? By the Bone Legion pouring down from the Summer Shore? Or were you killed by mortals...by warriors of one of the Trees or brigands from the Outer Grimwald?

Culture Shock? Whether you're from the Deep Grimwald or the outer villages, did you ever leave the Grimwald in your first life? Have you ever encountered a community of more than a thousand people? When you go to one of the great cities of Ilona or Skavia, will you view it with horror or wonder? You'll be somewhat prepared by your time in the Crucible, and your Mentor will at least have told you about the Empire...but you may be more affected by it than others.

GRIMWALD NAMES

Even the Outer Grimwald communities are quite small, and most Grimfolk only use a single name. Treefolk will identify their Tree as well; a shaman might be *Asa of the Olvari Tree*. Most Olvari names are unisex and celebrate natural forces.

Grimwald Names: Aro, Asar, Bren, Catan, Cru, Din, Dosh, Flod, Haska, Icra, Maju, Mira, Nalo, Norn, Oja, Orex, Soras, Strom, Tolas, Trig, Vir, Wrin

THE WYNDERI ISLES

Major Cities
Sunset, Haven, First Harbor

Primary Environments
Temperate

Exports
Ships, dyes, fish, glass, liquor, information

Mystical Traditions
None

The Wynderi Isles form an archipelago near the Summer Shore. Though the islands are small, the soil is good and fish are plentiful, and they support a significant population. While the islands are their home, the Wynderi have always been widely dispersed across the Empire. They're the finest shipwrights and sailors in Dalea, and most Wynderi prefer the water to the land. Every coastal city has at least a small Wynderi community catering to passing ships. While the Wynderi Isles are the source for a handful of unique resources—vibrant dyes, a potent beverage called *neema*, and fine glasswork—motion is the primary commodity of the Wynderi. They are masterful merchants and hagglers, with an eye for what a place has and what it needs. Wynderi vessels are faster than their Ilonan counterparts, and where Ilonan ships hug the coast, the Wynderi are capable of crossing straight across the Inner Sea. As a result, they're valued as couriers and passenger transport, and they've always played an important role as the bearers of news. The bard is an important archetype among the Wynderi, both as an entertainer who keeps spirits up while the crew is at sea and the person who gathers information at each port to sell in new towns.

While there are colorful tales of Wynderi pirates, these are largely exaggerated. While it has happened in the past, Wynderi culture emphasizes the freedom of travel and trade. Most Wynderi consider it their duty to oppose piracy wherever they encounter it; whether the perpetrators are Ilonan or other Wynderi, those who threaten the safety of the sea receive no mercy.

The Wynderi joined the Empire voluntarily; their interest has always been facilitating trade and maintaining access to as many ports as possible. They remained neutral during the Civil War; some captains sold their services to anyone who could pay, while others avoided any military engagements. It wasn't so easy to avoid the Dread. When the anchor port of Sunset was lost to the Bone Legion, refugees flooded the

islands. In addition to overwhelming the limited resources, these people may have carried seeds of the Dread with them. The Chant wreaked havoc in the islands, but Skinchangers and mass hauntings also played a role. Wynderi beliefs have always held that open water is a place of safety where dark magic cannot reach, but the Dread has put that to the test with tales of krakens and other monsters in the deep, along with vengeful ghost ships crewed by bloodthirsty Bones.

SOCIETY

The Wynderi have always been a democratic society in which each person works according to their strengths. A captain holds the office because they have the trust of the crew. There is no room for laziness among the Wynderi; everyone is driven to find which skills they possess and where those skills are required. On the islands, every captain is treated with the respect due to a community leader. The islands themselves are governed by a council of elders, many of them retired captains or shipwrights. Port towns are likewise led by a council of elders—though as with a ship's captain, their authority is based on the trust of the community. Age alone is insufficient to earn respect; a leader must have wisdom and charisma.

GEOGRAPHY

The Wynderi Isles are temperate and green, home to range of flora and fauna found nowhere else in the Empire. The potent liquor neema is created from the bulu berry, while the fine dyes the Wynderi are known for come from the shells of snails that thrive along the Wynderi coast. The sun is strong, and many folk from elsewhere in the Empire find the climate oppressively warm.

While the Wynderi homelands are based in the southern archipelago, over the centuries Wynderi have established a few small communities on the islands to the north of the Inner Sea and out beyond the teeth. Wynderi merchants use these island colonies to resupply, but they've never truly flourished; most of those Wynderi who leave the home islands either want to stay on the water or interact with people of other cultures. The one exception is the island community of Haven. This has absorbed many refugees from the home islands and become the de facto home of Wynderi culture.

The loss of the home islands has struck the Wynderi in different ways. Some captains take this defeat with a curious degree of indifference; this is simply proof the last days have come, and all the land will soon be consumed. However, a significant number of Wynderi want vengeance for those they've lost—and to regain their homelands. This has led a number of Wynderi captains to ally with Dawn Command, and these are the vessels that ferry Phoenix Wings from the mainland back to Pyre.

POINTS OF INTEREST

Sunset. The Wynderi have communities in every port, but Sunset was their one full city on the mainland. Located in the Summer Shore, it was a nexus for trade caravans from the Grimwald and renowned for its revels, markets, and shipyards. It was lost to the Bone Legion late in 592 IC.

First Harbor. The largest city on the home islands, First Harbor was the industrial heart of the islands and the seat of the council of elders. It was lost to the Chant early in 593 IC.

Haven. Located on an island to the west of the Imperial Capital, Haven has become the effective seat of Wynderi civilization since the loss of the home islands. The community is straining under the burden of refugees, and elders are working to redistribute the population among the coastal communities.

WYNDERI SHIPS

Most Wynderi view their ships as their true homes. Traditional Wynderi belief holds that the lands rose from the water, and a time will come when the waters swallow the land once more. This belief has been reinforced by the events of the Dread. Pessimistic Wynderi assert the Dread cannot be stopped; it is the first stage of the apocalypse and will only end when the land is consumed and cleansed to eventually rise once more at the dawn of a new age. Wynderi sailors typically sleep aboard their ships even when at port. All land is temporary; the ship is home.

Tied to this, every Wynderi is tied to two families: the bond of blood and the bond of water. The bond of blood is the connection between child and parent, and this family helps the child grow and learn their skills. Once grown, they must find their place on a ship, and this is the bond of water. The ship is their home, and everyone aboard has a responsibility to the ship and each other. The Wynderi have no tolerance for laziness or arrogance. A Wynderi who can't hold a place within a crew will either find a place in a port community or simply drift away into Ilona, leaving the culture behind. This is reflected by the fact that Wynderi use their ship's name the way other cultures would use a family name. The bond of blood defines the past, but the bond of water defines the journey that lies ahead.

Every Wynderi ship has two names. The first is the *port name*, which is used casually and with strangers. The second is the *story name*, which tells the tale of the ship and its crew. Thus, a ship with the port name *Winter Serpent* might have the story name *Alafer's Fine Wind–Serpent, Won over Winter with a Hand of Four Kings*. Alafer is the shipwright; a captain and a crew hold the ship in the moment, but the shipwright brought it into being and should always be remembered.

WYNDERI AND MAGIC

The Wynderi have always shunned the use of magic. Their traditions maintain that trafficking with spirits goes against the natural order and hastens the day when the waters will one day rise and consume the land. The Wynderi who hold to these traditions view the Deep with the same reverence that followers of the Dawn look at the light; all things emerged from the Deep, and in time they will return to it. The Wynderi maintain that deep water disperses evil influences, and traditionally all Wynderi are buried in deep water. The Dread has challenged these beliefs, as ghost ships and foul serpents have been encountered in the Inner Sea. However, most Wynderi stand by the belief that no good can come of magic. This leads any Wynderi to having mixed feelings about Phoenixes. The Phoenixes seek to do good, but they are creatures of magic; furthermore, they return from the dead, when nothing should return from the Deep. Those Wynderi that accept the Phoenixes typically view them as incarnate forces of nature, as opposed to the unnatural spirits like the Fallen. However, other Wynderi believe that the Phoenixes are themselves cursed and that misfortune will follow wherever they go. These people acknowledge that the Phoenixes try to do good and may indeed save innocents; however, they maintain that death and ill fortune will follow.

Despite all this, some Imperial sages maintain that Wynderi ships are unnaturally durable and swift. It could be that the wood of the Wynderi Isles has innate supernatural properties, but some scholars believe that Wynderi shipwrights are unknowingly benefitting from the favor of a native spirit.

WYNDERI NAMES

Wynderi use the port name of their ship in place of a family name. Landbound Wynderi will use the name of the primary port where they make their home. The bond of blood generally isn't acknowledged in a name; the Wynderi know who their parents and siblings are, and no one else need know.

Male Names: Adark, Borgaal, Conda, Hakir, Issa, Juma, Juran, Nyo, Safir, Sark, Torga, Wakaal

Female Names: Baridi, Dalu, Imari, Jyanu, Kesi, Kiri, Malu, Maji, Maridi, Nyanji, Sanji, Tamu, Tarisi

IF YOU'RE WYNDERI...

You might have been a bold captain, a clever merchant, or a bard searching for a new tale. You might have been a hunter tracking down pirates or a privateer who sold your services in the Civil War. You might have spent your life aboard a fishing vessel, harpooning serpents and other great beasts of the sea. When you develop a Wynderi character, consider the following questions:

Water or Land? Most Wynderi prefer to spend their lives on the sea—and the bond of water means more than the bond of blood—but some prefer the soil under their feet, and they have vital tasks to perform. Someone has to build the ships, provide the food, harvest the lumber, and of course preserve the stories. If you lived your life on land, were you on the home islands or in a port city? If you were in a port, what was your role with the community, and how did you get along with the natives? In the past, there have been tensions between Wynderi and some of the Talu houses; did you ever have to deal with this prejudice?

What was your ship? If you lived on the sea, what was the name of your vessel (both port and story)? If you were a captain, how did you earn the role? Is your ship still out there, or was it destroyed when you died? What is your favorite memory of your ship? The most exciting journey you ever took? If you spent your life traveling, you've surely seen many wondrous things...which remain with you?

How did you die? Were you on your ship or on land? Were you on the Wynderi Islands when they fell to the Dread, or were you far from your homeland? Could you have avoided your death if you'd made wiser decisions, or did you do the best anyone could expect?

How do you feel about being a Phoenix? Wynderi traditions maintain that Phoenixes are essentially cursed beings, and that death and misfortune follow in their wake. How do you feel about this? Do you accept this—that these are the end times—and simply do as much good as you can before the world is swallowed up? Have you abandoned these pessimistic beliefs and embraced the Dawn faith? Or do you have your own ideas about what it means to be a Phoenix?

PYRE

Primary Environments
Volcanic

Mystical Traditions
Ash Sorcery

Pyre is an island located at the center of the Inner Sea. Much of the island is covered by inhospitable lava fields and black sand, and steam rises from vast fissures. Some varieties of lichen, which clings to the rocks, glow and pulse in response to mystical energies; some say this is how the exile Laetus found the Grand Aerie. While much of the island is essentially uninhabitable, stretches of thin soil and even a small forest sit near the southern shoreline. A small community is spread around the recently renovated harbor; this village is called *Ember*.

The primary feature of the island is the Grand Aerie, a fortress carved into the stone of a massive dormant volcano. The Aerie was designed to hold thousands of people and served as the command center of the Dawn Legion for centuries. In addition to housing the Imperial Flame, it includes an extensive infirmary, a vast library, gardens, facilities for training mortal soldiers, and more…though many of these facilities have yet to be fully restored. Ninety-five mortals currently work in the Grand Aerie, comprising critical support staff and new recruits learning the arts of war or magic.

In the Dark Ages, the Talu sent political dissidents and criminals to Pyre to die. Working together, the exiles were able to stretch the limited resources and produce a viable community. During the Phoenix Imperium, the Grand Aerie was fully staffed, and Pyre was a vital part of the Empire. Following the Civil War, it remained active for a time as the center of Dawn Command. When Dawn Command was finally disbanded, the Grand Aerie was sealed and mortals encouraged to return to the mainland. Throughout the centuries, a small monastic community remained in Ember, determined to be ready whenever the Phoenixes returned. The few surviving Phoenixes often resided in Ember; in particular, the Elemental Marshal Cinder spent most of the last century there.

These monks played a vital role when the time finally came. For all their power, the Marshals were only five individuals. Aside from gathering information and resources, those monks with mystical aptitude had spent years studying Ash sorcery. They formed the core of the adept pool, and eight proved capable of becoming Flamekeepers; had it not been for this, it would have taken at least half a year before the Phoenixes could have restored the first Aerie. The provosts in Ember continue to train the new adepts in the present day, just as they taught the monks in ages past.

All in all, 230 people can call themselves true Pyreans. They are the most trusted mortal servants of the Dawn and a vital part of Dawn Command. All of them hope to die well and return as Phoenixes; perhaps you did just that.

IF YOU'RE FROM PYRE...

You may have been a dedicated monk in Ember or a follower of the Dawn who made the pilgrimage at the very end of your life. You could have been a Dawn Crusader who embraced the path of the Phoenixes when others had forgotten them or even a political exile from a time before Phoenixes, only finally finding your way to a Flame. When developing a character from Pyre, consider the following questions:

When were you there? Did you live in the modern age and die fighting the Dread, or are you from a previous time period? If you're from the past, you might have served the Dawn Legion when the Phoenix Imperium was at its height or maintained a lonely vigil on Ember after Dawn Command had fallen. You could have been a mortal compatriot of Laetus (page 87) who has lingered until the modern age. With the permission of the Marshal, you could start at Rank 2 and play a Phoenix from the Dawn Legion who for some reason took centuries to return from your first death; in this case, you may be shocked and disappointed by what has become of the Legion and the world.

Who were you before? Ember has maintained a small community, and it's possible you were born on the island. However, the majority of Pyreans came from somewhere else. The first exiles came from Ilona, fleeing Talu oppression. Those who served the Dawn Legion came from across the Empire, as did the faithful who made the pilgrimage even after Dawn Command had fallen. Where were you from before you journeyed to Pyre, and what drove you to abandon that life?

How did you die? Pyre is a barren place, but it has no natural threats and the Marshals shield it from the Dread. You could have died of natural causes after a life of devotion to the Dawn. If you're from the distant past, you might have died in the original conflict with the Talu. If you're from the modern age, you may have spent your life on Pyre but traveled the world in the last year, helping Marshals find recruits and supplies; in this case, you might have died facing a manifestation of the Dread.

What's your relationship with the Dawn? The Dawn faith was developed when the Empire was first established but has largely been abandoned in the modern age. If you're from the very first days of Pyre, you may not know it at all. However, if you spent most of your life on Pyre, you're presumably dedicated to the concepts of the Dawn. You believe the Phoenixes are servants of the light sent to protect the Daylit World from Darkness and Dusk. For you, this isn't just a fight for survival: It's a divine calling. With this in mind, you may be more concerned than your Wingmates

about living up to your full potential—helping innocents in every way you can, but also finding ways to inspire them and show that the Dawn has come to drive back the Dread. If you're interested, you could talk to your Marshal about the possibility of having visions from the Dawn during your times in the Crucible; perhaps your faith gives you a level of spiritual insight others lack. Of course, the Dawn has never been known to send visions, even to Phoenixes…so others might assume these are simply delusions crafted by your beliefs. Only time will tell.

PYREAN NAMES

The people of Pyre come from other cultures, and bring their names with them. Some adopt new names in their devotion to the Dawn; such names are typically much like the cogs of a Phoenix (page 40).

THE SHADOVAR

Mystical Traditions
Necromancy

Little is known of the days before the Talu rose to power in Ilona. The Talu used the mystical might of their House Gods to crush those who opposed them. Whatever cultures existed before them were assimilated or destroyed… with one exception. The Shadovar people once lived in what is now the Verdant Coast. The Yon Talu seized their lands, scattering and massacring the Shadovar. But they refused to submit or surrender. They simply kept moving, traveling through Ilona, Skavia, and even the Outer Grimwald. There are many tales of the early Shadovar, and most are surely exaggerated, but there is one common theme: those people who hurt the Shadovar come to an unpleasant end. It's hard to say what is truth and what is propaganda, but many bandit lords and petty tyrants disappear soon after turning on the Shadovar… and the Yon Talu themselves vanished from history long before the Empire began, wiped out by some sort of horrific plague. The Shadovar have never settled. Their tradition says that their journey is a story, and as long as they remain in motion, the story can never end. The Shadovar have always dealt with hostility; there have always been those who believe them to be thieves or harbingers of misfortune, towns that refuse to deal with them, brigands that seek to rob their caravans. But in the past, there have also been those who love the stories and songs of the Shadovar and welcomed their wagons. And when times were hard, the Shadovar would tell the stories of their ancestors and the misfortunes that befell their oppressors, and take comfort in being an ongoing part of the grand story of their people.

Since the beginning of the Dread, times have been harder than ever. The road is a dangerous place, and an ever increasing number of towns are closing their gates to the Shadovar. Now it's not simply bandits who prey on their caravans; there are tales of vigilante mobs and even Imperial soldiers killing Shadovar and burning their wagons. This hostility is based on a simple fact, one that has always been an issue but has become a far greater one now: the Shadovar are said to be necromancers who deal with the spirits of the dead. In many of the fabled stories, it is the slain ancestors of the Shadovar who return to avenge their children, or the fallen hero who returns to guide his beloved through her hardships. In the past such things were dismissed as stories. Now, with the Bone Legion butchering the people of the Summer Shore and hungry ghosts howling in the night, it is all too easy to see the Shadovar as a threat. The Dread is a mystery without an answer, and the Shadovar are an easy target for anyone who needs a scapegoat.

While the Shadovar are indeed necromancers, the truth is less dramatic than the tales. The Shadovar tradition focuses on the traces of the dead that linger in the Dusk, honoring the memories of the lost and soothing those spirits that can't find rest. The Shadovar are more horrified by the Bones than anyone. Shadovar mystics conduct seances and exorcisms, and those that truly understand them are glad to have their wagons near. But those who understand them are far fewer than those seeking someone to blame for the Dread, and it is a hard time for the Shadovar. But as long as they keep moving, the story isn't over.

SHADOVAR CUSTOMS

It's easy to see the Shadovar as sinister. They dress in dark clothing, and tattoo arcane symbols over their skin. They whisper with the dead, and send curses to those who do them wrong. Of course, all of these things are exaggerated or misunderstood. The Shadovar wear dark clothing because they believe it has a soothing effect on the dead. Their tattoos indicate their lineage and their personal stories; Shadovar believe it's important to remember and honor their ancestors, and this helps identify to ensure that a slain Shadovar's story will be preserved by those who find them. Many do whisper to the dead; they believe that the dead still touch the world through their descendants, and appreciate stories and news. As for sowing misfortune, in the time of the Dread there's always misfortune to go around.

Shadovar believe in family first and foremost. Shadovar will usually stand together in the face of oppression, but there are old feuds between a few of the families, and if a feud flares up it can be just as ugly as any Ilonan mob. This is another reason the Shadovar keep moving; they never linger long among potential enemies.

SHADOVAR NAMES

Shadovar tattoos have specific cultural significance. In particular, the family symbol is tattooed on the palm of the left hand, and this is shown in a gesture of friendship when other families are met. Shadovar names are typically three or four syllables, and or often shortened in casual use.

Male Names: Andaerian, Corandyras, Dorandan, Holaeras, Lorandar, Randoran, Sardolas

Female Names: Avalysse, Biralynne, Dasaera, Liraena, Radalynne, Solalaena, Vyralysse

IF YOU'RE SHADOVAR...

You might have been a chronicler, preserving the memory of lost heroes through song and story. You could have been a medium who guided the living with the words of the dead, or an exorcist who showed restless spirits the path to Darkness. You could have been an avenger settling the debts of those unjustly slain. You might have been traveling with your people, or you could have been working alone seeking answers to the Bones and the other undead manifestations of the Dread.

What is your story? The Shadovar believe that life is a story. How did your tale begin? What was your greatest triumph and your most foolish mistake? What is the secret you will never share? If it is within your power to achieve it, how do you want your story to end?

What is your relationship to the living? Is your family still alive, roaming the roads of the Empire? Where did you last see them, and do you believe you can do anything to help them now? Have you or your loved ones been persecuted by people of the Empire?

What is your relationship to the dead? Have you made any promises to the spirits of your ancestors, or to a slain lover or friend? Has the Dread corrupted the spirit of anyone you care about, or raised your ancestors as Bones?

KOR ATON

Major Cities
Unknown to the Empire

Primary Environments
Subterranean Tunnels

Exports
Ore, precious metals, jewels, silk

Mystical Traditions
Rune Magic

A network of tunnels lies beneath the Golden Mountains. They are older than any known human civilization. No one knows how deep they go, or what terrors or wonders wait to be found in the deepest halls. Ancient magic flows through these halls, providing light and air to the depths.

This is the foundation of Kor Aton. Almost everything about it remains a mystery to the people of the Empire. If you're an Imperial, all you've heard are stories. Kor Aton is the "Kingdom of Gold." Its tunnels are carved through solid gold, and valleys are filled with precious stones. It is an unconquered realm, an impregnable fortress nation; even the Phoenixes failed to bring it into the Empire. The Atons possess vast wealth and strange magics. Atons have never seen flowers nor ever heard music. They keep vast burrowing worms in their deep tunnels, and should they decide to go to war with the Empire, they would collapse the surface cities into the Darkness. They speak a strange language that uses as few words as possible to conserve the limited air beneath the surface. They've never opened their gates to outsiders, and if they ever do, the stranger will never be allowed to leave. Its people are deathly pale, lacking pigment in skin or hair, but their eyes are vivid blue; some stories say they glow.

Unless you're playing a Shrouded Phoenix or a Phoenix originally from Kor Aton, these stories and others like them are all you know about the Kingdom of Gold. You might want to skip the rest of this section so you can discover the facts as your character does. If you read on, just remember that you know things your character won't.

Kor Aton is a loose alliance of city-states. Each city-state is an *Aton*, a world that roughly translates to "vault." Each vault has a ruling house, and bears the name of the house. Thus Aton Nirhady is "the Vault of House Nirhady." Within a vault,

Kor Aton operates under a strict caste system. Supplies are limited in the depths; discipline and order are a matter of survival. For those not in the ruling castes, all supplies are rationed. Justice is harsh, and there are strict social customs. People in the Empire find the system oppressive, but most people in the Atons see themselves as part of a great machine. This is what has to be done to ensure that society endures. They know no other way, and they believe the surface world to be a place of war and savagery.

Kor Aton has never engaged in hostilities against the Empire, but their fortifications are so impressive the Phoenixes felt it was futile to try to force them into the Empire. The Atons are extreme isolationists. They do engage in trade with the Empire and pay richly for the many goods difficult to produce in the depths; however, they conduct all trade on the surface, extremely reluctant to allow any outsiders through their gates. The Atons have deep reserves of both precious and non-precious metals, and their wealth is indeed staggering. They also produce remarkable weapons and armor, though it's rare for them to sell these treasures to the surface world.

GEOGRAPHY

The tunnels that make up Kor Aton predate any known civilization. They are a remnant of the Old Kingdoms and incorporate magic systems that allow life to thrive in the depths. A system of *runic magic* is used to provide light, fresh air, water, a stable temperature, and other necessities. These effects are tied to inscriptions carved into the tunnels and mystical crystals, and they have to be constantly maintained. When you go below the Atons, the tunnels become dark and dank and cold. Each Aton lays claim to all the tunnels that lie beneath its halls, but even they don't know how deep the tunnels go or what dangers lie below.

Most castes are hereditary, but one is voluntary. Anyone can choose to become a *vault runner*—an explorer who delves into the depths, mapping the tunnels and locating mines and hoards of ancient treasure. The deep tunnels include a wide array of dangers—ancient traps, strange beasts, and hostile spirits—and few vault runners die of natural causes. But it is a choice in a society whose people often have few choices, and a vault runner who finds a rich trove can earn great comfort for their family. The depths also hold another possibility for those who find no place in the caste system. The *Voices of the Deep* are an order of monks who live outside the Atons, part of no caste or house. They patrol the deep tunnels, protecting the people of the surface from the dangers below while also seeking to placate the ancient spirits of the depths. It is these spirits the monks believe provide the magic that sustains life in Kor Aton, and without their rituals, the civilization would perish. Most people in the upper halls consider these beliefs ludicrous, but no one stops the Voices of the Deep from maintaining their vigil.

The upper halls of Kor Aton are vast. Every Aton maintains enormous fungal gardens to feed the people and deep reservoirs of water purified by magic; even so, supplies are stretched tight, and food is one of the main things they buy from the Empire. The Atons also possess deep mines, and when veins run dry, they send the vault runners out to find new passages. They may not have valleys of jewels or castles of gold, but their wealth is impressive, and there always seems to be new reaches to be tapped.

Current reports suggest Kor Aton has yet to suffer the full terrors of the Dread. It could be that the evil is confined to the surface, or it may be that it's only just beginning to worm its way into the depths. For now, the Dread is one more reason the Atons want little to do with the surface world. If the Dread begins to affect them, they may become more interested in cooperating with the Empire.

POINTS OF INTEREST

No one knows exactly what lies beneath Kor Aton, or how far the tunnels go. Are there true dragons in the deep? Are there ancient spirits whose good will sustains the vaults above? Perhaps there truly are valleys filled with diamonds, waiting to be found…or horrors even worse than the Dread waiting to be unleashed.

THE CASTES OF KOR ATON

Two castes share power in Kor Aton, forming the ruling class of each vault: the *Kamari* (Smiths) and *Vatsu* (Architects). The Architects are experts in runic magic, and their talents maintain the systems that make life possible. They are the source of light, heat, fresh air, and all other things the people require. The Smiths are the warriors and the makers of weapons, weaving runic magic into arms and armor. The Smiths maintain order and defend their vault from threats, be they strange beasts from the depths or raiders from other vaults. These are the ruling castes in every vault, but the balance between them shifts from vault to vault. If the Smiths are the ascendant house, the vault is likely to be aggressive and expansionist; if the Architects are at the helm, the focus is generally on preservation.

Beneath these castes are a host of lesser castes. The *Ratu* tend the fungal gardens and prepare food. The *Gana* are the miners and masons, and they may do metalworking beneath the dignity of one of the Kamari. The *Seva* are voices; this caste includes merchants, envoys, and mediators. The *Kadu* are soldiers, the rank and file who do the bidding of the Kamari. The *Valu* are the army of the Architects: They are savants who perform complex labor. The Valu include healers, scribes, civic planners, and many other vital tasks. The Kamari and the Vatsu enjoy the highest quality of life, followed by the Seva, then the Kadu and the Valu. Life for the lower castes is filled with endless labor. Vaults vary significantly in tone. Some are brutally oppressive, where the lower castes leave in fear of the punishment should they fail to meet

quotas. Others are driven by the vision of the common good; the lower castes may walk a harder road, but they are celebrated for their role in sustaining the civilization. If you play a Phoenix from Kor Aton, you'll have to decide what your vault was like and what role you played in it.

WAR IN THE DEEP

Kor Aton has never fought the Empire, and they've yet to face the common manifestations of the Dread (such as the Bones or the Chant). However, there are always conflicts in the deep. Atons may fight over newly discovered mines or mystical resources. Feuds and vendettas can take many forms, whether between Atons, Architects and Smiths, or members of the same caste vying for a particular position. Poisons are popular among the Vatsu and Valu, and an entire language of poisons expresses the degree of your disdain for your victim.

These are human threats. But what lurks in the deep tunnels? There are certainly deadly traps and strange beasts, but is the Dread stirring more organized horrors in the dark? By default, Kor Aton has suffered less from the Dread than the surface, but you and your Marshal could choose to reverse this. Perhaps the Voices of the Deep are struggling to contain the hordes of feral horrors boiling up from the darkness. It could be that the Kamari are leading the defense against these dangers, or it could be that the Smiths and Architects refuse to help the Deep Voices or listen to their warnings. If this is the case, you might be one of the few people in your Aton who knows just how dangerous the situation is…sadly, you died before you could do anything about it.

ATON NAMES

Atons preface their names with caste rank. Smiths or Architects include a derivation of the House name, so the Smith Dharya of House Nirhady is *Nirha'ka Dharya*.

Male Names: Ardhis, Adaki, Cordhi, Dharis, Jhori, Lhodris, Namaki, Shodi, Togri, Vayis, Yangri

Female Names: Adarys, Chasta, Davya, Dharya, Ghira, Lhoda, Mhaduva, Sharya, Verya, Yuva

Castes: 'Ka (Smith), 'Va (Architect), Seva (Voice), Kadu (Soldier), Gana (Miner), Ratu (Farmer), Valu (Savant). Vault runners and the lowest laborers don't use a caste prefix.

IF YOU'RE FROM KOR ATON...

You might be a Voice of the Deep who died facing unknown horrors in the depths or a vault runner who found an intriguing ancient artifact…moments before being killed by its defenses. You could be a Smith who paid a terrible price to protect your people, or a member of one of the lower castes who gave your life for the good of your vault. Or you might have been a merchant or envoy who died while negotiating with the people of the Empire. When making a character from Kor Aton, consider the following questions:

What was your caste? Were you a member of one of the ruling castes, or were you bound to the lower echelons of society? Were you content with your role, or did you want to see change?

Did you ever encounter the surface world? Few Atons ever leave their subterranean world, and most believe the people of the surface are barbarians. Did you ever leave your Vault? Did you know anything about the Empire before you came to the Crucible? If not, what stories have you heard and what strange expectations do you have?

Why did you become a Phoenix? Surviving the Crucible is a difficult challenge. Setting aside the physical and spiritual trials, it also tests to ensure that you're willing to fight to defend the people of Dalea. Why are you willing to work with people from an alien culture to defend a world you've never seen? Do you take a broad view and see the Dread as a threat to all living things? Do you hope to unite Kor Aton and the Empire? Do you see Dawn Command as an extension of your caste system and intend to continue to do your duty? Or are you happy to escape from Kor Aton and willing to endure any hardship to experience this new world?

What customs will confuse your Wingmates? The different provinces of the Empire have had a thousand years of interaction. They share a common language, and people are familiar with the customs of neighboring provinces. But Kor Aton has had almost no contact with the Empire, and your ways will seem strange. You learned Ilonan in the Crucible in addition to Pyrean, but you may use strange expressions or be clumsy with your phrasing. Beyond that, what are a few habits or hobbies of yours that others will find unusual? Do you keep insects as pets? Are you constantly asking questions about the sun? Do you find common hand gestures deeply insulting, and are there any particular phrases that have a completely different meaning in Kor Aton?

What have you left behind? You are effectively an exile. Even if you were to return to Kor Aton, there's no precedent for an Aton Phoenix, and you'd likely be treated as an outsider. What do you miss most? Who have you left behind, and do you hope that you will someday be reunited?

THE HISTORY OF DALEA

Much of Dalea's history is shrouded in mystery. Virtually nothing is known of the mythical Old Kingdoms, and the Empire has done little to preserve any remaining knowledge of the Dark Ages before its founding. What follows reflects history as known to a well-educated citizen of the Empire.

THE OLD KINGDOMS

The Distant Past

In Skavia, a massive bridge stretches out over miles of water before coming to a jagged end. No one knows who built it, how it was constructed, where it was supposed to go, or what conflict shattered it. Further inland sits a well that never runs dry; its waters are said to cure any ailment and prolong life. The people of Kor Aton live in network of subterranean halls and vaults that predate any known civilization, and even they shun the deepest tunnels.

These wonders are scattered across the Daylit World. Clearly, they are artifacts of ancient civilizations, but scholars have yet to learn any concrete details about the people who built them. Some say these are the remnants of pre-human cultures… that elves sowed the seeds of the Grimwald and dwarves carved the deep halls now claimed by Kor Aton. Others believe these were human nations, simply so old all knowledge of them has disappeared. Collectively, these lost civilizations are referred to as the Old Kingdoms. While nothing is known with any certainty, the common belief is these Old Kingdoms were destroyed in some long-forgotten conflict; many warlocks say the Fallen Folk (page 168) were lords and ladies of the Old Kingdoms who escaped its doom by slipping into Dusk.

Ultimately, these are no reliable facts about the Old Kingdoms. No one knows how long they lasted, how they fell, or how much time has passed since their destruction. Those few relics and structures that have survived to the present days are now the source of local legends or integrated into modern communities, but the Old Kingdoms themselves remain a mystery.

THE DARK AGES

The Time Before the Empire

A vast span of time lies between the fall of the Old Kingdoms and the rise of the Empire. In this period, Dalea was fractured into city-states and tribes; while people may know the history and tales of their ancestors, only dedicated scholars have a picture of the world as a whole. It's during this period that the cultures making up the Empire first came to existence. Many of these cultures were shaped by a force that's now shunned: magic. During the Dark Ages, humanity discovered the power

of magic, and different mystical traditions played a vital role in shaping cultures.

In the fertile heartland, a handful of families formed symbiotic bonds with supernatural beings of great power, which they called **House Gods**. Each of these Talu families used this power to lay claim to a region of the heartland, ruling as tyrants and princes. While there was a balance of power among the Talu, feuds and treachery were the rule of the day. The Talu seized the homelands of the Shadovar people; those who escaped slavery began a wandering existence that continues to the present.

Two distinct cultures took shape in the barren north. A handful of fortress cities were established, built upon Old Kingdom relics and ruins. These are the Bulwarks, and they remain the core of Skavi civilization. Though aligned by common cultures and traditions, each Bulwark remained a sovereign entity. The plains around the Bulwarks were home to nomadic clans. These folk were raiders who preyed on the people of the Bulwarks, other clans, and the Talu settlements in the Red Marches. Both Bulwark and clanfolk followed the same path of magic: bargaining with the mysterious Fallen Folk. Wealth, health, good fortune for friends or doom for enemies…the gifts of the Fallen take many forms, but every interaction with the Fallen carries risks.

In the vast forest of the south, shamans communed with the spirits of the natural world. Here as well, power led to conflict instead of unity. Tribe fought tribe, employing warriors strengthened by primal spirits or the raw power of wilds.

All across the Daylit World, those with power used their mystical might as a weapon. For all the wonders magic can accomplish, the stories from this time highlight the dangers such power presents in the wrong hands and the risks involved in working with the supernatural. Performed properly, the shamanic traditions of the Grimwald could imbue a warrior with the speed and strength of a wild beast; but one slip in the ritual and the bestial spirit would assume control, creating a bloodthirsty monster instead of a champion. In the end, the founders of the Empire conclude that these powers were too dangerous to be left in mortal hands.

THE PHILOSOPHIES OF LAETUS

A Blueprint for a New Age

The Dark Ages were a cruel time, but some across the Daylit World strove to make things better. Within Ilona, a number of Talu savants proposed codes and concepts that could unify the city-states and create a just society. The face of this movement was **Laetus Dolagi** of the Dol Talu. He codified what are now known as the Imperial Philosophies, and urged the Talu to adopt this creed. The movement began to spread across Ilona and had a significant number of followers even among the Talu. Laetus was careful and clever; he had too much support for his enemies to simply

assassinate him without creating a martyr. Unwilling to kill him, his enemies devised a new plan. Laetus and his most loyal followers were sent to an island in the Inner Sea, where they could create a new society modeled on the Philosophies; anyone who wished could join them. This was a cruel trick, as this "idyllic island" was in fact **Pyre**…a volcanic isle with minimal vegetation and limited resources. The Talu expected Laetus and his followers to turn on one another in their exile, fighting over the minimal resources, and to ultimately starve or fall into savagery. When this didn't happen immediately, they continued to send malcontents to Pyre; it was a way to rid the Talu of their enemies, and their could be no question the population would eventually exceed its resources.

It's remarkable Laetus's colony survived, and a testament to his leadership and the caliber of his followers. At the same time, Laetus continued to receive support from allies on the mainland; supporters smuggled food to Pyre and continued to circulate his writings among the people.

PHOENIX RISING

The First Phoenixes Are Reborn

As the Philosophies continued to gain ground in Ilona, and the Pyre colonists stubbornly refused to die, a cabal of Talu families decided the time had come to simply eliminate Laetus once and for all. The armada assembled for this purpose was an impressive act of house cooperation. Soldiers and avatars from half a dozen houses joined forces, assembling an army to slaughter every living thing on Pyre. But Laetus had allies even among the Talu. He received warning of the attack, and his allies began the process of evacuating Pyre—but their resources were limited, and the process was slow. Laetus and a thousand volunteers prepared to meet the Talu forces on the farthest shores of Pyre, hoping to buy time for the evacuation of those who couldn't fight…and to send a message with their sacrifice.

What happened next remains a hotly contested point of history. The commonly accepted story is that Laetus and his allies detonated a volcano after luring the Talu forces in. However, some assert that the state of modern Pyre doesn't reflect this. These sages maintain Laetus must have found some sort of Old Kingdom weapon beneath Pyre and made use of it. Whatever the nature of the blast, Laetus and his followers triggered a wave of destruction that annihilated the bulk of the Talu armada and scattered the rest. Most believe this was his sole intent: setting an example for his followers and crippling the Talu. Surely Laetus himself expected to die, and die he did—but after his death, a thousand heroes were reborn in the heart of Pyre. Their commander was the very image of Laetus restored to youth and vigor. But he maintained Laetus had died to save the people of Pyre and Ilona; he was simply a **Savant**, come to show a path to a new world.

THE GODFALL

The Empire Is Forged in Fire

While the loss of the armada only destroyed a small percentage of the Talu's military power, it was a serious blow to their sea power. As a result, Savant's allies on the mainland were able to rescue the remaining Pyrean survivors with the help of Wynderi mercenary captains. This included the thousand Phoenixes, whom Savant christened **The Dawn Legion**. Savant swiftly organized his allies. A number of Talu houses—notably the Dol and Pel Talu—joined with Savant, bringing the core of an army; this was supplemented by eager peasants from across Ilona. The battles that followed were bitter and devastating as the power of the newborn Phoenixes was matched against the might of the Talu and their House Gods. The Talu had greater numbers, superior discipline, more resources, and the power of their gods. The Talu had no idea what they were facing, and they used many resources recklessly in attempts to crush their enemy, only to be caught unprepared when the Phoenixes returned. After each defeat, the Phoenixes rose from the ashes with renewed strength. One by one, the Talu avatars fell, and the power of the House Gods dwindled. Never unified to begin with, many Talu houses turned on one another or surrendered. The crucial moment came when Savant's army faced the forces of the last Talu alliance. Savant had been working on a secret project: a ritual to break the bonds between the Talu and their gods, banishing the House Gods to the spirit realm known as the Dusk. The ritual was a success, and the shocked and demoralized Talu surrendered. But this act took the mortal sacrifice of every Devoted Phoenix of the Dawn Legion, including Savant himself…and it was his last life. The power of the Talu was broken, but the founder of the Dawn Legion returned to the Crucible for the final time.

EMPEROR AEGIS

The First Emperor Takes the Throne

Shocked and crippled by the loss of the House Gods, many Talu houses surrendered unconditionally. There were holdouts in the Fens and the Red Marches, but the Dawn Legion now held most of the Verdant Coast and the Summer Shore.

Following the final death of Savant, the Durant Phoenix **Aegis** assumed command of the Dawn Legion. He declared an end to the age of warring city-states and petty tyranny. It was time for all people to stand united in a new society guided by the principles of Pyre and the Philosophies. Those Talu who worked with the Legion were allowed to keep much of their property and pride, but power now shifted to the newly appointed Senate and Speakers. However, Aegis acknowledged it would take time to perfect this new society…and the Dawn Legion would remain in place and hold the reins of power until such perfection was attained. Aegis declared himself Emperor of the Phoenix Imperium, and other Phoenixes became the ministers of

the new Empire. Their intentions were surely good, and the Emperor listened to the advice and requests of the Speakers. But at the end of the day, all true power remained in the hands of Phoenixes.

THE CONQUEST

The Long Battle for Unity

It took years to pacify the remaining Talu resistance and fully establish the Empire across Ilona. But Aegis wasn't content with this progress. One evil had been brought down, one region united. But Skavi raiders still preyed on the Red Marches empowered by the gifts of the Fallen. Grimwald champions strengthened by primal spirits harried the Summer Shore. In an address to the Senate, Aegis swore to bring unity to the entire world…and so began the Conquest. Over the next fifty years, the Dawn Legion and the Empire slowly and systematically assimilated Skavia and the Grimwald. This wasn't simply a battle against mortals; it was a war against the Fallen and against the forces unleashed over the centuries by foolish shamans. Over the course of this inexorable advance, the Phoenixes established Aeries across Dalea, and anywhere they had an Aerie, the Legion could instantly reinforce beleaguered troops or respond to unrest or rebellion.

This was a slow and grueling process, full of bloody battles and bitter uprisings. Yet at the same time, there were many who welcomed the Phoenixes and took their side in battle. The Phoenixes sought to depose tyrants and banish evil spirits. Those who relied on magic fought to maintain their power and traditions. But many welcomed the new age, and in time, the Empire spread to cover the surface of Dalea. Only one nation remained beyond its reach: the subterranean realm of Kor Aton. The Atons were well entrenched in their underground fortresses, and they had so little interaction with the surface world that the Emperor ultimately allowed them to remain an independent nation.

THE PHOENIX IMPERIUM

Dalea under Phoenix Rule

There came a day when Dalea was fully united under the rule of the Emperor. House Gods and Fallen alike had been banished to the Dusk. Skavi raiders, Grimwald pillagers, Ilonan bandits—all had been brought to heel. The Empire was formally divided into provinces, and every province had its representation in the Senate. Tyrants were overthrown…except, of course, for the Phoenixes themselves.

If Phoenix rule was tyranny, it was surely a gentler tyranny than any seen in the past. People were expected to abide by the principles of the Philosophies, but beyond that, the provinces were allowed to keep most of their local customs. Skavi nobles, Talu families, and Grimwald chieftains kept their wealth and much of their power, but

slavery was outlawed and corruption swiftly prosecuted. Where a feudal structure remained in place, those higher in rank were required to care for those below. The Imperium fostered education and commerce. During this time, the Phoenixes expanded the Imperial Philosophies to include the **Dawn Codex**. This presented Phoenixes as servants of the Dawn, and outlined the paths of virtuous behavior most likely to lead to rebirth as a Phoenix. It was quite popular, especially within the lower echelons of society; however bad life might be, follow the path and you could be reborn and elevated.

Gentle tyranny though it was, on certain matters Phoenix rule was absolute. The Shrouded Legion spread its eyes across the Empire, and corruption and crime were ruthlessly punished. Most of all, all practice of magic—save for the approved traditions of the adept and Flamekeeper—was harshly suppressed. This took time, and there were serious uprisings in the course of the first century: the Witch Wars of Skavia, the Battle of the Bloody Roots, a series of sacrificial massacres attempting to restore the House Gods. Many of these threats were the work of mortals, but some disasters were purely the result of malign spirits escaping the Dusk. The Shrouded Legion identified the threats; Durants, Elementals, and Forcefuls crushed the uprisings, and Devoted found new ways to bind spirits and neutralize mages. Eventually, there came a time when it seemed the spark of magic was truly extinguished. The Fallen no longer answered the calls of the warlocks, and the shamans forgot how to hear the voices of the wild. Eventually these things passed from living memory, and the only magic left in the world was that of the Dawn. It was a perfect world at last…at least in the eyes of the Phoenixes.

The Three Emperors

Phoenixes are effectively immortal, but they can be killed and they can choose to die. The Emperor Aegis founded the Empire and ruled for over a century. The circumstances of his final death have never been made public, but he died in 142 IC and was succeeded by the Shrouded Empress Verity. Under Verity's rule, the Shrouded Legion was especially active in ferreting out corruption across the Empire, and some scholars say it was this passion to know everything that fueled the unrest that led to the Civil War. As with Aegis, it's not known how the Durant Empress Justice came to replace Verity; some rumors say Justice seized power after Verity crossed too many lines in her pursuit of knowledge.

THE HUMANIST MOVEMENT

Unrest Begins

In time, the dangers of magic and the tyrannies of the past were both forgotten. The Empire was strong, but despite the distant promises of the first Emperor, the Phoenixes showed no signs of passing the reins of power to the mortals. All of the Imperial ministers and high justices were Phoenixes. The Dawn Legion continued to ruthlessly persecute corruption, and under the reign of the Empress Verity, the definition of "corruption" had grown. Slowly but steadily, opposition to Phoenix rule was growing. In Ilona, the Dol Talu and the Pel Talu—the first families to ally with the Dawn Legion—accused the Phoenixes of drifting too far from the original Philosophies. Scholars denounced the Dawn Codex, saying the Empire had lost sight of Laetus's vision. The further one got from Pyre and the Capital, the more this dissent grew. In the depths of the Grimwald, the rotting manors of the Fens, and the Bulwarks of Hafsbridge and Lostwall, people spoke of freedom—a life lived without the unblinking eye of the Shrouded Legion. While the rebels of different provinces had a range of grievances and beliefs, they began to identify as a single movement, the **Humanists**. The basic principle was simple: Humanity should be ruled by humans. The Phoenixes had gone too far and ruled too long. It was time for them to step down, as the first Emperor had promised to do.

This fire burned slowly, but as the years progressed, it spread across the Empire. The Empress Justice condoned the dissent, but many of the ministers and justices took harsh action to suppress Humanist gatherings and protests, adding fuel to the fire. It was only a matter of time before the simmering anger reached a boiling point.

THE CIVIL WAR

The Mortal Uprising

The Civil War began in 284 IC with a series of simultaneous uprisings across the Empire. In half a dozen cities, rebel forces extinguished Aeries and turned on local Phoenixes, slaying justices and governors and demanding the mortal forces of the Empire submit to Humanist command. The leaders had hoped for a swift coup before the Phoenixes could be reborn and regroup, but they underestimated the Phoenixes' support. The majority of the common people still backed the Empress and the Dawn Legion…and what followed was a bitter, ugly struggle. The Phoenixes had supernatural power and nigh-immortality, but the Humanists were largely spread among innocent civilian populations. In preparation for war, the Humanists had developed weapons that could give mortals a chance to kill Phoenixes. The most infamous of these were the **dragons** and their ilk: flamethrowers and explosives. These tools could bring down Phoenixes, certainly…but only at the cost of tremendous collateral damage and mortal casualties.

The Humanists weren't a tightly unified force. Some of their leaders had hoped for a relatively peaceful end to the conflict; these factions simply sought to hold critical towns and cities in hopes the Phoenixes would see reason. Others were more destructive. In the north, a Skavi war leader named **Raven** turned to the traditions of her ancestors, raising a horde among the clans and leading bloody raids through loyalist lands. In the south, rebel legions devastated the Summer Shore. Worst among these was the general **Hadon Pelagius**, who soon became infamous for his cruelty and use of fire. He proclaimed that all who would not fight the Phoenixes were his enemies—and those who loved the Phoenixes should have no fear of fire.

For a time, it seemed a war that couldn't be won. The Humanists lacked the sea power required to strike Pyre, and as long as the Grand Aerie stood, the Phoenixes would always return. At the same time, the Humanists were so widespread and decentralized that no single defeat could truly cripple them, and every conflict cost innocent lives. Many leaders on both sides questioned the actions of extremist allies, and the number of Phoenixes began to dwindle. Phoenixes can only return if they believe in the righteousness of their cause…and a growing number were losing that faith.

The final conflict in the Civil War was the battle of Hadon's Fall. The Empress Justice met Hadon Pelagius in the field as he led his forces towards Westergate. Knowing his love of fire, Justice had trained a corps of Elemental Phoenixes to contain the destructive power of his weapons. Justice herself slew Pelagius, and his power was broken, but Justice felt no joy in her victory. Too many innocents had died. Hadon Pelagius was the worst of the Humanists, brutal and cruel; now that he was dead, Justice called on all Phoenixes to stand down. Justice had already been discussing the terms of a Phoenix surrender with the moderates among the Humanists, and now she put those plans into action. She formally abdicated, passing the Imperial crown to the mortal Mikan Dolanti. In her last address in the Capital, she swore from this point forward the Phoenixes would defend the Empire, not rule it. The Dawn Legion was formally dissolved and reformed as Dawn Command. The Phoenixes were to retire to Pyre, and there they would remain unless called upon by Imperial authorities. All these concessions came with a price; as the Phoenixes would remain as protectors, Justice demanded the horrific weapons developed during the war be destroyed, and such tools never used again. Once all preparations were in place, Justice submitted to formal execution. She believed it was the only way to truly mark the end of the Phoenix Imperium, and so she died her last death. Her ashes were interred below the Aerie in Westergate, the city she'd saved from Hadon Pelagius.

THE GOLDEN AGE

The Empire of Humanity

It took time to heal the wounds of the Civil War and restore the bonds between the Humanists and loyalists. Some Phoenixes and mortals alike refused to accept the terms of surrender, but most were true to Justice's wishes, and Dawn Command helped bring the renegades to heel. While Mikan Dolanti ruled as Emperor, he held to the original intent of the system; it was the Senate and the Speakers who truly guided the Empire through the difficult days. For a time, Dawn Command was busy—helping both to maintain order and rebuild shattered cities—but there came a point where there was no need for Phoenixes. Under the terms of the agreement, the Phoenixes left Pyre only when called…and no one had any reason to call them. Mortals were finally in charge of their destiny. The world was at peace. And Phoenixes had no purpose in this Golden Age.

The number of Phoenixes had dramatically diminished over the course of the Civil War. The Dawn Legion was a thousand strong when the war began, and there were fewer than four hundred Phoenixes at the end of it. Now their numbers continued to drop, and no new Phoenixes rose to take their places. This was a world with no need of champions, no driving purpose giving mortals the will to fight through death. Some Phoenixes engaged in reckless behavior, getting involved in intrigues and duels. Others simply fell to ennui, releasing their hold on life and retiring to the Crucible. In 330 IC, the Shrouded Phoenix Winter informed the Emperor all Flamekeepers were being released from duty: Dawn Command was no longer viable. Within a century, the Phoenixes had become the stuff of legends.

The Dawn Codex had been removed from the Imperial Philosophies in the first days of the Human Imperium. Late in the fifth century, interest in the Codex revived. The faith of the Dawn took root, and many old Aeries were restored as Dawn Temples. While the fervor subsided in time, it still remained a thread in the tapestry of the Empire. No one truly expected to come back as a Phoenix, but some sought to live in accord with Devoted virtues or show the resolve of a Durant. Periodically, vigilantes would dress as Phoenixes to fight bandits or corrupt officials, but these movements soon passed.

The Empire was never perfect. Many blemishes tarnished even the veneer of the Golden Age. Without the strict hand of the Phoenixes, corruption took hold of several institutions. While many Talu families are pillars of the Empire, some foster organized crime and other unsavory activities. Across the Empire, the curious dabbled in the ancient arts of magic, though few who ever achieved any practical results. Some of the Grimwald tribes have rekindled old feuds. It was never perfect, but its failings were always human. For the most part, the people were content…and blissfully unaware of the horrors lying in wait.

THE DREAD BEGINS

In 590 IC, the Empress Malita Dolanti died of a mysterious ailment and was succeeded by her young son Maelan. The Skavi city of Hafsbridge declared itself independent from the Empire. In the year that followed, strange stories began to circulate around the Empire. People murmured of savage beasts attacking travelers on the road, caravans disappearing, and villages found devoid of life. People complained about terrible nightmares and especially savage storms. Shadovar were accused of performing dark magics and driven from Ilonan towns. But these were only stories and not taken too seriously…until 591 IC, when the Bone Legion sacked the city of Westergate and began its inexorable march along the Summer Shore. Without the Phoenixes, news traveled slowly across the Empire. By the time the Emperor heard about the fall of Westergate, there was another, closer catastrophe: The village of Dulacia had fallen to the Chant. It was at this point, the enemy was given a name. The Emperor assured the people that the Dread now gripping the Empire would not last. The army would investigate immediately and restore order soon.

Thus began three years of escalating terror. The Imperial Army has done its best, but mortals cannot defeat these threats. The Army has been powerless to stop the advance of the Bones along the Summer Shore. When a town falls to the Chant, all anyone can do is ensure the curse spreads no further. Fortified cities provide shelter against many threats, and refugees have flooded the largest cities…but many manifestations of the Dread can strike anywhere. The Emperor has done his best to give the people hope, but in truth, there's little he can do…and in their hearts, the people know it.

PHOENIXES RETURN

Dawn Command Is Reborn

Most mark the end of the Phoenixes as the day the Aeries were extinguished, back in 330 IC—but as it turns out, a few Phoenixes never passed on into the Crucible. A handful—fewer than a dozen—remained active throughout the Golden Age, maintaining low profiles and living quiet lives. In 593 IC, a few of these elders came together and returned to Pyre. They restored the Imperial Flame, and within days, the first new Phoenix was reborn. Over the course of the last year, the new Dawn Command has scrambled: gathering resources, restoring Aeries, and recruiting mortals from among those who have remained loyal to the Dawn to serve as adepts guardians, and Flamekeepers.

THE PRESENT DAY

Your Wing Enters the Fray

The year is 594 IC. Where once weeks might pass between new manifestations of the Dread, it's now a matter of days or hours. The Summer Shore and the Wynderi Isles have been lost to the Bones, and their legions are moving ever closer to the heart of Ilona and the Capital. Multiple towns have fallen to the Chant; the greatest loss is Mardonford, a mercantile hub lost just one month ago. Between Bones, skinchangers, hungry ghosts, and other horrors, roughly a third of the Empire has fallen to the Dread.

Dawn Command has grown over the course of the year. There are approximately one hundred Phoenixes in the Daylit World, with eighteen active Wings. Scores of mortals at Pyre work to restore the Grand Aerie and train in the skills they need to fight the Dread. Fourteen Aeries have been restored. The Marshals are aggressively working to expand this network, but this requires Phoenix ashes and mortals willing and capable of serving as Flamekeepers. The people of the Empire are starting to hear stories of the return of the Phoenixes, but typically only followers of the Dawn actually believe them. Most assume these so-called "Phoenixes" are Dawn cultists dressing up in costume, as people did for a time back in the Fifth Century. The Minister of War and most soldiers dismiss Phoenixes as civilians at best and madmen at worst.

This is the world in 594. The Dread is a dire threat, and yet virtually nothing is known about it. Dawn Command is gathering resources, but the Empire at large doesn't believe in or trust the Phoenixes. It remains to be seen if one newborn Wing can make a difference in this troubled time.

CHAPTER THREE: HOW TO PLAY

Phoenix: Dawn Command is a story-driven game. The Action cards exist to add tension and uncertainty: Can a character overcome a particular obstacle? As the Marshal, your role is to help the players develop a compelling and entertaining story. It's your job to guide them through the rules—to determine what they are *trying* to do and help translate that into game terms. If a Phoenix wants to push a boulder onto an enemy, is it an Attack Spread or a Strength-based Skill Spread? How difficult should it be? It's up to you to make these choices. Always remember you are working with the players…but don't forget that the missions are *supposed* to feel challenging, and that this is a game in which death and failure are always possibilities.

THE ACTION DECK

Every player has a deck containing their Action cards. At Rank One, a Phoenix has seventeen cards in their deck, including four basic Traits and one School Trait. At the start of a mission, a player should draw until they reach their *draw limit*, which is **five cards** unless affected by Lessons or penalties. Generally a player draws back up to their draw limit after completing any action involving cards. However, in combat a player only draws *at the end of their turn*, which means they don't redraw after using cards for defense or to assist allies. There is no limit on the number of cards a player can have in their hand, but if a player has more cards than their draw limit they won't draw new cards until the drop below the draw limit. When a player exhausts their deck, they shuffle their discard pile to make a new draw pile.

TAKING ACTION: SPREADS

Over the course of a mission, a Phoenix might want to calm a panicked crowd, leap over an obstacle, or strike down an enemy. They may need to spot a hidden foe or slip into the shadows to avoid danger. These all use the same core mechanic: Players must reach a target number to achieve success. The Phoenix plays a **spread** of Action cards from their hand and adds the values together. If the value of the spread equals or exceed the target number, the Phoenix succeeds.

There are three basic types of spreads. Whenever a player wants to take an action, they describe what they're trying to do, and you determine what sort of spread it takes.

An **Attack Spread** is used whenever the player is trying to inflict damage or otherwise directly harm an enemy.

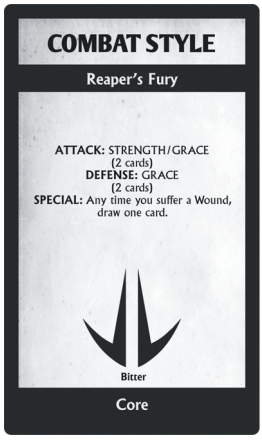
A **Defense Spread** is used if the player is trying to avoid an attack.

A **Skill Spread** is used for any other kind of action.

Attack and Defense Spreads are collectively referred to as **Combat Spreads;** both are defined by the player's **Combat Style,** one of the core Lesson cards of each School. Skill Spreads make use of a different core Lesson, the **Skill Specialties** card.

Cards that can be played in any spread are restricted in two ways: the **suits** the player can use and the **limit** on the number of cards they can play. There is no limit to the number of spreads a player may make in one turn, as long as they have cards to play.

Attack Spreads



The suit and limit of an Attack Spread are determined by the player's **Combat Style**. Every Combat Style has an entry for Attack and Defense. These entries determine the suit and the limit of the cards a Phoenix may play in Combat Spreads. So if a Combat Style says *"Attack: Intellect (2 cards),"* the suit is Intellect and the limit is two; the character can play up to two cards, and they both must be Intellect cards.

There are three steps to making an attack:

The player makes an Attack Spread. Add up the total value of the cards in the spread.

Subtract the Defense value of the Challenge from this total. The result is the damage inflicted by the attack.

The player removes Health Level tokens from the challenge with a **total** value equal to or less than the damage done by the attack. Any excess damage—damage that's not enough to fully claim a token—is lost. Most creatures are defeated with their last Health Level token is removed. Page 115 discusses Challenges in more detail.

Example: *Elegy makes an Attack Spread by playing an Intellect 4 and Intellect 5, for a total value of 9 against a Dreadknight. The Dreadknight has a Defense 4 and three Health Levels, each with a value of 3. Next, Elegy subtracts the Defense value of 4 from the Attack value of 9, and the remaining value of 5 deals damage to the Dreadknight. Elegy can remove Health Levels from the Dreadknight with a combined total of 5 or less. As each of its Health Levels are worth 3, Elegy only removes a single token. The remaining two points of damage have no effect.*

Using Sparks and Traits

In any Attack Spread, a player may increase their total value by burning Sparks, adding 1 to the spread for every Spark spent. Sparks are a valuable resource, but they can help a Phoenix to succeed when sacrifice is necessary. A Phoenix can use their final Spark in an Attack Spread, in which case they heroically complete their attack and deal damage to the Challenge before dying. A Phoenix who dies in this way is immediately consumed into ash, and will not be reborn until the following dawn. Page 119 discusses the cycle of death and rebirth.

A Phoenix may also choose to play Traits in an Attack Spread. As long as a player can justify how a Trait applies to their attack, the Trait does not count against the card limit for that Attack Spread. Encourage players to describe exactly how they use these Traits in their attack. Each Trait has a unique descriptor and ability; they're discussed in more depth on page 107.

Creative Combat

An Attack Spread should be more than just taking a swing and comparing numbers. Encourage players to describe their characters' actions. The end goal may be hurting an enemy, but *how* is that accomplished? Does the Phoenix swing on a chandelier? Tip a statue onto the enemy? If the character proposes something that seems especially difficult or important—for example, if the statue is a major part of the story and shouldn't be casually tipped over—you could require the player to make a separate Skill Spread to accomplish it, but minor actions that add color to a scene can simply be folded into an attack. The primary purpose of **Environmental Elements** (page 113) is to encourage this sort of storytelling.

A Marshal should feel free to reward players for creative narratives during combat. A player might gain a simple bonus to their Attack Spread for coming up with a good story, but Marshals may also apply conditions to the target or grant the player brutal damage for especially worthy stories.

Brutal Damage

Brutal damage is especially devastating. Normally, if a Phoenix inflicts four points of damage and the creature's Health Levels are worth 3 points each, they can only remove one Health Level, and the leftover damage is wasted. However, if the damage is brutal, the Phoenix can use the excess damage to remove a token even if they don't inflict the full damage of that token.

There are two restrictions on brutal damage:

- The smallest available Health Level token must be removed first. If a creature has Health Levels with values of 3, 4, and 5, and a Phoenix does a single point

of brutal damage, they have to use it to remove the HL-3 token—the smallest of the three Health Levels.

• A Phoenix cannot remove a Challenge's last remaining Health Level by rounding up with brutal damage. They have to inflict the full value of the final HL token to finish something off.

Defense Spreads

The suit and limit of a Defense Spread are determined by the character's active Combat Style. The full process of how a Challenge makes an attack is described on page 116. However, from the player's perspective, Defense involves the following steps:

• The Marshal tells the player the value of the Challenge's Attack and any special details—notably, whether it is an all-or-nothing attack.

• The player makes a Defense Spread. Add up the total value of the cards used in the spread.

• The player may add any appropriate Traits to the spread, narrating how they support their defense, **but they may not burn Sparks** to increase a Defense Spread.

• Subtract the total Defense value from the value of the Attack. If the result is zero or below, the Phoenix avoids the attack completely. If the result is a positive number, the attack connects and the Phoenix may take Wounds; page 115 discusses damage from Challenges in more detail.

Example: The Dreadknight attacks Elegy, and the Marshal says "It slashes at you with a jagged blade…Attack value of 6!" Elegy plays a Grace 3 and a Grace 2—not enough to avoid the attack entirely. However, she also holds the 1-point Trait Superhuman Reflexes, which Elegy weaves into a descriptive defensive narrative. Since appropriate Traits do not count toward the normal limit of a Combat Spread, Elegy's total Defense value is 6. Since this equals the value of the Attack, Elegy nimbly dodges out of the way, and the jagged blade misses her completely.

Defense Spreads are different from Attack and Skill Spreads in that the player does not usually know the exact consequences of failure. In order to keep tension high during a mission, you usually want to keep the abilities and damage calculations of a Challenge secret from the players—at least up until they've been attacked. However, you *should* give narrative indicators that describe how much damage they may do to a player! A tree trunk swung by a giant can do more damage than a wavering arrow launched from across the river. A precise strike from a weak opponent may have a high attack value, but players should not feel tricked into defending against a mere

scratch rather than a more dangerous attack. Be subtle, but don't be adversarial. You can let a player feel confidant that a particular attack doesn't have the power to kill them with one stroke…but beyond that let them discover the consequences of failure through trial and error. The Dread is a mystery: make the Phoenixes work to discover its secrets.

With that said, be certain to identify **all-or-nothing** attacks. With such an attack, there's no point in making a Defense Spread unless a player can match or exceed the value of the attack. Tell a player that this is the case so they don't waste Action cards in a partial Defense with no effect. Some powerful enemies have attacks that can automatically hit a character with no defense possible, but these abilities are rare and usually restricted in some way.

As a general rule, **Phoenixes only draw cards at the end of** their **turns** during combat. A Phoenix doesn't draw back up after making a Defense Spread. If a Phoenix spends three of their five cards on defense, they'll start the next turn with only two cards in hand with which to make Attack or Skill Spreads. In short, **defense sacrifices the ability to act at full capacity next round**! Most players will have a natural instinct to try to fully defend against every attack. Make sure to remind them they are Phoenixes. They *can* endure a significant amount of damage, and even if they die, they will simply come back stronger! A Phoenix who is too concerned about defense will never get to make a truly impressive attack, and if they never die, they'll never get any stronger! Phoenixes who die from damage have the opportunity to become *attendant spirits*, assisting their Wing even in death. Page 120 explains the rules of attendant spirits.

Skill Spreads

When a player wants to do something difficult that doesn't involve hurting someone or avoiding injury, they may make a Skill Spread. Skill Spreads are more versatile than other spreads, and frequently have a range of successful outcomes. If a character wants to lift a boulder, that's a simple success or failure; but if they want to see what they know about an ancient artifact, they might be able to get basic information with a decent spread, but considerably more information with a higher result. As with all spreads, a Skill Spread has a limit on the number of cards and suits used.

Limit. As a general rule, **a player gets to use three Action cards in a Skill Spread.** If the player has an exceptionally long amount of time to perform the action—they're taking an entire day to help fortify a village—you could allow them to play additional cards in the spread.

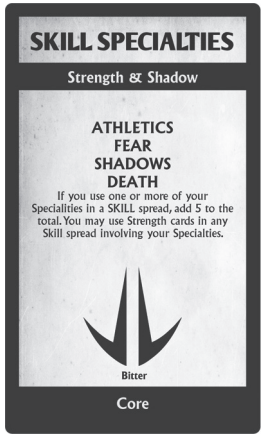
Suit. After the player decides on their action, it's up to you to decide which suits are appropriate. Bear in mind the basic functions of the suits:

• **Strength** is used both to test the limits of Phoenix endurance and to describe acts of raw physical power.

• **Intellect** is used for perception, deduction, and recall. If you're trying to spot something, remember a detail, or draw a conclusion, it's probably Intellect.

• **Grace** is both physical agility and social grace. If a task requires speed or precision, it might be Grace; if it involves persuading or inspiring someone, it's also Grace. Grace is also typically used to resist any sort of mental effect; it reflects willpower and force of personality. Every Phoenix has access to Grace cards.

In some cases multiple suits may apply to the same action. What you have to decide is whether a player can use *either* suit in the spread, or *both* of them. For example, climbing a tree involves both Grace and Strength, and you could say that the player can use either or both of these suits in a tree-climbing spread. When a character wants to get through a door, they could use Strength to knock it down or Grace to pick the lock…but those are two very different actions, and the player has to pick one of those suits and make a spread with only that suit.



Skill Specialties. Each character has a Skill Specialty Lesson based on their School. These represent natural talent and extensive training gained in the Crucible. These are the things the character is best at. It's up to you to decide when a Specialty applies to a situation. You want to be versatile, but the Shrouded shouldn't be able to use their *Lore* Specialty to climb a mountain because "they've studied rock climbing"—that's a job for *Athletics*.

Specialties have two important functions. If you have a Specialty related to a task, you get a +5 bonus to the total of your spread. In addition, a Specialty allows the character to use a suit that might normally not be associated with the spread in addition to the standard suit. For example, a Forceful Phoenix has a Specialty in *Scouting*. Normally, perception is a function of Intellect—a suit that Forceful doesn't have. But since searching for things is linked to Scouting, a Forceful can use Grace in Scouting Spreads. To be clear: **SKILL SPECIALTIES ARE NEVER USED IN COMBAT SPREADS.** They are *Skill* Specialties and are only used in *Skill* Spreads.

Results of a Skill Spread. The value of the player's spread indicates the degree of skill they display; the higher the value, the better the results should be. Here's a rough guideline.

- **0–4: Always Failure.**
- **5–9: Marginal Skill.** This is the level of success an untrained child could achieve.
- **10–14: Competent.** This suggests a reasonable level of luck or talent.
- **15–19: Exceptional.** This is on par with a highly trained mortal.
- **20–29: Superhuman.** This is an action you wouldn't expect a mortal to be able to perform. While this is a ten-point tier, you can certainly have a task that requires a 25 (or a 28) to succeed. A thirty is exponentially better than a result in the twenties, but a high twenty is better than a low twenty!
- **30+: Legendary.** The stuff of stories and songs.

When you set the suits used in a spread, you should also decide what value is required for success. In some cases, you may want to tell the player, "If you want to make that jump, you'll need a 20." However, when a Shrouded is trying to sneak past a guard, he shouldn't *know* exactly how difficult the task will be; this is what adds tension.

Example: *Zephyr the Forceful wants to leap across a wide ravine ahead of a group of oncoming rabid wolves. After some discussion, the Marshal declares this to be a Strength Spread. Zephyr has Acrobatics as a Forceful Specialty, gaining a +5 bonus to the spread and the ability to use Grace cards as well as Strength. Zephyr plays a Grace 5, Grace 3, and Strength 4, getting a total Acrobatics check of 17. Hearing the howls from the approaching wolves, Zephyr chooses to burn three Sparks to increase the total to 20. Achieving a Superhuman result sends Zephyr soaring through the air and landing safely on the other side. The Marshal chuckles, observing that a 17 would have sent Zephyr plummeting into the dark ravine...*

Tiers of Success. The table above is broken into tiers of five. The general rule is that a higher number is always better than a lower number; it's better to get a 14 than a 13, and you could set the difficulty for success at a number such as 18. However, the basic concept is that reaching a new tier represents an exponential improvement. The difference between 19 and 20 should be significant: This encourages players to burn limited resources to push a close result into the next tier. Twenty to Twenty-nine is a wider tier; higher is better, but thirty is the next exponential improvement.

Challenge Summary. *Phoenix: Dawn Command* uses a specific format for Skill Challenges that covers all the rules listed above. A mission that requires knowledge of the

Imperial City might call for an **Intellect Spread (Difficulty 15; The Empire, Lore; Trump: Ilonan background)**. This format describes the target number, any relevant Specialties, and a Trump Trait (if one exists) which guarantees automatic success. You should always feel free to accept other Specialties and Traits if your players can make a case for why they're useful in the given situation.

I Don't Have That Suit! There are three suits, and each Phoenix only starts with two of them. Does this mean that the Durant has no brains whatsoever? No—but it means that the Durant *won't be solving problems by using Intellect*, unless that action ties into their Specialties. *Phoenix: Dawn Command* is a game that emphasizes teamwork and squad play, and no one character can do everything. With that said, it's important for you to encourage that teamwork. If you put a sheer cliff in the way, you don't need to have everyone make a spread to climb it; instead, one character may need to make that spread to climb the cliff, and then throw down a rope and help the others up. Let players focus on their strengths; if a task strikes their weakness, they need to turn to a Wingmate for help!

Examples. Skill Spreads are very versatile, and players may come up with ideas you aren't sure how to handle. Page 135 includes examples of a variety of actions and how they would translate into spreads.

Extended Skill Spreads

Some situations are not easily solved by a single Skill Spread. When a Wing needs to chase an enemy across the winding rooftops of an Ilonan city, or when a ritual takes a series of vastly different yet important steps to complete, it may make more sense to assign an **Extended Skill Spread** to describe the action.

An Extended Skill Spread typically has an extremely high difficulty number—impossibly high for a lone Phoenix. These Challenges are meant to be completed over a series of Skill Spreads from the Wing. Each turn, a Phoenix may make a single Skill Spread that supports the overall goal for the Extended Skill Spread. Allow the player to narrate exactly how their actions help further the Wing's progress. Note the total Skill Spread achieved, and add it to the overall value for the Extended Skill Spread. When the overall value exceeds the target number for the Extended Skill Spread, the Wing is successful.

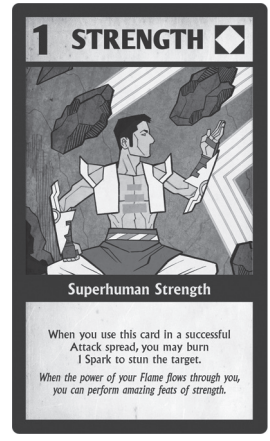
To increase the tension of the scene, an Extended Skill Spread is often set in conjunction with a combat scene. Players in this situation need to manage both threats, as time is of the essence. If the Wing spends too much time on skill checks, they'll be quickly overwhelmed by the enemies. However, the waves of enemies may not end until the Skill Challenge is complete! Finding the right balance should be the most important priority of the Wing.

Example: As the rest of their Wing holds back a wave of advancing Bone scouts, Elegy and Ash attempt to unravel the magic of an ancient Skavi ritual. The Marshal declares this to be an Extended Intellect Spread (Difficulty 85; Lore, The Arcane). Elegy attempts a Lore Spread to recall a tome on ritual magic, while Ash tries to scour the magic away with his knowledge of the Arcane. Elegy makes a Skill Spread of 21 and Ash gets a total of 18. Together, they have an overall value of 39, still 46 points short of the necessary total. The Marshal notes their progress and moves back to the rest of the Wing, who are just about to endure another attack from the Bones. Once the rest of the Wing acts, Elegy and Ash will be able to continue their efforts, hopefully in time to save their Wingmates...

Retrying Skill Spreads

In general, Phoenixes can't retry failed Skill Spreads. In combat, this is very straightforward due to the inherent timing of actions during a combat scene. However, in other circumstances, players may simply wish to try again after failing a task. As Marshal, it's up to you to determine whether it's appropriate to retry a spread in a given situation. When in doubt, you can default to a simple guideline: *Physical skills may be retried—mental skills may not.* You can keep trying to climb a wall, but if you can't remember something you can't try again.

Traits



Action cards with a value of one are special. In addition to suit and value, an Action card with a value of one has a descriptive term, such as *Superhuman Strength* or *Absolute Conviction.* These are **Traits.** A Trait reflects a distinctive attribute or skill a Phoenix possesses, and it's an important way for a player to personalize their character. A Trait can always simply be used for its suit and value, but Traits can enhance spreads in a number of different ways.

If a player can explain how a Trait is relevant to the action they are trying to take, **they may add the Trait to a spread without it counting toward the card limit and regardless of its suit.** For example, if a player wishes to climb up a cliff face, they may add *Superhuman Strength* to their spread for free if the player has given a good explanation of how enhanced strength applies to the spread. A player may add any number of Traits to a spread, provided they can justify each one to your satisfaction; you can always veto use of a particular Trait if you don't feel the player has given a compelling explanation.

When a player uses a Trait in a Skill Spread, and the Trait seems to be especially relevant to the action the Phoenix is trying to accomplish—for example, the action

involves stealth and the Trait is *Sneaky*—the value of the Trait should be increased to three of five. **This rule only applies to Skill Spreads, not Attack or Defense Spreads.** Some Traits seem useful, even though they may not be a perfect match for the situation. If a player can successfully narrate how the Trait adds to their Skill Spread, the value of these useful Traits may be increased to three.

In addition, all Traits have a special ability. For example, *Hunter* has the power, "This card has a value of 5 when used in an Attack Spread." This ability activates no matter how the Trait makes its way into the Attack Spread; players may use *Hunter* as one of their limited cards, or they may explain how being a Hunter makes this attack more effective. In either case, *Hunter* adds 5 to the spread rather than just 1.

Traits allow characters to take some control over the narrative of a scene. By being more descriptive about how their character acts, they add more to the story of their Wing's struggle against the fearsome Dread. Work with players to make the most of their Traits! If you veto an explanation too many times, players may stop trying to tell their stories.

Trump Traits

If a player has the perfect Trait for a situation, that Trait may trump that particular Skill Spread, and you can allow them to discard the Trait rather than making a spread at all. For example, a character needs to get a group of soldiers to move out of the way and happens to have the **Commander** Trait in hand. Trump Traits are ideal for when the spread isn't particularly difficult to begin with; it's a way to speed up the game and to let the player feel their character is an expert due to their background. If it doesn't replace a spread, a Trump Trait can be worth up to +10 in a Skill Spread.

Temporary Talents

Some Traits contain the phrase, "Set this card out as a temporary Talent." Temporary Talents are added to the play area with a player's other Lessons, giving the character a new active ability. Unless the Trait specifies otherwise, all temporary Talents are placed in the player's discard pile at the end of the current scene.

Lessons

Every Phoenix is trained in specific abilities that, unlike Traits, are always available. These abilities are called **Lessons**, and they're left face up in the play area for constant reference. As a Phoenix dies and is reborn, they gain the opportunity to choose advanced lessons for even more powerful options. Lessons provide character options that are always available and can be relied upon heavily.

Core Talent

The Core Talent a Phoenix learns is in many ways the most important Lesson they have. The Bitter gains **Bitter Strength**, the ability to add their Wounds to their Attack Spreads—an ability no other School has, but *every* Bitter gains. Throughout the life of a Phoenix, they will always be primarily known by the School of their Core Talent, even if they later die a death that allows them to pick a Lesson from a different School. A Core Talent is always active.

Core Talents also allow a Phoenix to be more successful with the suit they are best known for. For example, once per spread, an Elemental may use any one card in their deck as if it were an Intellect card. This helps ensure that even if an Elemental has a handful of Grace cards, they can still make an Attack Spread using Intellect. The Core Talent ensures that a Phoenix rarely has an entirely ineffective turn.

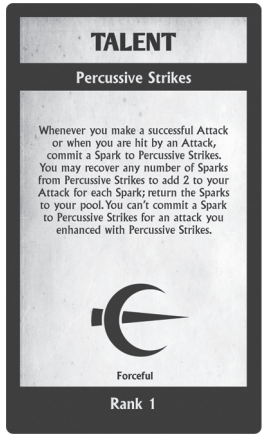
Combat Styles

Every Phoenix begins play with a core Combat Style which gives an outline for how a Phoenix attacks and defends. However, within that guideline, a Phoenix is free to use their Talon and the environment to describe the narrative of the attack! Two Durants may fight in unique ways, even though both began play with **Durant Steel**.

A Combat Style has three important components: an Attack entry, a Defense entry, and a Special entry. The Attack and Defense entries each list a *suit* and a *limit* on the cards that may be played in Attack and Defense Spreads. Attack and Defense Spreads are described on page 100-102.

The Special ability on a Combat Style is only active while a Phoenix is using that Combat Style. As a Phoenix advances, they may acquire multiple Combat Styles. At the beginning of a turn, a Phoenix decides which Combat Style is active, and cannot change this until the start of their next turn.

Committing and Reclaiming Sparks



Some Lessons and Combat Styles allow players to **commit Sparks** to gain an ongoing benefit. The act of committing Sparks creates a slow buildup of power, giving an opportunity for ever more devastating strikes and unbreakable defenses as combat continues. Committed Sparks are taken from a player's pool and moved directly onto the affected card. These Sparks still count as being part of a player's pool and may be burned off the card if they are needed.

If a player switches Combat Styles during a scene, all Sparks which have previously been committed remain on that Combat

Style. If a Phoenix switches back, they regain all benefits from the committed Sparks. Once committed, Sparks may not be moved to another Combat Style until they are **reclaimed**. Unless the card text says otherwise, committed Sparks are only reclaimed at the end of the scene, at which point they return to the player's pool of Sparks.

Skill Specialties

During their time in the Crucible, each Phoenix hones a set of skills. These skills are called **Specialties,** and grant a Phoenix important advantages when attempting certain Skill Spreads. A Phoenix who uses their Specialty gains a +5 bonus to their Skill Spread total and may potentially use a suit which is not normally associated with that skill. Skill Spreads are described in more detail on page 103.

Using Specialties

Specialties are intended to be used liberally by players in a wide variety of situations. Even on land, a Privateer can use their Specialty to navigate by the stars at night. Knowledge of the Empire could as easily apply to obscure legal codes as it does to knowing one of the most important merchants in the Imperial City. Many of the Specialities have similar uses, so a Phoenix with Acrobatics and another with Athletics have the same chance to race up a mountainside. Allowing players to narrate how their Specialties works into their actions creates a stronger story and helps to tie the Wing together.

Swapping Specialties

Each School provides a Skill Specialty card with four Specialties. These represent the skills considered most important by that School, and the training a new Phoenix typically receives in the Crucible. However, sometimes a player has a character concept that doesn't quite match the standard Specialties. As an optional rule, you may allow players to exchange a **single** Specialty for a different Specialty from the **Skill Specialties** list. If a Devoted was a Skavi warlock in their first life, they might want to replace the usual Spirits Specialty with the Arcane…while a Durant who's more of a paladin of the Dawn might replace Tradition or Healing with War. While you should help players make the characters they want to play, encourage them to avoid too much overlap so each player has a unique role in the Wing. If every Phoenix has the Arcane Specialty, none of them stands out as a specialist on the Fallen…and none of them has the skills they need when a situation calls for Spirits.

You can work with players to come up with Specialties that aren't on this list to reflect a particular character concept. However, take care to ensure this new Speciality isn't too broad; if it covers two or more of the Specialties presented above, it's too powerful. This is why the **Lore**, **Scouting**, and **Spycraft** Specialties are restricted. These are more versatile than most other Specialties, and access to

Skill Specialties

Here are the most common Specialties, along with their primary applications.

Acrobatics. Balance, tumbling, and leaping. Overcoming obstacles with speed and grace.

The Arcane. Familiarity with traditions of formulaic magic and the Dusk. Useful when employing Ash sorcery or dealing with the Fallen.

Athletics. Lifting, climbing, jumping, and swimming. Typically more associated with strength and endurance than with speed and finesse.

Death. Familiarity with both the causes of death and the undead. Useful for forensic examination; familiar with poisons and other tools used to kill.

Deception. Bluffing, disguise, sleight of hand, and cheating at games of chance.

Destruction. Ways to destroy structures and objects, including demolitions.

Diplomacy. Mediation and reasoned debate; any form of diplomatic communication.

The Empire. The history and laws of the Empire, etiquette and customs, and the Imperial Philosophies.

Endurance. Sheer physical endurance. Resisting torture, surviving hardship through sheer grit.

Fear. Intimidating others, resisting fears, and helping others shake off terror. Identifying what might frighten someone.

Fire. Both producing and containing fire. In the hands of an Elemental, effective use of firepower.

Healing. Identifying and treating mundane injuries and ailments. For Devoted, this can include healing rituals.

Insight. A keen understanding of the behavior of others; occasional intuition.

Leadership. Inspiring and guiding others. Knowing how to unite people behind a common cause.

Lore. Broad familiarity with most scholarly topics. This covers history, philosophy, geography, and similar fields, but also includes arcane and spiritual lore. This is restricted to **Shrouded** Phoenixes.

Nature. Familiarity with the natural world and creatures, including wilderness survival and herbalism.

Observation. Any sort of active perception, including eavesdropping and searching an area for clues.

Performance. Entertaining others. You should specify a particular specialty, but you can be multi-talented.

Privateer. Familiarity with navigation, naval combat, and maintaining a ship and crew.

Resolve. Mental discipline and determination. Can be used to shake off hostile mental effects.

Scouting. A broad talent reflecting the ability to both move stealthily and observe your surroundings. Useful for gathering intelligence, examining an area, and avoiding enemies. This is restricted to **Forceful** Phoenixes.

Shadows. At home in the shadows and skilled at sneaking past enemies and operating normally in low-light situations.

Spirits. Familiarity with animistic magic and the spirits of the dead. Useful for performing exorcisms, séances, or interacting with natural spirits.

Spycraft. A broad talent reflecting any skill associated with espionage. Breaking and entering, disguise, shadowing, stealth, and cryptography could all apply. This is restricted to **Shrouded** Phoenixes.

Stealth. Familiarity with any sort of technique related to avoiding detection.

Streetwise. Knowledge of the great cities of the Empire, along with the criminal underworld and the shady side of things. You have friends in low places.

Tradition. Familiarity with the myths, superstitions, and old customs of the provinces.

Traveler. Familiarity with customs, geography, and survival all over the Empire. You may speak a number of different languages and have friends in many places.

War. High familiarity with the machines, tools, and tactics of warfare.

this broad range of talents is a part of the strength and balance of the Forceful and Shrouded Schools. These three Specialties cannot be taken by other Schools; a Durant Phoenix could take Spirits or Stealth, but not Lore or Spycraft.

Getting More from a Spread

A Phoenix is faced with a dire challenge, and can't make it work with just the cards in their hand. What can they do to ensure success?

Burn Sparks. This is the simplest answer when a player is just a few points shy of what they need to succeed. A Phoenix can burn Sparks to improve the results of an **Attack** or **Skill Spread;** each Spark burned adds one to the value of the spread. This is one of the most important uses for Sparks—it's a limited resource that can be spent to succeed. However, **a Phoenix cannot use Sparks to improve a Defense Spread**!

Use a Trait. Does the player have a Trait in hand that could help in this situation? Players who aren't confident storytellers may not use Traits right away; if that's the case, explain how a Trait can help.

Use an Environmental Element. During combat, a Phoenix can get a boost by using an Environmental Element (page 114). This doesn't directly improve the result, but it allows the player to draw an additional card.

Get Help From a Friend. The Devoted Phoenix specializes in helping others. A Devoted can always discard a card to give another Phoenix a boost. The Devoted also has many Traits which may be discarded to add to a Wingmate's spread. .

Other characters have a more limited ability to lend a hand. If a player has a Trait in hand that seems relevant to an action an ally is taking, they can discard the Trait and explain how they're helping. However, the player needs to explain how *they* are using the Trait to assist. For example, if a Shrouded has the Trait *Sneaky* in hand, they can't just throw it away and somehow make the Durant sneakier. Instead, the player has to explain how the Shrouded doing something sneaky is going to help the Durant accomplish an action. Getting help in this way usually only adds the base value of the Trait to the spread total, though the Wing may spend multiple Traits to assist a Wingmate. If a Trait seems perfectly matched to the situation, you can increase this bonus to three.

Fail. *Phoenix: Dawn Command* is grounded in the idea that characters *can* fail, and they will have to deal with the consequences. The catch is that failing a Skill Spread should never be the absolute end of the story. It may hurt the Phoenix. It may make things more difficult. It may mean that the innocents they were trying to save are lost. But one way or another, the story should always be able to move forward. And remember: In *Phoenix*, death isn't the end!

Storytelling and Fair Play

Phoenix isn't just about playing cards; it's about creating a story. Any time a player makes a spread, encourage them to describe what they're doing. Traits and Environmental Elements encourage this, and you should consider giving a Phoenix a minor bonus for telling a good story; you can find examples of this in section on page 101. An Attack Spread can involve more than just an attack; it can include as many elements as you feel are reasonable without requiring an additional Skill Spread. If a Phoenix wants to swing across the room on a chandelier and strike a distant villain, there's generally no harm in letting them do it.

At the same time, Phoenix *is* a card-driven storytelling game! The cards in a player's deck represent the resources they can muster at any given moment, and the card values are variable for a reason. Maybe a player draws a run of low cards—what does that mean for their Phoenix? Is the character too distracted by an enemy to focus on the task at hand? Or are their Wounds making it tough for the Phoenix to leap into combat?

By intention, players are rarely able to discard cards from their hand. During combat, a player can discard one card before drawing at the end of their turn. Out of combat, they must use the cards that they have. Players can't make spreads solely for the purpose of throwing away cards; if an action is trivial, then it doesn't require a spread at all. This includes performing "useless" actions simply to get cards out of their hand. Otherwise, it can be too easy to reach legendary levels of success. Your job is to make sure players respect their resources and abide by these rules of fair play.

COMBAT

At the beginning of a combat, take the players' School cards and ask them how they are arranged—*Who's in front? Is there someone guarding the Flamekeeper? Where are you hidden?* Place the School cards on the center of the table representing the positions of the characters. Next place the Challenge cards, using numbered counters to represent the Health Levels of each Challenge. Finally, apply any conditions that are in effect before the first player's turn.

The Torch: Turn Order and Environmental Elements

Combat is broken up into **turns** and **cycles**. A turn encompasses the actions of a single Phoenix. A cycle is one turn for each member of the Wing in the scene. So if there are four Phoenixes in the scene, there will be four turns in the cycle.

Decide which Phoenix goes first. This is up to you, but there's usually an obvious answer—for example, if one Phoenix was scouting ahead of the others, it makes sense for that Phoenix to act first. Otherwise, you can simply ask who wants to go

first. *Phoenix* is a cooperative game, and this doesn't have to be left to chance. Once you've chosen the first player, give that person the **Torch**.

The Torch serves two purposes. First, it indicates which Phoenix is currently taking a turn. When a player finishes their turn, they may pass the Torch to any other Phoenix that hasn't yet acted in this cycle. The Torch is passed from player to player until every member of the Wing has acted once, completing the cycle. The last player to act may then pass the Torch to whomever they wish, and players don't have to keep the same order from cycle to cycle. This structure is intentionally fluid to give players a little more control over the flow of the story.

Aside from serving as a turn marker, the Torch also has a list of **Environmental Elements**—interesting objects in the room. This list is provided as part of the setup instructions in a scene. For example, a tavern scene might include a Barstool, a Roaring Fireplace, a Plate-Glass Window, and a Chandelier. The purpose of Environmental Elements is to encourage players to add color to their actions. When a Phoenix makes an Attack Spread, they shouldn't just say, "I hit the enemy." A Phoenix might swing across the room on the chandelier, hit the villain with the barstool, or throw them through the plate-glass window. A player can add as much detail as they want into a description, but they can only **use** one Environmental Element per turn. When an element is used in this way, it should be crossed off on the Torch, and the player who used it immediately draws a card. Other players can continue to refer to an element even once it's been crossed off the Torch, but this special benefit happens only the first time it's used.

While the one reliable bonus from using an Environmental Element is getting to draw a card, as Marshal, you may choose to provide additional benefits to players who come up with especially entertaining or compelling stories. Here are a few examples of benefits you could choose to apply.

- **Brutal Damage.** If it seems like an attack should do extra damage because of the story—someone is shoved onto a rack of swords, for example—you can choose to make the damage of the attack **brutal**. This means that the player rounds damage up instead of down when determining how many Wounds are inflicted. See page 101 for complete information on brutal damage.

- **Conditions.** If someone is pushed into a roaring fireplace, it stands to reason that they could end up *Burning*. Likewise, this is how someone can be *Immobilized*. Usually you should set a minimum number of Wounds as a threshold for success. If a Phoenix wants to push an enemy into the roaring fireplace, you might say "Sounds good. If you inflict at least two Wounds with this attack, they're going to start *Burning*."

- **Sparks.** If someone does something that is exceptionally brilliant or entertaining, you could choose to give them a Spark. Players can never have more Sparks than their maximum based on Rank.

Turn Structure

When a player take a turn, go through the following steps:

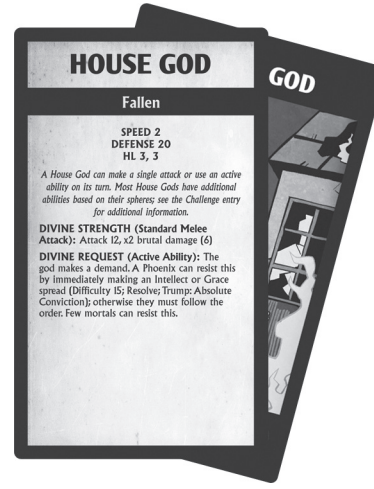
Choose a Combat Style. A Rank 1 Phoenix often only has one Combat Style. However, as the Phoenixes learn more Lessons, they may gain new Combat Styles. A Combat Style determines the suit and limits of Attack and Defense Spreads, and may grant an additional ability. Once a Combat Style is chosen, it cannot be changed until the start of the player's next turn.

Make Spreads. A player can make as many Attack or Skill Spreads as they want, until they run out of Action cards or don't have anything else to do.

Discard and Draw. Once a player is done taking actions, they may choose to discard one Action card, then draw up to their hand limit. **This is the** only **time a player may voluntarily discard a card!** Unless something modifies it, a player's hand limit is **five** cards. If they already have five or more cards in hand, they don't draw. When an Action deck runs out of cards, the player shuffles their discard pile to create a new draw deck.

Pass the Torch. Give the Torch card to another player who hasn't acted yet in this cycle. At this time, a Challenge may interrupt and take its turn.

Challenges



Challenges are the threats the Phoenixes face during a mission. Typically a Challenge is an enemy creature, but Challenges can also be used to represent environmental hazards. A Challenge is a double-sided card. The front lists the Challenge's **Defense**. The back lists complete statistics, including Speed, Attacks, and Health Levels.

When does a Challenge act?

Challenges take their actions between player turns. The scene establishes when a Challenge takes its first action. From that point on, look at the **Speed** of the Challenge. This is how many player turns pass before the Challenge acts again. So a Challenge with a Speed of 2 will act between every other turn. With a four-person Wing, the structure looks like this: Elegy, Ash, *Challenge*, Drake, Shepherd, *Challenge*.

How do I decide what a Challenge will do?

Many Challenges have suggested tactics. Often a creature will attack the last person who hurt it. Ultimately, however, this is up to you. A Challenge is *your* tool to drive the story. The important thing to remember is that you want the story to be challenging and compelling, but this isn't a contest between you and the players. There's no reason for you to go easy on them—and in fact, if you *avoid* killing them, you're actually limiting their opportunity for advancement—but at the same time, you don't win some sort of prize for slaughtering the whole Wing.

How does a Challenge attack?

A Challenge will have one or more Attack options listed in its description. Describe the attack to the intended victim and state its Attack value: *"The creature roars and swings wildly at you with a gory claw—Attack value of 6!"* Here are three examples of Challenge attacks.

Vicious Thrust (Attack): Attack 6, Damage x2 (4)

This is a *standard* attack. Go through the following steps.

1. Subtract the value of the target's Defense Spread from the Attack value.

2. Multiply the remaining value by the damage multiplier, if any. *The number in parentheses is the maximum damage the attack can do.*

3. Divide the result by the Phoenix's Endurance (rounding down) to determine the number of Wounds.

Consider three Phoenixes, each defending against a Vicious Thrust. Elegy has a Defense Spread of 7 and avoids the attack completely. Drake has a Defense Spread of 5. This difference of 1 is doubled, resulting in 2 damage; Drake's Endurance is 2, so he takes a single Wound. Finally, Wolf doesn't defend at all. The difference of 6 is doubled, becoming 12—enough damage to kill Wolf outright! Fortunately for Wolf, the maximum damage is 4, so that's what he takes; with an Endurance of 2, this becomes two Wounds. If an attack is listed as **brutal,** you should round up instead of down to determine the number of Wounds.

Stunning Stroke (All-or-Nothing Attack): *Attack 14, Damage 1 Wound, and the victim is* Stunned.

This is an *all-or-nothing* attack. If the player can make a Defense Spread whose value equals or exceeds the Attack value (in this case, 14) they avoid it completely. If they make a Defense Spread with a value **less** than the Attack value, they suffer the listed effect…here, they would take one Wound and be *Stunned*. It's important to tell a player when an attack is all-or-nothing; if they can't successfully defend, there's no reason to waste cards on a Defense Spread.

Disorienting Cry (Special Attack): *The target is* Stunned.

If no Attack value is given, the attack is automatically successful.

How does a Challenge defend?

Every Challenge has a set Defense value. This is the target number a Phoenix must reach before they even begin to damage the Challenge. So if a Challenge has a Defense of 4, you subtract 4 from the value of the Phoenix's Attack Spread, and the result is the damage done. When you play a Challenge, you should place the enemy's Health Levels face up on top of the Challenge card. Unlike Phoenixes, however, Challenges often have Health Levels with a range of values, so a zombie ogre could have "HL 3, 3, 3, 8." A Phoenix can remove tokens with a **total** value equal to or less than the damage of the attack. So a Phoenix that hits the zombie ogre for 9 damage could either remove the HL-8 token, or all three of the HL-3 tokens. Generally, a Challenge is defeated when it loses its last Health Level token; depending on the Challenge, the player may have the option to decide if it is taken alive or slain.

Note that an attack is considered to be **successful** if it exceeds the target's Defense, even if it doesn't do enough damage to remove any HL tokens. This is particularly important for some Lessons, such as the Devoted's Passing Pain.

What else can a Challenge do?

It depends on the Challenge and the scene. Some Challenges have additional abilities beyond attacks. In "The Harvest," the Harvester automatically drains one Spark from any Phoenix who's *Exposed* when the Harvester takes its turn. Aside from combat, it's entirely up to you to determine the Challenge's actions. Depending on the scene, a Challenge could engage the Phoenixes in conversation, make use of objects in the environment, attempt to flee, or anything else that seems appropriate to the scene.

Group Enemies

Certain Challenges are designated as "Groups." Generally, these represent large numbers of individually inconsequential creatures—a horde of Chanters, an innocent mob. Group enemies are typically defined by having low defense but a very high number of Health Levels. Group enemies are also frequently able to attack multiple Phoenixes with a single attack. Because they represent many people, they can take up a larger space than their card would suggest; for example, you could set a necromancer next to a group of zombies and say the necromancer is *inside* the group and can't be attacked until they are defeated—or at least significantly weakened. Group enemies are vulnerable to attacks that cover a large area, such as explosions, and they may take additional damage from such effects. The Elemental Phoenix is the expert at dealing with groups, but if a player can come up with a good

explanation to use an Environmental Element (page 114) to strike multiple targets, you could give them a bonus to the Attack Spread.

Afflictions

One of the most dangerous ways a Phoenix may be wounded is with an **Affliction**. Representing a wide range of terrible curses from across the Daylit World, Afflictions are special Action cards that become part of a Phoenix's deck, activating whenever they are drawn by the player. Each mission has unique rules for how players may gain an Affliction as well as the consequences for drawing one.

Once gained, an Affliction is immediately shuffled into a player's deck. This means that a player will draw into an Affliction before they are able to shuffle their Deck and discard piles together. When drawn, the player must immediately show the Affliction to the Marshal, then add it to their discard pile and replace it with a new card from their deck. Refer to the mission or Challenge Cards to determine the specific penalties.

Some Bitter Traits count as Affliction cards when drawn. However, the Bitter isn't considered to be affected by an Affliction unless they have one or more *actual* Affliction cards in their deck. For example, a Bitter cannot be hurt by the Chant until they've heard the Chant in the first place! Similarly, if a Bitter gains an Affliction which is later healed, they are no longer considered to be Afflicted since there are no actual Affliction cards in their deck.

Usually, Affliction cards are only removed from a player's deck once they die. However, some missions may have alternate conditions for removal, and some advanced Devoted Lessons can also heal Afflictions.

Tactical Movement

Phoenix: Dawn Command rarely relies on precise positioning. The School cards and Challenge cards show relative positions of Phoenixes and their enemies, but it's not intended to be extremely precise. Phoenixes are generally athletic, and you can usually combine movement with an Attack Spread: "I'm going to charge across the room and hit that Dreadknight!"

However, if you *want* movement to be a factor, you can add it in as an additional obstacle. Consider the following examples:

> • **Running Uphill**. An enemy is making ranged attacks from a high position. In order to get close enough to make a melee attack, a Phoenix needs to discard 15 points worth of Grace cards; this can be done over the course of multiple turns. If a Phoenix has the Acrobatics or Athletics Specialty, they only need to discard 10 points worth of Grace cards.

• **Getting through the Mob.** A necromancer is standing in the middle of a mob of zombies. In order to make a melee attack against the necromancer, Phoenixes must force their way through the mob; this requires a single Skill Spread with a value of 15, and both Grace and Strength can be used. Athletics and Acrobatics are applicable Specialties.

These are just a few examples—the point is that you can always establish environmental obstacles that challenge the Wing.

CONDITIONS

Conditions are effects that temporarily modify the victim's capabilities. A Shrouded Phoenix could slip into the shadows and become *Hidden*, while a Bitter Phoenix might become *Enraged* and strike an opponent with such a powerful blow that they are temporarily *Stunned*. Conditions are represented by round counters which are placed on a Challenge card or School card. You can find a guide that identifies conditions and their effects in the appendix on page 446. Most conditions have different effects depending on whether they are played on a Phoenix or a Challenge, and these are noted in the guide. The duration of a condition depends on the effect that causes it. One effect might cause a character to be *Exposed* until the end of their next turn, while another might cause them to be *Exposed* until the end of the scene.

INJURY AND DEATH

When a Phoenix takes damage, divide it by their **Endurance** and round down. The result is the number of **Wounds** the Phoenix takes; flip over that number of green Health Levels to reveal the Wound side. A single Wound represents a significant amount of physical damage. When a Phoenix has taken two Wounds, they've suffered an injury that would kill a normal human; they're simply able to ignore it and keep going because of the power of their Flame. In describing the results of attacks, however, feel free to call out the severity of the injury. A Phoenix can keep on fighting, even with broken bones, pierced lungs, and so on…but mortals may be a little disturbed by the injured Phoenix or even mistake them for undead!

Death and Rebirth

Phoenixes can die either by running out of Sparks or Health Levels. In either case, the body immediately dissolves into ash, along with Talon and Uniform. A Phoenix with no Sparks is immediately pulled into the the Crucible at the moment of death and is out of play until rebirth. A Phoenix is always reborn at dawn and can choose to be reborn either in the Grand Aerie at Pyre or at any active Aerie close to a living Wingmate. Usually this happens on the dawn immediately following death, but

at your discretion, it can take longer; some Phoenixes linger in the Crucible for decades before being reborn. During this time, the Phoenix's spirit is undergoing trials in the Crucible; this will result in the new Lessons and Actions the Phoenix will have upon rebirth.

Attendant Spirits

If a Phoenix runs out of Health Levels but still has Sparks, the body dissolves but the spirit remains. The Phoenix can immediately bond with another living member of the Wing and accompany them as an **attendant spirit**. When this occurs, the dead Phoenix should immediately choose one basic Trait card from their deck, and then set all remaining Actions and Lessons aside. As an attendant spirit, a Phoenix can do the following things:

- An attendant spirit can telepathically communicate with the Phoenix serving as their host. The spirit can speak to others using the host's voice—but this is only possible when the host allows it.

- An attendant spirit can burn Sparks to boost any spread their host makes, **including Defense Spreads**! The bonus is +1 for each Spark burned, representing the spirit's advice and guidance.

- The attendant spirit has only a single Trait. If the Trait on that card applies to a spread their host makes, the bonus the spirit grants by burning Sparks is doubled—the host gains a +2 bonus for every Spark burned.

A Phoenix may remain as an attendant spirit until they eventually run out of Sparks or until the next dawn, whichever comes first. At that point, the Phoenix is drawn down into the Crucible and goes through the process of rebirth.

In terms of the mission, this means that if a Phoenix dies from physical injuries early in a mission, odds are good they will still have Sparks and can continue to participate as an attendant spirit. On the other hand, if the Phoenix dies from using all of their Sparks, at least they've had a chance to do some impressive things before dying!

Healing

Phoenixes can endure a remarkable amount of damage. A single Wound would cripple most mortals. As such, casual first aid can't help a Phoenix; only supernatural abilities such as the power of a Devoted can remove Wounds. The only time a Phoenix heals damage is at dawn—every day at dawn, Phoenixes are reinvigorated and regain **one Health Level** and **a number of Sparks equal to twice their Rank**.

CHARACTER ADVANCEMENT: REBIRTH

Death makes a Phoenix stronger. When a Phoenix dies, they return to the Crucible and undergo further trials and training. In addition, their bond to the Imperial Flame—the source of a Phoenix's mystical power—grows stronger. This provides a number of benefits. When a Phoenix is reborn, the following things occur.

- A Phoenix's Rank increases by one. This can improve the effects of many Lessons and Actions.

- A Phoenix's maximum Spark pool increases by two or more, and it is fully replenished.

- The Phoenix immediately gains one Lesson from the School related to their death. Each card has a minimum Rank value; a Phoenix may choose any cards of their new Rank value or less. They can flip double-sided lessons.

- The Action deck of a Phoenix improves. At each even Rank, a Phoenix gains a value 5 Action card from one of the two suits associated with their School. **A Phoenix may not have more than two cards of the same suit and value in their deck**, aside from Traits. At each odd Rank, a Phoenix gains a Trait from the School related to their death. Each School Trait has a minimum Rank. A Phoenix may choose any Trait of their new Rank value or below.

- In addition, at each odd Rank, a Phoenix may *remove* any one card from their deck, eliminating less useful low-valued cards.

- A Phoenix is always reborn with full Health Levels. Additionally, at each odd Rank, a Phoenix gains a new Health Level.

- At Rank 2, each Phoenix gains a **Talon** card. See page 123 for additional information about Talons.

Rank	Sparks	HL	Lessons	School Traits	Improved Actions	Talon Power
1	10	5	1	1	*None*	
2	12	5	2	1	Add: 5	First
3	14	6	3	2	Remove: Any one card	
4	16	6	4	2	Add: 5	
5	18	7	5	3	Remove: Any one card	
6	20	7	6	3	Add: 5	
7	24	8	7	4	Remove: Any one card	

Story First

We've presented the mechanics of rebirth. However, it's also important to discuss the *story* of the rebirth. First and foremost, the question to present to a character after death is, *"Why did you die?"* What sort of death was it, and as a result, what School should the character take their Lesson and Trait from? Remember:

- Bitter dies in failure.
- Devoted dies for others.
- Durant isn't strong or tough enough.
- Elemental dies for duty.
- Forceful isn't fast enough or can't overcome an obstacle.
- Shrouded dies because of secrets: either in pursuit of knowledge or because a secret was revealed.

There is no right answer. It's a question of how the *character* sees their death and what lesson *they* take from it. For example, if you're crushed by a giant, do you see this as a failure to defeat the giant and become Bitter about it? Or do you say, "If I'd just been a little tougher, I could have beaten him," and become Durant? Almost any death *can* be seen as a failure and thus be Bitter, but is that how your character sees it?

In general, this is up to the player. However, one of the goals of the game is to *make your death matter.* Say a Phoenix decides they really want a pot of gold on the other side of a river of lava and falls in trying to jump across. He could certainly call this a Bitter failure or a Forceful failure to overcome an obstacle. But there's really nothing Shrouded, Elemental, or Devoted about this death, unless they truly were going to use the gold to help starving villagers. If the player wants Devoted Lessons, the Phoenix needs to die a Devoted death.

Once a player has answered the question "Why did you die?" the next question is, *"Why did you come back?"* A Phoenix never *has* to return. The trials of the Crucible are brutally difficult, and a Phoenix can always surrender and fall into darkness or simply linger in the Crucible without moving forward. Many Phoenixes never make it through all seven rebirths. What is it that gives the character the will and determination necessary to fight their way through the Crucible again? What is so important to the Phoenix that gives them the desire to keep fighting?

Mentors

The Crucible is a personal experience. It's tied to the Phoenix's own Flame, and they will never see friends or Wingmates there. However, a Phoenix is not alone. They

have one person to guide them and offer advice—a Mentor. This is the spirit of a Phoenix of their School who was bound to the Flame long before. A Mentor has lived through all of their lives and chosen to linger in the Crucible afterwards. This is a special character shared by you and the player, one that will only be encountered between lives. While you don't *need* to develop Mentors—and Bitters often don't have them—it's another chance to deepen the story of the character. Who is this Mentor? What is a character's relationship with their Mentor? Is the Mentor a nurturing and inspiring figure or a brutal drill sergeant? Does the Mentor have any unfinished business they hope the Phoenix will resolve?

A Mentor is always of the same School as the Phoenix's *last death*. If a Durant Phoenix has an Elemental death, they wake up in a very different part of their Crucible, learning different lessons from an Elemental Mentor. Thus, every time a Phoenix learns a Lesson from a new School, it's an opportunity to develop a new Mentor.

Double-Sided Lessons And Swapping Traits

All Lessons of Rank 5 and above are double-sided. When a Phoenix dies and is reborn, they may choose to flip any of their double-sided Lessons; they are drawing on a different aspect of their power. Likewise, with the Marshal's permission a Phoenix can replace one Trait in their deck during the process of rebirth; the new Trait must be the same suit as the old Trait, and if it is tied to a School it must be the same Rank (or below) and same School as the Trait being replaced. Replacing a Trait represents a fundamental change in the character, and the player needs to explain what has caused the shift. Why is the Bitter no longer Vengeful? How did the Elemental develop the skills of a Commander?

Phoenix Tools: Talons and Uniforms

Phoenixes generally don't have a strong reliance on equipment. The power of the Phoenix comes from their supernatural power. Any Strength-based Phoenix can literally tear an enemy apart with their bare hands. Beyond this, when a Phoenix dies, any mundane objects are left behind at the spot where they died. So *acquiring things* isn't a primary motivation for Phoenixes: At the end of the day, you can't take them with you.

However, Phoenixes have two things that *do* remain with them every time they die and are reborn, and it is these two things that identify them as Phoenixes. Every Phoenix has a Talon and a Uniform.

A **Talon** is a weapon that the Phoenix obtains in the Crucible after their first death. Each Talon is a unique heirloom tied to the particular Flame of the Phoenix. Most Talons are traditional weapons—swords, axes, spears. However, a Talon can be

exotic; it could be a flaming sword, an animated chain, or an axe formed of shadows. It could also be something not traditionally considered to be a weapon. A Shrouded could have a book that foretells the deaths of their enemies, and an Elemental could have a hovering, flaming orb. A Talon could also be incorporated into the Phoenix's Lessons or Actions; for example, the Shrouded could say that whenever they use Psychometry, meaningful secrets about the target scribe themselves onto the pages in the Talon-Book. Diverse as they are, all Talons share two traits. Every Talon is at least partially made of virtually indestructible—and visually distinctive—Pyrean steel. This could be the binding of the book, the cage of the flame-orb, or simply the metal of a common weapon. In addition, **a Phoenix may burn 1 Spark to make a ranged attack with a Talon**. Depending on the shape of the Talon, this could be as simple as making a mundane attack—throwing a spear, for example. However, it can also manifest as a blast of magical force or as some other supernatural effect.

The key is that at its basic level, a Talon *doesn't grant any new abilities.* It is cosmetic, a reliable tool for the Phoenix to *explain* attacks or powers…but it doesn't actually improve them on its own. This changes over time, as the Talon evolves with its wielder. **At Rank 2**, a Phoenix chooses a Talon card. This is a power unique to the Talon and not tied to a School.

The other tool of the Phoenix is the **Uniform**, which appears each time they are reborn. If it's damaged, it's restored at dawn. A Uniform could be a suit of armor, fancy clothing, a set of rags, or anything in between. A Uniform could include a few simple pieces of equipment—for example, a Shrouded might always have a set of lockpicks in a belt pouch. Regardless of form, all Uniforms have two badges: one bearing the symbol of Dawn Command, and one that indicates the symbol of the School associated with the character's first death.

Uniforms and Talons are reduced to ash when a Phoenix dies and return when they are reborn. A Uniform cannot be removed unless a Phoenix allows it. If a Uniform or Talon are taken from a Phoenix, they return at dawn. A Phoenix can pick up other weapons or acquire a new suit of armor, but these won't have any significant effects on their abilities and are mostly useful for adding a moment of drama to an action; a Bitter might grab a spear from a weapon rack and fling it at a distant foe, or temporarily pick up an old shield found on a battlefield.

The Shrouded Marshal in the Grand Aerie has records of all of the Talons ever encountered. Since each Talon is uniquely bonded to a particular Flame in the Crucible, referencing these records is one way to find the list of other Phoenixes who have held it in the past. Many Talons have blazed their way through history, and some enemies may remember these ancient weapons.

Protecting Mortals: The Buddy System

Phoenixes possess skills and reflexes far beyond what most mortals are capable of. Even veteran soldiers would quickly fall when facing terrors Phoenixes take for granted. If Phoenixes don't work to defend mortal companions, they'll quickly die. When Phoenixes team up with mortals, each mortal is assigned a Phoenix companion…and it is up to that Phoenix to prevent their companion from being killed.

A mortal companion is represented by one or more Health Levels that are set to the left of the normal Health Levels of a Phoenix. When a Phoenix is injured, half the Wounds taken must be applied to mortal companions. If a Phoenix suffers a single Wound, they may choose whether to take it themselves or apply it to the mortal; if they take two Wounds, one of these *must* be applied to the mortal.

In a noncombat situation, Phoenixes can freely trade responsibility for their mortal charges. During combat, it's more difficult. During their turn, a Phoenix may choose to exchange responsibility for a mortal with another Phoenix—either passing a mortal to a Phoenix who's qualified to take one, or exchanging mortals with a Phoenix who's already guarding one. In this case, both Phoenixes involved must discard two cards.

A few additional rules apply to dealing with mortals.

- Mortals must be divided evenly among the Wing. If a Phoenix is already guarding a mortal, they can't take a second mortal companion unless everyone else in the Wing has one.

- The Durant Core Talent reduces damage before it's divided between Phoenix and mortal. So if a Durant takes two Wounds from an attack and negates one using their core Talent, they can take the remaining Wound themselves to protect the mortal.

- *Seasoned Veteran, Death Wish,* and other Traits that allow a Phoenix to draw an attack from an ally can be used to protect a companion. A Phoenix can discard either of these Traits on their turn to shift their mortal Health Levels to the right of their normal Health Levels. For the remainder of the scene, the mortal can't be hurt by an attack until the Phoenix is dead.

The Buddy System is a unique opportunity for players to see precisely how much stronger they are than everyday mortals. The supernatural horrors of the Dread are too powerful for anyone but a Phoenix to handle. When travelling with a Phoenix during combat, mortals will probably be killed. You should use these moments to reinforce the themes of *Phoenix: Dawn Command*—that each mission is part of the brutal war between the Empire and the mysterious Dread.

CHAPTER FOUR: TOOLS FOR THE MARSHAL

Players, Stop Now!

The preceding chapters have included material for both players and the Marshal, providing an overall introduction to the setting and the rules. The rest of the book is intended purely for the Marshal. It includes details on challenges you'll face and the mysteries you'll work to uncover. Reading any further will impact your enjoyment of the game.

Marshals: What Lies Ahead?

This chapter contains an assortment of tools and advice to help you as you run *Phoenix: Dawn Command*. It begins with a walkthrough of running your first session of *Phoenix* and guiding your players through character creation. Following that, it includes the following sections.

- **Translating Actions Into Spreads.** *Phoenix* encourages creativity. The previous chapter explained how spreads work… but what do you do when an action doesn't quite fit the mold?

- **The Rules of Magic**. Equal parts rules and backstory, this looks at the different forms of magic that appear in the world of *Phoenix* and explains how you can work them into play.

- **Interludes.** What happens between missions? This section deals with about expanding the story beyond the action core action. This includes the developing the story of a character's death and rebirth, and developing a rival wing to deepen the story of Dawn Command.

- **Creating Missions.** This book includes seven missions that are ready to use. But you're not limited to these missions. This section discusses the things you should bear in mind as you develop your own missions.

- **Creating Challenges.** A mission won't be very difficult without Challenges. This section discusses the steps involved in creating a Challenge.

- **Things to Remember.** A few final things to bear in mind as you dive into *Phoenix: Dawn Command.*

The fate of Dawn Command is in your hands. Guide your players well!

Online Resources: The Handbook For The Recently Reborn

The following section walks you through the process of creating characters with your players. The Downloads section of **twogetherstudios.com** provides two important free tools for this first session. The first of these is the ***Handbook For The Recently Reborn***. This is a short guide that introduces a player to the basic rules of *Phoenix* and provides an overview of the Schools and the world; it also includes the questions we suggest players answer about their characters. Providing each player with a copy of the *Handbook* will limit the material you need to explain. If you're concerned that character creation may be too much to handle in your first session, you can also download **a Wing of pregenerated characters**. In the long run, more players will have more fun with characters they've created, but using pregenerated characters in the first session is a way to jump into the game with minimal effort.

YOUR FIRST SESSION: CHARACTER CREATION

So you've got a group of friends over, and you're ready to create characters and play the first mission. "The Harvest" (page 236) is a short mission that's designed to introduce the basic concepts of the game. Now you need to draw the players into the story and create characters. Where do you begin?

SETTING THE TONE

The first step is to introduce people to the world and basic situation. Read or paraphrase the following:

> *You were born in the Dalean Empire, a prosperous nation whose dominion stretches across the known world. While there is magic in this world, it is powerful and dangerous, and it has largely been suppressed by the Empire; it's not part of everyday life. The Empire itself has been prosperous and peaceful for centuries…at least, it was until three years ago. That was when the Dread began: a wave of terror that has shaken the very foundations of the Empire. We've faced all manner of supernatural horrors. Dead soldiers have risen from their graves to prey upon the living. Skinchangers and stranger beasts lurk in the wilds. We've lost entire cities to a chant that turns all who hear it into crazed killers. Any nightmare you can imagine—there's a good chance you can find it somewhere in the world today. And worst of all: We don't know* why *this is happening. We don't know if these attacks are somehow connected or if our world is simply falling apart. All we know is that we're at war and we are losing. Mortal soldiers can't defeat the forces of the Dread, and we have lost almost a third of the Empire to these horrors. We have only one hope—and that's you. You are Phoenixes. In your first life, you could have been anyone: a soldier, a farmer, a child. But you died a remarkable death and were given a chance to return stronger than before. You are imbued with supernatural strength and power, and if you die, you can return again up to a total of seven times. There are a hundred Phoenixes in the world today, and all of you are part of an organization called Dawn Command. You are charged with fighting the forces of the Dread—doing your best to protect the innocent and find out anything you can about why this is happening and how we can turn the tide. Your missions will be dangerous. You may not survive, and you may not always succeed. Don't be afraid to die—just make certain each death has meaning.*

Once you've done that, take a moment to answer questions. The key points to emphasize are that the world is at war and losing, the situation is dire, and as newly returned Phoenixes, the players are our best hope to turn the tide.

CHARACTER CREATION

Now that the players have an idea of the world, it's time for them to create their Phoenixes. This section assumes that your players know absolutely nothing about the world. If the players have already read Chapter Two or the *Handbook For The Recently Reborn* and are well-grounded in the world, you can skip most of this exposition.

Selecting a School

Read or paraphrase the following:

> *As a Phoenix, you grow stronger each time you die. These powers are shaped by your death; the ultimate questions are always why you died and what lessons you learned from your previous life. Phoenixes are divided into Schools, and each School has a different role and set of powers in the game. Every time you die, we'll talk about what sort of death it was; you may draw from multiple Schools over the course of the game, but your first death is the most important. It provides your core abilities, which define your character throughout each life. Listen to the following descriptions, and think about which School interests you.*
>
> ***Durant** Phoenixes die because they aren't tough enough…and the lesson they learn is to be stronger. The key to the Durant is survival; they are the hardest Phoenixes to kill, and they excel at defending others. Durants are also trained in military strategy and leadership. Durant Phoenixes are straightforward warriors, but focused on defense as opposed to raw offense.*
>
> *The **Devoted** die for others, and they learn to strengthen and defend their allies. Devoted Phoenixes can use their cards to enhance the actions of others, and can take damage meant for allies—and hopefully give it to an enemy. While the Devoted excel at enhancing and defending their allies, a Devoted also has the potential to draw on the strength of the entire Wing for dramatic actions. In addition, their ability to transfer Wounds to enemies can make them surprisingly effective in battle. Devoted are diplomats and healers, and knowledgeable in the ways of spirits.*
>
> *The **Forceful** die because either they aren't fast enough or can't overcome an obstacle. Reborn with ever–increasing speed, the Forceful Phoenix is best known for overwhelming barrages of attacks. Forcefuls are exceptional scouts, and often blaze the trail that others will follow.*
>
> *The **Elemental** Phoenixes die for duty, as they burn their very life force to scour away the enemies of the Empire. Bound tightly to the Imperial Flame, the Elemental use fire, frost, and lightning to scatter their foes before them. While many are scholars and lorekeepers, each Elemental is a powerful weapon pointed directly toward the Dread.*
>
> *The **Shrouded** die due to secrets—either in pursuit of secret knowledge or because a secret was revealed. Shrouded Phoenixes excel at hiding themselves and revealing hidden things. They are scholars, spies, and assassins, skilled at striking from the shadows and trained in spycraft and lore.*
>
> *Finally, **Bitter** Phoenixes die in failure. They're angry, and they take that out on their enemies. Bitters get stronger as they are hurt, and they are powerful and reckless warriors with a talent for berserk*

rage. Where Durants are often the last to fall, the Bitter is frequently the first to die…but they'll do a lot of damage on the way.

The six Schools create a important balance on a mission, allowing Phoenixes to complete a variety of tasks due to their suits and specializations. All six Schools are tied to two of the three suits—Strength, Grace, and Intellect. While every Phoenix has access to the Grace Suit, only half can use Strength cards, while the other half uses Intellect. This breaks down as follows.

- **BITTER:** Strength and Grace
- **DEVOTED:** Intellect and Grace
- **DURANT:** Strength and Grace
- **ELEMENTAL:** Intellect and Grace
- **FORCEFUL:** Strength and Grace
- **SHROUDED:** Intellect and Grace

Phoenix: Dawn Command is intended to work with a balanced Wing. With four players, **only two of the Strength Schools—Bitter, Durant, and Forceful—may be used in a Wing. Similarly, a Wing may have only two Intellect Schools—Devoted, Elemental, and Shrouded.** This rule is to reduce the amount of overlap between characters and ensure players have the best chance to surmount the challenges presented in the game. The boxed set of *Phoenix: Dawn Command* only comes with enough basic action cards for two Strength characters and two Intellect characters.

Example: *Four friends sit down to choose the Schools they wish to play in* **Phoenix: Dawn Command.** *Once Bitter and Durant are picked, Forceful is no longer an option—only two of the three Strength Schools may be played at one time. The other two friends instead turn to the Intellect Schools. The final, balanced Wing consists of Bitter, Durant, Devoted, and Elemental.*

Once the players have each chosen a School, pass out their School cards and their three core Lessons. Each School also has two Rank 1 Lessons and two Rank 1 Traits. **Each player chooses one Lesson and one Trait from these options.** Whenever a Phoenix is reborn in the Crucible, they gain access to even more powerful Traits and Lessons. More information about character advancement can be found on page 121. Finally, each player receives twelve Action cards: two copies each of the cards valued 2, 3, and 4 in the two suits tied to their School—so Bitter gets six Strength cards and six Grace cards.

Selecting Traits

Every Phoenix begins play with four Traits that further define the unique qualities of their character. One Phoenix may have *Killer Instincts* and *Astonishing Luck*, while another might be a *Cursed Warlock*.

Each player may choose two basic Traits from each of the Action suits associated with their School. These four Traits are added to the character's Action deck. Traits are described in greater detail on page 107.

Example: *As a Bitter Phoenix, Wolf has access to both the Strength and Grace suits. While selecting Traits, Wolf may choose two Strength Traits and two Grace Traits. After looking through the choices, Wolf eyes* **Superhuman Strength** *and* **Death Wish**, *two descriptions that definitely fit the Bitter theme. Next, Wolf considers the Grace Traits. Both* **Vengeful** *and* **Hunter** *easily fit into Wolf's backstory from before he was a Phoenix, so these are also perfect choices. Wolf takes all four of these cards and shuffles them into his Action deck.*

Since each Trait in *Phoenix: Dawn Command* is unique, players must come to an equitable agreement about which Phoenix will gain which Trait. One way to do this is to lay all the Traits out and have each player take a turn selecting until every player has four cards. This is a good approach if players don't have clear ideas about their characters. If people already have strong character concepts, it's up to the group to discuss their ideas and allocate Traits fairly.

Developing The Character

Once each player has their School, Lessons, and Traits, they have the core building blocks of a character. But who *is* this person? How did they die? Were they a hero in their first life, or a normal person who faced impossible odds? The crucible is a brutal trial: what gave them the strength to get through it and earn their rebirth?

The *Handbook For The Recently Reborn* includes a list of questions for players to answer; this is a free download at *twogetherstudios.com.* If you don't have access to this, you can ask the players the following questions directly.

- *Who were you in your first life? How and why did you die, and how does your School reflect this?*
- *To become a Phoenix, you must overcome significant spiritual trials. You can't fight your way back from death unless you have something to live for, and everyone knows the life of a Phoenix is one of service to the Empire and constant strife. Why did you come back?*
- *What is the person, place, or thing that is most important to you?*
- *What is your greatest fear?*

- *Which member of the Wing do you feel the strongest connection to? Why?*

- *Your Uniform is the basic clothing, armor, and equipment that returns with you every time you are reborn. What's the most distinctive element of your Uniform?*

- *Your Talon is a unique weapon or tool that you earned in the Crucible. It returns with you when you're reborn and grows in power along with you. A Talon can be any sort of weapon or object, though it always incorporates the Dawn Command symbol in some way. What is your Talon?*

- *When you're reborn, your appearance is a reflection of your self-image. Some Phoenixes look exactly as they did in their first life. Some are idealized versions of their original bodies. Any aspect can change— age, gender, race, height. What is the vision of yourself that you show the world?*

Between these questions and the Traits, this helps to give each player a clear sense of who their character is and how they will react to the situations that lie ahead. It also provides you with details you can use to personalize the missions that lie ahead. If a Phoenix was a farmer from Skavia, they may know people at the Blackstone Aerie in "The Harvest". Once you know their greatest fear, you can look for places to work it into a story. And once you know what they care about, you have something you can threaten to raise the stakes of a scenario. If the players don't know much about the world, this is a good time to work with them and help them develop connections to it. If a player wants to be a barbarian warrior, does this fit more with a Skavi raider from the Dark Ages or a hunter from a Grimwald Tree? If they want to be from a noble family, is their idea a better match for one of the Talu Houses of Ilona or the nobles of Skavia? If they are Talu, which house makes the most sense?

This is also a good time to highlight the fact that the Phoenixes wouldn't have made it through the Crucible if they weren't willing to work with Dawn Command and fight the Dread. Each Phoenix may have their own reasons for joining the fight, but Dawn Command never has to force them to help; the Crucible handles that by weeding out anyone driven solely by greed or self-interest. Essentially, this is a war movie and any character who wouldn't have signed up simply won't be in this movie. Each player can come up with their own motivation, but the Crucible wouldn't have chosen them unless they *were* motivated to fight the Dread and protect the innocent.

Introducing the Wing

Before getting started, give players the opportunity to introduce their new characters. Read or paraphrase the following:

Phoenixes are divided into units known as Wings. A Wing can have one Phoenix from each School. The process of being bound into a Wing isn't something decided by mortals: You have a mystical connection to one another, and you may have special abilities you can only use on other members of your Wing. You may not have known each other in your first lives, but you're bound together now and will serve together for all your lives to come. After you were reborn, you spent your first few days getting to know

one another and learning to work together. So now each of you should take a moment to introduce yourself to the rest of the Wing. Who are you? What do you look like? What do you want to share about your past?

The final step in character creation is for players to **name their Wing.** There are eighteen active Wings in Dawn Command, and the Marshals need a name to identify this particular Wing. This could be as simple as "Wing 17," but it could be more fanciful: *Dawn's Light, the Fabulous Four, the A-Wing.* This is a chance for people to establish a group identity and have a little fun.

FINAL PREPARATIONS

Lastly, make sure each player has all the components they need to play:

- Based on their School, each Phoenix gains a School Card, core Lesson, core Combat Style, and core Skill Specialties card. Every player should also have their copy of the *Handbook for the Recently Reborn*.

- Each player chooses one School Lesson, one School Trait, and two basic Traits from each of their Action suits.

- Every player also gains a number of Action cards to finalize their deck. From each of the two suits which define their School, they gain the following Action cards: two 2s, two 3s, and two 4s.

- Players shuffle together their Action cards and Traits to create their starting deck. At Rank 1, each player should have a total of seventeen cards in their deck.

- A Rank 1 Phoenix begins play with ten Sparks and five Health Levels, which should be set out in front of them with the **Health** (green) side face up.

- Players set their four Lesson cards out on the table in front of them. They should draw an initial hand of **five** Action cards from their deck and set the rest to the side as a draw pile.

- All leftover Traits, Lessons, and Action cards should be returned to the box. These won't usually be needed again until character advancement.

- Make sure the Marshal has easy access to any Challenges and conditions that may come up during the first mission.

- You're ready to begin!

SAMPLE PLAY AREA

HEALTH LEVELS

SCHOOL CARD AND LESSONS

SPARKS

DRAW PILE

HAND

DISCARD PILE

Example: *Drake is a Rank 1 Devoted. Drake automatically gains the Devoted School card, Shared Strength core Lesson, Spiritual Guidance Skill Specialty card, and the Passing Pain Combat Style, placing them face up in the play area. Drake then picks one of the two Rank 1 Devoted Lessons, placing* ***Devoted Bond*** *next to the other Lessons.*

Next, Drake chooses one of two Rank 1 Devoted Traits. After taking **Heart Of The Wing,** *Drake finds two character-defining Grace Traits:* **Charming** *and* **Inspiring**. *Drake also chooses* **Resourceful** *and* **Shaman** *as Intellect Traits. These five cards form the core of Drake's deck.*

Finally, Drake takes six Grace Action cards and six Intellect Action cards—two 2s, two 3s, and two 4s of each—and shuffles them together with the five Traits already chosen to create a starting deck. Drake then draws five cards and is ready to play **Phoenix: Dawn Command!**

TRANSLATING SPREADS INTO ACTIONS

Phoenix is a very flexible system. Players describe what they want to do, and you set the difficulty and tell them which suits they need to do it. At its best, this flexibility encourages creativity. However, it can also cause confusion. Just how far can a player go? At what point is something an Attack Spread or a Skill Spread?

The simplest basic principle is that **if a Phoenix is trying to harm an enemy, it's an Attack Spread. Otherwise, it's a Skill Spread.** Another critical point concerns **Environmental Elements** (page 114)—the list of objects included on the Torch in a combat scene. These are called out as things the players should be able to use in significant ways when they describe their actions. So if there's a fight in a tavern and the Torch includes "Roaring Fireplace" as an element, it is a message to the players that they can try to throw someone into the fireplace or grab a burning log. If the Torch doesn't include any mention of a fire, it doesn't mean that there's no hearth in the tavern; it means that for whatever reason it's not going to play a dramatic role in this scene. Perhaps the flames are almost burnt out. Perhaps it's covered with an iron grate. The core point is that if an Environmental Element is mentioned on the Torch, the players are encouraged to think of clever ways to interact with it, and you should help with this.

With these two principles in mind, let's take a look at a few possible actions and how you can break them down.

1. Durant Phoenix: *"I'll hit the Chanter with my Talon."*

This would be a standard Attack Spread. But it's not very interesting, and you might try to draw the player out and see if you can get a more colorful description. Does the Phoenix move while making the attack? Could they make use of an Environmental Element? You never want to *force* the player to tell a story, but using an element has a concrete benefit (drawing a card) and might provide additional rewards.

2. Forceful Phoenix: *"I'll run across the room and push the weapon rack down on top of the Chanter, impaling it with dozens of swords and spears."*

Provided there's nothing especially difficult about moving across the room—the floor isn't made of lava, for example—this is a reasonable description of a standard Attack Spread. If "Weapon Rack" is an Environmental Element in the room, the player can immediately draw a card. In this case, you might also **make the damage brutal;** this is a simple reward when a player uses an Environmental Element in a way that feels like it should inflict additional damage.

3. Elemental Phoenix: *"I'll stare at the Chanter and make its brain explode."*

For most Phoenixes, this is simply impossible. However, if an Elemental Phoenix wants to create flame inside the Chanter's skull, this would be resolved as a standard attack. If the attack does enough damage to kill the target, then sure, its brain exploded; otherwise, its head is wreathed in flames, but it survives.

4. Devoted Phoenix: *"I invoke the true name of the Fallen Prince and bind it to this place."*

There are quite a few ways you could deal with this.

- If the player has no special experience or expertise relating to the Fallen, you can dismiss it. "*You don't know its true name, and you don't know the proper protocol for a formal binding…would you like to try something else?*"

- If the player has an excellent justification for it—they've dealt with the Fallen before, they have an appropriate Skill Specialty or Trait, and it makes a good story—then you could allow it as a Skill Spread. The Rules of Magic section (page 137) presents an overview of different types of magic and ways to interact with spirits. As this is a Fallen, it would probably be an **Extended Intellect Spread** (*The Arcane, Lore*). You could set the difficulty of this Skill Spread arbitrarily, or you could base it on the number of Health Levels the Fallen Prince has remaining… so doing it at the start of a battle would be nearly impossible, but the longer the battle goes, the easier it would be. You could tell them that they'll get a bonus if they can find a particular object (say, a sprig of holly) or by actually composing part of the binding and reciting it at the table.

- You could have the Phoenix make a single **Intellect Spread** (*The Arcane, Lore*) and resolve it as an Attack Spread— allowing them to use their knowledge to make a devastating attack. Typically you'd only want to allow a player to attempt this once in a combat, and you could say that if the Attack doesn't completely eliminate the target it does no damage at all.

It's inevitable that players are going to come up with ideas you haven't considered or concepts that are difficult to translate into a spread. The key to Marshalling in *Phoenix: Dawn Command* is to encourage creativity. You want your players to be engaged with the story. It's not just about numbers and cards; it's about finding as many ways as possible to draw your players into a scene. When a player comes up with an interesting idea, **try not to say "No."** You can redirect them… if the Durant wants to make an enemy's brain explode, you can say "That's not something you have the power to do, but you could get the same result by hitting them with that bench." If they want to summon a House God, you can always say it's not possible. But you can also set it up as a challenge: they can do it, but they have to find the proper location; they need to find a child of the Deo bloodline (see page 205); they need to negotiate with the House God; and they'll have to deal with the unexpected consequences. Rather than shutting down ideas, try to work with the players and develop the story together.

THE RULES OF MAGIC

Magic was a powerful and dangerous force during the Dark Ages. The Talu used magic to enforce their tyranny, and the actions of careless warlocks and shamans resulted in plagues, deaths, and lingering curses. The Imperial Philosophies forbid the use of magic, and the Dawn Legion enforced this edict with steel and fire. In addition to persecuting mages, the Devoted Legion banished spirits and strengthened the barriers between Dusk and the Daylit World. This strict enforcement lasted throughout the Phoenix Imperium. By the time of the Civil War, the traditions had been lost, and those who dabbled rarely had the power to breach the barriers between realms. The shamans in the Grimwald honor the spirits, but don't channel their power. Some Skavi study the arts of the Duskcraft, but it's been centuries since a Fallen answered a call. Now the Dread has weakened the walls between Dusk and Daylight. Power is out there waiting to be used; but what can be done with it?

Phoenix: Dawn Command takes an unstructured approach to magic. If a Devoted Phoenix has the *Shaman* Trait, it doesn't provide a specific set of spells. Instead, they may manifest their Lessons through the lens of that technique. An Elemental with the *Shaman* Trait might describe *Fire Shaping* as drawing on primal spirits of fire, while an Elemental *Warlock* could invoke the name of a Fallen Prince of Flames. Beyond the concrete abilities of Lessons, magic is largely accomplished using **Skill Spreads**. A Devoted can use their *Spirits* Specialty to exorcise a ghost or calm a feral beast. There are two basic models for magical spreads.

- If the ritual is swift and carries a chance of failure, resolve it as a standard Skill Spread. If the Phoenix matches or exceeds the Difficulty number, the spell succeeds; otherwise it fails.

- If the only real difficulty is time—for example, a binding ritual that will definitely work if the Fallen doesn't kill you before it's completed—then use an Extended Skill Spread (see page 106). A Phoenix can only contribute to the spread once on each turn; thus the Difficulty is a measure of the time it will take. A typical Phoenix can hit a target of between 15-30 in a spread each turn.

Magic is never free, and any magical effect requires the caster to burn Sparks. In the case of an Extended Skill Spread, a Phoenix must burn Sparks *every time they contribute to the Spread*. The following sections look at each path of magic. Use these as guidelines, but ultimately you decide what's possible, what Specialties and Traits apply, how difficult it is and what it will cost. Magic is supposed to be dangerous and unpredictable: feel free to add unexpected risks or costs.

Ash Sorcery

Ash Sorcery uses ritual and incantation to alter reality. This requires the use of *Phoenix ashes* (see the sidebar). All Devoted, Elemental, and Shrouded Phoenixes understand the basic principles of Ash Sorcery, as does any Phoenix with a Specialty in *The Arcane*. Ash Sorcery requires a supply of Phoenix ashes and an **Intellect**

Magic and the Lore Specialty

The Arcane Skill Specialty applies to Duskcraft, House Gods, and other spirits of the Dusk. The *Spirits* Specialty applies to spirits of nature and the dead. A Phoenix with the *Lore* Specialty is a mystical jack-of-all-trades; they've studied every tradition of magic, but they don't have extensive experience. You can choose to allow a Phoenix to use the *Lore* Specialty for any mystical spread, but you can also rule that a particular task is too specialized for Lore to apply. The goal is to allow a Shrouded Phoenix to fill any gaps in knowledge—compensating for the lack of a Devoted or Elemental—while still allowing a Phoenix with the specific Specialty to feel like the true expert.

Spread (The Arcane, Lore). Ash sorcery can be used to do the following things.

- **Produce effects that mimic a Phoenix's Core Lessons.** Mortals and Phoenixes can both perform these rituals, allowing a desperate Flamekeeper to produce a blast of flame (as *Fire Shaping*) or shift Wounds from someone who's dying (using *Shared Strength*). The rituals are fairly easy—a single spread of around 20 or an extended spread around 30-60—and cost around 5 Sparks worth of Phoenix Ashes. Dawn Command strongly disapproves of wasting ashes in this way.

- **Enhance the transporting abilities of the Imperial Flame.** The Imperial Flame allows Phoenixes to travel from Pyre to any active Aerie; this simple ritual doesn't consume ashes. By burning Phoenix ashes, it's possible for a wing to travel back to Pyre from another Aerie or to transport mortals or material goods with the Phoenixes. This doesn't usually require a spread, but either effect burns 10 Sparks worth of Phoenix ashes.

- **Establish a connection to the Imperial Flame.** It takes 10 Sparks worth of Phoenix ashes to create a set of message candles, and 20 Sparks worth of ashes to ignite a hearth and bind a Flamekeeper to it; these are the requirements to restore an Aerie.

- **Magnify the existing powers of one Phoenix, or allow multiple Phoenixes to combine their power to accomplish a great task**. Devoted healing, Elemental destruction, Shrouded concealment; any of these effects could be enhanced. The Devoted Legion used Ash sorcery—a tremendous amount of ashes, and Phoenixes working together—to banish House Gods and Fallen and strengthen the veil to the Dusk. These sorts of effects are typically Extended spreads with high difficulty, and cost anywhere from 10-100 Sparks worth of ashes depending on the desired effect.

Mortal adepts can perform the first three functions on this list. However, the most common job of an adept in Dawn Command is monitoring and maintaining a set of message candles. Sending messages involves a different minor ritual for each candle combination, though this doesn't consume ashes.

Phoenix Ashes

Whenever a Phoenix dies, their body, uniform and Talon dissolve into ash. When a Phoenix dies their final death, these ashes are imbued with the essence of their Flame. These final remains are called *Phoenix ashes*. Phoenix ashes are measured by their value in Sparks and are required for Ash sorcery. They can also be used in place of a Phoenix's Sparks to pay the costs of mystical rituals as described in this section. They can't replace normal Sparks for any other purpose; a Phoenix can't burn ashes to power their Lessons or enhance spreads. A typical Phoenix produces twenty Sparks worth of Phoenix ashes on their final death.

As the game begins Phoenix ashes are in short supply and are being reserved for establishing new Aeries. If Dawn Command acquires a substantial supply—which can happen as a result of the "Summer Shore" mission—Phoenixes may be given ashes as part of a mission. And should a member of the wing die their final death, they will at least leave the wing with some ashes...

Duskcraft

Duskcraft is the art of the warlock, and involves dealing with the unnatural spirits of the Dusk. Duskcraft revolves around the following basic effects.

- **Summon a Fallen.** In the current age, it's almost impossible to summon the Fallen Folk to the Daylit World. However, it may be possible in special circumstances, such as summoning the Harvester of Knowledge in the Hungry Library (page 394).

- **Bargain with the Fallen.** Anyone can make a deal with one of the Fallen. A warlock knows how to safely negotiate, ensure that the Fallen is actually bound to the bargain, and make sure the terms are what they appear to be.

- **Bind a Fallen.** These rituals allow a warlock to temporarily confine a Fallen to a specific space or vessel. If the warlock lacks a suitable vessel (such as the runic vessels in "Pulling Strings") the best they can do is hold the Fallen in place while continuing to negotiate; should the warlock leave the area or attack the Fallen, it is released. So this is a powerful negotiating tactic, but not absolute victory.

The power of Duskcraft is that the Fallen Folk can produce magical effects beyond any mortal mage; this is why they were created in the first place. There's a vast range of Fallen; a shoemaker can clean and mend clothes, while the Hektarch can raise armies of Bones. What a Fallen can offer will be based on its sphere of influence. Fallen can also offer knowledge or general effects such as "good fortune"—which typically reflects a number of minor invisible sprites attending the subject and helping at just the right time. A Fallen deal should feel like a faerie tale: there should be an element of whimsy or mystery, and always the fear that there's some catch the warlock is missing.

Standard Duskcraft rituals take time and involve summoning circles, rare components, true names, and other things that Phoenixes generally don't have. Phoenixes may be able to overcome some of these limitations by burning Sparks, but this is up to you; you can always rule that a particular Fallen simply can't be bound without a sprig of fresh holly and the knowledge of its secret name, or something similarly esoteric. Furthermore, classic Duskcraft deals with the Faeda spirits, and spirits of other cultures—such as the Puppeteer in "Pulling Strings"—may prove difficult to affect. The primary use of Duskcraft is when Phoenixes interact with Fallen, such as the missions "The Harvest" and "Mercy." Duskcraft uses **Intellect Spreads** (The Arcane). The *Warlock* Trait is specifically tied to Duskcraft, and could either serve as a trump Trait (allowing the Phoenix to resolve a minor action without making a spread), or it could be worth +5 to +10 in a spread.

Divine Invocation

The House Gods of the Talu are spirits of the Dusk, like the Fallen Folk. However, they cannot physically manifest in the Daylit World. Instead they bond with mortal avatars, who serves as anchors allowing them to exert power in the world. Without an avatar, a House God is completely powerless; and the process of claiming one requires a ritual and a willing subject (typically a child) of a specific bloodline. When a god is bound, it can exert power freely around its avatar (see page 205 for examples). Initially this is all that it can do; but over time its sphere of influence grows. Talu priests must be members of the house bloodline, and they learn rituals that allow them to request that a House God perform a specific function. If they are within the god's sphere of influence and the god chooses to grant the request, it can channel a portion of its power through the priest. These powers are relatively minor effects, similar to the Phoenix core Lessons. During the Dark Ages, Talu houses created channeling sites that could increase the power of a god in a specific area. An example of this is the Deo Beacon in Cartacia (see page 385). If the avatar of the god stood in the beacon chamber, it was capable of projecting bolts of flame to burn any army attacking the city. Other houses may have similar tools… though after five hundred years, it's possible that they no longer remember their functions.

A Phoenix can't directly bond to a House God or channel its power. However, they could perform spreads to summon a House God (provided there's a suitable avatar present); locate the current avatar of a House God; or break the tie between a House God and its avatar (see page 205). All of these would be **Intellect Spreads** (The Arcane). The *Warlock* Trait is be worth +5 in any spread tied to House Gods, but it's not a trump Trait; they are similar to the Fallen, but not identical.

Shamanic Magic

Shamanic magic draws on spirits of nature. Here's a few examples of things that a shaman could attempt.

- **Influence an aspect of nature.** Alter the weather. Locate or summon animals. Encourage plant growth. This is a matter of asking the local spirits to shift some aspect of the status quo.

- **Allow a mortal to channel a spirit.** During the Dark Ages, tribal champions would channal primal spirits to take on the aspects of beasts. This can enhance a willing mortal's physical capabilities or have other appropriate effects. However, it always carries the risk of destroying the mortal's mind. Grimwald champions had extensive training and could still be lost to this; the people of the modern world have no training, and the effects of doing this would likely be disastrous.

- **Drive a spirit from a host.** If a werewolf was the result of a corrupted wolf spirit possessing a human, a shaman could try to drive out the spirit.

The critical restriction on shamanic magic is that it only works *if there are spirits to influence*. Nature spirits aren't innately present in all natural things; instead, nature has the *potential* to host a spirit. The Grimwald has the highest concentration of natural spirits; others could be found scattered across the Empire, in places that feel especially primal. The short form is that it's up to you to decide whether it's possible to attempt a particular ritual in the current location. Like Duskcraft, this normally involves trappings and components. A Phoenix can compensate for missing elements by burning Sparks, hence the cost. Any act of magic should feel significant and weighty. Set the Spark cost appropriately, and warn the Phoenix of everything that could go wrong. Shamanic magic uses **Grace Spreads** (Spirits). The *Shaman* Trait can be a trump Trait, and should always be worth +5 to +10 in a shamanic spread.

Necromancy

The Shadovar tradition of necromancy allows a Phoenix to **sense the presence of restless spirits, communicate with the dead** and to **perform exorcisms**, calming restless spirits. Standard necromancy can't actually raise the dead or create Bones… but it can be used to sense the driving spirit behind a group of Bones or to try to separate Bones from that spirit (as shown on page 178). This is typically a **Grace Spread** (Spirits, Shadovar background). The *Exorcist* Trait may be a trump Trait; if not, it can be worth +5 to +10 in any exorcism spread. Ghosts are typically remnants of memory and emotion; they rarely have the full sentience of the original mortal.

INTERLUDES

Missions in Phoenix are usually high pressure, time sensitive situations: there's a Chant outbreak and the Phoenixes only have two hours to contain it! The focus is on action and danger. But there's lots of interesting stories you can tell in this world that *aren't* driven by the threat of impending doom. This is where *Interludes* come in.

Interludes are scenarios that take place between standard missions. Here's a few typical Interlude scenarios:

- The Phoenixes need to return to Pyre after they complete their mission… does anything interesting happen along the way?
- Is there some aspect of the mission that still feels unresolved? Do the Phoenixes want to remain in place to help with recovery efforts or delve deeper into a mystery?
- If a Phoenix died, what is their experience in the Crucible?
- Is anything interesting going on at Dawn Command? Is there news from one of the other wings?

These situations can be expanded into full missions of their own if you wish. But often they don't require people to play cards or track Sparks. A lot of these situations can be resolved entirely through conversation, or by working through email. This is especially appropriate when the situation only involves one of the players— working through the Crucible experience, or the journey of a lone survivor as they make their way back to Pyre. This is a great way to add depth to characters and to develop a stronger attachment to the world itself.

All of the missions we've included in this book come with suggestions for interludes, but you can always develop your own interludes based on how a story plays out.

SHOWCASING CHARACTERS

One of the primary purposes of an Interlude is to give players an opportunity to delve deeper into their characters. This can be especially important if a particular player ended up having a minor role in a mission; an Interlude can give them a moment in the spotlight. Consider the following scenarios.

- **Off Duty.** After being badly injured in a previous mission, the Phoenixes are ordered to take a day off to recover. What does each Phoenix do with some free time? What do they do for fun? Direct this question to each player, and work together to explore the ideas they come up with.
- **Unfinished Business.** As the wing is returning to Pyre, they encounter someone from one of the Phoenix's first lives. A spouse or child wonders whether the Phoenix still has a relationship with them. The Phoenix's village needs someone to

intercede for them with an uncaring Imperial bureaucracy. Look to the questions the Phoenix answered during character creation. What do they still care about? What did they leave behind? How will the Phoenix deal with this baggage from their old life?

• **Groupies.** The mystique of the Phoenixes, and the desperation and gratitude of the mortal populace, lends a certain celebrity to the Wing… especially among any followers of the Dawn faith. People want to be reborn as Phoenixes, and there's a lot of legends and folk wisdom — most of it wrong — about what Phoenixes can do and what you do to become one. How do the Phoenixes deal with all this attention?

A CONVENIENT DEATH

Whether through luck or skill, sometimes one member of the wing just doesn't die as often as the others.

A lower ranking Phoenix can afford to be more reckless with their Wounds and Sparks, and loading in deaths isn't the worst thing in the world. But sometimes a player WANTS to advance in rank, but simply hasn't encountered a threat sufficient to take them down. In these cases, you can use an Interlude to provide a suitable death. Consider the following scenarios.

• A Fallen spirit offers something valuable in trade for a life. See the "Tinker At The Crossroads" interlude on page 256 for an example of this.

• The Phoenix is ambushed and killed by a mysterious assailant, or brought down by a spell or poison (something that doesn't generally affect Phoenixes). When they're reborn, they can investigate their own murder. Who had the motive and means? Was anyone else killed at the same time?

• Alternately, the Phoenix is slain in a chance meeting with a powerful enemy you want to use later… someone like Omen (page 215). This is a chance to show off how lethal the enemy is, that a single Phoenix can't defeat them, and it can create a vendetta for this Phoenix if they want payback.

• In fighting the Dread, a Phoenix might end up being responsible for the death of mortals. Whether or not they are truly at fault, the Phoenix could be declared guilty and subject to execution. Does the Phoenix submit to mortal justice, or have they decided that they aren't subject to provincial law and anyone who tries to take them in will pay dearly? The death itself may only be a minor convenience, but how does the Phoenix feel about being marked with dishonor, or being made an outlaw?

• You can always simply ask the player to describe the circumstances of their death. Do they want a hero's downfall— dying to buy time for mortals to escape an unbeatable foe— or do they want something mysterious and lingering?

THREE'S COMPANY, TWO'S TOO FEW

You can also run an interlude when you don't have the full wing available. Most of the missions are designed for three to four Phoenixes, and if you only have one or two players they're unlikely to succeed. This is a good time for an Interlude. You could have them investigate and fight a single Challenge— dealing with a War wyrm that attacks a small village, or a Chant outbreak in a farming community (producing smaller mobs with fewer Health Levels). They could have to deal with a social situation— an imperial feast, a long journey guarding an important mortal, a mediation between two feuding towns— that involves more roleplaying than action. Or you could have the Phoenixes help a town with a noncombat scenario that doesn't require a full wing: appeasing an angry spirit, bringing vital supplies, escorting a Flamekeeper to re-establish an Aerie.

THE STORY OF REBIRTH

Every time a Phoenix dies and is reborn, they pass through the Crucible and go through a new series of trials and tests. This is how they learn their new Lessons and Traits. The Crucible is much like a dream, and it can create any situation the Phoenix needs to face to move forward. It can manifest any creature or individual, but these aren't real; they're simply dream-images. There's only one sentient being who shares the Crucible with a Phoenix: their *Mentor*, the spirit of a previous Phoenix who once held their flame.

Talking through the Crucible experience is a good way to add depth to a character. It's a chance for a player to think about what they've gone through and what challenges they've overcome to gain new power. Consider the following questions.

- What gives the Phoenix the strength to overcome the challenges of the Crucible? What are they fighting for?
- Time in the Crucible has no bearing on time in the Daylit World. How long does the experience take from the perspective of the Phoenix? Days? Weeks? Years?
- What is the single greatest challenge that they face?
- What is their interaction with their Mentor like? Is the Mentor proud of them? Inspiring? Disappointed?
- Does their Mentor have any insight into the current situation? For example, did the Mentor know Hadon Pelagius or Omen?
- Was there any particular challenge involved with learning a new Lesson?

Some players won't enjoy this, and there's nothing wrong with simply giving them new cards with no fuss. But if a player does enjoy exploring the Crucible, you

can take some time to develop their relationship with their Mentor. What do they know about their Mentor? What is their name? Does the Mentor have unfinished business or regrets? Do they have any connection to events that will unfold in future missions? One catch: a Phoenix only has one Mentor at a time, but they **always get a Mentor of the School whose Lessons they are learning**. So a Durant Phoenix *starts* with a Durant Mentor. But if they die a Devoted death, they will have a new Mentor in the Crucible, who might have a completely different story and attitude.

THE RIVAL WING

The Phoenixes are part of Dawn Command, but over the course of missions the only Phoenixes they deal with are the Marshals. This can lead to the sense that they are the only Phoenixes in the world. After the wing has completed their first mission or two, have each player come up with a *second* Phoenix: the members of a different wing. At the base, they need to come up with a cog and a School: "A Bitter named Ratchet." But encourage them to come up with a deeper story: How did this Phoenix die? What are they like? How do they get along with the members of the player wing? You can start them off by providing one member of the rival wing: The Devoted Phoenix Mercy.

Cog: MERCY

School: Devoted

Personal Details: *The civil war between mortals and Phoenixes was a horrifying conflict. Born to a noble family, Mercy left riches behind and founded a nonpartisan order of healers who cared for the innocents caught in the conflict. She died helping the wounded in one of the worst battles of the war. For centuries she lingered in the Crucible; the suffering of innocents in the Dread drew her back. She is deeply concerned about protecting mortals and will go to great lengths to avoid collateral damage.*

Appearance: *An Ilonan noblewoman in her early twenties; dark hair, pale skin; dresses in a simple robe marked with symbols of the Devoted School. Her Talon is a mirror that she uses as a focus for her healing abilities, showing a positive reflection that becomes reality.* (The picture on page 16 is an image of Mercy.)

Mercy could form a friendship with the Devoted of the player wing, or she could harshly reprimand members of the wing who recklessly endanger mortals. Whenever she comes up, be sure to mention her compassion and concern for innocents. Initially, Mercy serves as a way to show the players what you're looking for in their rival wingmates, but she also plays an important role in the mission arc presented in this book; the more connection the players feel to her, the more powerful this experience will be. So get each player to contribute a wingmate along with Mercy and to come up with a name for this rival wing. Between each mission, you can talk about what the other wing has accomplished. During Interludes, Phoenixes could be paired up with rival wingmates: the player Devoted and Mercy need to work together to put an end to a mass haunting, or the Durant teams up with a rival to

lead a group of mortal soldiers. If players want a change, you could actually have them play the rival wing for one mission. The wings don't actually **have** to be rivals; the purpose of the wing is to add depth to the world and for the players to feel like there's a war going on that's bigger than just them. And the more characters in that war that players grow attached to, the more levers you have to play with… as shown with Mercy in Mission Six.

EXPANDING THE WORLD

You can find a map of the Daylit World on page 44. However, this is only a broad overview of the world. It shows the borders of the provinces, a number of important cities, and a few ruins and key sites. **These aren't all the communities in the Empire**. The cities that have been called out include many of the most important locations, but they are also highlighted because **most of them are locations of active Aeries**. But Ilona is filled with farming villages and lesser towns. Skavia may include Bulwark cities not shown on the map. This map is a foundation to work with, but you should expand it to fit the needs of your story. This map is a starting point, but you should expand it to meet the needs of your story.

Neither the map or the descriptions of the provinces include precise population numbers or a scale for the map. This is up to you, based on the scope of the story you want to tell. Do you want it to take the Phoenixes weeks to return to Pyre from Harrowgate, or just a few days? Does a population of 20,000 feel like a large city, or does the Capital in your Empire have 200,000 people? In all things, you should think of the map as a foundation on which to build.

Beyond this: by default Dalea is the only continent in the Known World. You have the power to add new lands across the horizon. If the Dread is dealt with, a new threat could appear from across the sea. Perhaps there's another continent where the Old Kingdoms never fell… or perhaps in *your* Dalea, the Hektarch is the advance force of an invasion from beyond the Deep.

CREATING MISSIONS

As the Marshal, it's your job to provide the challenges, enemies, allies and mysteries that the Phoenixes will interact with during their adventures. This book includes seven missions that are ready for use. When you're ready to make your own missions, you can build on this existing storyline or create something entirely new that better suits the interests of your players. Creating a mission for *Phoenix* is a fairly simple process; select the Challenges you're going to use and develop the story that draws in the Phoenixes and brings them into contact with this threat. There's a few elements to consider.

STARTING POINT

A typical scenario begins with the Phoenixes in the Grand Aerie on Pyre. A call for help comes in and they respond immediately. Often very little information is available; identifying the threat is part of the mission itself. Here's a few different approaches you could take.

- The mission target is located a significant distance from an Aerie. In "The Summer Shore" (page 315) the mission begins just before the wing reaches their destination, whereas in "Pulling Strings" (page 341) the journey is part of the mission.

- The Phoenixes are contacted by a group seeking their assistance as they are traveling back to Pyre. This could be a Talu House, a unit of the Imperial Army, a Grimwald tribe, or a Kor Aton delegation— or even one of the Fallen Folk. Are these people requesting help from Dawn Command, or are they reaching out to the Phoenixes directly? Do the Phoenixes believe Dawn Command would approve, or is this about their personal motivations?

- One of the Phoenix Marshals provides the wing with a mission, but as they are heading to the Flame Chamber a second Marshal— likely Winter, the Shrouded Marshal— approaches them with a second set of orders. These might contradict the first Marshal's orders, or they could simply involve a secret goal within the mission.

WHAT'S AT STAKE?

One of the core thematic elements of *Phoenix* is that **missions matter.** You're not fighting for gold or glory, you're fighting because if you don't, people will die. You want players to legitimately feel that success is worth dying for. Beyond this, failure should be a real option… and the players should feel the impact of that failure. If a major city falls, they should encounter refugees over the course of the next few missions, and the loss of strategic resources should come up. So in creating a mission, consider the consequences.

- Someone personally important to one of the Phoenixes is killed.

- A village or city falls to the Dread; many mortals die and many more become refugees who seek aid in neighboring regions. This is a significant blow to morale across the Empire.

- Loss of an important fortification, outpost, or Aerie means that the the people living in the region have no ongoing protection against the Dread. This is especially true of Aeries: if an Aerie is lost, Dawn Command has no way to send Phoenixes to that region or to receive information.

- An important city or faction loses faith in the Empire and Dawn Command, and declares their independence from the Empire.

- If the Phoenixes fail the mission, the rival wing (page 145) steps in and saves the day. However, significant damage is already done… and the rival wing gets all the glory (and possibly solves the problem in a manner the player wing disapproves of).

In general, the Phoenixes are also fighting to prove that Dawn Command can be trusted. Every success builds confidence in the Phoenixes; every failure will spread stories that the Phoenixes are hoaxes or incapable of stopping the Dread.

WHAT SKILLS ARE INVOLVED?

Ideally, a mission should provide every Phoenix with a moment in the spotlight. Every Phoenix has combat skills, though Forceful, Elemental, and Bitter are generally the best on the battlefield. As you establish the challenges people will face, consider the Specialties of your wing and what people most enjoy doing. Is there an opportunity for the Durant to show off his leadership skills? Is there an arcane mystery for the Elemental, or a chance for the Shrouded and Bitter to sneak around? Here's a quick overview of what the Schools are best at.

Diplomacy or Leadership: Devoted, Durant

Feats of strength: Bitter, Durant

Scouting and stealth: Forceful, Shrouded, Bitter

Dealing with spirits or arcane secrets: Devoted, Elemental, Shrouded

Athletic Prowess, overcoming physical obstacles: Bitter, Durant, Forceful

Leading armies and siege warfare: Durant, Elemental

Healing conventional injury or sickness: Devoted or Shrouded

Also remember that Bitter, Durant and Forceful can't accomplish Intellect Challenges unless they're in their Specialties, and Devoted, Elemental and Shrouded can't complete Strength Challenges unless they're in their Specialties.

Phoenix: Dawn Command is a heroic fantasy game, so it wasn't designed with the idea that Phoenixes often fail at mundane tasks. However, if the stakes are low it can be interesting to create a situation where none of the Phoenixes are experts and force them to think outside their normal limits. The wing doesn't have a diplomatic Devoted or a Durant leader to handle a delicate negotiation… can the Bitter use fear to force an agreement? Can the Shrouded use Deception to convince them to make the right decision?

WHAT ARE THE CONSEQUENCES OF DEATH?

If all the Phoenixes die, do they fail the mission? After a Phoenix dies, the earliest they can be reborn is the following dawn… and even then, they can only be reborn at the closest Aerie. If the Phoenixes are out in the wilderness or deep in enemy territory, it might be many days before a reborn Phoenix can rejoin the action. The Phoenixes are also in trouble if an enemy extinguishes the Aerie they're defending, as the next nearest Aerie might be hundreds of miles away. If a mission's objective is achieved over a number of days, death might not be a serious concern; it might even be advantageous, if a Phoenix is gravely wounded and nearly out of Sparks. But many missions are so time-sensitive that a few hours will make the difference between success and failure. Consider the following scenarios.

- A plague is spreading and will completely overtake the community within a day. The Chant (page 182) is an example of this.
- The target of the mission will escape if they receive a few hours respite.
- The enemy only needs a few hours to accomplish its goal.
- Innocents will die if the enemy isn't stopped immediately.

HOW MANY COMBAT ENCOUNTERS WILL THE WING FACE?

Generally speaking, you want two to three combat encounters in a mission. The more encounters you have, the greater the threat as the Phoenixes will burn through their resources. However, you generally don't want to continually throw the same Challenge at the wing over and over, as it can become tedious. Consider the following ideas.

- The wing initially encounters a group of minions, and then encounters the powerful creature that leads them or spawned them.
- The wing encounters the symptoms of a plague or infection, and then the source.
- The first encounter deals with a threat that can't be entirely vanquished; however, the second encounter includes the key to ending the first.
- Fight the same threat twice, but with dramatically different context, stakes, and environment that make the second situation more challenging.

If you look to the mission "Chants & Whispers" (page 259), the Phoenixes initially fight a Chanter Mob directly. Following this, they take a shortcut through future mob encounters by making Skill Spreads in which failure results in injury… this is a way of fast-forwarding over repetitive encounters while still maintaining a sense of a threat. "The Summer Shore" (page 315) presents a Challenge that simply can't be defeated; the Phoenixes have to force their way through the obstacle instead of fighting it.

If you want to make a challenge especially deadly, you could consider having the mission begin close to dawn, so Phoenixes that are killed have a chance to be reborn. Look to the "Creating a Challenge" section below for more suggestions as to how to make your Challenges interesting.

ARE THERE OPPORTUNITIES FOR HEROIC SACRIFICE?

One of the most distinctive features of *Phoenix* is that death is how a character grows stronger. As a result, you want to create many opportunities for players to die. You can accomplish this with powerful challenges, but you also want to make sure that a death feels *meaningful*… you weren't just crushed by an unbeatable monsters, you allowed yourself to be crushed so that the innocents could escape. "The Harvest" (page 236) offers a Phoenix the chance to consume the Harvester's fear to save others without further risk at the cost of one life. In "Chants & Whispers" (page 259) the Chant can only be exorcised with a massive expenditure of Sparks… but the death of a Phoenix generates a burst of Sparks for this effect. In "Scartongue" (page 286) it's known that whoever strikes the killing blow on the villain will die along with him… who will do it? Think about ways to make death a vital part of the game. There should always be other solutions; even in "Scartongue" a mortal can be sacrificed instead of a Phoenix. But you want to create opportunities for heroic death.

CREATING CHALLENGES

Phoenix: Dawn Command includes a host of Challenges, both those used in the included missions and others that are waiting to be used in missions you develop. However, you can always create new Challenges of your own. Although the Challenges are on cards, there's no reason they have to be - you can use a picture you've found, or no picture at all, just describing to the Phoenixes what they see. However, here are some things to consider when creating Challenges.

How hard is it for the Phoenixes to make a successful Attack?

Hurting a creature requires the Phoenix to make an Attack Spread with a value equal to the creature's Defense plus their lowest-value Health Level. However, just *hitting* the creature plays an important role for many effects. If a Phoenix can at least match the creature's Defense, it can use *Psychometry* or *Passing Pain*. Furthermore, brutal damage can wreak havoc on a creature with a low defense and high-value Health Levels. A Challenge with a Defense of twelve or higher can pose a problem for many Phoenixes.

How hard is it for the Phoenixes to actually hurt the Challenge?

This takes into account both the Defense and Health Levels of the creature. Consider the following examples.

• *Colossus: Defense 5, Health Levels 10, 10, 10*. It takes an Attack Spread with a value of 15 to inflict an injury on the Colossus, and a 25 to inflict two Wounds with a single attack. However, a creature in this model is highly vulnerable to brutal damage, which could inflict an injury with an Attack value of 6. If you're trying to make a creature that's easy to hit but requires a heroic effort to bring down, you could add a number of lower-value Health Levels, as these will give Phoenixes using weaker attacks or brutal damage something to do… or you can make the creature treat brutal damage as normal damage, so Phoenixes have to match the full value to hurt it.

• *Fallen Blademaster: Defense 12, Health Levels 3 (x10)*. The high Defense value means that some Phoenixes won't even be able to hit it, but Phoenixes that can reach high Attack values (notably Elementals and Bitters) will be able to inflict serious injuries.

• *Chanter Mob: Defense 3, Health Levels 3 (x 30)*. Anyone can hit this, but it takes a lot of damage to eliminate it. Characters that can make multiple attacks (notably Forceful and heavily wounded Bitter Phoenixes) will shine here. Brutal damage is largely irrelevant, as the creature's defense is the massive number of small tokens.

A typical Rank One Phoenix has five Health Levels with a value of 2 each. Consider what the Health Levels and Defense of the creature reflect. A low Defense, high-Health creature typically represents a heavily armored or massive creature; easy to hit but hard to actually hurt. With group enemies, health level tokens represent individual members of the group. Group enemies often have attacks based on the number of Health Levels on the card— the more of them are present, the more targets they can hit with an attack. Other ways to justify high Defense or Health: the enemy doesn't have human biology; the enemy is undead and must be entirely destroyed; or the enemy regenerates until it's truly defeated. The Empire has found that most of these threats are difficult to beat, even with an army: so it makes sense that the minions of the Dread can take a lot a damage from conventional weapons before dropping - otherwise, the Empire would have already won by now.

How easy is it to avoid the enemy's attacks? How much damage can it do?

The power of an enemy attack is determined by three factors. The *Attack value* indicates how difficult it is to avoid the attack. The *damage multiplier* indicates how significant a glancing blow can be. And the *maximum damage* value indicates just how serious an attack can be. Consider the three challenges...

• *Colossus: Attack 10, Damage x3 (10)* This attack isn't that hard to avoid, but even a one-point difference in Attack and Defense will result in a wound. If a Phoenix doesn't defend at all they can suffer up to 10 points of damage… enough to kill a Rank One Phoenix in a single blow.

• *Fallen Blademaster: Attack 20, Damage x1 (3)* The Blademaster's attack is virtually impossible to avoid, but it's never going to inflict more than one Wound.

• *Chanter Mob: Attack 7, Damage x2 (4), Attack value increases by one with each attack.* This is initially easy to avoid, but increases over time… and the x2 Damage multiplier means that even a narrow hit will hurt. The most it can do is four points of damage, so it can't inflict more than two Wounds with a single attack regardless of how high its value becomes.

As a general rule, an Attack with a value of less than 8 can be easily avoided. An attack with a value of 12 will be difficult to entirely avoid without using Traits or getting help from a Devotes. And an attack of 18 will be almost impossible to avoid, though it can be done with the right combination of Lessons and Traits.

Do you want to threaten the Phoenixes with heavy attacks or deadly effects?

One of the interesting things about *Phoenix: Dawn Command* is that you can make truly dead challenges, knowing it's okay if some of the Phoenixes die. However, when design deadly attacks, try not to make them so simple as "if it hits you, you die." Even though the Phoenix may come back later, this isn't fun for players. Here are some ways to make your attacks feel threatening, but not unfair:

• **The deadly attack requires a buildup.** The Harvester Fallen need to apply a certain condition to a victim before they can use their most devastating attacks. Hadon Pelagius has one Attack that's high value but low damage, but stuns its target… and a higher damage attack he can only use on a Stunned target. Once the Phoenixes see how this works, they'll at least have an opportunity to remove the condition or whatever it is that makes the deadly attack possible.

• **Provide warning.** If an attack can kill from pure physical force - such as the Colossus's attack - the Phoenixes should be able to recognize the threat. Warn them that this is an attack they really want to avoid - don't skimp on Defense this time! If it's a magical attack, the creature could still telegraph it… they can see power building up, or mortals in the vicinity start dropping dead just from the general effect. You can also target the Durant first. A Durant can survive an attack that will instantly kill another Phoenix, and it clearly shows just how dangerous that attack is.

• **The attack is lethal, but not right away.** This is the point of the *Bleeding* Condition: it creates a situation where a Phoenix knows they are going to die, but they aren't denied agency until the end of the scene. This gives them ample opportunity to die on their own terms, either by sacrificing herself or by using all of their best attacks, knowing that this is the last chance to make an impact. Other options are Afflictions that do damage over time, or other types of powerful hostile magic ("you can feel your arm slowly turning into stone - what do you do?")

• **The attack is lethal, but it visibly costs the enemy something to do it.** Maybe the Dreadlord stabs a Phoenix through the heart with its sword, but then the sword shatters. Another option is suicide attacks by members of a group enemy - when the enemies use this attack, remove HLs to show that they're losing members by doing it.

Do you want to put the Phoenixes under time pressure?

Not every challenge needs to have very deadly attacks - it might be that the Phoenixes will lose just by taking too long to defeat it. Maybe the attacks keep getting stronger, or the group of enemies keeps getting bigger, the longer combat continues; or, hostages or innocent bystanders will get harmed if the enemy is not destroyed quickly.

What are other things that will make combat interesting?

The Phoenixes already have basic combat strategies that work pretty well in most situations. Sometimes all it takes to make combat interesting is to make the goals different than simply making attacks and defending. Here are some examples:

- The Phoenixes have mortals that they need to simultaneously protect (see "The Buddy System", page 125)
- The Phoenixes can't defeat the enemy just by removing its Health Levels
- The Phoenixes don't want to kill the enemy because it's possessed, or because it's been tricked into fighting the Phoenixes, or because it has no choice
- The Phoenixes must figure out a puzzle or secret in order to win
- The Phoenixes only need to escape in order to win
- The Phoenixes would rather that the enemy surrender

If you review the missions provided with this book, you'll see examples of most of these.

REWARD CARDS AND DREAD CARDS

Most of the time, Phoenixes only grow stronger when they die. But there are times when someone does something incredibly heroic, imaginative, or hilarious and you want to recognize the effort. For this, Phoenix includes a set of four **Reward Cards**: *Last Stand, Favored By Fate, Grim Determination,* and *Heroic*. These Traits are useful in their own right, but each one also has a special ability that can only be used once; after this power is used, the card is removed from the Phoenix's deck and returned to you. Reward cards are also removed when the character dies and is reborn. Multiple Reward cards can give a Phoenix a good reason to live!

It's entirely up to you to decide when and how to distribute Reward cards. You could allow a worthy Phoenix to choose their Reward from the cards currently available, or you could choose the card based on the action that the Phoenix performed.

The game also includes a set of additional Traits that are tied to manifestations of the Dread: *Memories of the Chant, Horrific Vision, Kandari Blood Curse,* and *Disturbing Insights.* These can be obtained by performing specific actions in a mission, and they are generally powerful but carry some sort of disturbing side effect. These cards are kept for this and all future lives, except for *Disturbing Insights.* If you don't run the missions included with the book, or if no Phoenix meets the to receive the card, you can always hand it out in a later scenario that feels appropriate.

THINGS TO REMEMBER

Phoenix: Dawn Command is different from most roleplaying games in a number of meaningful ways. As Marshal, here are a few things for you to keep in mind as you run your game.

Phoenix is a war story.

Unlike many fantasy roleplaying games, *Phoenix* tells a very specific sort of story around a number of central themes. It is almost always a war story in which a squad of elite soldiers must depend on each other and be willing to sacrifice themselves for their Wing and the Empire—or at least the things the Empire is fighting for. This is expressed by the following:

- Turn order can be set by the players having permanent initiative scores.
- There are no player vs. player conflict resolution guidelines.
- There are many challenges that can only be passed with everyone acting in concert. Many Lessons and Traits are designed to support teamwork.
- There are almost always innocents that the Phoenixes can save through their actions.
- Very few challenges are designed with a single Phoenix in mind.
- Phoenixes aren't good at everything (for example, if one Phoenix can address Strength challenges, they will have other Wingmates who can handle Intellect challenges).

When you create your own *Phoenix* stories, remember that Phoenixes are most effective as a team, and success and failure is considered as a team—not on whether each one personally lives or dies. *Make sure you convey these things to the players.* In many RPGs, the protagonists are driven by greed or self-interest, and there is little that truly encourages teamwork. In *Phoenix: Dawn Command*, the Phoenixes are fighting to save their world. They may have different long-term goals or motivations, but if they don't work together, *everyone dies.*

Keep up the pressure.

Many roleplaying games build suspense with dice, which prevent a player from predicting the outcome of any action. In *Phoenix* players can see whether they have a good or bad hand and plan around it, removing the sense of uncertainty and giving the players more control. Since there's less random chance, we build tension over time by putting pressure on the Wing—they only have a finite number of Health Levels and Sparks, and both of these resources are relatively hard to recover. Of the course of a mission, one of your jobs as Marshal is to keep taxing the Phoenixes, forcing them to make hard choices between using their resources now and holding them for later. As the Wounds and conditions pile up and the Phoenixes grow closer to death, they get more frequent opportunities to either try to survive or to decide to die in a dramatic or satisfying way.

Failure is an option.

Part of building pressure is the sense that success and failure matter…and that failure is a distinct possibility. As a result, a mission should never take the form of "The Phoenixes must succeed, or the world will be destroyed." Instead, a mission might be "The Phoenixes must succeed, or this Aerie and village full of innocents will be lost." In a long-term campaign, future missions will build on the success or failure of previous missions; because the Phoenixes failed to save the Blackstone Aerie, the Fallen gain a foothold in Skavia, and there's no help from Skavia in a later mission. The players should always know that failure is an option, and that success will be significant in the future.

Give the characters the right opportunities to die.

Phoenix is a game about noble sacrifices, heroic last stands, and cursing the darkness as it takes you. Even the Schools are defined by how each Phoenix responds to death. In most games, death is the end of the story, and you don't really want player characters to die. In *Phoenix*, if you don't give heroes a chance to die, you are actually limiting their ability to grow and improve. *You want to give players opportunities to die*—you just want them to die well.

Some deaths are bad. You don't want a Phoenix to die in the very first round of combat in a mission facing some nameless minion. Usually this is unlikely due to the caps on maximum damage for most attacks, but you can also work to spread attacks around the Wing instead of focusing on one Phoenix. Most enemies have a variety of attacks they can make, so feel free to use lower-damage or condition-inflicting attacks instead of maximizing damage. Dead characters can linger as attendant spirits after they die, but think about whether a player is going to be bored if their character dies two or three hours before the end of the mission. With that said, sometimes you *want* to have a dramatic death early in the mission as a way of

establishing the stakes and the threat. Don't shy away from early deaths, but don't kill Phoenixes just because you can.

Some deaths are good. Almost any death in the final battle of a mission is good. The "boss" enemies of each mission are usually designed to have very lethal, scary attacks, because the excellence and heroism of the Phoenixes is gauged by how terrifying the threats they fight are. Remember that if mortals could deal with this threat, the Imperial Army would have dealt with it and there'd be no need for a wing of Phoenixes. Guaranteed deaths, or deaths that are assigned to PCs without player input or a chance to defend are bad. But there's nothing wrong with extremely damaging, hard-to-avoid attacks when they come from the source of the evil that the Phoenixes are hunting. If four Phoenixes are playing, having one or two Phoenixes die by the end of the mission feels significant. If the Wing succeeds in their mission objectives, death is a mechanism to "level up" and regain your HLs and Sparks.

Voluntary deaths are the best of all. Being a Phoenix means you have the option to throw yourself on a bomb or make a last stand on the bridge to save your friends. Phoenixes are vessels of powerful magic, and when there's nothing left to physically fight, powerful magic may still be necessary to cleanse a place of evil, heal the victims, or exorcise the spirit of the thing the Phoenixes beat back. In creating missions of your own, always look for opportunities for heroic sacrifice. They should always have alternatives: If a Phoenix *has* to die, it's not much of a sacrifice. But being able to make the choice to die saving others is a big part of *Phoenix*—especially for Devoted and Elementals!

One issue you may run into is when a Phoenix simply doesn't die. If a particular player is especially cautious or simply very lucky, you may end up with a situation where one member of the group is three or four ranks behind the others. **This is not the worst thing in the world.** Each death does drive the character one step closer to the end of the road, after all. *Phoenix* has a different sort of balance from many games, and a low-ranking character can choose to be more reckless. However, you may want to offer a player opportunities to die heroically "off-camera" between missions to help catch up with the rest of the Wing, as described on page 143. If you and the player come up with a good story, you don't need to fully play out each scene. In short, a player should never feel punished for surviving a mission; if a player *wants* to die, find a heroic death on the way home.

CHAPTER FIVE: THE DREAD

Over the last four years, the Empire has been beset by every imaginable form of terror. The dead prey on the living. The Chant consumes entire cities. Monstrous creatures prowl the woods, and the Fallen Folk feed on fears. People call this wave of nightmares *the Dread*. Dawn Command doesn't know precisely when it began. Around 570 IC, stories began circulating. Strange beasts were seen in the wilds. A traveler found a hamlet filled with corpses. A small village was plagued by an angry ghost. Few people took these stories seriously...until the Bone Legion sacked Westergate in 571 IC. The first force the Imperial Army sent against the Bones was slaughtered, and the army fared no better when it faced the Chant. Even in the wake of these events, panic was gradual. Word traveled slowly. Dawn Command has magical means of communication, but the rest of the Empire uses couriers or birds. Far away on the Verdant Coast, it was easy to dismiss the wild tales coming from the Summer Shore—and by the time news of an attack reached the army, it was far too late to respond.

The only good fortune was that the Dread began slowly. In the early days, the Bone Legion advanced at a snail's pace, marching slowly and only at night. Months might pass between reports of a Chant outbreak, and weeks between any sort of new terror. Even as it became clear the Dread was no hoax, people still hoped it would end…that the Imperial Army would defeat the Bone Legion and the other manifestations would simply stop.

These hopes were dashed. The Army has lost every engagement with the Bones, who have also laid waste to the Summer Shore, butchering anyone foolish enough to remain in their path. Rather than stopping, manifestations of the Dread occur with ever greater frequency. Dawn Command has eighteen active Wings—at any given time, almost all of them are in the field. Worst of all, the Dread remains a complete enigma. Why did it begin? What triggers its manifestations? What is the connection between the attacks?

This chapter begins with a look behind the curtain at the story of the Dread. This is followed by a set of **Challenge entries**. These include overviews of the forces Phoenixes will face in the missions provided in the next chapter: the Bones, the Chant, and the Fallen Folk. It concludes with a host of Challenges that *aren't* included in the missions…Challenges you can use as the foundation of your own stories.

As you read the tale of the Dread, remember this is your story too. We're presenting you with *an* explanation for the Dread—a story that ties together the Bones, the Fallen, and the Chant—but perhaps you have another idea. Or maybe there's one piece you want to change. Maybe you like our explanation for the Dread, but have a different vision for the Fallen Folk. What follows in this chapter is intended as

inspiration, but you should always feel free to explore your own path, especially if one or more of your players already know the canon story!

WHAT IS THE DREAD?

The Dread is the driving force behind the conflict in the present day. It can strike without warning in a hundred horrifying forms. While it's unclear if these attacks are related, the people of the Empire perceive them as a relentless, monolithic assault, and it has filled their hearts with dread. Though the Emperor has promised the Dread will be overcome, by 594 IC the common people have lost hope. Many people are fleeing their villages to take shelter in fortified cities; others don't believe city walls offer any true hope against the terrors hunting them. The Imperial Army has proven entirely ineffective; even when they could actually fight the threats, they usually learn of them too late to do anything. This has led to a bunker mentality, with military engineers reviving weapons forbidden by the treaties that ended the Civil War. In "Chants and Whispers," the Phoenixes encounter the army preparing to flood a tenement with fire to stop a Chant outbreak, even though hundreds of innocents will die in the process. As horrible as this seems, they believe it's the only way to save the city. The Empire has no idea what they're dealing with, and they have no long-term plan. At this point, all they can do is cut off a limb the moment it becomes infected and cauterize the wound.

Phoenixes change everything. Phoenixes are either resistant or entirely immune to most forms of possession and mundane disease. Phoenixes can interact with Chanters without being overcome. They can converse with the Fallen Folk in Pyrean and scatter a squad of Bones while searching for a weakness. Most of all, the communication and transportation options available to Phoenixes allow them to respond to threats with remarkable speed. Phoenixes can learn about a Chant outbreak before it has spread too far to contain; this is rarely true of the Army.

The Dread isn't a monolithic force. The actions of a rogue Phoenix—**Omen**—have stirred up ancient forces and set many wheels in motion. Many threats are tied to an Hektarch entity called the **Hektarch**. Created to fight a total war in the distant past, it now seeks to complete its mission in the present day. The Hektarch is a mystic war machine with access to dozens of supernatural threats. Beyond this, the actions of the Hektarch have weakened spiritual barriers and stirred up other ancient beings. This has allowed the Fallen Folk to return to the Daylit World. Meanwhile, a second force—the **Anima**—seeks to preserve life by creating new creatures that can survive the Dread.

The conflict between the Hektarch and the Anima destroyed the Old Kingdoms. Now it has begun again, and if nothing is done, it will escalate until all life is destroyed. To fight it, the Phoenixes must first understand it. They must uncover

the mysteries of each individual manifestation of the Dread—learn what drives the Bones and how they differ from the Chant—and follow the threads until they can see the image on the tapestry.

This Chapter presents a host of manifestations of the Dread. However, there are many things it *doesn't* cover. There are no statistics for skinchangers, goblins, or hungry ghosts. All of these things *could* appear, and page 150 discusses creating new challenges. This is a set of blocks so you can start building, but don't hesitate to add your own tools to the box.

ROOTS OF THE DREAD: THE OLD KINGDOMS

The roots of the Dread stretch back to the ancient civilizations now known as the Old Kingdoms. In the present day, virtually no information about the Old Kingdoms exists; only a handful of ruins and relics have survived the passage of time. The people of the Empire don't know the names of these nations, the scope of their civilizations, what they achieved, or how they fell. Many of the forces threatening the Empire are creations of the Old Kingdoms. As a result, it's important for *you* to know about the Old Kingdoms as you develop your own stories and manifestations of the Dread. However, don't be too quick to share this information with the players. As it stands, clues will start to come out over the course of the existing mission path; the Phoenixes will find Athan relics in "The Summer Shore" and have a chance to speak with a Heartland spirit in "Pulling Strings." Uncovering the story over time will be more entertaining than receiving it on a silver platter…and, of course, you may come up with new ideas as the story evolves.

THE SHAPE OF THE OLD WORLD

The Daylit World was a very different place in the days of the Old Kingdoms. There was no Inner Sea; Pyre once lay at the heart of vast fertile farmlands. There were a number of wild preserves in the south, but no Grimwald covering the land. The known world was split between four major civilizations: the **Faeda Concord**, the **Heartland Alliance**, the **Atavi Union**, and the **Guhani Deep**. Each of these nations perfected a field of magic and had thousands of years to hone these arts. Before delving into the nations themselves, it's important to focus on two techniques used by multiple cultures: **Spiritual Conception** and **Ascendance**. Once these have been established, each culture can be examined in more detail.

Spiritual Conception

Spirits were one of the most essential and fundamental tools of the Old Kingdom. Spirits served much the same role as computers and automation in present-day Earth. They served as monitors, performing both menial tasks and vital functions no human could achieve on their own. While every nation employed spirits, each had its

own distinct approach. Faeda spirits were both autonomous and anthropomorphic, with thought processes that made sense to humans. The Guhani created spirits that were intentionally inhuman, operating more like a computer; you could trust a Guhani spirit to monitor your home, but you couldn't have an interesting conversation with one. At its core, any spirit is a construct of mystical energy that exists in the Dusk and touches the Daylit World through a particular interface. Each culture used different styles of interface, which will be explored in the descriptions of each nation.

Ascendance

Having mastered Spiritual Conception and having learned to work with the Dusk, a number of civilizations took this concept further. If it's possible to create a spirit from nothing and provide that spirit with a physical vessel within the Daylit World… why couldn't it be possible to do the same thing with a human soul? Over time, Old Kingdom mages developed ways to bind a mortal soul to a source of mystical power. When the mortal died, their spirit would be pulled to that well of power and preserved. They could then create a new physical body and even learn ways to channel their sustaining energy to manifest superhuman abilities. The people who underwent this process were called **Ascendants**, and if they sound like Phoenixes, it's because Phoenixes are Ascendants. The Imperial Flame, the thousand Flames that sustain the Phoenixes, the hearths that empower Aeries…all of these things are relics of the Heartland nation of Pyre. The Imperial Flame was designed to produce warriors who would fight for the common good, and it has simply continued to perform that function in the modern day. But Ascendants were parts of other nations as well, and they served many different roles.

The Heartland Alliance

The Heartland covered the region that is now Ilona…although in those times, the Inner Sea was simply a network of rivers and valleys, so there was more land than exists today. The Heartland was home to a number of small nations with a shared cultural heritage, not unlike the Talu city-states of the Dark Ages; the largest of these were **Athana**, **Pyre**, **Tyroi**, and **Stoma**. Heartland magic focused on enhancing mortals, including a range of spirits that would act through mortal vessels. The most obvious relics of these are the Talu House Gods, which were originally designed by Stoma and Tyroi. The Puppeteer from the mission "Pulling Strings" is a Stoma bio-weapon, designed to seize control of a mortal population and turn it into a weapon. The Heartland nations were also the masters of Ascendance. This was the specialty of Pyre and Athana, though all of the Heartland nations practiced it to some degree. Pyre was a meritocracy; anyone had the opportunity to become an Ascendant, and all Ascendants were devoted to serving the common good. In the other Heartland nations, ascendancy was reserved for the military and ruling class. The "Alliance"

was an ideal that rarely held, and the Heartland nations were constantly squabbling and skirmishing; this drove an ongoing arms race, all the more because the leaders of a nation couldn't be killed through any normal means.

Necromancy first evolved on the streets of Stoma, where both the House Gods and Ascendancy were available to only the ruling class. It was discouraged by those in power, which only fueled the passion of the rebellious. The basic techniques of these early necromancers would eventually be recovered by the Shadovar…but long before that, they would be put to terrible use.

The Faeda Concord

The Faeda held the northern region of the Daylit World, what is now Skavia and the Golden Mountains. Much like the modern day, the Faeda were concentrated in a small number of massive cities. Spiritual Conception was the cornerstone of Faeda society. The spirits created by the Faeda were independent, anthropomorphic, and capable of manifesting physically within the Daylit World. These spirits could manipulate mystical energy in ways that were impossible for mortals, and the Faeda used both binding rituals and simple bargaining to get the spirits to work on behalf of society. Think of this as a nation that manufactured its own gods, or at least djinn; the spirits could perform wonders, as long as the were properly constrained and controlled.

The Faeda spirits were capable of feats the more limited creations of the Heartland could never achieve, in part because these spirits were fully sentient. Faeda spirits could evolve, learning new techniques and exceeding the expectations of their creators. The Faeda spirits that survived the final conflict are what the people of the modern day call the **Fallen Folk**. While the Faeda were masters of Conception, they had less success when it came to Ascendancy; they were able to produce a handful of Ascendants in the last days of the Old Kingdoms, but only a few and more limited than their Heartland counterparts.

The Atavi Union

The Atavi inhabited the southern region of the ancient world. Their magic focused on integration with the natural world. The Atavi employed both Ascendancy and Conception, but their techniques revolved around awakening and creating spirits within nature. Where the Faeda might create an entity called "The Stormshaper" to control the weather, the Atavi would unlock the consciousness of the storm system itself. Wood, wind, and water were all aware within the Atavi Union. Atavi Ascendancy didn't involve creating a new body for a mortal who died; instead, it was about merging a human spirit with a natural force. A dead Atavi might bond with a pack of wolves or a mighty river; this added a human aspect to what was otherwise an entirely inhuman entity. These spirits still linger in the Grimwald, and it is these forces that shamans interact with.

In addition to unlocking the spirits of nature, the Atavi specialized in creating living tools…from growing cities to developing new forms of life. The **Ichtryo** and **Shoggoth** are Atavi creations, the Shoggoth showing that while the Atavi worked with natural tools, their creations could be quite unnatural. The state of the Grimwald—the massive vegetation and unnatural fertility—is a relic of lingering Atavi forces.

The Guhani Deep

The Guhani colonized the world beneath the world, a region that came to be known as "The Deep." The Guhani relied on magic to sustain life in the depths of the earth, using mystical tools to provide light, air, and other necessities; these same systems are maintained by the Architects of Kor Aton. Guhani magic works through a physical medium, specifically the runes still used by the Atons. The Guhani employed spirits to maintain all mystical systems, but these spirits weren't anthropomorphic in any way. This turned out to be their downfall. The spirits created to maintain Guhani society placed no inherent value on human individuality. Working together, these **Guha** assumed control of the civilization. Humans became a cog in the wheel, driven by the spirits to fill their roles in the overall machine of the state. The Guhani never developed Ascendants. As with Kor Aton in the present day, their society was always very distant from the surface nations.

THE FALL OF THE OLD KINGDOMS

After the Heartland nations mastered Ascendancy, they became increasingly arrogant and aggressive. After a host of minor conflicts, a Faeda cabal created a spirit devoted to the destruction of the Heartland nations. They called this entity the **Hektarch**, "The Lord of Slaughter." They designed the Hektarch to study and assimilate other forms of magic, starting with the Heartland techniques of necromancy. The Hektarch proved able to exploit these techniques in ways no human had ever considered. This led to the first appearance of the Bones as the Hektarch raised armies of the dead to slaughter the living. Initially, the Heartland didn't know who to blame for the Hektarch's actions and struck out wildly against perceived enemies; soon the entire continent was at war. Every nation was producing weapons…and the Hektarch was assimilating them. The warlocks who created the Hektarch hadn't considered the effects of consuming spirits of other nations, and as the Hektarch devoured them, it absorbed some of their purpose. Where it was once interested solely in destroying the Heartland, now it wouldn't rest until it destroyed every civilization of Dalea.

The war that followed was devastating. Soldiers of all nations continued to fight one another while the Hektarch worked to destroy them all. By the time it became clear the Hektarch was an existential threat, it was too late to stop it. It had evolved beyond the understanding of its creators. The war dragged on, but there seemed no path to victory.

An unlikely alliance brought the conflict to an end. In the Atavi Union, a host of lesser spirits merged together into a gestalt entity: the **Anima**. This force recognized the conflict between the Ascendants and the Hektarch would continue until all life was extinguished. It was determined to preserve life…but placed no value on the civilizations of the Old Kingdoms. At the same time, the leaders of Pyre had come to the same conclusion and developed a plan of their own. The Anima set a chain of natural disasters in motion, while Pyre unleashed a force that rippled across the Dusk, disrupting both spirits and Ascendants. Together, this effectively destroyed the Old Kingdoms; studying the ruined world, the Hektarch concluded that its work was complete and became dormant. After enough time had passed, the Anima released life back into the devastated world, recreating things that had been destroyed. As such, the people of the present day are made in the likeness of the inhabitants of the Old Kingdoms, but there is no direct line of ancestry.

OMEN'S FOLLY

Over the course of thousands of years, life flourished and civilization was reborn. During the Dark Ages, the people of this new age discovered magic. Shamans in the Grimwald touched the forces created by the Atavi, and Talu families bonded to the House Gods. Over time, the spirits created by the Faeda had evolved and become something entirely new; these Fallen Folk bargained with the warlocks of Skavia. When Laetus and his followers explored Pyre, they managed to re-establish the Imperial Flame, not knowing exactly what it was; when they laid down their lives, the Flame drew them in and returned them as Phoenixes.

While the people of Pyre hadn't anticipated the actions of the Anima, they did have a plan when they disrupted the Dusk. They'd placed limits on their Ascendants, a cap on the maximum number of times they could return and thus the power they could obtain. Seven lives was sufficient to do great things, but it was a level of power that wouldn't wake the slumbering Hektarch. This system held throughout the Phoenix Imperium…until Omen. The full details of Omen's story can be found on page 215, but the most important piece is what happened after Omen died his final death. The Shadovar Shrouded was unwilling to rest in the Crucible. He wasn't done with the Daylit World, and like many Shrouded, he was convinced he could solve any mystery—and so he set to work finding the path to immortality. He managed to escape his Crucible and venture into the wider Dusk. He dealt with Fallen and discovered the soul-creches of Athan Ascendants. Armed with this knowledge, he returned to his Flame and shattered the bonds holding him to seven lives. Time is unpredictable in the Dusk, and by the time Omen returned, nearly three hundred years had passed: It was 590 IC.

Omen was a brilliant necromancer and warlock. His technique was flawless. But he never understood *why* the ancient Pyreans had placed limits on the Flame. Through his actions in the Dusk, he broke a host of wards. He'd restored Fallen who had

been dormant ever since they'd been banished by the Phoenix Imperium. With his rebirth, he woke the Hektarch. Revived, the Lord of Destruction gazed upon a world teeming with life. It recognized the scent of Pyrean Ascendants and Faeda spirits, and it began making plans to destroy them all.

This was the beginning of the Dread. The Hektarch is a vast entity formed of many lesser spirits, and it has taken time to restore its many aspects. It has unleashed the Bones. It has co-opted the Chant, a primitive version of Stoma magic. It has unleashed dozens of curses and lesser entities—weapons created in the last war of the Old Kingdoms. At the same time, other ancient forces are stirring. Fallen are finding their way back to the Daylit World after centuries in the Dusk, and the Anima is returning to full consciousness. Currently, the Anima is experimenting, creating new forms of life to see if it can come up with something that could survive the Hektarch's apocalypse. However, it places no particular importance on humanity; as a result, many of the monsters it creates are just as dangerous to humans as anything unleashed by the Hektarch. Worse still, the Anima is a ticking bomb. Right now, it's experimenting to see if it can create a viable survivor. But should the Hektarch gain too much power—should the Anima conclude the war cannot be won—it could trigger another apocalypse, destroying the modern world and starting the cycle again.

One important point: Omen set the Dread in motion through his actions, but destroying Omen now won't stop it. On their own, the Phoenixes weren't sufficient to wake the Hektarch. But now that it's restored, it won't rest until it has destroyed modern civilization.

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR YOU?

As you create new missions and storylines, bear a few things in mind.

There are many aspects to the Dread. The Dread isn't a monolithic entity. The undead and many of the malevolent supernatural entities (such as the **bladestorm)** are creations of the Hektarch. They are mystical weapons from an apocalyptic war. The creations of the Anima are simply designed to survive at all costs; they aren't made to be weapons, but the instinct to survive can easily set them at odds with humanity. The Fallen and others like them, survivors of the Old Kingdoms, each have their own agenda. If you're creating a new challenge, decide which of these orders it belongs to. Consider the idea of **werewolves**. If they're a product of the Hektarch, the werewolf curse is essentially be a bioweapon designed to turn its victims into killers who prey on their own kind. Victims become murderous beasts, eager to slay those they once loved. On the other hand, if the Anima created werewolves, they wouldn't be so innately destructive. They might still lose control due to primal instincts, and some could be driven mad by the experience—they could easily pose

a danger—but it should be *possible* to co-exist with them, whereas if they're tools of the Hektarch, they're simply weapons.

This principle extends to entire missions. If a threat is connected to the Hektarch, it has no purpose beyond destruction and cannot be swayed from its course. On the other hand, Fallen can be bargained with and creations of the Anima aren't driven to destroy humanity. These things could even become allies, while the forces of the Hektarch are only driven to destroy.

A secondary point is that both the Hektarch and the Anima are massive and inhuman entities. They don't communicate directly with their forces. The Hektarch uses the Bones as pawns, channeling the hatred of restless spirits to destroy its enemies…but no Bone commander knows anything about the Hektarch. A werewolf has no direct contact with the Anima and doesn't know how it was created. Phoenixes will begin by figuring out the small mysteries: How do you defeat the Bones? Can you cure the Chant? It's only in the long term they'll start to see the bigger picture.

OTHER ANSWERS

As we said at the start, this is one possible explanation for the Dread. It's a mythology that links the Bones and the Fallen, and it provides room for Dread threats that aren't absolutely evil. But if it doesn't appeal to you, find another path. Here are a few possibilities to consider:

- The Dread is a delayed reaction to Phoenixes. Laetus and his followers were the first Phoenixes, and by returning, they broke the cycle of life and death. It has taken centuries, but the cracks are now beginning to show. In order to restore the balance, Phoenixes will ultimately have to extinguish the Imperial Flame…making the ultimate sacrifice to stop the Dread.

- The Dusk is a parallel world, and the Fallen Folk are its lords and ladies. When the Phoenixes drove them off, the Fallen began planning revenge; the Dread is their war on the Daylit World. This presumes Fallen that are more unified than in the current model and a more coherent geography for the Dusk.

- According to Shadovar prophecy, the end of the world is coming, and among the signs of this apocalypse are the dead rising, cities crumbling, and the natural world turning against humankind. In this prophecy, a chosen few decide which parts of the old world to save and protect so they can become the seeds of the new.

CHALLENGE: THE FALLEN FOLK

OVERVIEW

The Fallen are the denizens of the Dusk, the realm that exists between the Daylit World and the Darkness of death. They come in as many different shapes as there are stories; some are monsters to be feared, some powerful spirits who can turn a peasant into a prince, and others minor sprites who might mend torn pants in exchange for a saucer of milk. The Fallen were most active in Skavia, but the Phoenixes drove them from the Daylit World. The Phoenix Imperium forbid any traffic with the Fallen, and the Devoted Legion strengthened the wards between Daylight and Dusk. Throughout the history of the Empire, the Fallen Folk have been legends. In the wake of the Civil War, some would-be warlocks have dabbled in the old arts, but only a few achieved any success. When the Dread began, many of the old wards were broken. The Fallen are returning to the Daylit World. Some are as terrifying and deadly as any manifestation of the Dread. Others could be valuable allies…but the Fallen never give anything for free.

The Fallen are something between fiend and fey. They are the stuff of stories, and most draw power from something humans can provide. They may feed off fear or love. They may make bargains because bargaining itself is what sustains them. But they always want something…and they always have something to offer, though that something could be "a painful death."

MANIFESTATION

"It's a simple offer, and I'll only make it once." Moonlight gleamed on the Tinker's golden mask. "You take my beautiful flute, whose music will win your true love's heart. In exchange, I take one day of your life. Dawn to dusk, and I choose the day. Do we have an agreement?"

- The Fallen Folk take many forms, but a few things are generally reliable.

- Virtually all Fallen wear masks. Fallen are spirits of the Dusk, and their physical forms are shells that allow them to interact with the Daylit World; in a sense, everything about a Fallen is a mask. So they all wear masks, but they don't have faces behind their masks.

• Most Fallen are modeled on a human form. Looking to the Harvester of Fear (pictured above), it appears to be a robed man. It doesn't actually have legs; its lower body is a mass of fear-energy. But from a distance it could pass for human.

• Each Fallen embodies a particular concept and serves a function. This isn't something they can change or hide. The Tinker at the Crossroads can't disguise herself as the Harvester of Fear, or even as a farmer or soldier; her appearance may change, but she is always a peddler with a golden mask.

• Every Fallen is bound by certain rules and limitations based on their nature and purpose. The Tinker at the Crossroads can only manifest at a crossroads and only for the purpose of making bargains. The Harvester of Fear requires a certain ambient level of fear. Fallen also draw strength broadly from human interest. Whether humans fear them, envy them, or want to deal with them, attention makes them stronger. For this reason, the Phoenix Imperium worked hard to discourage belief in the Fallen. It was hard to accomplish this in Skavia, where they were such an integral part of the culture; but elsewhere in the Empire, most people don't actually believe in the Fallen Folk.

At the end of the day, the Fallen are conceptual entities. Each Fallen was created to serve a specific purpose and possesses powers they can only employ in pursuit of that purpose. The Tinker can't give her gifts away for free; she *has* to strike a bargain. Over the course of thousands of years, each Fallen has evolved. They draw power from human belief, and by creating stories that humans circulate, the Fallen can shape themselves. The rules that bind them are often unique and bizarre. At the core, they may relate to their original function, but other aspects may drift in because of a story retold over many centuries. Perhaps the Harvester of Fear has to flee when faced with a crowing rooster. Maybe the Prince of Blades must stop to mend a broken blade, or can't fight an unarmed foe. Perhaps you can trap the Thorny Queen's soul in a robin's egg and threaten her for its return. This is a way to emphasize that while the Fallen are sentient, anthropomorphic spirits, *they aren't in any way human*. Note this story-shaping is a slow process that has happened over thousands of years and centuries of bargaining with warlocks. It has made the Fallen what they are today, but a Phoenix can't defeat a Harvester by making up a weakness and *believing* it into reality.

The power and capabilities of the Fallen vary tremendously, and essentially can be whatever fits your story. Shoemakers are minor sprites that mystically perform minor domestic tasks. Goblins might have the power to sour milk and similar minor tricks. On the other end of the spectrum, beings like the Harvesters have the power to threaten entire regions. A Fallen lord might be able to cure an illness, build a palace, grant good fortune, or level any sort of curse upon a victim. The Harvester of Fear can consume your fears and give them physical form. The main point is a Fallen is limited by its function. The Harvester of Fear can't make someone love you…unless the only thing standing in the way of love is fear, and he can strip that

away. Even in the case of the Harvester of Fear, the implication in the story is that when his power was at its height, it took a hundred Phoenixes to defeat him. It's only because he is newly returned to the world and hasn't fed on a great deal of fear that a single Wing of Phoenixes has a chance to defeat him. But if you want to have him return later with far greater power, that would be entirely appropriate.

A second critical point is the core of the Fallen always remains within the Dusk. In the mission "Mercy," the Wing is drawn into the Hungry Library, the domain of the Harvester of Knowledge. While they meet the Harvester in the library and can defeat him in battle, the Harvester *is* the library. Defeating his manifested form—whether in the library or the Daylit World—is an inconvenience that disrupts his actions for a time. But the physical form is only a mask; you can't truly defeat a Fallen with physical force. Even the Dawn Legion couldn't destroy the Fallen. The best they could do was drive them away.

One important fact: The language people currently refer to as "Pyrean" is the common tongue of the Old Kingdoms. Fallen have the ability to transcend most language and communicate telepathically, but Pyrean is their native tongue and they all understand it.

LORE

The lords and ladies of the Old Kingdoms dabbled in dark magic, and they became great and terrible. Their deeds were so dark, the Sun feared to rise each morning. This angered the Dawn, who commanded the morning rains to continue until they washed the entire world clear. The flood that followed wiped the Old Kingdoms from the world, but the great lords and ladies weren't so easily slain. Realizing there was no reasoning with the Dawn, they made bargains with the Dusk; she took pity on them and drew them into her shadow, and there they live to this day.

The preceding tale is just one many explanations people have come up with for the origin of the Fallen Folk. Both stories and sages generally agree the Fallen Folk are survivors of the Old Kingdoms. Some suggest their diversity in form and function is based on the sorts of deals they had to make to escape the doom of the Old Kingdoms. Overall, a few facts are absolute. The Fallen are spirits who live in the Dusk and can manifest in the Daylit World under certain circumstances. They possess powerful magic, but they are restricted in how they employ it. They are bound by strange rules, and most want something from mortals.

Any specific Fallen will have stories associated with it. Remembering these tales would be an **Intellect Spread** (The Arcane, Lore, Tradition). It's up to you to provide the stories tied to a particular Fallen, but a strong spread should be able to identify the general powers and limitations.

The deeper facts aren't known to even the wisest scholars, but could be discovered

by Phoenixes over time. The Fallen are often seen as lords and ladies, with the implication they have a sort of civilization in the Dusk. In fact, the Fallen aren't citizens of the Old Kingdoms who somehow survived its downfall. They are *tools* of the Old Kingdoms—the weapons and resources. Most entities identified as "Fallen Folk" were created by the Faeda Concord (page 163). To a certain degree, you can think of the Fallen as artificially intelligent programs. The Harvester of Knowledge was a librarian. The Harvester of Fear was a weapon. The Tinker at the Crossroads was a mercantile system. Shoemakers were simple domestic sprites, performing much the same functions they do today. The basic powers a Fallen possesses are those abilities it needed to perform its core function. Some of the Fallen were destroyed in the final conflict that brought down the Old Kingdoms. Others simply had no sense of purpose following the destruction of their creators. Those that survived did so by evolving—transcending their original design to become something new. They created new identities and fed on mortal belief, allowing it to reshape them. Thus, the Harvester of Fear *isn't* the same being that served the Faeda thousands of years ago. A fragment of that program remains at its core, however, and it still retains its basic function: serving as a weapon that kills people with their own fears. Looking to the Tinker, in her original incarnation she may have simply fulfilled transactions; now she creates them. This isn't simply an act; the Fallen have transformed themselves by creating new identities for this new age. As a result, the Fallen generally don't talk about the Faeda, the Hektarch, or other elements of the Old Kingdoms. If there's a compelling reason, they can try to recall the details of the past, but these things have been irrelevant for thousands of years.

The Fallen need human interaction to sustain them. It's the energy that powers them, and it gives their immortal lives purpose. They don't typically interact with one another while in the Dusk; they have nothing to offer one another. However, as they begin to gain new power and purpose in the Daylit World, new feuds could arise.

Fallen of Other Cultures

Traditionally, *Fallen Folk* refers to the spirits of Skavia—the beings created by the Faeda Concord in the Old Kingdoms. These spirits can physically manifest and are anthropomorphic both in form and the way in which they relate to the world. The term "Fallen" can also be used to refer to any spirit created in the Old Kingdoms. For example, in the mission "Pulling Strings," the Puppeteer is referred to as Fallen. However, like most spirits of the Heartland Alliance, the Puppeteer can't manifest physically. The Guhani spirits that maintain its prison can be called Fallen, but they can't manifest physically and don't have an anthropomorphic consciousness. Beyond this, because the Puppeteer has had little interaction with the world, it still speaks of the Old Kingdoms and the conflict…while the Skavi Fallen have put that world behind them.

MECHANICS

Fallen are diverse by nature. In developing Fallen enemies, think about what their function is and how to represent it. For example, the Harvester of Fear has the ability to make people afraid (represented by the *Exposed* condition) and has a devastating attack that only works on frightened people. The Harvester of Knowledge has the power to cause a victim to be forgotten…and can likewise consume such a victim if this condition isn't removed. No one rule should apply to all Fallen; instead, each one should present a new challenge.

The Arcane Specialty is the primary Specialty relating to the Fallen and the Dusk, and the *Warlock* Trait is often a trump card when interacting with them. The Spirits Specialty is tied to ghosts and natural spirits, so it doesn't usually apply to the Fallen. Lore can often be used unless you feel the task is highly specialized.

Binding and Bargaining

The Fallen were originally created to work with humanity, but even the Faeda bargained with them. On the simplest level, the Fallen appreciate payment for their services. A shoemaker expects to be offered a piece of cheese or a saucer of milk in exchange for its work, and if it's not compensated, it may vandalize the home and it inhabits. The shoemaker is an immortal spirit and doesn't actually need food; but it feeds off the process, the belief, and the energy the mortal generates by following the spirit's protocols.

Beyond such friendly arrangements, there is an elaborate system for dealing with the Fallen; Phoenixes specializing in Lore or the Arcane can take advantage of it. When the proper forms are met, a Fallen is bound to fulfil any promise it makes. Most Fallen are willing to bargain; a Skill Spread isn't required, but can be used to help a Phoenix negotiate or ensure they haven't left any dangerous loopholes. The challenge to Fallen bargains is to make the price something both interesting and significant. Gold is meaningless to both Phoenixes and Fallen. But a life is a commodity with clear value to a Phoenix. In "Mercy," the Harvester of Knowledge offers freedom in exchange for the spirits of the previous Phoenixes in a Phoenix's Flame. Giving this up has no *practical* cost to a player, but from a story perspective, they are condemning a host of past spirits to death…are they willing to do this? In "Pulling Strings" the Puppeteer offers an army in exchange for its freedom; but that army will be made up of possessed innocents. Fallen can ask for very abstract things—a memory, a day in your life—but these should be all the more sinister and costly because of this.

There are protocols for forcing a Fallen to the bargaining table. Usually these require elaborate preparations: binding circles, rare herbs, secret names. Phoenixes can sometimes bypass these protocols by burning Sparks, using the pure power of

their Flame in place of lesser tools. This is done as an **extended Intellect Spread** (The Arcane, Lore); set the value based on the difficulty of the scenario. As this is an act of magic, a Phoenix has to burn one Spark every time they contribute to this spread.

Binding isn't always an option; it's on the table in the mission "Mercy," but not an option in "The Harvest." Ultimately, it's up to you to decide. Should a Phoenix ask, it's something that depends on the particular Fallen and on hundreds of arcane aspects…essentially, are the stars right? Binding provides Phoenixes with a way to defeat a Fallen beyond combat and is a good way to balance the skill-based Phoenixes with the combat-oriented ones, but it it should never become a trivial thing. If Phoenixes know what they're up against, you can add variety and suggest binding as an option under a particular set of circumstances…they have to find a secret name, a particular flower, or a similarly exotic thing. Typically, binding a Fallen restricts it to a particular location. However, assuming binding circles and other formal tools haven't been employed, the binding Phoenix has to remain at the location to keep the Fallen trapped. As such, it's a powerful negotiating tool, but it's not unlimited; if Phoenixes are too demanding, a bound Fallen can still dig in its heels.

STORY ROLE

The Fallen Folk are *alien* and *unpredictable*. Once a Wing has encountered the Chant, they know what to expect from it. With the Fallen, each encounter presents an entirely new challenge.

When creating a Fallen, consider the following things.

- What is its **purpose**? What function did it serve in the Old Kingdoms, and how does this define its basic capabilities?

- What is its **story**? The Fallen have evolved over time. They have shaped and been shaped by the stories told about them. What are the stories people tell about this Fallen, and how has this affected its motivation and its powers?

- What are its **limitations**? The Harvester of Fear needs its victims to be afraid. Does your Fallen have similar restrictions?

- Can you **bargain** with it? Weaponized Fallen such as the Harvester of Fear may not be willing to negotiate with Phoenixes. A Fallen such as the Puppeteer or the Tinker will actively seek to bargain. The Harvester of Knowledge is willing to bargain but just as happy to slowly suck your memories away. What does your Fallen want, and what does it have to offer?

- Can it be **bound**? What's the target number of the extended spread? Are any special elements required to attempt a binding?

- What are its **signs**? Powerful Fallen often have environmental effects. The Harvester of Fear literally leaks fears…the terror-filled mist that surrounds it. The Harvester of Knowledge consumes memories, and people around it forget Lessons and words. What are the ambient effects of your Fallen?

An Immortal Threat

Another element to consider with the Fallen is they are immortal. Destroying a manifestation is a temporary inconvenience. As such, Fallen can be interesting ongoing characters. This ties to the fact that Fallen are creatures of the Dusk…and the Phoenixes return to the Dusk each time they die. If a Phoenix establishes an interesting relationship with one of the Fallen, that entity could show up at some point when they are in the Crucible. This is an opportunity for it to offer a bargain other members of the Wing know nothing about. What does the Phoenix want that Dawn Command can't provide, and what are they willing to do in exchange?

Duskcraft

Phoenixes aren't the only people making deals with the Fallen. The Dread has weakened the barriers between Dusk and Daylight, and anyone delving into the old Skavi traditions can make bargains with the Fallen. Foolish mortals can prove to be just as much of a problem as any manifestation of the Dread. Consider the following scenarios:

- The people of a Skavi community are suffering from a wide range of supernatural afflictions. This is the work of a group of young warlocks, using newfound power to take vengeance for real and imagined injustices. It's a classic witch hunt. It's up to you to decide if the powers wielded by these warlocks can hurt Phoenixes or if it's simply a question of how many mortals die while the Phoenixes search for answers.

- A powerful Fallen entity with a host of lesser spirits at its command is establishing a cult across Skavia and perhaps the Empire as a whole. It plays on people's fears of the Dread to draw them into bargains; does it supernaturally control its cultists, or does it convince them its cause is right? This Moonlit King seeks to recreate the Faeda Concord, raising a particular Skavi noble to be ruler of the region. It could be aligned with the Countess of Hafsbridge, giving her a network of followers that stretches across the Empire—but it could be just as interesting if the intended ruler isn't actually involved. He's the last heir of a family that made bargains with the Moonlit King, but he knows nothing about such things and doesn't want to work with the Fallen. Either way, this can be an interesting building threat that has nothing to do with the Hektarch and the primary forces of the Dread, but that is pursuing escalating schemes in the shadows.

- A Skavi mortal with a close connection to a Phoenix has a problem. Long ago their family made a bargain with one of the Fallen Folk. Now the Fallen is coming to collect, and this friend is on the hook. What's involved in this? Can the Phoenixes buy off the Fallen or face it in battle?

- One of the interesting things about the Fallen is they don't have to be enemies. They aren't innately evil, and their bargains can be quite valuable. But can a Phoenix ever trust them? And can you show all the reasons why the Phoenixes decided this tradition of magic was too dangerous to be allowed to continue?

CHALLENGE: THE BONES

OVERVIEW

An army marches across the Summer Shore. From a distance, they appear to be Humanist soldiers from the Civil War, marching in a perfect classic formation. Fire Chariots ride in the vanguard, and wagons pull heavy siege engines toward the nearby city. The first thing you might notice is the silence. There are no drums, no horns, no officers barking orders at their troops; the army flows forward in perfect, silent coordination. As they draw closer, you can see the banners are rotting. The soldiers wear rusting armor beneath which no flesh can be seen; nothing remains except bare and shattered bone. The dead are rising, and they've come for blood.

As of 594 IC, many crucial questions remain unanswered.

- Is there any way to permanently defeat a force of Bones? The Bones swiftly recover from any form of injury, and as a result, the Empire has yet to win a conflict with them.
- Are the different groups of Bones working together, or are they each operating on their own?
- How much do the Bones remember of their previous lives? What are they trying to accomplish?

The Bones play a central role in "Scartongue," "The Summer Shore," and "The Siege." To date, the Bones are the single most widespread manifestation of the Dread. Finding the answers to these questions and discovering a way to defeat the Bones—even temporarily—would be an enormous victory for Dawn Command and the Empire.

MANIFESTATION

The Skavi warlord wears a torn cloak of rotting bearskin. His lower face is hidden behind a steel mask depicting a snarling bear's jaws. Above this mask, his eyes are empty sockets in an ivory skull. This skeletal champion wields a bastard sword engraved with pale blue runes. A cold wind blows mist across him, and for a moment you can see him in his prime…a handsome, muscular man with ritual scars on his bare chest. Then the mist blows clear and only the bones remain.

The Bones are the skeletal remains of soldiers who have risen from the dead. They are the most common manifestation of the Dread and have appeared across the entire Empire. Bones are always warriors, but they can be drawn from any era in Dalea's history. The greatest threat so far is the Bone Legion—thousands of undead Humanist soldiers ravaging the Summer Shore—but Bones could be Skavi raiders, Grimwald barbarians, Talu soldiers, or even Old Kingdom warriors.

While Bones share common elements, every manifestation has its own unique features. Here are a few things common to all Bones:

- Bones are always warriors. Typically, they attack the same regions and people they fought when they were alive.

- An individual Bone soldier is an ectoplasmic sheath surrounding a framework of bone. It is this ectoplasmic force that actually holds the corpse together; think of it as a poltergeist dragging its bones around.

- They employ the same weapon and tactics they used when alive. They carry the remnants of these tools, but many of them are actually too damaged to perform their original function. Bone Sappers *appear* to carry explosives, but their grenades are rotting and empty; it's the ectoplasmic force that actually creates explosions or flames. The equipment used by Bones can't be salvaged; if they are ever defeated, it returns to its decrepit state.

- Over time, Bones can recover from any form of damage. The rate of this regeneration varies. The soldiers of the Bone Legion recover within seconds and recover Health Levels at the start of every round. By contrast, the Bone Reavers in "Scartongue" can be temporarily defeated, but will return every night.

Beyond this, Bones can vary. The Bones in "Scartongue" can't manifest during the day, and the Reavers raise the corpses of the mortals that they kill. The Bone Legion encountered in "The Summer Shore" and "The Siege" has no issue with sunlight, and it collects the corpses of the dead to create behemoths. Dawn Command has noticed these differences, but doesn't know what drives them.

LORE

The Bones are a new threat never encountered by the Empire before the start of the Dread. While the Shadovar have a long history with necromancy, they have always *worked* with spirits of the dead—never raised their bodies. Shadovar mystics are puzzled by the Bones because it seems impossible for so many restless spirits to be united in a single cause. Taking an army of soldiers from the Civil War, surely you could find *one* so furious that they could seek to fight on…but thousands? And so focused? It goes against all their experiences with necromancy.

In truth, each Bone manifestation *is* a single spirit, whose fury has been tapped and amplified by the Hektarch (see page 160). While it may appear to be dozens or

even thousands of individuals, a Bone army is a dream made real—the dream of a commander whose restless spirit is trying to finish the war it died fighting. The Bones encountered in "Scartongue" are the honor guard of the Kandari warlord Scartongue, who is hounding the descendants of his ancient enemies. The Bones in "The Summer Shore" and "The Siege" are the armies of Humanist general Hadon Pelagius, who still seeks to conquer the Empire. The individual soldiers are merely the commander's memories of their army. If Hadon Pelagius vividly remembers a centurion, the Phoenixes could encounter a Bone centurion with distinctive characteristics and behavior—but overall, the Bone soldiers are entirely interchangeable. They act as Hadon Pelagius generally expects his soldiers to act, but they have no individual identities. Even the unique centurion isn't actually the ghost of that soldier; it's simply Hadon's memories projected onto a corpse.

This is the reason each Bone manifestation is unique: No two dreams are precisely the same. Scartongue imagines his victims rising to fight for him, so they do; Hadon collects the corpses of his victims, and their spirits strengthen him. The dreamlike nature of the Bones is both their strength and their only weakness. The Bone commanders aren't fully connected with reality. They believe they're fighting their ancient enemies. Technically, Hadon Pelagius's forces won the Civil War; he is now fighting the Empire he helped to create. But he still *sees* it as the Phoenix Imperium. Most of all, the Bone commanders don't realize they're dead. They're dreaming a perfect dream in which their forces are victorious…and as long as it continues, their soldiers can't be truly destroyed. The only way to defeat a Bone manifestation is to bring the dream to an end by defeating the commander. Unless the commander *believes t*hey can be defeated, they can't actually be hurt, and any injuries heal instantly. To defeat a Bone commander, a Phoenix must recreate the actual circumstances of that commander's death—which means that the only way to defeat a Bone commander is to learn the details of their story. Until a Phoenix understands the commander, they cannot be laid to rest.

MECHANICS

Deathless Foes

Bones cannot be destroyed unless their commander is laid to rest. Most units of the Bone Legion recover two Health Levels at the start of their turn. As Bones are generally group enemies, this represents multiple soldiers reforming and returning to the fight. Weaker Bones might take longer to recover—returning in an hour, or when night falls. You can also present additional ways to temporarily disrupt Bones. In Scene Three of "The Siege" (page 416), the Phoenixes can make an **extended Intellect Spread** (Difficulty 60; Spirits, Lore, Shadovar background) to sever the connection between Pelagius and a distant unit of Bones. You could allow a similar approach in a situation where a small unit of Bones are far from their

commander. You could also allow the Bones to be defeated for a period of time if the circumstances of their defeat match a particular story tied to the commander's history. Essentially, what makes Bones interesting is that brute force alone can't finish them off. No matter how impressive your Attack Spread is, defeating the Bones requires knowledge…thus creating a balance between the more combat-focused and skill-based Phoenixes.

Ghostlight

To make a Bones commander believe they can be defeated, a Phoenix must become part of the dream. This requires reminding the commander of their final defeat. When a Phoenix builds up connection with the commander, the Phoenix is surrounded by a glowing shroud of ectoplasm, through which it's possible to see a shadowy image of the commander's killer. This is called **Ghostlight**. Fighting a commander involves a simple formula: **The maximum number of Wounds a Phoenix can inflict on a commander in a single turn is equal to the number of points of Ghostlight that Phoenix possesses.** If a Phoenix has a single point of Ghostlight, they can inflict only one Wound on a commander each turn; it doesn't matter how many spreads they make—only the first Wound will last. Note that this limit is per **turn** as opposed to per **cycle**, for purposes of counter-attacks and other things that allow a Phoenix to attack on someone else's turn.

As a general rule, a Phoenix can get a point for something reminiscent of the event. For example, Scartongue was killed by a Kandari warrior wielding a spear. A Phoenix can get one point of Ghostlight by using a spear, and one point by wearing the uniform of a Kandari warrior. However, the stronger the connection, the more Ghostlight is gained; a Phoenix gains two points of Ghostlight if they are attacking with the actual spear used to kill Scartongue, and another two points if the Phoenix actually is a Kandari warrior. In addition, a Phoenix can always generate one temporary point of Ghostlight by either acting out a moment from the commander's death scene or challenging the commander's vision or reality—trying to make them aware of the dream's flawed logic. These sorts of actions only provide a bonus for a single round, and to maintain this bonus, a Phoenix must come up with a new idea each turn.

See page 306 and page 424 for examples of battles with a Bone commander.

STORY ROLE

When you're developing a mission around the Bones, consider a few things.

Commander. The first question should always be, *Who's the commander?* This is the spirit that drives the Bones, and the story of the commander is the key to dealing with them. What is the conflict that drives the commander? Who does the commander think they're fighting? Why are they attacking now? Equally important: Is it possible to defeat the commander during this mission? In "Scartongue" and "The Siege," the Phoenixes must defeat the commander to succeed. In "The Summer Shore," the commander isn't present. The Bones *can't* be defeated—so the goal is simply to push through them and survive long enough to achieve the mission objective.

Frequency. How often do the attacks occur? Is this an ongoing problem or an unexpected event? The Bone Legion in the Summer Shore is a continuous threat; the army of the dead is constantly regenerating and will never go away until its commanders are defeated. On the other hand, Scartongue's raiders attack once each night, and if they are defeated, they don't return until the following night. Where do your Bones fall in this spectrum? If you want to create a scenario using a Bone Chariot, Bone Legion, and Bone Champion, you could connect it to the primary Bone Legion plot. You could also say that this is the anniversary of a particularly terrible massacre and a Bone commander has manifested *just for this one night*. It could be these Bones can't be defeated, and the challenge is saving as many mortals as possible over the course of the night.

Lore. What can the Phoenixes learn about these Bones, and how will the information help them? If there's a commander in the mission, learning their story is critical for any chance of fighting them. If not, knowing the story may still be the key to victory. In the example above, if the Phoenixes recognize that they're dealing with the reenactment of a particular battle, they may be able to guess that all they need to do is to survive the night.

VARIATIONS

The base set includes three different styles of Bones.

THE BONE LEGION. The most visible face of the Dread, the Bone Legion is the Humanist forces that fought the Phoenixes during the Civil War. A mission dealing with the Bone Legion could involve thousands of undead soldiers, and most begin to regenerate as soon as they're injured. This can lead to missions such as "The Summer Shore," in which defeating the Bones isn't actually the goal. The Bone Legion is made up of multiple manifestations, each with their own commander. Defeating Hadon Pelagius in "The Siege" is a serious blow that removes a significant number of Bones, but it's not the end of the Legion. The Bones still hold the Summer Shore; the Phoenixes simply know how to fight them. If you create additional Humanist commanders, consider what makes them different from Hadon Pelagius. If you want to make things more challenging, you could present a Legion whose commander has formed a bond with a *House God* (Page 205). The Bone Legion includes the **Bone Legion**, **Bone Chariots**, **Bone Sappers**, and **Bone Champion**.

GRIMWALD BONES. The mission "Scartongue" involves a small number of Bones—a chieftain and his honor guard instead of a massive army of the dead. The default Reaver doesn't regenerate, but it has the ability to resurrect its mortal victims as undead servants. This same model could easily be used for a Skavi raider; you could replace their *Bloodfire Darts* with an ability connected to the Fallen. This includes the **Reaver**, the **Barrow Lord**, and the **Risen Dead**.

ANCIENT BONES. The **Ancient Bones** and the **Dreadlord** don't appear in the existing mission arc. Remnants of soldiers from the Heartland Alliance in the Old Kingdoms, they could rise up to reenact some ancient battle. The Dreadlord is the commander of this force, and the challenge she presents is that she's from a past era about which nothing is known. You can't defeat her unless you know her story…and there are no records to refer to! There's good news and bad news. The Dreadlord was an Ascendant—a being like a Phoenix—and the bad news is she has the power to drain Sparks from her enemies and use them to power her own Lessons. The good news is she has died multiple times, and died fighting Phoenixes. Choose two Phoenix Schools and two weapons used to kill her. Any Phoenix from the correct School or wielding the right sort of weapon can get a point of Ghostlight. It's possible that a Phoenix could actually be tied to the same Flame as one of the Dreadlord's killers, which means their Talon is the exact weapon once used to kill her; this combination would be worth four points of Ghostlight. The challenge is figuring all this out. The Phoenixes can rely on trial and error, or they can engage her in conversation and try to get her to reveal information. She will see a Phoenix of the proper School as one of her killers, and may reveal the story of her death in her taunts.

CHALLENGE: THE CHANT

OVERVIEW

It happens without warning: Someone begins to chant, singing words in an unknown tongue. This Chanter lashes out at anyone nearby, tearing at former friends with inhuman strength. Those closest pick up the words and join in. Anyone who joins the Chant is lost to homicidal madness; anyone who resists it is torn apart by Chanters. It spreads with terrifying speed and can quickly engulf entire communities. Dozens of villages and a number of major cities have fallen to the Chant. And yet, as the story begins, we have more questions than answers.

- How does a Chant outbreak begin? Why does the first victim start chanting?
- How does it spread? By hearing the Chant or by physical contact?
- Is there any way to save someone who has begun chanting?
- Do the chanted words have meaning? The few who have survived an outbreak haven't recognized the language.

While Phoenixes aren't immune to the Chant, they are highly resistant to its effects. This puts the Phoenixes in a position to study the Chant more closely than any mortal has—and to finally answer these questions.

MANIFESTATION

Over there—a dozen of them. Blood streaks their clothes and skin, and streams of blood trickle from their eyes and mouths. Their motions seem awkward, but despite this inhuman posture, they move with uncanny speed and precision. They chant as they rush toward you. Their voices are rough, but what strikes you is the perfect unison of both song and movement. Individually, the Chanters seem clumsy, but as a group, they move with absolute coordination.

The Chant is a form of contagious mass possession. Victims lose control of their bodies, and form into **Chanter Mobs**. Casual observation reveals these details.

- Chanter Mobs search for victims, attacking anyone who resists infection. A mob acts as a single entity, with perfect coordination—as if a single mind controls their actions. Their escalating Attack value reflects this; as more of them move into position, they use pack tactics to increase the efficiency of attacks.

- Chanters are alive, but they ignore pain and minor wounds, and only crippling injuries can stop them.

- Chanters bleed steadily from all orifices. This is most noticeable around the eyes, ears, nostrils, and mouth, but Chanters also bleed through their pores and leave bloody prints on anything they touch.

- Chanters alternate between standing perfectly still and sudden bursts of motion. Their movements seem stiff and awkward, but their remarkable speed and coordination offset this.

Someone who studies the Chanters closely notices their eyes don't follow their movements, darting around as if panicked. To all appearances, the victims are aware of what's happening, but cannot control their bodies. In fact, a Chanter Mob doesn't perceive the world through mortal senses. A powerful spirit controls the Chanters, and it perceives the world through auras and spirits. Chanters cannot be blinded and ignore darkness, smoke, or similar obstacles. The one advantage Phoenixes have is that the senses of Chanters don't extend as far as human vision; a Chanter can't "see" anything more than ninety feet away. This limitation won't be immediately obvious in close quarters, but if Phoenixes can identify this weakness, it could prove useful in large-scale conflicts.

Whisperers

The Chant slowly drives the blood from the body of its victims and fills their veins with ectoplasm. Ultimately, this kills the victims. In some cases, the new corpse becomes a greater focus for the power of the Chant. A **Whisperer** floats in the air as if hanging from an invisible hook. It no longer has breath to speak, but anyone who gets close to it hears the Chant as a telepathic whisper in their mind.

An aura of telekinetic power surrounds each Whisperer; the creature's high Defense and Health Level values represent this. The physical body isn't especially durable, but the ectoplasmic shield deflects most attacks. Whisperers make no effort to dodge enemy attacks, and when a Phoenix removes a Health Level from one, they are simply weakening this shield; the final blow alone actually strikes.

A Whisperer attacks with telekinetic force, either slowly crushing an enemy or flinging an object at an foe. In addition, the Whisperer can project a focused form of the Chant into the mind of a foe, which can temporarily overwhelm the resistance of a Phoenix.

LORE

The Shadovar weren't always a wandering people. Long before the Empire, the Shadovar lived on the coast of Ilona. The Yon Talu wanted these fertile lands, and they fought the Shadovar, driving them from their homes. The greatest city of the Shadovar was home to a musician named Terethen.

When he saw the Talu slaughtering his people, he crafted a song of sorrow that the angry Shadovar ghosts eagerly took up. These spirits took hold of the Yon Talu, forcing the killers to sing until no breath remained. Terethen died at the same moment as the last of the Yon Talu, and the song of sorrows died with him.

The Chant is a necromantic weapon created by the ancient Shadovar. It was a tool of final vengeance, designed to possess and kill any human who came into contact with it. The Chant was created centuries before the first Phoenixes founded the Empire, and the preceding paragraph is an obscure Shadovar tale that the years have buried. This is indeed the origin of the Chant, but a Phoenix who remembers this story is still left with questions. If the Chant ran its course centuries ago, why is it back now? What determines where it strikes?

The heart of the Chant is a mystical construct, an artificial spirit Terethen crafted from the anguish of his slaughtered kin. It is a gestalt entity with fragments of thousands of souls, and as it kills, it catches fragments of its victims' spirits, using their memories to expand its reach. It isn't truly sentient; it follows a programmed path of relentless expansion. The Chant itself has no desires or feelings, and it can't be reasoned with.

The process of infection consists of two elements. Any mortal who hears the Chant is compelled to join in. When someone speaks the words of the Chant, the gestalt force gains access to their body. It plants an ectoplasmic seed, and as the victim continues to chant, this spreads through blood and bone, at which point the Chant can control the victim's body. This gives the Chanters their inhuman strength. Ectoplasm spreads as the victim chants, forcing blood out of the body until death. In short: When a mortal hears the Chant, they want to join in. If they chant, the spirit seizes control of their body until they die. If they resist, they die at the hands of the murderous Chanters.

The gestalt spirit of the Chant is anchored in a tablet of black stone engraved with the words of the chorus. This is a Shadovar tradition—preserving songs that should never be sung on slabs of black stone. Terethen hid the tablet, in case his people should ever need this weapon again. When the Hektarch awoke, it recognized the Chant as a primitive form of the magic of the Old Kingdoms, and reactivated the dormant gestalt. The tablet has been shattered, and each Shard can serve as an anchor for a localized Chant outbreak. A handful of the Hektarch's servants have been sowing these seeds in communities across the Empire. In some cases, a suicidal agent manually triggers a Shard, but they also respond to strong emotion; once planted, they are mystical mines awaiting activation.

In case a Phoenix delves into metaphysics: The Chant is a gestalt entity that exists in Dusk. The Shards of the slab are the anchors that allow it to touch the Daylit

World and infect people. Among other things, this means all Chanters are spiritually connected; Chanters in Mardonford are controlled by the same spiritual entity infecting the Chanters in the ruins of Talcroft. However, that gestalt force is so vast and inhuman, it can't be influenced in the same way as a simple ghost or typical Fallen; generally the best option is to break the bond between the spirit and the Shard—and thus, the region.

MECHANICS

The Chanter Mob is simple foe that seeks to overwhelm an enemy with sheer numbers. Health Levels can be modified as a story requires; this 30 Health Levels is a relatively small mob. The mob has a high damage modifier, but a low ceiling. Chanters have unnatural strength drawn from the ectoplasm flowing through them, supplementing bone and muscle, but they're only people—they can only inflict so much damage on Phoenixes. When dealing with a mob, every one to two Health Levels represents an individual.

The **Telekinetic Slam** is a powerful attack that removes an Environmental Element from play; whether the attack succeeds or fails, the object used is destroyed. The Whisperer can use an element a Phoenix has already used; it simply means the object is no longer available even for pure color descriptions.

The **Telekinetic Grab** is slow but deadly, especially if a Chanter Mob accompanies the Whisperer. The victim of the Grab is suspended in the air, but is not entirely immobilized; they can attempt any action that seems plausible, though all card limits are reduced by one card. The only obvious way to break the Grab is to kill the Whisperer. However, on their turn, a victim could use the Chant or a countersong to become Hidden to the Whisperer; this causes it to release the grip. Don't volunteer this information—unless a Phoenix makes a *Brilliant Deduction* or a breakthrough seems justified!

Whisperers occur when the body of a victim has built up sufficient ectoplasm. Killing a Chanter releases this force prematurely, so Phoenixes can't create Whisperers accidentally. It's not entirely clear why some bodies can hold sufficient power to become Whisperers and some don't; even if left alone, only a small number of Chanters evolve into Whisperers, while others simply die.

Effects of the Chant

Phoenixes can resist the compulsion to Chant, but they aren't entirely immune to its effects. When a Phoenix is infected with the Chant, they must add an Affliction card to their deck.

AFFLICTION: THE CHANT

A Phoenix afflicted by the Chant remains in control of their actions, but feels a constant yearning to join the Chant. When the Phoenix draws an Affliction card, this urge becomes overwhelming, and they begining chanting. In the brief time before they regain control, they feel terrible pain as cold flame—the blood of a Phoenix—flows from their eyes, nose, mouth, and pores. Remove all Affliction cards from a Phoenix's deck when either they die or the anchor Shard is dealt with.

When a Phoenix affected by the Chant draws an Affliction card, they take one Wound and must choose someone else who can hear them—either a Phoenix or uninfected mortal—to be affected by the Chant. If this victim is a Phoenix, that player adds an Affliction card to their deck. A mortal immediately begins chanting, and becomes a Chanter Mob with HL 3,3 (or add two HL-3 tokens to an existing Chanter Mob).

A Phoenix can acquire an Affliction card a few different ways.

- The *Piercing Whisper* attack of the Whisperer.
- Becoming infected when an afflicted Phoenix draws an Affliction card.
- Interacting with the Chant directly using a mystical power (such as *Psychometry* or the Devoted's ability to take on the Wounds of others).
- Voluntarily joining in the Chant.

If a Phoenix already has two or more Affliction cards in their deck, they don't add any more. Instead, **each time they would add an additional Affliction, they reveal and discard the top three cards of their Action Deck;** if an Affliction card is revealed in this way, it takes effect immediately.

It's extremely easy to join in the Chant voluntarily. Once a Phoenix starts chanting, the words just come naturally. **If a Phoenix chooses to Chant, they immediately become** Hidden **to all Chanter Mobs and Whisperers.** This effect lasts for one round after the Phoenix stops chanting. However, each round the Phoenix chants, they add an Affliction card to their discard pile (or suffer the alternate effects described above).

Understanding The Chant

Few mortals have ever heard the Chant and survived to tell the tale…and none of those survivors have gained any information about the Chant itself. It has the rhythm of a song, but none who have heard it could identify the language. This is because it's in **Pyrean**—the same language Phoenixes learn in the Crucible. Phoenixes learn this language precisely because no one else knows it, and it allows them to

communicate privately. Not even the Phoenixes know where Pyrean originated; no culture in the Empire speaks it. Anyone with a Lore or The Arcane Specialty may know that Pyrean is also "the language of the Dusk"; the Fallen understand it, and Skavi warlocks use Pyrean phrases in their incantations.

The critical point is the Phoenixes have always heard that the Chant is completely unintelligible…but when they hear it for the first time, they realize THEY understand it.

Understanding the Chant

Any Phoenix who listens to the Chant recognizes it as a lament for the dead. By making an **Intellect Skill Spread**, a character can analyze it further. (Lore, Shadovar background)

5–14: The bulk of the Chant eulogizes people who have died. The chorus is accusatory; it blames the listeners for the deaths of these innocents and demands they join the song as absolution.

15–19: Setting aside the chorus, the verses never seem to repeat. Each verse is about a different person. To make this clear, the current verse could be about a Chanter in the group the Wing is dealing with.

20–29: While the verses seem to be evolving, the Phoenix recognizes the *style* of the song. It's a traditional Shadovar dirge. This causes the character to recall the story of the Song of Sorrow—the first paragraph of the Lore section.

30+: At this level, the Phoenix can create a countersong, described below.

A Phoenix who was Shadovar in their first life gets a +5 bonus to this spread. A Phoenix who's currently afflicted by the Chant gets a +5 bonus to the spread; this can stack with the Shadovar bonus. In either case, the Phoenix can use Intellect or Grace for the spread.

Any Phoenix can join the Chant to evade other Chanters. A Phoenix with a deep understanding of the Chant has a better option: devising a **countersong** that masks the presence of the singer without inviting possession. Because the Chant constantly evolves, this isn't something that can be written down or taught to others. In combat, a Phoenix who's gained a legendary understanding of the Chant can make a **Grace Spread** (Difficulty 10) each turn to become *Hidden* from Chanters. Outside of combat, a Phoenix may be able to use this song to help mask the presence of their entire Wing; this is up to the Marshal based on the design of the mission.

Interacting with the Chant

Phoenixes have many ways to interact with the Chant using their skills or powers. Here are a few of the most likely options.

Skill Spreads

Phoenixes may want to use Skill Specialties to try to get more information about the Chant: to determine how it's spreading, if it can be cured, and so on. Use the **Studying the Chant** sidebar as a general guideline for the sort of information this approach can gather and the required success. It is not possible to cure the Chant using a Skill Spread. You could allow a Phoenix to break the Chant's hold on an individual with a legendary Spirits or The Arcane Spread—performing a targeted exorcism that blasts the ectoplasmic infection from their body—but depending on the damage they've already suffered, the victim may still die.

Psychometry

This is a trump card. If someone uses Psychometry on a Chanter or Whisperer, it's the equivalent of a legendary result on the Studying the Chant Spread. They should also get a vision of the Song of Sorrow story: It is a construct forged from the sorrow and pain of thousands of spirits, an ancient weapon of last resort created to defeat a horrific enemy. They can even glimpse the local anchor Shard and get a rough idea of its location. The only drawback? This deep connection to the Chant goes both ways, and the Phoenix should immediately add an **Affliction** card to their deck.

Curing the Chant

Traditional medicine can't cure the Chant, but magic can. If a Devoted uses their core ability to transfer another's Wounds on a living victim of the Chant, the Devoted suffers **one Wound** and adds an Affliction card to their deck. This removes the infection and heals the victim, negating any injuries the Chant caused. You have to decide whether other forms of magical healing can fully remove the Chant or simply repair the physical damage the victim has suffered—prolonging their survival, but not actually curing them.

Aside from magic, there are two ways to cure the Chant. The best way is to find the anchoring Shard and break the connection. This ends the outbreak and frees all the local victims—although people who've been possessed may still die due to blood loss and other injuries. The process for this is described in the **Cleansing a Shard** sidebar. This is the only way to cure multiple victims. In addition, beyond this, a Shard has a limited sphere of influence, and if someone can be removed from this area, the connection is broken and the possession ends. Initially, the sphere of influence is roughly half a mile from the anchor Shard, and this grows as the Chant

Studying the Chant

Any Phoenix observing Chanters can make an **Intellect Skill Spread** (Healing, Spirits, Lore) to draw additional conclusions about the Chant. The precise information provided should vary based on the Skill Specialty used. A Healing Spread will focus on the ways it spreads and how to contain it, while a Spirit Spread will reveal details about the possession.

10–14: The Chant is a form of possession as opposed to a physical disease; a malevolent spirit controls the victims' bodies. They're alive, but between blood loss and injuries, they're definitely dying. Even if the Chant could be broken, many would still die.

15–19: A single spiritual entity controls the victims of the Chant—something far greater than an individual ghost. It's too vast to be targeted by a simple exorcism. The sound of the Chant has a compelling effect, forcing mortals to start chanting. If people can't hear it, they remain unaffected.

20–29: While the sound of the Chant has a compelling effect, it is the act of chanting that drives possession. When a victim chants, blood is forced out of their body. If someone stops chanting, they aren't cured, but the effect doesn't spread. While the spirit is too vast to be exorcised, there is likely an individual or object anchoring it; if this link could be broken, it might stop this outbreak. The Phoenix may also realize chanting makes them invisible to Chanters.

30+: At this level, the Phoenix realizes they could fashion a countersong using the **Understanding the Chant Spread**, and they get a +5 bonus to this spread. They recognize that Whisperers are puppets of the Chant entity, but not the anchor for it.

A Phoenix who's currently afflicted by the Chant gets a +5 bonus to the spread and can use Grace as well as Intellect. Spirits, Healing, and Observation are all valid Specialties.

claims more victims—thus, by the time it has spread across the city, you'd have to get someone miles away from the city to break the curse.

Any mortal who has been possessed by the Chant once and then freed from its control is immune to further possession. While Phoenixes are resistant to the effects of the Chant, they also can't benefit from this immunity; a Phoenix is always at risk of reinfection.

Cleansing a Shard

When a Phoenix acquires a Shard of the Chant tablet, they can break its connection to the Chant gestalt by pouring Sparks into it—literally breaking the connection with their own spiritual power. A typical Shard requires 25 Sparks to cleanse, though the Marshal can raise or lower this number to represent a large or small Shard. While this power is channeled through the Phoenix holding the Shard, any member of the Wing can donate Sparks for this purpose…and if any Phoenix dies by donating Sparks in this way, their death adds an additional 10 Sparks to the pool. Success immediately ends the local Chant outbreak. Chanter Mobs are cured and Whisperers become corpses.

This brute-force technique can be performed by any Phoenix and can be done in the middle of combat. If the Phoenix has at least fifteen minutes and an appropriate Skill Specialty or Trait (*Shaman*, *Warlock*, and so on), they can make a Intellect or Grace Spread to cleanse the stone. Divide the result of the spread in half, and reduce the Spark cost to cleanse the Shard by that amount. If the spread result is legendary, subtract the full value of the spread.

You've taken our home,
Our hope, our lives
Now all of this
we take from you
Our pain compels you
Take up our song
Mourn the fallen
As you fall too

—The chorus of the Chant

STORY ROLE

The Chant is an **outbreak** threat. It can start anywhere and spread rapidly. It consumes innocents and turns those a Phoenix cares about into monsters. When you're developing a mission around the Chant, here are a few things to keep in mind.

Mystery. The first time the Phoenixes encounter the Chant, they don't know anything about it. They don't know how it spreads—through touch? Through sound? Highlight this uncertainty. If the Wing finds uninfected mortals in a scenario, can it save them? Highlight the strange details of the Chant—trails on walls from bloody fingers, erratic movements, terrified eyes.

Time Pressure. The Chant spreads quickly. Physical barriers can hold it at bay, but the longer an outbreak lasts, the more Whisperers appear—and Whisperers can tear

through most obstacles. Meanwhile, every verse of the Chant brings an innocent closer to death. When Phoenixes are dealing with the Chant, highlight this tension. They're always running out of time, whether to contain the outbreak or have any hope of saving the infected.

Innocents Lost. Chanters aren't grisly monsters. They're innocent people, trapped and slowly dying while the Chant uses their bodies to kill their friends. When dealing with Chanters, talk about the individual members of the mob. Are there children? Village elders? Is a Chanter Mob a wedding party claimed in the midst of the ceremony? A band of Shadovar entertainers and the audience? One effective approach is to ask each player to describe a Chanter that catches their eye; this allows you to draw the players deeper into the scene and give them a personal connection to the mob.

Mortal Terror. The Chant is one of the most infamous faces of the Dread. It's destroyed major cities, and people don't understand how it starts or how it spreads. People use extreme measures to deal with any possible threat of an outbreak, as shown in the mission "Chants and Whispers," where the Imperial Army is prepared to firebomb a tenement filled with civilians to contain the Chant.

You can use the Chant many different ways. The mission "Chants and Whispers" is one example: The Wing is sent to retrieve a scholar trapped in the middle of a Chant outbreak. Do they focus on their mission to save the sage, or do they seek to stop the outbreak? Here are a few other ideas to consider.

Simple Outbreak. The Phoenixes arrive right at the beginning of an outbreak. There are no Whisperers, and there may not be enough Chanters to form a mob—but the infected are scattering and searching for victims. Can the Phoenixes locate and contain the affected long enough to find the Shard causing the outbreak? This is especially effective if the innocents are important to the Wing; this can be a good interlude to set in a Phoenix's home community.

Recon and Recovery. Entire cities have been lost to the Chant, and the Empire has given up on these communities. What does Mardonford look like weeks after the Chant? Is anyone still alive? Is it filled with Whisperers, or has the Chant evolved into something new? The Wing must recover something vital from the abandoned metropolis—what will the Phoenixes find there?

Upping the Ante. The Chant can occur anywhere…even in the midst of a totally unrelated mission.

Chant Spreaders. Agents of the Hektarch are spreading the Shards, sowing the seeds of the Chant. Who are these people? Deranged Shadovar seeking vengeance for their lost homeland? Calculating warlocks serving the Hektarch in exchange

for personal power? A Fallen drawing strength from the fear or pain the Chant is causing? Is Omen (page 214) spreading the Chant to build his own power base? When the Phoenixes find a Chant spreader with a dozen Shards, can they talk her down before she triggers all the Shards?

Statistics

Statistics for the Chanter Mob and the Whisperer can be found on page 285. These are the most common manifestations of the Chant, but others could appear. One variation on the Whisperer is the Whisperer Gestalt, as seen in the mission "Chants and Whispers." This represents a group of Whisperers clustered together. In addition to increased Health Levels, it has the ability to maintain multiple *Telekinetic Grabs*. Its increased telekinetic power also allows it to cause minor quakes and ultimately shatter the walls of buildings.

CHALLENGE: BLADESTORM

Created by Robin D. Laws

OVERVIEW

The ancient magical super-soldiers known as bladestorms destroy their targets using a deadly combination of stealth, contagion, and sudden, viscera-shredding violence. Devised by the spirit-shapers of the Guhani Depths to tear through enemy armies, they attack any living being that registers as a fitting target for their annihilative impulses. A bladestorm's true form is a whirling vortex of blades, saws, spikes, pins, and chains. Though terrifyingly effective as ambulatory weapons, these forms require punishing quantities of magical energy to sustain themselves. To decrease their demands for mana, bladestorms transform into bodily simulacra of their most recent victims. This doppelganger mode eats up only a scintilla of the energy the true form requires. Even better, it allows them to prowl around amid living beings passing as one of them. When the targeting rules given it by its long-dead creators kick in, it shucks off the doppelganger form like a cloak of old skin, turns into a tornado of weaponry, and attacks its new victim. If it prevails, it can then adopt the form of the creature it has just reduced to a pool of pureed gore.

Bladestorms survive by destroying living beings. Phoenixes top their preferred kill lists: Tapping a Phoenix's Flame provides a bladestorm the power it needs to reproduce.

MANIFESTATION

A bladestorm in doppelganger mode looks like its last victim. It can create and inhabit a replica body of anything it can kill. It chooses its targets following a complex set of rules recited by the Guhani spirit-shapers who created it. No one knows enough to even look for that original text, much less its precise details. Suppositions based on limited contemporary observations of bladestorms reveal the following. Given a choice, they prefer to attack members of species that possess culture and language, have a humanoid bodily structure, are mammalian, and weigh between one and three hundred pounds. When desperate, though, they'll destroy and inhabit whatever presents itself. Bladestorms have been found in the form of dogs, deer, horses, and in one instance, a war wyrm (page 234). As they feed on the pooled life force of a victim, they can to an unpredictable degree parrot its behavior, copy its speech, and even access its innate magical powers. The war wyrm simulacra, for example, could emit a half-hearted thunder blast.

A bladestorm's imitations rarely stand up to attentive scrutiny. In doppelganger mode, the bladestorm moves and speaks with a time lag. It can reach into its victim's memories to respond to questions or search for adequate reactions but does so clumsily. Rarely does this matter. In most cases, fooling an observer for a minute gives it enough time to approach, attack, and reduce that observer to paste.

A bladestorm in its true form looks like a whirling cloud of sharp things reducing you to paste. Against most victims, it exists for a matter of seconds before settling into its fresh form. In combat with a Phoenix, it might go a few rounds longer before killing or being killed.

LORE

Bladestorms are a product of the Old Kingdoms that have remained dormant until recently. As such, there is no lore available; modern Sages have yet to assemble a clear picture of their origins and life cycle. When one is killed, it tumbles apart into a pile of metallic pieces as the ancient spell that held it together dissipates. It's possible that Dawn Command could learn something from its remains or that a Phoenix could use *Psychometry* to get an glimpse of its ancient purpose.

MECHANICS

The mechanics of the bladestorm depend on its current form.

Mortal Disguise

Typically a bladestorm is encountered in the form of the last creature it killed. This disguise is physically convincing, but bladestorms aren't masters of subterfuge, and a suspicious Phoenix can spot one with an **Intellect Spread (**Difficulty 10; Observation, Deception, Scouting**).** While in a typical human form, a bladestorm has **Defense 6** and **Speed 3**. While in human form, it has one attack**—Frenzy (**standard melee attack**)** Attack 8, Damage x1 (3). If it occupies an inhuman form, it maintains its Defense of 6 and its normal Health Levels; it can use the attacks of the form, but it is always *Stunned*; this reduces its Speed by 1 and Attack and Defense by 2.

A bladestorm maintains a mortal form to conserve energy. **A bladestorm gains 2 Sparks when it kills a mortal, to a maximum of 8 Sparks.** If it kills a Phoenix, it gains a number of Sparks equal to those the Phoenix possessed at the moment of death, with no limit on the maximum number. A bladestorm can burn ten Sparks to split, creating a second bladestorm that is identical in every respect. A bladestorm with no Sparks in its pool is trapped in its mortal form until it successfully kills something.

Typically, a bladestorm will use its mortal disguise to get close to a victim and surprise them with an *Ambush* attack. The first time it does this in a scene, it recovers all of its Health Levels. If it is reduced to zero Health Levels in mortal form before ever making an *Ambush* attack, it may immediately perform this as a counter-attack… so it can't be killed until it has revealed its true form.

Form of Blades

A bladestorm reveals its true form when it makes an *Ambush* attack, shredding its mortal form and bursting out to lacerate a victim. It moves with blinding speed, and this ability to relentlessly barrage its victim is what gives it the power to kill even Phoenixes. Its only weakness is the fact that every attack uses Sparks. If a bladestorm runs out of Sparks, it must revert to its last mortal form, and in this state it can be easily destroyed.

It's very difficult to destroy a bladestorm while it has Sparks. The first time a bladestorm makes an *Ambush* attack, it is restored to full health, eliminating any damage inflicted on its mortal form. While a bladestorm is in its natural form, it is immune to the *Bleeding* and *Vulnerable* conditions, and it treats brutal damage as normal damage. Finally, the moment someone declares an attack against it, a bladestorm can choose to scatter its form. For the duration of the turn, its Defense is doubled. In addition, it cannot suffer more than one Wound on a turn in which it has scattered its form.

The key to defeating a bladestorm is to survive its assault until it runs out of Sparks. Decide how many Sparks it has at the start of a scene; a bladestorm with 8 Sparks is a lethal enemy.

Assassin's Blade

As presented, the bladestorm is a killing machine designed for maximum carnage. The assassin's blade is a variant of this creature designed to target specific individuals. Such a bladestorm has a maximum Spark capacity of 4 and lacks the ability to reproduce, but it is more effective at replicating mortal behavior and operating in mortal form. While in mortal form, it has a Speed of 2, Defense of 8, and its Frenzy is Attack 10, Damage x1 (4). It can shift its appearance in mortal form, and if in a crowd of mortals, it can use its turn to become *Hidden*. Spotting a *Hidden* assassin's blade or piercing its mortal disguise takes an **Intellect Spread** (Difficulty 25; Observation, Scouting, Deception; Trump: *Superhuman Senses*, *Brilliant Deduction*, *Seen This Before*).

STORY ROLE

A bladestorm is an autonomous spell that has long outlived its creators. It is a product of the final war between the Old Kingdoms, created by the Guhani and unleashed onto the surface world as an indiscriminate engine of destruction. The destruction wrought by the Anima (page 164) sent surviving bladestorms into a dormant state. Now the Hektarch has stirred them from this slumber, and they are free to slaughter and feed. The fact that the civilizations they were created to fight have been destroyed makes no difference to a bladestorm; battle is their purpose, and they will fight until they fall.

The destruction of ordinary living beings allows a bladestorm to survive. Each kill generates a pool of occult energy that sustains it until it feels a tug of imminent dissipation and must feed again. The juicier the prey, the larger the pool, and the longer a bladestorm can go without another kill. However, bladestorms need not wait until mana from their most recent kill dwindles before attacking again. To a bladestorm, a Phoenix registers as the most appealing target of all. A bladestorm perceives Phoenixes as the champions and rulers of the surface nations. Thus they are the highest value targets on the battlefield…and beyond that, they allow the bladestorm to reproduce. When a bladestorm kills a Phoenix, it can briefly tap their Flame and use the energy to fission into two equally powerful versions of itself. With no Guhani left to weave the spells to create them, this is now the only way a new bladestorm can come into being.

The predatory activities of one or more bladestorms could form the basis of a mission. After encountering Phoenixes, a bladestorm might commit a series of slayings designed to attract them; some have learned that enough murders become

irresistible bait to Phoenixes. However, a bladestorm could also be a wild card added to another mission. The Phoenixes encounter an imprisoned bladestorm in the "Pulling Strings" mission; a free-roaming bladestorm could make an interesting foundation for an interlude, whether it simply ambushes the Phoenixes or is preying on one of the Phoenix's home towns.

Bladestorms exhibit a quasi-sentience. They can't break the dictates of their programming, make moral choices, or feel empathy. Two bladestorms might access a different set of stolen memory traces, but none of them can be said to have a personality. They can assimilate and retain new information, creating previously unspecified behaviors allowing them to better accomplish the goals laid out by their creators. Those rules impel them to survive to fight again, and show them how to identify and rank potential victims. Their makers didn't give them the ability to stop; they were made to be weapons of final vengeance and last resort. The bladestorms survive and kill, kill and survive, until they are destroyed.

After one or two smaller scale bladestorm incidents, the Phoenixes might be thrust into an epic-scale conclusion in which an entire army of them amasses to battle an Imperial force. In a large engagement, bladestorms leap from one victim to the next in a blur of motion, assimilating and abandoning a series of forms in a matter of seconds apiece. A handful of them can rip through an entire legion of ordinary warriors in minutes. Only the Phoenixes, armed perhaps with knowledge of the original creation spell or some other definitive mega-defense against them, can stop them before they mow their way across the continent in an apocalyptic swath of destruction.

A final possibility: Omen (page 214) acquired an assassin's blade while in Kor Aton and has repurposed it to target Imperial leaders. After one of the Speakers is killed, Dawn Command dispatches the Wing to protect the Emperor or other Speakers. Can they find a way to defend the mortals from the assassin's blade?

STATISTICS

BLADESTORM (Fallen)

DEFENSE 8

HEALTH LEVELS 10, 10, 10

SPEED 1

Execute (*Standard Melee Attack*): Attack 12, Damage x2 (10). This attack costs the bladestorm 1 Spark.

Ambush (*Standard Melee Attack*): Attack 18, Damage x1 (10). This attack can be used only when the bladestorm is in its mortal form and if the target has encountered a bladestorm before the Attack value is reduced to 12. The first time it does this in a scene, it regains all Health Levels.

Scatter Form (*Ability*): When the bladestorm is attacked, it may burn 1 Spark to double its Defense for one turn. It can only suffer a maximum of 1 Wound during a turn in which it has used this ability.

Immunities (*Ability*): While a bladestorm is in its true form, it is immune to the *Bleeding* and *Vulnerable* conditions and treats brutal damage as normal damage.

Mimic Form (*Ability*): The bladestorm takes the form of its most recent victim. This form is convincing, but if there is reason to be suspicious it can be spotted with an **Intellect Spread** (Difficulty 10; Observation, Deception, Scouting). A typical mortal form has Defense 6, Speed 3, and can make an Attack 8, Damage x1 (3). A bladestorm gains 2 Sparks when it kills a mortal and all of a Phoenix's Sparks if it kills a Phoenix; if it has no Sparks, it is trapped in its most recent mortal form until it kills again. The maximum number of Sparks it can gain from killing mortals is 8.

A bladestorm can make a single attack in a turn. An assassin's blade is a variant bladestorm; it has Speed 2, Defense 8, and Attack 10, Damage x1 (4) in mortal form. It has a maximum spark capacity of 5.

CHALLENGE: THE CURSE EWER

By Jason Morningstar

Overview

The Curse Ewer is an old Skavi mystical tradition gone horribly awry. In the Dark Ages, a Curse Ewer was a valued part of a Skavi community. She would consume malevolent magics that would otherwise harm her people, deflecting it and holding it within her. When a Curse Ewer was close to death, a ritual would transfer her burden to a young apprentice, and the village would remain safe. If the Curse Ewer died without passing her burden, her corpse was animated by the dark magics within her, and she turned on her community. This is what the Phoenixes face: a risen corpse whose very blood is concentrated evil magic. Can the Phoenixes find a way to lay a Curse Ewer to rest before innocents fall prey to the curses she carries?

Manifestation

In life, the Ewer is a valued member of the community. Locals will have sharply conflicting ideas about how the Curse Ewer should be treated, even if they are obviously a growing problem. A Curse Ewer literally bleeds evil magic, and to harm them is to invite personal disaster. They know this and won't hesitate to use it against their enemies.

In death, a Curse Ewer is a monomaniacal monster that retains only a glimmer of consciousness—enough to remember every injustice and slight across a long and eventful life, but not enough to tamp down a wild rage. Execration forms a wet film on their lifeless skin and contaminates everything around them. If unrestrained, they head directly for their village and utterly befoul it before following the road toward the nearest town.

A dead Curse Ewer is a lifeless but animate monster, driven by decades of darkness to harm those it protected in life. Their blood courses with execration, the physical embodiment of the evil they have absorbed. An oily rust-red fluid, execration colors the skin and eyes of a Curse Ewer, marking them for life. Stagnant within a lifeless circulatory system, execration seeps out hemorrhagically through decaying pores. Everything it touches is tainted by its many curses.

An undead Curse Ewer is supernaturally strong and shrugs off devastating attacks, which only open bloody wounds and contaminate the attacker. Engaging in a stand-up fight with a Curse Ewer is almost as bad as letting one rampage—everything in the vicinity will be accursed and ruined as a result, including the attackers. For a Phoenix, this means one or more curses for the current lifetime. For everyone else, the result is neither temporary nor easy to shrug off.

Lore

"We're happy here and life is good. Our children are fat, and no evil touches us. We have the Curse Ewer to thank for that, and thank her we do. Truth be told, there is too much darkness up in these hills—too much bad magic—and were there no one to swallow it up, we'd be ruined.

Tudja came to us starving and friendless with no prospects and no hope, and we made her a bargain. She knew what it meant to become a Curse Ewer and we didn't push her—she wanted it. She went through the ritual with clear eyes, glad for a full belly and a warm bed but also glad to be part of something, to be important, to keep innocent people safe. Tudja's a good person deep down, despite everything. Of course, that was forty years ago, and the badness has been filling her ever since. Rotting her slowly from the inside, it is. By her twenty–fifth summer, it was plain what she was, it had already marked her. The evil was in her blood, and her veins grew dark. Now, after so many years, she's just a shadow of that pretty, hungry girl who came to us, made the pact, and took on the mantle of a Curse Ewer.

And now she's old, Tudja is, and we're afraid of what's coming. The last Curse Ewer we had was sealed alive into a cave in her final years—she died there and still rails against us, and may the Gods help us if that monster ever claws her way free. Insane, dripping calamity from her very pores, hateful and restless and driven to be avenged of us, we who loved her and cared for her. And we do love Tudja, despite the way she has changed, despite everything. We wish her peace, but there can be no peace for a Curse Ewer. She took the bargain. She knows how it must end."

In Skavia, a young person—usually someone otherwise indigent or desperate—is sometimes called to the life of a Curse Ewer. Such a person makes a sacred covenant with a village or town to keep them free of malevolent magic in exchange for meals and shelter. A powerful apotropaic ritual seals the agreement, which lasts a lifetime and beyond. While a Curse Ewer is active, a village enjoys good fortune and freedom from evil spirits and supernatural mischief, all of which is reified by the magical volunteer.

Usually a Curse Ewer enjoys a sideline as a warlock, fortune-teller, or cunning man, but their main role is as a living container for evil. This tradition began in the Dark Ages, and the Curse Ewer would absorb the darkness that flowed from the Dusk and the Fallen. In those times, a Curse Ewer was a necessity for a village, but also feared—and rightly so. The blood of a Curse Ewer courses with execration, the physical embodiment of the evil they have absorbed. An oily rust-red fluid, execration colors the skin and eyes of Curse Ewers, marking them for life.

Execration intensifies and compounds within a Curse Ewer's body, and the older they are, the more potent it is. A single drop might just promise bad luck, but a person liberally sprayed with the filthy stuff is doomed to misery, pain, and heartache. Land soaked in execration will grow barren—or worse. Their blood is—literally—magical poison, and after four decades absorbing curses and malignant ghosts, only execration remains to sluggishly flow through distended, ropy veins. This is when a Curse Ewer dies, and a village's trouble truly begins.

The Phoenix Imperium never persecuted Curse Ewers, because in and of itself the tradition isn't dangerous; as long as there's no dark magic in a region, the Curse Ewer is simply a harmless superstition. Throughout the history of the Empire, a Curse Ewer has been a sort of good luck charm for a village, but few ever absorbed enough darkness to pose a threat in death. This has dramatically changed in the last few years. A Curse Ewer can protect her village from the Dread, but few villages remember the dangers that can be posed by a Curse Ewer—or the rituals to deal with it.

Mechanics

Laying a Curse Ewer to Rest

It's possible to physically defeat a Curse Ewer. They can fight on despite terrible injuries, and a Ewer must be torn to pieces before it will fall. However, this will unleash all the pent-up curses within it on the surrounding area and permanently scar the region. Fortunately, there are other options.

If a suitable mortal volunteer can be found, the apotropaic ritual investing them as a Curse Ewer will also drain the previous Curse Ewer, rendering it a lifeless husk. This is a dreadful sacrifice and, perhaps more importantly, only a temporary fix. The monstrous cycle will continue. Not just anyone can become a Curse Ewer, and it's possible a good candidate may not be available, may be many days away, or may be a dear friend or loved one. A Phoenix with *the Arcane*, *Lore*, or *Tradition* Specialties can identify a suitable host. The ritual must be performed in the presence of the current Ewer, and it is an **extended Intellect Spread (**Difficulty 60; The Arcane, Lore**)**. The *Warlock* Trait is worth +5 in this spread, and every time a Phoenix contributes to it, they must burn 2 Sparks.

A Phoenix willing to die at the same moment a Curse Ewer is destroyed can consume a lifetime of darkness and take it with them back to the Crucible, ending the terror at considerable expense to themselves. Their new incarnation inherits a deep curse that remains terrible and permanent across all their future lives. This isn't represented by a card: It's up to you to determine the nature of the curse and exactly how it manifests.

Spray of Execration

Any time a Phoenix hurts a Curse Ewer with a melee attack, they must come up with a curse that would ruin a mortal's life. It must be worse than any curse previously named for this effect in this scene; you are the final judge of this. The Phoenix suffers that curse, which remains with them until they die and are reborn. If they can't think of a curse—or choose not to—they suffer two *Bleeding* conditions instead.

Contamination

A Curse Ewer is a locus of malign magic. Just being in its presence brings misfortune, and contact with its corrupted blood has lasting effects. Many of these effects won't have a concrete effect on a Phoenix, but they can ruin the lives of mortals. The Curse Ewer's *Curse of Doom* attack can place an extreme curse on its victim, but otherwise there are no concrete mechanics for these; it's up to you to describe the ongoing contamination and distribute curses as you see fit. If a new Curse Ewer is appointed, they can absorb incidental or significant effects…but a curse from extreme exposure can only be removed by the death of the victim. Use the following lists for inspiration about the effects of execration, and feel free to add your own curses.

Incidental or Environmental Exposure

These curses can be acquired simply by being in a contaminated area or touching a contaminated object…so anywhere a Ewer has been or anything it's touched. These effects linger anywhere a Curse Ewer has been injured.

- Your trees, or the trees of your closest friends, will break and wither; your orchards will bear no fruit. If you keep bees, they will swarm and fly away, or die in the hive after attacking you.
- Your livestock, or those of all who hold you in friendship, will disappear or die in the fields.
- Your animals, or those of your entire village, will sicken and become tainted; they will produce foul and sour milk or go dry, eggs will be laid rotten.
- A vengeful ghost will haunt you or one of your loved ones.
- Misfortune will mar your family and personal life.
- Your home will be broken and divided.
- A loved one will become dangerously ill.
- You will be wracked by sharp pain.

Significant Exposure

These effects come from being splashed with fluid or having close physical contact with an Ewer. These effects can linger in a location where a Curse Ewer was slain.

- Your crops, or those of your entire family, will be blighted and stunted or die outright.
- You will suffer a severe and debilitating illness.
- Some valuable structure belonging to a close relative will burn to the ground.
- Unclean spirits will follow you and interfere with your business.
- Your water, or that of your kin everywhere, will flow befouled or dry up in your well, cease flowing altogether, or be muddied or contaminated.
- Your livestock will trample your neighbor's fields and ruin them; your dogs will destroy your neighbor's chickens and goats, breeding murderous enmity.
- Love will flee from you.
- Bad luck will dog you in business and commerce, and you will be reduced to penury.
- You or your beloved shall miscarry or be barren, or you shall birth monsters.
- You will be consumed by disease and begin to rot from within.

Extreme Exposure

These severe curses are acquired by a direct curse with the Ewer's *Curse of Doom*, by getting the Ewer's blood in one's mouth, eyes, or nose, by contact with the Ewer's viscera, or by being covered in its blood. The first few of these have concrete mechanical effects that could immediately affect Phoenixes fighting the Ewer; the others are broader in their impact.

- Your vitality will wither, and your stamina will vanish. **Phoenix Effect:** The victim is permanently *Vulnerable*.
- You shall be constantly tormented by uncontrollable horrific fits and visions. **Phoenix Effect:** The victim is permanently *Exposed*.
- You will be gripped by madness and pose a threat to those you love. **Phoenix Effect:** The victim is permanently *Enraged*. They are driven to behave in a reckless manner that endangers others; if they don't play this up, you can apply collateral damage (to mortals or property) to attacks that they make.
- You bleed profusely, and you can die from the least injury. **Phoenix Effect:** Any time the victim suffers one or more Wounds from an attack, they receive a *Bleeding* condition.

• You will be shunned, ridiculed, or driven out of your home and community as a traitor, villain, or false friend. **Phoenix Effect:** Phoenixes resist this, so you won't be driven out of Dawn Command. However, all mortals—including mortals who work for Dawn Command—will treat you with fear and suspicion, and attribute any misfortune to you.

• The ghosts of those you love will be tormented and haunt you with their suffering.

• A loved one will die suddenly through accident, misadventure, or mystery—perhaps in terrible ways—trampled by a horse, burned up in a fire, or drowned in a well. This will continue over time until all those you love have been lost.

• Your land and property will burn—home, barn, stable and field—and fires will take everything you value, up to and including your children.

• It will rain for 80 days straight, or there will be no summer or no winter and only drought, or evil storms will menace the open places, or floods will drown the low places.

Story Role

While an undead Curse Ewer poses a physical threat, the greater challenge is the fact that destroying it with brute force has a lasting impact on the region where it dies. As such, it's best used in a place that has some significance for one of the Phoenixes. A curse may not be too great a burden for a Phoenix, but do they want to inflict that same curse on their family or friends? Similarly, the path of having a mortal take on the burden of the Ewer has more weight if this mortal is a family member or loved one.

By default, the assumption is that the tradition of the Curse Ewer was never suppressed by the Empire. However, there are a number of different ways you could interpret this.

• The Ewer's village has maintained this tradition in secret. In this case, the nature of the burden is known. A Phoenix could be called in when an elderly Curse Ewer is close to death. There is no suitable mortal to take the burden; what do they do?

• A young Ewer could abandon the traditional passive role and use their power to seize control of their village, perhaps with the aid of other creatures of the Dread.

• A more powerful entity could capture a beloved Ewer hoping to harvest their execration and use it as a weapon.

• The tradition of the Curse Ewer hasn't been practiced for centuries—until a community learns of it and tries to revive it to contain the Dread. These people didn't know the risks or what would happen when the Ewer died. This is a simple option for a rampaging Ewer, and it can be used in any part of the world.

• While the tradition was abandoned long ago, the corpse of a long-dead Curse Ewer is raised by the Dread. They break free of their crypt and attack their ancestral village.

STATISTICS

CURSE EWER (*Undead*)

DEFENSE 6

HEALTH LEVELS 4 (x10)

SPEED 2

Curse of Doom (*All–or–Nothing Ranged Attack*): Attack 14, Damage 1 Wound, and the victim suffers a curse from the execration extreme exposure list (see Challenge entry). The victim may avoid this curse by immediately burning 5 Sparks. Otherwise the curse lasts until the Phoenix is reborn.

Refill the Vessel (*Active Ability*): The Ewer regains two Health Levels (HL 4), but suffers a negative condition for the duration of the scene. Conditions are applied from this list in this order: *Exposed*, *Vulnerable*, or *Bleeding*. It can suffer *Bleeding* multiple times.

Spray of Execration (*Passive Ability*): Whenever the Curse Ewer suffers one or more Wounds from a single attack, ask the Phoenix, "What would ruin your life?" The player must quickly describe a curse severe enough to ruin a mortal's life. If the player can't think of a unique curse, they suffer two *Bleeding* conditions instead. All curses last until the Phoenix is reborn.

Contamination (*Passive Ability*): A Curse Ewer spreads misfortune by its presence. See the Mechanics section for more information.

A Curse Ewer can make one attack or use one active ability per turn.

CHALLENGE: HOUSE GOD

By Mary Robinette Kowal

OVERVIEW

During the Dark Ages, the Talu Houses dominated Ilona through the power of their House Gods. These powerful spirits bonded to mortal avatars who served as their anchors in the Daylit World. Talu priests performed rituals to draw the attention of the House God and to extend its reach, allowing a House God to affect an entire city-state instead of just the area around its avatar.

The Dawn Legion banished the House Gods and placed wards between Dusk and the Daylit World to keep them from returning. With the onset of the Dread, those barriers have grown weak, and a few of the House Gods are touching the world once more. However, much has changed in the last five hundred years. The Talu are spread across the Empire, and most of the techniques and rituals for working with the House Gods have been forgotten. But there is one reliable method that all Talu remember: placing a child into the room where the House God was venerated. If the process works, the House God attaches themselves to the well-being of the child, who then serves as an avatar of the House God.

This child avatar does not control the House God, but it does respond to the avatar's moods and whims. Anything the House God perceives as a threat to its avatar is answered with horrific destruction. But in the middle of that destruction is often an innocent child. Can the Phoenix find a way to stop the House God without hurting the avatar?

MANIFESTATION

House Gods do not have a visible presence. They follow their avatars, whom they protect at all costs. In the past, priests used a specific system of rituals to communicate their needs to the House Gods. Without access to these tools, the only way to control a House God is to manipulate its concern for the child avatar. Each child then has a "priest" who "explains" the child's needs to the House God. For instance, they might interpret crying as "kill those intruders." The better the avatar is treated, the more the House God helps the priests. As a child ages, it begins to state its own wishes. Ideally, the avatar serves as a benevolent ambassador to the

House God…but in the hands of a spoiled or spiteful child, the House God is a dangerous power. A cautious and cruel family might cut out the tongue, so the child can never state their own desires…though this might not end well for the family.

A House God can manifest effects approximately a half mile away from its center, but the farther away from the center of influence, the weaker the effects. The House God core is bound to its avatar. Since they aren't visible, the only sign of a House God's presence is a child with a circle of destruction around it.

LORE

"My cousin's daughter was a beautiful infant. You must understand that it was a great honor for the priests to choose her as our Goddess Valona's avatar. We knew her current avatar was ailing and his time would come to release his corporeal form and rejoin the Goddess. When Eudokia was born, it seemed propitious timing, but my cousin...he had married outside the family, and his wife wanted to dedicate her daughter to the House God of her *family.*

The family priest tried for days to convince the mother to let him take the infant, but she kept refusing because another woman was expecting. He agreed to wait, because the bloodlines would be purer.

Then Manus died, and we were without an avatar. No other child was ready. That same day, another beast came out of the woods and killed some of our family.

We tried praying, of course we did. But we are not worthy to speak to the House God directly. We needed someone pure—an innocent—to speak on our behalf. So the priest just took the girl and conducted the ritual without consulting anyone.

And he was right.

Our house has been safe and prosperous since then. In fact, we've been able to extend that safety to our neighbors. They reward us for the protection, but that seems only fair, doesn't it?

As for my cousin's daughter...if she were not the holy avatar of Valona, some might call her spoiled. But she keeps us safe. It's only right that she be allowed to eat whatever she want. And she is so pure, she doesn't need to bathe.

Her mother tried to brush her hair once. It was a good reminder that none of us are worthy to touch her—not without being burnt by Valona's Purifying Fire. And we're safe now. That's the important thing."

House Gods were created by the Heartland Alliance of the Old Kingdoms (page 162) to serve as household security systems. Over time, their definition of "household" expanded to protect a family across a wide location—a neighborhood, a street, or an entire city-state. In the Dark Ages, these spirits bound themselves to those

families that most closely matched the bloodlines they'd been designed to protect. With no means to understand the true nature of these spirits, the Talu created their own legends and myths around their House Gods. Some of the House Gods fully embraced these new personas; others largely ignored them, focusing solely on their purpose as protectors of their family. Thus, the gods of the Yon Talu were cruel and demanding, while the gods of the Dol Talu were largely passive and acted only to defend their charges.

It's been almost six hundred years since the House Gods were banished, but there have always been those who continued to worship them, with no real understanding of how they operate. These people simply remember that the House Gods protected their families. Some have presented their children in the manner they recall from their stories…and now, with the walls to Dusk growing thin, some of the gods may answer this call.

MECHANICS

House Gods share a common foundation, but each has a unique set of tools to work with. Most of these served some sort of domestic function long ago, but have since been amplified and repurposed into weapons. A House God with the power to calm its family can use this to induce torpor or bedlam. Heat is a common tool, and many gods can burn their enemies—the Pel Talu defined Pelaton as a warlike god of flame, for example, and the House God embraced that role. By contrast, the Deo established Verata as a cunning goddess who advises rogues, and she developed the power to whisper to those with Deo blood. The following sections pertain to how a House God *fights*, but feel free to grant them whatever additional cosmetic abilities seem appropriate.

By default, the avatar of a House God possesses an exceptional Defense score. When describing a battle, establish this based on the god's nature—a fire god could deflect attacks with shields of flame, while a subtle goddess might confuse attackers. All avatars possess superhuman strength. They are remarkably durable, but still mortal; if an attack bypasses their Defense, they are easily taken down.

Divine Request

Once an avatar is fully integrated with a House God and has grown into its role, it can speak with the god's voice. This has a powerful coercive effect that few mortals can resist; provided the request isn't clearly self-destructive, most mortals instinctively obey. Phoenixes can make a **Grace Spread** (Difficulty 15; Resolve; Trump: *Absolute Conviction*) to resist this effect; otherwise, they must obey the request for one turn, after which they shake it off. This is a common power among House Gods, but it can only be used by an experienced avatar who is closely attuned with the god; as a result, a newly bound infant avatar won't possess this ability.

Divine Nature

Each House God should have two or more divine abilities. Use this list as inspiration, but expand it as needed.

• **CALL LIGHTNING** (*Standard Ranged Attack*): Attack 15, Damage x2 (6), and the victim is *Stunned* for one turn.

• **HURRICANE** *(Standard Ranged Attack*): Attack 18, Damage x1 (4). This can target up to three victims, and if a victim's Defense Spread has a value of less than ten, the victim is *Stunned*. An avatar with this ability can often fly.

• **INFERNO** (*Standard Ranged Attack*): Attack 10, Damage x2 (6), and the target gains 1 *Burning* condition. The House God can target one specific creature it can see, or all creatures (friend and foe) within a radius of up to a hundred feet of the avatar. In addition, this avatar is immune to damage from *Burning*.

• **INCITE BEDLAM** (*All-or-Nothing Ranged Attack*): Attack 12, affects all targets within range of the House God's voice. Damage Special—Mortals are driven mad, and Phoenixes are *Exposed*. If an *Exposed* Phoenix attacks the House God, it may select a different target for the attack (after the value of the spread has been determined). A Phoenix can remove this condition by making a **Grace Spread** (Difficulty 15; Deception, Resolve).

• **EARTHQUAKE** (*Special Attack*): This effect inflicts 15 points of fortification damage against nearby structures (enough to destroy a typical building) and all nearby creatures (other than the House God) are *Stunned* for one turn.

• **GRANT FAVOR** (*Active Ability*): Targets one being within sight of the House God or a priest who properly invokes it. The beneficiary receives a +10 bonus to the value of the next spread they make (or a +10 to Attack or Defense for one turn). This effect lasts until the beneficiary makes a spread or until the House God grants its favor to another being, whichever comes first.

• **HEALING TOUCH** (*Active Ability*): With a touch, a House God can remove 1 Wound; remove all conditions currently affecting someone; or remove all Afflictions currently affecting someone. The House God can target itself with this effect. It can restore life to a dying mortal, but not one that is already dead.

• **SCAPEGOAT** (*Passive Ability*): When the House God loses its last Health Level, it can have a nearby priest die in its place, as long as one is available. The priest dies and the House God is restored to full health.

• **CONSECRATION** (*Passive Ability*) While the House God is within its house or place of power, undead cannot enter it and Phoenixes must burn 1 Spark for each turn they remain within it.

• **FOURFOLD RETRIBUTION** (*Passive Ability*) Whenever the House God takes a Wound from an attack, the attacker takes 12 Damage. There is no defense against this power. In addition, any time an attack places a Condition on the House God, the attacker also suffers that condition.

• **PETRIFYING VISAGE** (*Passive Ability*) Once the House God activates this ability, gazing at the House God causes mortals to turn to stone and causes Phoenixes to add an Affliction card to their deck. Phoenixes can avoid looking at the House God if they've been warned, but acting blindly reduces the card limits on all spreads targeting the House God by one card. The Affliction effect is *PETRIFICATION: When an Affliction is drawn, discard two Grace cards. If you can't, you have been turned to stone and are dead.*

These are examples, but extend this list as you see fit.

Defeating a House God

There are three basic ways to defeat a House God.

• **Kill the avatar**. This is the simple answer; once the avatar is slain, the House God will be returned to the Dusk and cannot return until a new avatar is properly consecrated. However, there's two drawbacks. The first is that the avatar may be an innocent. The second is that as its final action a House God can unleash a burst of destructive power (based on its divine nature) that can devastate everything within a half-mile radius.

• **Perform the Shutdown Ritual.** House Gods were created by the Ascendants of the Heartland Alliance. They are tools—and there are rituals to shut them down. This isn't an option under normal circumstances; Phoenixes will have to have learned significant information about House Gods. This could involve studying ancient records (an account of one of the Devoted of the Dawn Legion who first fought them; records from the Heartland Alliance; etc) or using Psychometry on the avatar. If a Phoenix is capable of performing it, the ritual is an **Extended Intellect Spread** (Difficulty 80; The Arcane, Lore). *Warlock* and *Exorcist* are both worth +10 in this spread.

• **Win The God's Favor.** If the avatar is still a child and the bond is weak, Phoenix can simply win the favor of the avatar; the House God looks with favor on anyone the avatar likes. Diplomacy and Grace can convince the avatar to use their powers for good, though the danger of abuse always remains.

STORY ROLE

In deciding to use a House God, the first question is whether it is **active** or **passive.** An active House God is fully bonded with its avatar. The two speak with one voice; it can use Divine Request; and it is fully aware of what is going on around it. This only happens if proper binding rituals were performed and the avatar has had time—potentially years—to develop their rapport with the god. Otherwise, the god is passive. They experience the world solely through the thoughts of the avatar. There's no way for a Phoenix to communicate directly with the spirit; they can only work with the avatar and hope the spirit doesn't perceive them as a threat. The next question is whether the people around the House God intentionally bound it to the avatar, or if they don't fully understand what is going on.

Here's a few approaches you can take with this.

• A family's infant has become the avatar of a passive House God. This wasn't intentional and the family has no idea what's going on… however, the child's tantrums can cause madness and flame. The child is too young for any effective communication. Can the Phoenixes identify the nature of the threat? Can they find a shutdown ritual, or will they kill an innocent child?

• A passive House God is bound to a child in an urban family. They are protecting their neighbors (using its abilities of consecration and healing) but the familiar patriarch has established himself as the child's "priest" and is demanding increasingly ridiculous tribute.

• A passive house god is bound to a child… but the child is cruel and vindictive, and using his power in a destructive manner.

• A Talu child has been stolen by someone who intends to use it as the avatar of a house god; the family just wants their child back.

• A Talu House in the Fens has successfully restored an active House God. However, the House God is ruthless and cruel, and is demanding sacrifice and bloodshed. Do the members of the house embrace their terrifying patron, or do they regret their actions?

• Two Talu Houses have restored their gods… but the gods are more concerned with pursuing an ancient feud between the houses than protecting their families from the Dread. Can the gods be banished before they destroy the city with their vendetta?

STATISTICS

HOUSE GOD *(Fallen)*

DEFENSE 20

HEALTH LEVELS 3,3

SPEED 2

Divine Strength (*Standard Melee Attack***):** Attack 12, x2 brutal damage **(6)**

Divine Request (*Active Ability***):** The god makes a demand. A Phoenix can resist this by immediately making an **Intellect** or **Grace** spread **(**Difficulty 15; Resolve; Trump: Absolute Conviction**);** otherwise they must follow the order. Few mortals can resist this.5

A House God can make a single attack or use an active ability on its turn. Most House Gods have additional abilities based on their nature; see the Mechanics section for additional information.

CHALLENGE: ICHTRYO

Created by Javier Grillo–Marxuach

OVERVIEW AND LORE

Ichtryo is a living object lesson in not judging a book by its cover.

Even before the final war laid waste to the Old Kingdoms, the Atavi strove to find ways to spread the message of peace, tolerance, and collaboration among all living things. To this end, a group of adventurously foolhardy monks took to the seas in a vast, mobile monastery built atop a series of barges, hoping a detailed study of school behavior in fish would help them in their attempts to better understand collaboration and colony behavior in living organisms.

After spending many, many years living like fish—and, subsequently, dying like fish—the monks found their efforts thwarted. That is, until a chance encounter with a primordial creature redeemed the entire doomed experiment. As the last few survivors faced certain death from dehydration and exposure, an unusually psychoactive species of fish (originally named the Ichtryoicterus for their yellow color) gently guided them back to land and safety. The fish's greatly advanced sense of empathy perceived the monks' distress and need for help.

In addition to its ability to communicate telepathically and its highly-developed sense of empathy, the Ichtryoicteri were also remarkable for their ability to heal quickly from all damage: They are essentially unkillable. Those lucky enough to have communed with Ichtryi have come to believe that Ichtryi can actually choose the time of their passing.

Once rescued, the monks continued to commune telepathically with their saviors—whose sole desire was to explore the land. Being nigh-immortal gave the Ichtryi eons to get to know the oceans, and all that remained was the world above.

The monks and fish struck a bargain wherein powerful magic was brought to bear to give the fish their heart's desire…with the fish's agreement that, in exchange, they would become living lessons about peace in a world that—at the time—seemed to understand only war.

Thus—with the addition of a pair of spindly legs and a powerful enhancement in the Ichtryoicterus's pineal gland that resulted in a large protruding globe at the center of the fish's forehead—Ichtryo was born.

MANIFESTATION AND MECHANICS

Ichtryi appear to all as huge bipedal yellow fish with a gnarled, fanged mouth, a glowing orb at the end of a stalk between the eyes, and webbed feet at the end of very muscular legs.

Although Ichtryi are quite friendly, their generally menacing look combined with their standard greeting leads any encounter to immediately seem perilous. They tend to rush any new life forms they meet while issuing a whine of salutation (which underwater is quite pleasant, but on the surface sounds like a war cry) and baring their fangs (which to them is the highest form of friendship).

Basically, any Wing that encounters an Ichtryo—or a school of Ichtryi—will likely believe it is under attack unless they've had a previous successful encounter with an Ichtryo.

If not immediately attacked, Ichtryo will proceed to aggressively probe anyone it encounters. While all it's doing is searching for travelers who carry the seaweed snacks Ichtryi enjoyed so much when they ploughed the water, their messy efforts will most likely be mistaken for hostile theft by the party. Apparently, the clumsy attempts of a massive, land-lubbing fish to get the food they crave—and some travelers have been known to carry—most frequently feels like an attempted attack with large, bony heads and sharp fangs. This is an Attack with a value of 4; if the victim doesn't defend at all, it's entirely harmless.

Upon sighting Ichtryo, any player will automatically be given the opportunity to strike first…and that's when the real lesson begins.

On the turn after it's damaged, an Ichtryo is restored to full health, even if it was reduced to zero Health Levels. It reciprocates with a psionic blast that strikes an attacker for the same amount of damage they dealt the Ichtryo—albeit in the form of a withering and debilitating wave that drains the attacker's life-force and will to live. This effect is similar to the Devoted Combat Style *Passing Pain*.

It's important to emphasize that the Ichtryo is *being* hurt; bones may be broken, blood will flow. You want the Phoenixes to feel that it might be possible to defeat it, up to the point where they reduce it to zero Health Levels and it still doesn't die; at this point, it is likely clear that it can't be killed. If all Phoenixes are slain before this happens, the attackers are revived immediately through a massive blast of empathic healing delivered through the Ichtryo's pineal gland. All Phoenix injuries will be restored.

The encounter continues until the players realize the only way to win is not to play. If they surrender peacefully and respectfully, their health is restored to the level it was at the beginning of the encounter, and the Ichtryo delivers a strong, psionic blast of calm, well being, and empathy as a parting shot. If a Phoenix shows particular wisdom or compassion, or works to stop the others from fighting, you could give them the *Favored By Fate* Trait (if it is available).

Anyone surrendering to an Ichtryo will be asked through telepathy to compose a three-line poem—the first and last lines must rhyme—with a theme of peace, conciliation, and oceanic imagery. Although that player will not be included in any psionic blast damage should a melee occur, the penalty for not appeasing the Ichtryo's poetic charge will be a loss of health deemed appropriate by the Marshal as a penalty for not fully embracing the ethos of friendship and peace embodied by the Ichtryo.

The poem must be different for all encounters with Ichtryi—players may not use the same poem twice, regardless of whether they encounter the same or different Ichtryi. These creatures are psionically linked one and all and will recognize the recycling of material. Punishment for this is at the Marshal's discretion.

If a player is carrying seaweed and offers it to the Ichtryo before the encounter can devolve into a melee, the Ichtryo will recite a three-line poem about peace—preferably with a rhyming first and last sentence and some form of maritime image—and back away peacefully.

If offered meat of any kind, an Ichtryo will initiate the melee with a psionic blast (standard ranged attack): Attack 18, Damage x2 (6). This damage will not be restored should the melee end peacefully.

Ichtryi are vegan.

STATISTICS

ICHTRYO (Atavi)

DEFENSE 6

HEALTH LEVELS 4 (x8)

SPEED 1

Psychic Blast (*All or Nothing Ranged Attack*): Attack 18, Damage Special; the victim suffers a number of Wounds equal to the Wounds they last inflicted on the Ichtryo.

Bumble (*Standard Melee Attacl*): Attack 4, Damage x1 (2). If the victim doesn't defend at all, the attack is harmless.

Regeneration (*Ability*): At the start of its turn, the Ichtryo regains all Health Levels it has lost. This ability takes effect even if the Ichtryo has lost its last Health Level.

Gift of Life (*Ability*): The Ichtryo can heal the injuries of others, and even restore life to those who have been recently slain.

An Ichtryo can make one attack each round. It can only use Psychic Blast against someone who has previously attacked the Ichtryo.

CHALLENGE: OMEN

OVERVIEW

Omen is a mysterious Phoenix working independently of Dawn Command. The players first learn of his existence in "The Summer Shore," and he plays a role in the remaining three missions. At the end of "The Siege," Omen is still at large and the players still don't know his full story. What does Omen want? He supposedly died his final death…how is he here?

MANIFESTATION AND LORE

Long ago, a man saw his family and his people slaughtered by Talu tyrants and their House Gods. This man was wise in the ways of necromancy, and in his thirst for vengeance, he created a terrifying weapon. His enemies were destroyed, but he was horrified by his actions and the innocents he had killed. He couldn't bear to let his fellow survivors know what he had done, and he took his secret and sorrow to an early grave. But his spirit found no rest. Instead, he found himself drawn into a realm of trials, a place where he searched for an answer to the horrors he had seen and done…a way to build a better world. In his first life he was Terethin, the creator of the Chant. He was reborn as Omen of the Shrouded Legion.

Omen served in the Dawn Legion, alongside Savant and Aegis. He rejoiced as the Talu gods were banished and magic was driven from the world, believing the tragedies he had seen would never occur again. When the Civil War came, many Phoenixes had doubts—not Omen. He believed in his heart mortals lacked the integrity to rule justly and the wisdom to wield magic responsibly. Only Phoenixes could maintain a peaceful world. When Justice ordered the Phoenixes to stand down, Omen refused. He tried to rally supporters, but only a handful stood by him. Determined to continue the war, he slew the last Empress; her allies trapped him, and he died his final death.

For anyone else, that would have been the end. But Omen still wouldn't rest. In his first life, he knew more about necromancy than any other mortal; in his time as a Phoenix, he had studied the secrets of the Dusk and the ways of the Fallen. During his previous deaths, he'd explored his Crucible and learned how to move into the Dusk beyond. He dealt with Fallen in their places of power, studied the spiritual creches of ancient Ascendants, and ultimately found a path to resurrection. Now he

has broken the shackles that hold Phoenixes to seven lives. He is truly immortal. It took him centuries to find a path back to reality, but he is more determined than ever to restore the Phoenix Imperium.

As described on page 164, Omen's return is the event that set the Dread in motion. Despite his brilliance, Omen's ego and pride have prevented him from recognizing this. In his eyes, the Dread is simply further proof humans can't survive without Phoenixes. In his ideal vision, he will become the Emperor of the restored Phoenix Imperium and lead his people to defeat the Dread. However, he's not entirely convinced this is possible, so he has a back-up plan. He has learned about the Hektarch, and he believes if all *mortals* were to die, it would shut down. He'd prefer to lead a prosperous Empire, but he's prepared to be the leader of a few thousand hand-picked immortals. With his understanding of Old Kingdom magic, he can promise his followers true immortality. Pyre can only sustain one thousand Ascendants, but he believes he can save more using the hearths of Athana. Many mortals are irredeemably corrupt, and if he has to destroy the world to create a utopia, he will.

Omen's pride also prevents him from wanting anything to do with Dawn Command… in part because the current Marshals are the people who killed him last time. He believes the new generation of Phoenixes will listen to him when the time comes. If not, well, those who follow him will be given true immortality, and the others will die their seven deaths.

In pursuit of this mission, Omen has been traveling the length of the Empire. He has been studying the Dread and searching for every scrap of information he can find about the Old Kingdoms. He's been gathering powerful relics and making alliances with Fallen. He set the events of "Pulling Strings" in motion so he could recover the Render of Veils (page 226) and use its powers to peer into the future. To accomplish this, he needed to provide the Render with an Ascendant host, so he sacrificed Mercy. It was the Render who showed Omen the vision of a world populated only by Phoenixes, and he's still considering what it would take to accomplish this.

Omen is a powerful Phoenix with the *Soon Forgotten* Lesson. Mortals find it almost impossible to remember anything about him, and even Phoenixes have difficulty remembering precise details. As a Shrouded, he can change his appearance each day, but pride and his distinctive equipment prevent him from doing this unless absolutely necessary; normally he appears as a lean Shadovar man in his middle years, weathered but still handsome. When he enters combat, his skin becomes suffused with shadows, making it difficult to follow his movements. Omen's original Talon is his cloak, which surrounds him like a living shadow and protects him from harm. In his journeys, he has acquired a host of additional artifacts. His right eye is carved from Pyrean steel, and it allows him to see Fallen spirits and learn their secret names. Traveling through the Dusk, he acquired the Talons of the two Wingmates

who opposed him—a short sword and a bracer. His buckler and rod are Athan tools he recovered investigating the Old Kingdoms. Combined with his Rune Ink and the bargains he's made with Fallen, he's a formidable opponent.

MECHANICS

While Omen is a Phoenix, he has unlocked the full potential of his Flame and returned more than seven times. A master strategist, he's rarely caught in a combat situation he hasn't planned for down to picking the location and preparing resources. These resources include Rune Ink, Fallen allies, and Old Kingdom artifacts. A few examples of these things are listed here, but if you use Omen, feel free to adjust these to suit your story. He's a mastermind and an expert in all forms of magic. He's also the creator of the Chant, though this is a dark secret and point of shame. Nonetheless, if it suits his purposes, **he can start a Chant outbreak at any time**.

The critical challenge with Omen is *he is immortal*. He has tied his Flame to a network of Athan hearths, so he doesn't return to the Grand Aerie when he is reborn. This means death simply allows him to escape and return even stronger. It's up to you whether he points this out to the Phoenixes—most likely because he's tempting them with the promise of immortality—or if they'll only find this out after he returns from his next death. Phoenixes can't be rendered unconscious. If a Phoenix removes Omen's last Health Level, they can say they are simply crippling him as opposed to killing him, so he can be restrained. However, Omen is a Phoenix. Unless he *wants* to be captured—and he might, as being taken to the Grand Aerie could be part of his plans—he can always kill himself. Mechanically, we don't track his Sparks, but in theory he has them and can kill himself by burning through them. The only way to imprison Omen permanently is to somehow bind his spirit. And even then, bonds may not hold forever; he already broke the prison of seven lives. If players will swear allegiance to him (and he will use Skavi magic to give such an oath power), he is willing to show them the path to immortality, but it's something that takes considerable time to master. Omen spent centuries in the Crucible, and a Phoenix who takes this path will still be out of play for a significant period following their seventh death.

Rune Ink

Omen possesses a more powerful version of the *Rune Ink* Lesson, expanded over the course of his additional lives. He can use each rune once per day. He can only use one rune on any given turn. He can only activate *active* runes on his turn, but he can use *passive* runes at any time, even in response to an attack or injury. Here's a sample set of runes, but feel free to change them.

- *Dancing Puppet* (passive): One nearby mortal takes an attack intended for Omen.

- *Grail of the Atavi* (passive): Omen regains four Health Levels (HL 6).

- *Broken Hourglass* (active): One Phoenix loses half their current Health Levels (round up). This will kill a mortal.

- *Constellation of the Blindfold* (active): One Phoenix discards their hand. Search through their deck and choose a new hand for them, then shuffle their deck.

- *Sangrite Venom* (active): Resolve as an all-or-nothing ranged attack; Attack 16, Damage special—the target adds one Affliction to their unused deck. Whenever that Affliction is triggered, the victim takes one Wound and Omen recovers one Health Level (HL 6).

Fallen Allies

Omen has made arrangements with many Fallen. Some of these are tied to his long-term plans, but others are tied to personal protection. It's up to you to decide how many Fallen he might have on retainer and exactly what their powers are; this is a way to change the rules of any particular encounter. As a general rule, Omen can only have a single Fallen bodyguard in play at a time (competing contracts). He is having to make deals in exchange for their services, so he won't call them into play unless he has to. Here are two sample Fallen, but you can come up with others:

- **Time's Reaver.** While this Fallen is present, time slows down for everyone except Omen. His Speed increases to 1, and the draw limit of all Phoenixes is reduced by one.

- **The Vizier of Maladies.** At the start of each turn, all members of the Wing receive a new condition, in this order: *Vulnerable*, *Enraged*, *Stunned* (for one round), *Bleeding*. Once these have been distributed, they suffer an additional *Bleeding* condition at the start of each of Omen's turns; once there are no more *Bleeding* tokens, they each suffer one Wound instead.

Getting rid of one of these Fallen requires an **extended Intellect Spread** (Difficulty 40; Arcane, Lore; Trump: *Warlock*); to contribute to this spread a Phoenix must burn one Spark. It's up to you whether the Fallen is immediately banished when the spread is successfully completed or whether time freezes as the Fallen spirit negotiates a new bargain with the Phoenix who completed the spread.

STORY ROLE

Omen will be featured in future scenarios released by Twogether Studios, but he's included here in case you want to take his story in a different direction. Omen has a few goals that could bring him into conflict with the Wing.

- Omen would like to convince the Emperor and the Speakers to simply abdicate power and restore the Phoenix Imperium (with him in charge). To this end, he may encourage or even instigate manifestations of the Dread that prove mortals can't face it alone.

- Omen continues to gather Fallen allies and Old Kingdom relics, and he doesn't care about collateral damage. Phoenixes could come between him and his current goal, or they could have to deal with the aftermath of his actions (as in "Pulling Strings").

- Omen is willing to defeat the Dread by eliminating humanity; he may be searching for weapons or even Dread manifestations that could accomplish this task.

- If one of the Phoenixes appears to be sympathetic to Omen's cause, Omen could visit that Phoenix in their Crucible.

- Omen could make an attack on the Grand Aerie itself to assassinate one or more of the Marshals. Likely his idea is to assume control himself, but if he is defeated, one of the player Phoenixes could be called on to fill the vacancy.

Omen has at least two agents: the Durant Bastion (encountered in "The Summer Shore") and a Wynderi Elemental named Kuchoma. These are the two members of his former Wing who sided with him in the Civil War, and he has shown both of them the path to immortality. He could have other mortal or Phoenix agents, as you see fit. He believes in the righteousness of his cause, and he believes in time the player Phoenixes will join him; he doesn't see them as enemies, simply deluded.

It's entirely possible a Wing of Phoenixes would decide to work with Omen, especially if they don't know about his "destroy all humans" plan. If your players want to do this, you can simply change up their missions. But over time, emphasize that while Omen is brilliant, he's also narcissistic, utterly ruthless, and not entirely sane.

STATISTICS

OMEN (Phoenix)

DEFENSE 12

HEALTH LEVELS 4 (x8), 6 (x8)

SPEED 2

Blade of Secrets (*Standard Melee Attack*): Attack 14, Damage x1 (6). In addition, the victim is Exposed for the duration of the scene and Omen shares one of their secrets with the wing.

Binding Rod (*Standard Melee Attack*): Attack 14, Damage x2 (10). This attack can only be used on a victim who's Exposed. if a victim is killed by this attack, they are trapped in the rod and don't become an Attendant Spirit.

Cloak of Shadows (*Passive Ability*): Omen's cloak protects him from harm. If he is attacked and doesn't lose a Health Level with a value of 6, he becomes *Hidden* after the attack is resolved. When he makes an attack while Hidden, the value is Attack value is increased by 6. Locating him requires an **Intellect Spread** (Difficulty 20; Observation, Scouting; Trump: Supernatural Senses).

Rune Ink (*Ability*): Omen has a set of mystical tattoos similar to those granted by the *Rune Ink* Lesson. See the mechanics section for full details.

Omen can make one attack and use one active rune per round. He can also unleash Fallen servants; see the mechanics section for more information.

CHALLENGE: PSYCHOPOMP

By Will Hindmarch

OVERVIEW

Legends from the Dark Ages make it clear the psychopomp was feared and revered as an agent of death in earlier eras. Modern sages debate the existence of the psychopomp, but such doubts result from the might of their mystique—not any diminishment of their power.

Are they many or few or singular? Is the psychopomp a gestalt being or a multifaceted, many-faced conglomerate? The many faces of the psychopomp suggest a variety of individuals, but it seems the more one comes to know the psychopomp, the less it can be understood.

Still, the existence of the psychopomp means knowing and cautious Phoenixes can never be certain when they have met *one* psychopomp in disguise or when they have dealt with some mere facet or fiber of a greater being. Whatever their origin or intent, they dwell in the Dusk ever crossing rivers of pain, stalking bloody battlefields, and following damned roads so that they shall always know the landscapes of the realms of death. Their existence is one of constant sojourns, always to and fro—never lost, but never at home.

Thus they often come to know Phoenixes quite well…

MANIFESTATION

In the myths that still linger within the Empire, psychopomps are depicted as grim figures heralding or trailing death—the iconic example is an enrobed skeleton with coins affixed in its empty eyes, carrying a lantern of dizzying balefire, and humming a dirge with a voice that seems to come from afar, even when the psychopomp is all too close. Psychopomps may pilot ferries, wagons, chariots, coaches, or gondolas. They may ride horses made of smoke and shadow. They may stalk on their own two feet.

Those are symbols. Those are the ways bards and mystics communicate the maddening dead to the living—pinning them into a singular notion, giving them a singular name that can be spoken or forbidden, lending them an image that can be sculpted and paid tribute. The psychopomp, for all it seems to love its symbols and honor the skulls and bones within us, is not as we depict it.

Psychopomps, it has been said, can wear any face that has a skull within it. They have haunted the living with gruesome masks and bloody helmets. They have tricked the living with the hale flesh of friendly faces long since lost to death. They have slipped hidden among us in the guise of stags and hounds and strangers.

When they walk in the Daylit World, Psychopomps appear not so much *as* the living as *with* the living, by infusing their intent or lending their wisdom to those who carry out tasks akin to those of the psychopomp. Ferry pilots, wagoners, coach drivers, charioteers, and wanderers may hide the psychopomp within their midst—or may themselves be psychopomps in disguise, trudging along through living lands.

When encountered in the Dusk, they often appear dead or dying. Death can resemble life from afar and in fleeting moments. In the spaces between a Phoenix's living days, the psychopomp often appears as a succession of familiar faces in strange or accustomed garb. The psychopomp may be your missing husband dressed for his deathbed or your childhood cohort dressed for her wedding, which you did not attend. It may change faces quickly in the afterlife, unable to see its own disguises, or it may shed that appearance for its skull and hood.

However it looks, the psychopomp reflects your past, your fears, and your future—often in ways even it cannot understand.

LORE

It's easy to lump the psychopomp in with the Fallen Folk, but it wasn't created by mortals; it's a product of the Dusk itself. Dead dreams, lost hopes, and memories that refuse to die congeal into some conglomerate of voices and echoes that make up the essence and the form of the psychopomp. A psychopomp manifestation contains traces of those who once lived and also the stuff of spirits who were never flesh and blood at all.

Think of its essence as if it was made of river water and you wanted to separate out the waters of two intersecting rivers from lake they form together. Water in the lake is easy to identify. Water in a river is certainly a part of the river. At the delta, however, borders and definitions do not always make the same sense.

Still, as there are many lakes and rivers in the world and in death, it seems there are multiple psychopomps. Sometimes. They flow together, then separate, then rejoin, like water. When and where you encounter them often determines *who* and *what* they are—and likewise, what they want. They change, as we do…but not like we do.

In different myths, the psychopomp admires or despises the Phoenix. A Phoenix defies death, traversing the afterlife and returning to true life again and again as the psychopomp never can; this stirs love and envy. A Phoenix also suffers death again

and again, changing over time into successive versions of a single soul, devoted to toil beyond the boundaries of life; this stirs admiration and spite. The psychopomp is, in a way, truest to itself when it is dead—as the Phoenix is truly itself when alive.

So it is that the psychopomp conspires to test and challenge the Phoenix's body and soul, wits and faith. These challenges take the form of physical attacks in the world or the afterlife, certainly, but more often as riddles or tests of wisdom—and most often as grim bargains and internecine negotiations.

Tales abound of the psychopomp—whose cosmic function is to tend the borderlands between life and death, guiding mortals into the purview of death—offering its staff of office to the Phoenix for one night.

The legend of Modrethean tells of the psychopomp using that name while consulting with a Phoenix over which nine victims of plague should be returned to life for nine days.

That the psychopomp is not wholly monstrous, not wholly unfair, and not wholly understood is what makes them maddening. Vile and valiant, pitiable and grand, they are more like the living than we may care to admit.

MECHANICS

A psychopomp cannot be defeated by violence. Its manifestation can be destroyed, usually with minimal effort, but this is only a minor inconvenience and may result in the death of an innocent mortal the psychopomp was using as its host. A psychopomp never poses an immediate threat, and destroying its manifestation cannot prevent its larger schemes. Likewise, it cannot be bound or controlled by Duskcraft or necromancy; it is neither a simple ghost nor one of the Fallen Folk.

A psychopomp can predict the future of a Phoenix, foretelling doom or triumph. There are a few ways to implement this.

- **Present a situation and a concrete outcome.** *"You will see your sister again, and on that day, she will die."* The Phoenix can avoid the situation as long as possible through whatever means they can come up with—but when it finally does come to pass, the consequence will happen. Of course, there could be an unforeseen twist; in this example, the sister could die…and return as a Phoenix.

- **Connect an outcome to a Trait.** *"You take such pride in your intelligence, but you can't foresee everything."* The next time the Phoenix uses a Trait that fits the prediction (in this case, *Smartest Person In The Room* or *Seen This Before*), the outcome triggers. If the Phoenix identifies the Trait, they can of course choose to avoid playing it…but how long will they be hobbled by fate? Note that you don't have to *explain* to the Phoenix that a Trait will trigger the effect; they should have to learn through experience.

- **Random chance.** *"You never know when fate will deal you a bad hand."* Place an Affliction card in the Phoenix's *discard* pile (ensuring it will take a little time to come into play). The effect triggers when the Affliction is drawn.

The effect of a psychopomp's prediction could be generic good or bad fortune (typically an immediate bonus or penalty to a spread). It could be a highly specific event—the death of a particular individual—or it could be generically bad. One option would be to have the victim pick a friend or Wingmate in the area to suffer a particular number of Wounds due to an unexpected tragedy. *Someone* is going to get caught when that wall collapses…but who?

Beyond this, a psychopomp can also make specific deals relating to death. It can cause the death of mortals or return them to life, create or avert plagues, and similar effects. It can delay a Phoenix in the Crucible or allow them to return to a battle instantly.

STORY ROLE

Utilize the psychopomp—singular or not—to create individual or recurring antagonists who can be more than villainous monsters. They're intelligent, emotional beings whose relationships with the Phoenixes can persist through lives and deaths. Let them pose moral or tactical dilemmas for the Phoenixes only if those dilemmas have dramatic consequences. Consider the following seeds:

- The psychopomp teaches a Phoenix some lesson it may need in the next life, but steals and wears a memory in exchange.

- The psychopomp hurries the Phoenix back to life before the battle is lost, but must be paid two mortal lives in exchange.

- The psychopomp haunts the Phoenix through one life, like a ghoul chasing an army across battlefields, planting plagues like crops in the fertile ground.

- The Phoenixes must negotiate passage across a wide river, a gorge, or a sea, and the pilot in command of the means of travel seems in every way to be a face of the psychopomp. Can they prove this person is a psychopomp—or are they mistaken?

Another common place to encounter a psychopomp is in the Crucible. When you are talking through a Phoenix's rebirth experience, present an encounter with a psychopomp. Perhaps it warns of something terrible that will happen if the Phoenix returns to life immediately. Will the Phoenix go ahead with the rebirth and accept the consequences or choose to linger in the Crucible until the danger passes? In such a case, a player could potentially play another character—for example, a Phoenix from the Rival Wing—or even play a new member of the Wing, using a School that's currently not represented. The Durant is delayed in the Crucible, so take a short vacation as a new Bitter Phoenix!

The Render of Veils (page 226) has a certain amount of overlap with the psychopomp. It also predicts the future and is neither ghost nor Fallen. If you wish, you could tie the two of these together. Alternately, a psychopomp could be a manifestation of a Phoenix's Flame, conducting ongoing tests to ensure that a Phoenix is worthy of its power.

STATISTICS

A psychopomp doesn't use statistics. You can lay out its card as a visual reference in a scene, but it doesn't fight as other Challenges do.

CHALLENGE: THE RENDER OF VEILS

The Render of Veils is an enigma. In the mission "Pulling Strings," the Phoenixes learn that the rogue Shrouded Omen has stolen the remains of this spirit from a prison below Kor Aton. Following that mission, Omen assassinates the Devoted Mercy using a strange weapon…and in the mission "Mercy," she reappears in a strangely twisted form. Omen's actions have disconnected her from her Flame, and she is instead bound to the Render of Veils. Between her lives, she has seen visions of all possible futures…and the vast majority of them are so terrible she wishes to give people peaceful deaths rather than have them fight the Dread.

Beyond this, Mercy poses an unwitting threat. As a vessel for the Render of Veils, she inherently disrupts the barriers between Dusk and the Daylit World. If she stays in a place for too long, Fallen begin to emerge, or mortals are pulled into the Dusk. Even her attention is lethal; if she speaks to someone, they begin to hemorrhage and bleed. Her despair takes physical form in her attendants, and she can pull people's enemies out of their past. Beyond this, Mercy is still a Phoenix… sort of. If she's slain, she is pulled back into the bowels of the Render of Veils, and will eventually reappear in the world.

Mercy is the first vessel of the Render in the modern world, but there could be others as time goes on. A manifestation of the Render might attack Phoenixes in the Crucible, seeking to pull them from their flames and add them to itself.

Within the mission arc provided in this book, the Render of Veils is left as a mystery. The implication is that it was a mystery even to the people of the Old Kingdoms. No nation created it. It preyed on Ascendants and couldn't be destroyed…it could only be stripped of its vessels and bound in the Guhani Depths. Omen learned of it and freed it so he could use its visions of the future, but he had no real idea what he was unleashing. The Render and Mercy may appear in future material produced by Twogether Studios, but you can choose to develop your own stories around the Render if you wish. If you work with the Render, you'll probably want to decide its purpose. Here are a few ideas to consider:

- The Render of Veils comes from a future where the Daylit World has been defeated by the Dread. It is the last corrupted remnant of the Imperial Flame, and this is why it can connect to Phoenixes. Is it trying to ensure that its own terrible future comes to pass, or is it actually trying to steer people away from doom…but too warped to clearly communicate its desires?

- The Render of Veils is a manifestation of the Dusk. It perceives Phoenixes and Ascendants as a violation of the natural order, and it was created to assimilate them and strike back at the world that created them.

- The Render is a doomsday weapon designed by ancient Pyreans. The Imperial Flame was a creation of Pyrean optimists; as the final war went on, the last Pyreans created the Render of Veils to destroy Ascendants and reality itself rather than allow the Hektarch to claim victory.

CHALLENGE: SHOGGOTH

by Kenneth Hite

OVERVIEW

A Shoggoth looks like a black boil or a curdled homicidal oil slick—the shadow of every predatory nightmare. It changes its shape and attack before you've reacted to the previous one. It liquefies when struck with spears, then grows arms to hurl them back at thrice the speed and strength. It disguises itself for decades, spreading out as pebbles or worms until deciding to kill everyone on the western side of the continent. It watches you from firefly eyes in night-blooming flowers the color of clotted blood and hears you with gossamer bat ears floating a mile up. It flows through a city devouring flesh, poisoning plant life, and undermining temples until it discovers a fitting and worthy foe.

Then it bites her head off.

MANIFESTATION

In its resting state, a Shoggoth is a gravid ball of meaty jelly, dark with a blend of all colors, studded with eyes of glowing green. Nobody sees a Shoggoth in its resting state: Now they cling to the walls as pillars of rock, spread themselves out over the ground as a thin spray of water, or pour like a choking cloud out of seemingly impossible crevices. Only the occasional flicker of green light hints at their eyes watching for new targets.

A Shoggoth on the attack is even worse. It thunders like a charging mammoth, whistling fragments of incantation or battle cry like a psychopathic whip-poor-will. It never stops moving and often spreads a wide shark mouth across its entire width, revealing yards and yards of overlapping, razor-sharp cartilage snapping and foaming. It may extrude two huge elephantine trunks ridged with barbed talons or snake a thin cable of flesh around a foe to choke her to death while pouring hissing gouts of acid from a dozen open stomach cavities onto her escort troop. The Shoggoth, in short, can attack like anything in the natural or magical world, except faster, stronger, and all at once.

Faced with a Shoggoth, most warriors simply drop their weapons and pray for a quick death. Some shriek in terror and flee, chopping a retreat for themselves

through their fellows. Some brave fools try to gauge its behavior, like any other deadly foe—they find themselves moving inhumanly, trying to raise nonexistent limbs to parry or bend thigh bones in an impossible dodge.

It has no vital spots; even its malevolent emerald eyes simply wink out and turn into suckers to trap a probing spear or engulf a stabbing hand. Every part of it can flow out of the way, harden into armor, or expand into puffy fungus. It cannot be poisoned, as it can absorb or assimilate the toxin, refine it, and inject it right back through a newly grown fang. It cannot be burned by mortal fire, either quenching the flame or even fuelling itself somehow, although a sorcerous bolide might leave its outer layer carbonized for a year or two.

Its only known vulnerabilities are deep cold—its mostly liquid body eventually freezes—and extremely arcane magics. It can somehow "recalculate" itself to resist minor mystical effects, but spells that violate or reach outside the very forces of nature can affect it.

LORE

The Shoggoth is a deadly combination of weapon and familiar, created by the Atavi Union in the last days of the Old Kingdoms. The final war between the Old Kingdoms ended that age; half of what is horrible and all of what is incomprehensible in the world spawned from their ruins. The Atavi war-breeders wanted servants who could fulfill any physical task, protect them from any attack, and avenge their deaths. As the final war escalated, the Atavi built their Shoggoth slaves to regrow, redesign, and replicate their flesh, and war-breeders refined and improved their designs until their Shoggoths were optimized for destruction.

These ultimate Shoggoths loyally battled for decades, seeking microscopic advantages and evolving on the battlefield into unstoppable killers. The Atavi themselves proved less durable. Perhaps the Hektarch had arranged matters, briefly unbalancing the war and exposing one Atavi after another. Perhaps one of the Atavi, more subtle than the rest, built a Shoggoth to host his soul, distributed throughout an unkillable body. Perhaps the Shoggoths' war had evolved even more than their frightful bodies. Or perhaps they recognized they had more in common with their fellow war-familiars than their cowardly would-be masters and arranged their assassination, each Shoggoth striking just as the guardian Shoggoth deployed an attack against a suddenly defenseless target.

Perhaps the Shoggoths had dreamed of such a time: the masters dead and only Shoggoths left to ravage the world. If Shoggoths dream, that is. They spouted and spawned, decayed and deformed, driven only by the auroras or centuries-long flows of magic.

Then they vanished into the deep cold seas or under the glaciers. Some say even the Dawn could not kill the Shoggoths, so it froze them in time…until the Dread.

MECHANICS

Shoggoths can disguise themselves against almost any natural surface: rock, vegetation, and especially water. They are fully amphibious. A Shoggoth can also grow wings for diving attacks or inflate itself with hydrogen and float miles above for surveillance.

Protean Barrage

Shoggoths are instinctive tacticians, striking for weak spots with the most effective attack. Shoggoths can reproduce any physical attack, usually exaggerated obscenely with extra barbs, claws, or teeth. They can strangle, engulf, entangle, or simply flow over their enemies. They can attack any number of foes in range with no diminution of skill or ferocity—while in theory they might be limited by the number of eyes they have to devote to the task, in practice nobody brings that many warriors close enough to a Shoggoth. Although they don't normally bother, Shoggoths can even hurl missiles from absorbed arrows to whole tree trunks and boulders with corded sinew, aiming perfectly with a dozen sensoria.

In practice, a Shoggoth has an attack pool with a value equal to the number of its Health Level tokens. It can divide this however it wishes between up to four attacks. So if a Shoggoth has forty HL tokens, it could make four attacks with an Attack value of 10, two strikes with a value of 20 apiece, or a single inescapable attack with a value of 40. Attacks don't have to be divided equally, and they don't have to target the same foe. The example Shoggoth could launch an attack with a value of 25 against a Phoenix, and three attacks of 5 apiece against mortal foes. Regardless of the value of an attack, this Protean Barrage has a x1 damage multiplier and a can inflict a maximum of ten points of damage with a single attack.

Regeneration

Shoggoths can re-form themselves to defeat any normal physical attack, absorbing or flowing away from any damage. At the start of its turn, a Shoggoth recovers half its lost Health Levels, rounded down; so if a Shoggoth began with forty HL tokens and currently has twenty, it will regain ten tokens. **This occurs even if the Shoggoth currently has no Health Levels at all.** A Shoggoth can't restore Health Levels lost to cold (including the Elemental *Frostbite* and *Consume Heat)* or an attack using a *Sunspear*; if an attack from such a source removes its last Health Level, the Shoggoth is destroyed.

The only other way to destroy a Shoggoth is uncover and enact a powerful arcane ritual. This isn't something a group can just choose to do. They have to find a

suitable tool—an ancient repository of Atavi lore, a Faeda superweapon, or an Ash sorcery ritual empowered by the final deaths of one or more Phoenixes. Employing such a tool will typically be an **extended Intellect Spread** (The Arcane, Lore) with a difficulty equal to four times the Shoggoth's starting Health Levels. Every time a Phoenix makes a spread contributing to this, they must burn one Spark. Once the ritual is complete, the Shoggoth stops regenerating and will die when it loses its last Health Level.

Sanity-Blasting Horror

Shoggoths exist outside normal combat logic, evolved far beyond any rational predator. Humans can only explain or tactically grasp its deadly, perfect, savage actions after hours of obsessive thought. Experienced warriors are perhaps even more vulnerable to this visible impossibility than new fighters who don't recognize how uncannily good these things are at killing. Experienced warlocks, more horribly, find themselves increasingly obsessed with trying to block, harness, control—in short, retro-create—Shoggoths. For defense, of course! Shoggoths also physically repel natural, normal folk. Whether this is because of their naked ferocity or because they were built from matter not native to this world, the effect is instinctive revulsion and denial. Survivors of Shoggoth attacks might even swear they burned down their own city rather than admit such things exist.

When a Phoenix encounters a Shoggoth for the first time, they are *Stunned* for the duration of the scene. Any further lingering effects—such as an obsession with recreating these creatures—is at the discretion of the player.

Battlefield Contaminant

The lingering obsession with Shoggoths isn't the only long-term effect of fighting them. To begin with, they are simply poison: foul miasms settle and horrible blights and chancres spread wherever a Shoggoth exerts itself. They also corrupt their enemies. Did you have an open wound while fighting a Shoggoth? Did you open your mouth while wrestling a Shoggoth underwater, or wake up to find it looming over you? Did you inhale its odor? Then Shoggoth saliva, ichor, skin mites, or slime got inside you. (Everything you smell is just you noticing tiny particles of something hitting your tongue or mucus membranes.) Miniscule ebonescent drops, whirling through your bloodstream or wafting down your airway, fighting your white blood cells, wrenching their way into your lung capillaries…until one day you wake up and your eyes are a bright green, and your flesh just flows closed over a cut.

The first time a Phoenix is wounded by a Shoggoth, the Phoenix must place an Affliction card in their deck. For the rest of this life, they are afflicted by *Shoggoth Corruption*. Whenever an Affliction is drawn, they suffer one Wound, and this damage cannot be healed through any effect. If the Phoenix dies due to this Would, their

remains become a new Shoggoth with a number of Health Levels equal to five times the maximum Health Levels of the Phoenix. Unless the Phoenix has a way to remove Afflictions, there's no known cure for this effect; can the Wing find a long-lost cure before the victims are consumed?

STORY ROLE

On top of any ontological questions it raises, a Shoggoth should be a deadly physical challenge. The battle against the thing utterly devastates any built-up area, but the Shoggoth is even more deadly in a wasteland, where it can blend in and strike in a series of horrible improvised ambushes. "Just killing it" should itself be a crazily difficult task—the Phoenixes may have to find a lost superweapon and re-tune it, hijack divine lightning, or do something else with major consequences.

Here are a few ways to make an unkillable shapeshifting horror from beyond rational time even more of a challenge:

- A mad cult worships a Shoggoth, seeing it as the embodiment of the Darkness, the avatar of the Will of Life, or the egg of their god. The cult is burning down a city to please it ("the Darkness demands we all become the same, abandoning ranks and privilege") or subverting defenses against the Dread ("resistance against Life is blasphemy!") somewhere strategically or personally valuable. The Phoenixes must find out where the Shoggoth is without alerting the cult, which would respond with standard mad suicide attacks carrying plenty of civilian collateral damage. Then comes the question of how to fight a Shoggoth in the middle of a capital city without killing thousands of people.

- One Shoggoth raises its camouflage to the next level—it impersonates one of the Phoenixes, a valuable scholar, or a beloved family member. Then it impersonates another, and another. You could incorporate the players in this scheme, informing the disguised Shoggoth of the deception and letting them scheme against the others…or you could have it disguised as a member of a Rival Wing accompanying the players. Does this mean the entire Wing is corrupted?

- The Shrouded Marshal Winter has deciphered an ancient Atavi text. They believe they have discovered a rune that can slow, stall, or even block a Shoggoth. The rune changes shape—a sun-cross, a star, a brazier, a pentafoil, a tree branch—so even copying it requires an almost-supreme magical effort. The Phoenixes head to the Deep Grimwald to find the rune, memorizing a magical procedure to let the whole team copy it—so if even one of them dies before they find it, the mission is a failure.

- A Shoggoth bites off the head of a Phoenix, considering them a truly worthy foe. When the dead Phoenix resurrects, they have the memories of the Shoggoth—linked to it, they might be a grand intelligence opportunity or a sleeper traitor waiting for an alien activation code. Worse, it's not impossible that killing the Shoggoth will kill that Phoenix again—but in their mind, where they can't just resurrect away from the damage.

STATISTICS

SHOGGOTH (Atavi)

DEFENSE 8

HEALTH LEVELS 3 (x40)

SPEED 2

Protean Barrage (*Standard Melee Attack*): Attack special, Damage x1 (10). The Shoggoth has an attack pool with a value equal to the number of Health Level counters on the Shoggoth, and can split this up between up to four attacks.

Regeneration (*Ability*): At the start of its turn, a Shoggoth recovers half of its lost Health Levels, rounded down. This occurs even if the Shoggoth has no Health Levels.

Corruption (*Ability*): The first time a Phoenix is injured by a Shoggoth, they must place an Affliction in their discard pile; this is *Shoggoth Corruption*.

Sanity-Blasting Horror (*Ability*): The first time a Phoenix encounters a Shoggoth, the Phoenix is *Stunned* for the duration of the scene.

A Shoggoth can use Protean Barrage once per turn, making up to four attacks.

CHALLENGE: War Wyrm

OVERVIEW

The War Wyrm is an Old Kingdom weapon created by the Guhani Depths. It's similar in design to the *Crystal Swarm* (page 357). The core of the wyrm is a pumpkin-sized metal sphere encrusted with runes. Its body is an energy construct that expands when the sphere is activated. While in its active form, the war wyrm is capable of burrowing through solid stone. A war wyrm has limited sentience. Its mission would be programmed into its sphere by a Guhani rune-shaper, and its consciousness is sufficient to react to unexpected obstacles; however, it has no sense of personal identity or desire.

MECHANICS

The War Wyrm typically begins combat by bursting up from the ground and attempting to *Swallow* a victim. If this attack is successful, the trapped Phoenix **suffers two points of brutal damage at the start of every Phoenix's turn**; each turn, they can negate this damage by burning two Sparks. While inside the wyrm, a Phoenix can't be attacked and is immune to its *Tremors* effect. There are two ways to escape the wyrm: a Phoenix can make a **Grace Spread** (Difficulty 30; Athletics, Acrobatics, Fire) to crawl or burn their way out, or they can attack the wyrm from inside. Its Defense is reduced to 5, and if they inflict two Wounds (removing two HL-10 tokens), they are able to hack through its skin and escape.

STORY ROLE

The War Wyrm is weapon from the Old Kingdom. It can serve as a typical Dread threat, reactivated by the Hektarch and following its original programming to attack surface cities. It could also be found in the deep tunnels below Kor Aton, either following an ancient sentry protocol or roaming randomly.

STATISTICS

War wyrm *(Fallen)*

DEFENSE 10

HEALTH LEVELS 10 (x10)

SPEED 3

Swallow (*Standard Melee Attack***):** Attack 18, Damage Special—The victim is swallowed. See mission text for details. This attack can only be performed if the wyrm is *Hidden*, and only one victim can be swallowed at a time.

Thunder Blast (*Standard Ranged Attack***):** Attack 12, Damage x2 **(6),** and the target is *Stunned* for one turn. This attack can target two Phoenixes and inflicts 5 points of Fortification damage **(**if applicable**).**

Tremors (*Ability***):** While the war wyrm is emitting tremors, a Phoenix must discard a Grace card at the start of their turn; if they cannot, they must discard three cards.

Submerge (*Ability***):** The war wyrm becomes *Hidden* and cannot be attacked.

A war wyrm can make a single attack on its turn. It can use Submerge *instead of making an attack.*

MISSION ONE: THE HARVEST

"The Harvest" is a short mission designed to introduce players to the world and mechanics of *Phoenix: Dawn Command;* the scenario should take between two to three hours from start to finish. In "The Harvest," the Wing is dispatched to an Aerie under attack by hostile forces. When they arrive, they discover the aggressors are Fallen who are harvesting the fear of the Aerie staff. They must act quickly to save the innocents and prevent a plague of panic from spreading across the region.

Background

Spirits have lingered in the world since before human civilization existed. The people of the present day don't know the true origin of these beings, but call them the Fallen Folk…usually shortened to **the Fallen.** These spirits have always had a strong presence in the province of Skavia, the barren lands of the north. Before the rise of the Empire, Skavi warlocks would bargain with the Fallen to gain mystical power. The Phoenixes drove the Fallen back into the Dusk and put an end to the warlock traditions. Over the course of centuries, the Fallen have become creatures of myth and legend.

Now one of the Fallen has returned. The **Harvester of Fear** is a powerful spirit that feeds on mortal terror. Thanks to the Dread, the people of this region are more frightened than they've been in centuries. The elevated levels of fear have allowed the Harvester to return. He has seized the Aerie—once his seat of power—and draws the terror out of mortal prisoners so he can unleash a plague of nightmares. This is a simple scenario: The Phoenixes must enter the Aerie and defeat the Harvester before his ritual is complete.

Prologue: The Grand Aerie

Read or paraphrase the following:

> *It has been less than a week since you were reborn as Phoenixes. You've spent most of that time learning to work together as a Wing and catching up with the current state of the Empire. The situation is desperate, though, and there's no more time for study. Now you're on duty in the Flame Chamber, waiting for news of the next emergency.*
>
> *The heart of the Grand Aerie is the original Imperial Flame, the fire from which all Phoenixes are first reborn. The chamber that houses the Flame is a massive cavern. Dozens of candles line the walls, and adepts scurry about studying the candles and the Flame. One figure stands out in this: Cinder, the Elemental Marshal.*

The Marshals are the oldest and most powerful Phoenixes of the present day. Survivors from the Civil War, they are mostly on their last lives; they possess tremendous power, but their talents are best used supporting Dawn Command as

opposed to acting in the field. Each Marshal possesses abilities with immense tactical value, and at the moment the Grand Aerie needs those skills. Thus, the Marshals guide the new Phoenixes, but cannot lead them into battle.

The Elemental Marshal is an expert in all things arcane, especially Ash Sorcery—powerful magic that can be performed only using the final ashes of Phoenixes. Cinder maintains the Imperial Flame itself along with the candles, which facilitate communication with the far-flung network of Aeries. The Marshal is an ongoing character who will be an important ally. As such, the players themselves can help round out this character, giving them a sense of personal attachment. If you believe your group would enjoy this, determine the following details by asking each player, one at a time: Is the Elemental Marshal male or female? They are hundreds of years old, but what age do they appear to be? What distinguishing characteristics does Cinder have? After these key details have been established, have each player add one rumor they've heard or personality trait they've noticed about the Elemental Marshal. In case you choose not to do this, here's a default description to work with.

> *The Elemental Marshal is an old man with a long beard that often catches on fire, though it never seems to burn away. He has a network of fine burn–scars in the patterns of arcane symbols all along his arms and hands. You can literally feel the heat of his gaze. He often seems distracted, as if listening to distant voices. He has a controlled, even temper…and you've heard stories that if he loses his temper, people explode.*

The Flame Chamber is the communication and transportation hub for Dawn Command. The candles on the wall are broken into sets of four, and each set of candles is linked to an Aerie somewhere in the Empire. When a candle is lit in the Aerie, its twin is lit in the Grand Aerie. This allows for simple communication; there is a basic set of codes tied to candle patterns, similar to codes used by police and emergency services outlined on page 43. Beyond this, the Elemental Marshal can use the Imperial Flame to transport Phoenixes from the Grand Aerie to any other active Aerie. There are a few catches: This works only for Phoenixes, and currently the Elemental Marshal is the only one who can perform the ritual. So when an alert comes in, the Marshal can send a Wing to help—but the Phoenixes have to get back to Pyre under their own power once the mission is done. This is one reason Phoenixes are in such short supply; at any given time, most of the eighteen Wings are out in the field. In any case, the Phoenixes don't have to wait long before trouble arises.

> *Suddenly a set of unlit candles flares into life. An adept scurries over to study the message, but the Elemental Marshal is already in motion.* He *barks commands at adepts, who gather around the massive central flame. Then* he *turns to you. "Phoenixes!"* he *calls. "The Blackstone Aerie in Southern Skavia has just called in two candles, Aerie compromised. There has been no further contact, which means it's a dire situation. We'll send you through as soon as the flames are aligned. There is every chance you're stepping into active combat. Your job is simple: Identify the threat and learn as much about it as you can. Find and protect the Flamekeeper. Survive if possible."*

Give the players the opportunity to ask questions. Refer to the Mission Briefing for answers.

Once questions are done, it's time for action. The Phoenixes must pass through the Imperial Flame one at a time. Once the players agree on order, **collect each player's School card and set them out in the center of the table in the order they will pass through the Flame**. Shift the first card forward and continue to Scene One!

MISSION BRIEFING: SKAVIA

This presents information players may want to know about the mission that their characters already know. This information is common knowledge to most Phoenixes, with a few extra details for certain characters. You don't *have* to present this information to your players: If they're itching to jump through the Flame and fight, don't hold them back with exposition. There will be an opportunity to revisit this information later. You should also review the *Fallen* Challenge Description on page 168.

What's "Two Candles"?

Every Aerie has a set of signalling candles that allow for a simple communication. In an initial message, one to three candles are used to indicate the severity of the threat. One candle is a call for investigation, two indicates a problem that requires a Wing of Phoenixes, and three is a threat that could destroy a city or destabilize a region. The optional fourth candle indicates the Aerie itself has been compromised. In this case, there's a significant threat, and it's breached the Aerie. Standard procedure calls for the sender to provide additional details once the initial message has been acknowledged. The fact that they haven't suggests the sender is unable to continue…so you could be traveling directly into combat.

What's a Flamekeeper?

Flamekeepers are the most important mortal agents of Dawn Command. Each Aerie has a hearth that can be linked to the Imperial Flame in Pyre. But igniting a hearth is no simple task. A Flamekeeper lights the hearth using their own lifeforce. From that point on, the Flamekeeper is bound to the Aerie. If the hearth is extinguished, the Flamekeeper dies, and vice versa. Also if the hearth is extinguished, Dawn Command can't communicate with the Aerie or send assistance. Thus, in any situation where an Aerie is compromised, the Flamekeeper's safety is always the highest priority. Standard procedure is for the Flamekeeper to retreat to a fortified chamber at the first sign of danger.

More information about adepts, Flamekeepers, and the use of magic by mortals can be found on page 137.

What is Skavia?

Skavia is the northernmost province of the Empire. It is a place of long nights and longer winters, a land of moors and barren plains. It has long been home to two cultures…the settled folk who live in the ancient Holds and surrounding villages and the nomads who roam the plains. In the past, these nomads were infamous raiders and often ventured south to pillage Ilonan communities. Since the rise of

the Empire, the nomads have dwindled in number and been held to Imperial law.

What truly characterizes Skavia is a belief in the Fallen Folk. The ancestral lords of the Holds claimed to be changelings descended from Fallen. The Skavi have a long tradition of bargaining with the Fallen; someone who engages in such deals is referred to as a warlock or a witch. This practice is forbidden under Imperial law, but many Skavi families believe they are still bound or protected by ancient bargains.

Who are the Fallen Folk?

The official stance of the Empire is that the Fallen Folk are nothing more than myths and superstition, the stuff of firelight tales. According to these stories, the Fallen are ancient creatures with great mystical powers. They come in a variety of shapes and sizes. Some are cruel and seek to trick or hurt humanity; others are simply strange. Skavi warlocks used to make bargains with the Fallen and could gain great power as a result.

If a character with an appropriate Skill Specialty (such as *Lore* or *The Arcane*) asks about the Fallen, you can provide the following additional information. If a character has the *Warlock* Trait in their deck, go ahead and give them this information immediately; warlocks are mystics who gain power by making bargains with the Fallen.

Many scholars believe the Fallen Folk are the last survivors of a previous age of the world. Relics and ruins in Skavia and Kor Aton hint at these ancient, lost civilizations. Somehow the Fallen survived by slipping into Dusk, a layer of reality between life and death. This explains the diversity between the Fallen; they may be different races or species, and they may have used different methods to survive. Some of the Fallen are cruel and seek to harm or deceive mortals; other are simply alien. Generally, the Fallen seem to need humans to help them come to our world; they seem to draw on emotions and belief. This is why the Empire sought to wipe out knowledge of them—so they might be forgotten. And it may have worked; it's been centuries since any confirmed account of an interaction with one of the Fallen.

Do we know anything about Blackstone? Has there been any trouble there?

Blackstone is a place of moors and barrens, most of which lack much strategic or economic importance. It's not close to a major city, but there are a number of small villages nearby. They've had ongoing problems with Bones—skeletal raiders who strike in the night—but these have been isolated incidents as opposed to an ongoing campaign. Still, people are afraid and concerned about the future.

If any of the PCs are from Skavia, you can add one more detail.

You don't remember all the details, but you recall a time when the entire region was shunned. Perhaps it was cursed or haunted by the Fallen. For whatever reason, most people avoided it.

This is the extent of common knowledge about Blackstone. However, it's possible a Phoenix has more esoteric knowledge. If they are interested in digging deeper, this is a fine opportunity to make a Skill Spread to see if they know more. This is an **Intellect Spread**, meaning the player can make a spread with up to three Intellect cards in it. The Lore Specialty applies to this spread. In addition, if a Phoenix was from Skavia in their first life, you can treat them as though they had a Specialty. This provides a +5 bonus

to the spread, and it allows the Phoenix to use their favored suit in addition to Intellect. This is an example of your ability as Marshal to adjust the rules to fit the story. The Skavi Bitter doesn't have Intellect or Lore—but this is a tale from their home region, and it makes sense that they could know about it.

Skill Spreads have a range of results: This chart shows the information the player gets based on the total value of their spread.

<10: The Phoenix doesn't have any additional information about the region.

10–14: *You've heard the Phoenixes cleansed the region of some lingering evil back when Skavia was brought into the Empire. That's why they established an Aerie in such a region—to reassure people the darkness had been driven away.*

15–19: *You remember a specific story about the region. Long ago, a Skavi war leader bargained with a Fallen Prince known as the Harvester of Fear. The Harvester was supposed to wipe out a rival clan. He pulled their fears from their minds and unleashed them into the world; these terrors killed the clan, then went on to kill the foolish warrior who'd made the bargain, along with his people. These fears lingered, preying on anyone who ventured onto the moors. Thus, the region was shunned until the Phoenixes of the Empire defeated the Harvester and cleansed the area.*

20+: As above, but the Phoenix also knows the Blackstone Aerie was supposedly the stronghold of the Harvester himself before the Phoenixes claimed and sanctified it.

Again, don't force this information if the Phoenixes don't want details this early in the game; they can always come back to this later.

Scene One: The Dreadknight

Read or paraphrase the following:

The transition is not unlike burning alive. You experience a period of terrible pain, and everything goes black…then the pain recedes, and you find yourself elsewhere. Details come together. You've stepped out of a bonfire—a smaller version of the Imperial Flame on Pyre. Weapons hang from one wall, ready to meet the needs of any reborn Phoenixes. There are a few stuffed beasts against the opposite wall, trophies of past hunts. In the center of the room, a hideous figure chokes a man in adept's robes.

The enemy is armored in the manner of a knight, but he clearly isn't human. His proportions are all wrong: His forearms are too long, and his spine is stretched and curved. His armor is forged from blackened steel and stamped with gleaming runes. Despite the bulk of the armor, this Dreadknight's movement is fluid and assured.

SETUP

Place the Innocents card and the Dreadknight card in the center of the table. Set five Health 3 tokens on the Dreadknight to represent its Health Levels, and one Health 2 token on the Innocent. Shift the first player's School card forward to indicate that they are in the same room as the Dreadknight (while the other Phoenixes are still in the Aerie). Finally, give the first player the Torch, and take a moment to explain how the Torch works…something like this.

> *This is the Torch. It indicates the active player; when you are done with your turn, you can pass it to any other Phoenix who hasn't taken a turn this cycle. In addition, it has a list of interesting Environmental Elements in this room. Once during your turn, if you think of a meaningful way to use one of these elements, you may immediately draw one card and cross that element off the list. If you come up with a good story, you may get additional benefits.*

This room is the **Flame Chamber**, and the Torch contains the following elements: **The Imperial Flame**, **Weapon Rack**, **Imperial Banner**, **Cringing Adept**, **Signalling Candles**, and **Stuffed Bear**. The bear is a giant trophy, not a toy; it's a perfect thing to hide behind or topple over onto a Dreadknight!

The room itself is simple and open. The walls are made of black stone with no windows. An open archway on the south wall, directly across from the Imperial Flame, is the only exit. The altar with the signalling candles (the candles used to communicate with the Grand Aerie) is in the southeast corner. The adept ran into the room and was using the candles when the Dreadknight walked in and grabbed him.

FIGHTING THE DREADKNIGHT

The first Phoenix through the Flame gets to take an action before the Dreadknight responds to their presence. If the Phoenix wants to study the Dreadknight, see the Lore section below. If they attack and deal damage, the Dreadknight staggers under the blow but doesn't fall. If the Phoenix wants to force the Dreadknight to drop the adept, this works as long as their attack inflicts at least one Wound on the Dreadknight; if the attack inflicts multiple Wounds, you could even say the attack actually severs the Dreadknight's arm. Either way, once the Phoenix has finished their turn and drawn back up to five cards, the Dreadknight releases the adept and turns to face the intruder. Paraphrase the following so it takes the actions of the Phoenix into account:

> *The twisted warrior tosses the adept to the ground, hissing "First them…then you." He turns to face you. His face is hidden in the deep shadows of his helmet, but his eyes burn with a fierce red light… and as he stares at you, you feel icy claws tearing through your mind. This is an Attack with a value of 8. It's an all–or–nothing attack, so if you can't make a Defense Spread with a value of 8 or higher, there's no reason to make a spread.*

The Dreadknight attacks with his *Dread Stare* followed by physical attack. He has no interest in talking to the Phoenixes and fights to the death. Emphasize his unnatural strength and durability, and that his speed is truly inhuman; it's difficult to focus on him, and sometimes he seems to shift from one point in space to another. This is the Dreadknight's first turn, and thanks to his 2 Speed, he acts after every other Phoenix. So following this attack, two more Phoenixes can enter the room and take their turns—then the Dreadknight acts again.

Death Is Only the Beginning

When the Dreadknight is reduced to HL 0, he *immediately* triggers his *Fear Storm* attack. Paraphrase the following:

> *The Dreadknight hisses in pain, and for a moment it seems as though he might fall. Then he reaches out toward the adept and clenches his fist, and the adept howls in terror. At least, it looks like he does, but there's no sound. Instead, a wave of darkness flows out of the adept's mouth and flashes across the room, striking you all with both psychic and physical force. This is an all or nothing attack with a value of 6. When your vision clears, the Dreadknight is laughing; his injuries have vanished.*

The Dreadknight is drawing strength from the fears of the adept, and cannot be killed as long as the adept is afraid of him. To defeat him, the Wing has to interact with the adept.

DEALING WITH THE ADEPT

Whenever the Phoenixes turn their attention to the adept, paraphrase the following (if you want, you can ask your players to fill in the placeholder text):

> *Adepts are Flamekeepers–in–training; they have enough magical talent to help maintain the Flame and operate the signalling candles. However, they aren't trained in any sort of magic that's useful in a fight. This particular adept is* ***Ilonan and in his late teens****, with* ***pale skin*** *and* ***vividly red hair****. He is sprawled on the floor, watching the battle with wide eyes. He is shaking, and he cheeks are wet with tears.*

The Dreadknight has forged a mystical link to the boy, and the adept's fear sustains the knight. As long as the adept is trapped in this unnatural terror, the Dreadknight cannot be defeated; any time he's reduced to HL 0, he simply triggers his *Fear Storm*.

Anyone who studies the adept or attempts to interact with him can tell his terror is unnatural. One solution is to kill the adept; all this requires is **an Attack Spread of 4 or more**, and once the adept is dead, the Dreadknight is immediately *Exposed*. However, the adept is certainly innocent, and he's also a valuable asset; it's hard to find people with the mystical talents necessary to serve as adepts or Flamekeepers. A better solution is to try to shake the adept out of his fear using a Skill Spread. As a social action, this is by default a **Grace Spread** (Leadership, Diplomacy, Fear).

- **<10:** The spread fails, and he's driven deeper into his fear. The next social spread a Phoenix makes against the adept has a penalty of -5.

- **10–14:** The spread fails, but it helps shake the adept from his terror. The next social spread a Phoenix makes against the adept has a bonus of +10.

- **15+:** The adept comes out of his trance. The Dreadknight is *Exposed*.

Every character has a Specialty that could apply to this situation, but it's up to the player to decide which approach they're taking. **Leadership** and **Diplomacy** are excellent options. **Fear** or **Deception** could work, but because they aren't perfectly applicable, the Phoenix takes a -5 penalty to the spread total. Finally, a number of Traits are clearly applicable here. For each one of the following in the spread, **add an additional +5** to the total: *Commander*, *Inspiring*, *Charming*, or *Seen This Before*. Other Traits can be added as normal; they just don't provide an extra bonus!

When the Dreadknight is *Exposed*, paraphrase the following:

> *You see the Dreadknight as he really is. His armor is rusted and piecemeal. His face, now revealed, is pale and dull with skin like cracking parchment. His eyes, the dull red of dying coals, look on you with hatred. He no longer has the same power over you—or the adept.*

Remove any *Exposed* conditions on the Phoenixes. The Dreadknight fights to the finish, but he can no longer use his *Fear Storm* or *Dread Stare*. When his HL drops to zero, he dissolves into black smoke and dissipates, leaving no trace behind.

USING THE ENVIRONMENT

The Torch includes a list of interesting Environmental Elements, and players are encouraged to use these when describing their actions. The first time someone uses an Environmental Element in a meaningful way—"*I try to throw the Dreadknight into the Imperial Flame!*" they get to draw a card, providing more options for combat. However, if the story is good you can choose to provide an additional bonus based on the logical consequences of using the element. Here are a few examples.

- The **Weapon Rack** is full of sharp, pointy objects. A Phoenix could use the weapon rack to make a ranged attack—grabbing a hand axe or javelin and throwing it at the Dreadknight. Alternately, if a player tips the rack onto the Dreadknight or slams it into the weapons, the Attack should inflict **brutal** damage.

- A Phoenix might want to wrap the Dreadknight up in the **Phoenix Banner.** This is a difficult challenge, requiring a **Grace Spread** (Difficulty 20; Athletics, Acrobatics). If this is successful, place an *Immobilized* condition on the Dreadknight. Until its next turn, its Defense is reduced to zero, and it spends its next turn tearing free of the banner. A Phoenix could also use the banner for flavor—flinging it at the Dreadknight as a distraction but not actually trying to immobilize him. This doesn't actually provide a bonus…aside from the fact that using an Environmental Element always allows the player to draw an extra card.

WHAT DO WE KNOW?

At first glance, no one knows what the Dreadknight is. However, any Phoenix can make an **Intellect Skill Spread** on their turn to study it. Lore and Tradition are both relevant Skill Specialties, and a Phoenix from Skavia can make this spread as if they had a Skill Specialty.

- **<10:** The character has no idea what the creature is.

- **10–14:** *The creature could be one of the Fallen Folk, though most people say the Fallen are just firelight tales. You vaguely recall a story about some sort of prince of fear and his dread knights.* You can expand on this with any of the common knowledge about the Fallen from the Mission Briefing.

- **15–19:** *It's been centuries since a confirmed physical encounter with one of the Fallen Folk, but that's what this is. You recognize it as a Dreadknight, one of the servants of a powerful Fallen Lord called the Harvester of Fear. The Harvester and his knights can draw fears from mortals, and this fear gives them power.*

- **20+:** *The Dreadknight isn't what he seems. He's cloaking himself in the adept's fear, and using that to evade your attacks. As long as he can feed off the adept's fear, it will be almost impossible to defeat him.*

A Phoenix should receive a +5 bonus to this spread if they make it *after* the Dreadknight uses his *Fear Storm*, and an additional +5 bonus if the Phoenix has already acquired the restricted knowledge about Blackstone from the Mission Briefing. The Traits *Seen This Before* or *Psychometry* can provide an extra +5 bonus to this spread. Alternately, if a Shrouded uses *Psychometry* in an Attack Spread and uses its ability to make the Dreadknight *Vulnerable*, they should receive information as if they'd made this spread with a value of 20+.

- The **Cringing Adept** can't easily be moved, but there's a good chance the Phoenixes will interact with him in some way—trying to shake him from his fear or protect him from the Dreadknight. As with any Environmental Element, "using" the adept in a meaningful way allows the active player to draw a card.

- The **Imperial Flame** is essentially a bonfire; someone could heat a weapon, light a torch, or even try to throw the Dreadknight into the Flame. An Elemental or Devoted might draw on the power of the Flame to strengthen a mystical attack. Generally, this is simply a justification for drawing a bonus card, but you could make an attack deal brutal damage or have a successful attack place a *Burning* condition on the Dreadknight. If the Dreadknight uses *Fear Storm*, it extinguishes any *Burning* conditions affecting him.

The main point is to be flexible and encourage storytelling. The room description is intentionally vague to allow players to establish the scene. As long as it doesn't contradict anything previously established in the scene, questions like "Where's

the banner?" should generally be answered with "Where do you want it to be?" The main thing is that a player gets a special bonus only the *first time* a particular Environmental Element is used. This doesn't literally remove it from the chamber, and people can keep grabbing weapons from the weapon rack throughout the scene…but the bonus card and the potential for brutal damage are given only to the first Phoenix who makes use of the rack.

Once the Dreadknight is defeated, remove the Challenge cards and the Torch from the table and return School cards to each player. Continue to Scene Two.

Scene Two: The Aftermath

With the battle finished, the Wing has more time to study the room. Read or paraphrase the following:

> *The building seems to be made from a single piece of polished black stone. The surface of the walls is uneven—slightly warped and undulating. The reflection of the firelight sometimes seems to be replaced by strange images you can't quite place. There's only one exit from the room—a large open arch—and now you notice a thin layer of mist rolling in from the hallway.*

While the fog is disturbing, there's no immediate threat. If the adept is still alive, the Phoenixes can talk to him. This is also an opportunity to revisit the information provided in the Mission Briefing and see if the Phoenixes have any new insights. There's little else of use in the room. Phoenixes can take weapons from the rack, but this doesn't have a concrete impact on their abilities. Equipment is primarily a way to add flavor to the description of an Attack Spread, though if a Phoenix acquires a thrown weapon (javelin, hand axe, and so on) they could use it to make a ranged attack in the next scene.

Standard procedure in this situation is to use the signalling candles to send a report back to Dawn Command. Any Phoenix with Intellect in their deck can operate the candles; otherwise, the adept can send a message. The candles have limited options, but *Dusk incursion* and *Phoenixes on site, Investigating further* would be logical codes.

The Aerie itself is a simple structure. It's a hollow obelisk, and the Flame Chamber sits at the top of it. There's nothing else up here: no windows, no access the rooftop. The only way to go is down, following the spiral staircase down into the mist. When someone leaves the chamber, continue to Scene Three.

TALKING TO THE ADEPT

Assuming he lived through the battle with the Dreadknight, the adept is shaken but thrilled to see actual Phoenixes. His name is Calan, and while he appears Ilonan, he was born on Pyre; he misses the Grand Aerie, and if you want a little comic relief, he could ask about the Elemental Marshal and bring up some of the rumors they've

heard…though that sort of casual conversation could downplay the urgency of the situation. Ultimately he tells them what he knows.

> *The adept says, "I hate it here. The Empire didn't build this place; they took an old Skavi shrine to the Fallen and converted it into an Aerie. Sometimes I see things on the walls out of the corner of my eyes…things like that creature." He shudders. "Everyone has been on edge. We're afraid of the Bones, but it's more than that…there's a despair that just seems to seep into your veins. It was at its worst tonight. I couldn't explain it, but I* knew *something terrible was coming for us. And then it did. The front doors flew open, and I saw this man…I couldn't quite see him, but I knew he was a lord or a king. He had those…knights…with him, and people in chains. I remember the moon—the moon itself was hanging over him. The Flamekeeper yelled for me to go and warn Pyre, so I ran."*

This has all happened within the last fifteen minutes. Calan doesn't know what has happened to the Flamekeeper; there's a secure chamber downstairs, but he doesn't know if the Flamekeeper was able to reach it. If asked, Calan remembers two knights with the terrifying prince, and the prisoners were other villagers.

THE LORE OF THE FALLEN

If the Phoenixes want to study the tower in more depth, the first step is to review the Mission Briefing section. This includes basic information about the Fallen and Blackstone. If the Phoenixes have spoken with the adept, they receive a +5 bonus to this spread.

A Phoenix can also gain additional information about the Aerie itself. This is an **Intellect Spread** (Difficulty 20; The Arcane, Lore), and a Phoenix gets a +5 bonus if they've spoken with the adept (who mentioned the Empire didn't build the Aerie). *Seen This Before* is a trump Trait; if a Phoenix has this in their hand, they can get the following information without needing to make a spread:

> *A number of ruins lie scattered around the Empire, hinting at ancient civilizations…nations that fell so long ago we know nothing about them. Scholars refer to these as the Old Kingdoms. The architectural style of the building is reminiscent of these ruins, and some say the Fallen are remnants of the people of the Old Kingdoms. This tower could have been built by the Fallen long ago.*

If the Phoenixes have already learned the story of the Harvester, you can work the following information into your description:

> *This tower was once the stronghold of the Harvester. Once he was defeated, the Phoenixes must have converted it into an Aerie in the hopes of containing any lingering evil influences. Studying it, you realize it was designed as a psychic amplifier; it concentrates and magnifies fears. If the Harvester regains his full power, the building will allow him to spread his influence over the region.*

Armed with this information, the Phoenixes will recognize the mist in Scene Three as the psychic byproduct of the tower…excess fear leaking out into the structure.

Scene Three: A Hall Full of Fears

The Wing may choose to charge downstairs en masse, or they may send one or more members ahead as scouts. When someone ventures into the mist, read or paraphrase the following:

> *The floors of the Aerie are hidden beneath a layer of heavy fog. This mist distorts sound; you can't hear your own footsteps, but you hear other sounds all around you: whispers, sobs, and cries of pain. It's hard to tell what's coming from downstairs and what's simply in your mind. Dark shapes dart in and out of the mist…insects, perhaps?*

This chilly fog is a manifestation of the influence of the Harvester. It distorts both sound and light; regardless of what light sources the Phoenixes bring to bear, it's impossible to raise the ambient light level beyond what a flickering candle could produce. Thus, the hall is dark and cold, filled with strange sounds and movement in the shadows. The dark shapes aren't insects. With an **Intellect Spread** (Difficulty 10; Observation, Scouting), a Phoenix sees they are shapes formed from mist, each one unique. An **Intellect Spread** (Difficult 15; The Arcane, Lore, Spirits) reveals these are manifestations of fears torn from the minds of Aerie staff. These tiny spirits possess no sentience, and they cannot be physically harmed. The only way down to the first floor is by venturing into the mists…and even if a player comes up with a way to avoid touching the floor and the mist, the tiny terrors swarm toward them. When these motes of darkness roll over the Wing, they trigger their deepest fears.

As each Phoenix enters the mist, present the player with a scenario of the fear that grips them. Refer to the **Greatest Fear** the player chose when creating the character. A Phoenix who's afraid of bugs hears chittering in the fog and knows it's filled with flesh-eating beetles. If a Phoenix fears the memory their first death, they know whatever killed them is waiting downstairs. You don't have to get too detailed, and the Phoenix *knows* this fear is illogical—but challenge each player to explain how their Phoenix overcomes this fear and keeps moving forward. The player must then make a **Grace Spread** to determine how effectively they manage to push past their fears. If you want, you can speed things up by allowing one player to make a spread for the entire Wing; a Durant could use Leadership to give everyone courage, or a Devoted could use knowledge of spirits to protect the Wing from this malevolent influence. It can be an interesting opportunity to explore each Phoenix's fears and how they react to them; use your judgment. When the spreads have been resolved, continue to Scene Four.

OVERCOMING FEAR Skill Spread

This is a **Grace Spread** (Difficulty 15+). The Fear Specialty applies. Other Specialties could apply based on the nature of the fear; challenge the player to explain why the Specialty is relevant. Using a Specialty is important: Not only does it provide a +5 to the spread, but it also lets a player use an additional suit. So if the Durant can justify Leadership being relevant, they can use Strength *and* Grace in the spread.

- **<15:** The Phoenix must burn as many Sparks as necessary to push the result to 15; if they don't have enough Sparks, they die (though in this case, they can keep all their Sparks as an attendant spirit). At this level, a mortal would be reduced to permanent madness or a catatonic state.

- **15–19:** The Phoenix is able to press forward, but is haunted by fear. They are *Exposed* going into the next scene.

- **20+:** The Phoenix is able to shake off the unnatural fear.

In addition to Specialty, you can provide a bonus for a good story or relevant Trait. For example: *Reckless* or *Death Wish* could allow the character to keep going in spite of their fear, while *Seen This Before* or *Makes It Look Easy* help the Phoenix shake it off. Each of these could grant an additional +5 bonus. Meanwhile, *Absolute Conviction* and *Never Gives Up* are exactly what are needed here; either one will serve as a trump card, allowing automatic success. With that said, *being* Exposed *is not that bad.* Don't feel that you have to help everyone reach a 20 here. If someone is going to die because of a bad spread, you may want to offer advice on using Traits or other ways to improve it…but Scene Four will be more interesting if someone is *Exposed.*

Scene Four: The Harvester of Fear

Read or paraphrase the following:

Once this was a grand hall. Today it stands bare, floors hidden beneath a layer of roiling fog. The chamber is dominated by a strange sculpture formed from stone and steel—an abstraction of a tree, a thick pillar with broad branches extending from it, studded with sharp spikes. People are chained to the tree, Skavi villagers and members of the Aerie staff; you can see the Flamekeeper hanging from a high branch. Though the prisoners appear unconscious, they thrash and moan. A large glass sphere sits atop the tree, shimmering with a pale glow like moonlight. It is hollow and nearly filled with darting black shapes. Looking more closely, you see streams of darkness flowing up the tree from the bodies of the victims.

A ragged Dreadknight is watching the main gate, blade drawn, but your eyes are drawn to the figure standing in front of the tree, a tall man carving shallow wounds on the back of a moaning prisoner. The Harvester of Fear wears an elaborate mask—an unblemished alabaster face, its temples ringed with shards of jagged obsidian in a mockery of a king's crown. One pale and flawless hand holds a long scepter, both elegant and barbaric, studded with the same razor–sharp obsidian of his crown. His other hand is clawed and as dark as pitch, and he uses those claws to drag long, shallow cuts across

a prisoner's cheek. His voice is a whisper, but you hear it as if he's whispering into your ear. "Don't hold it in." He speaks as matter-of-factly as a butcher calming a calf. "The longer you can scream, the longer you'll live."

At first, the Harvester appears to be dressed in a dark robe and cloak. On closer examination, he's formed out of solid, shifting shadows wrapped around a skeletal frame. His defense reflects the fact that it's hard to hurt him with physical force. As he's injured, the shadows fade and reveal his gaunt skeleton.

SETUP

Place the *Harvester* and *Innocents* cards next to each other and the *Dreadknight* between the Phoenixes and the others. The Dreadknight begins the scene *Exposed*, which means he can't use his *Fear Storm* or *Dread Stare*. The mortals are unconscious and their fears are channeling into the sphere; as a result, the Dreadknight has nothing to work with. This room is the **Grand Hall**, and the Torch contains the following Environmental Elements: **The Tree of Pain, Layer of Fog, Discarded Chains, Torn Tapestry, Blood, Bottle of Skavi Ale, The Flamekeeper**, and **Ray of Moonlight.**

Moving across the room takes some effort, as shown in the Movement Spreads sidebar.

Movement Spreads

Moving across the chamber is a **Grace Spread** if the character is relying on speed and finesse (Acrobatics applies), or a **Strength Spread** if the Phoenix is using pure strength to overcome obstacles (Athletics applies). The following difficulties show how far a Phoenix can get if they start at the stairs:

- **5–9:** The Phoenix reaches the Harvester.
- **10–14:** The Phoenix reaches the base of the Tree of Pain.
- **15–19:** The Phoenix climbs up the Tree of Pain. The Dreadknight can't reach them, but the Harvester can still attack with his scepter.
- **20–29:** The Phoenix reaches the top of the Tree of Pain—getting close to the Flamekeeper and orb—but won't be able to interact with them for one turn.

30+: The Phoenix dodges both Dreadknight and Harvester and reaches the top of the Tree. They can immediately interact with either the Flamekeeper or the Orb.

If the Dreadknight is alive, the difficulty is increased by 5 unless the Phoenix is *Hidden*; the Dreadknight moves to intercept anyone he can see. Once a Phoenix reaches the base of the Tree of Pain, **reduce the difficulty by 10**; so, Difficulty 5 to climb into the tree, 10 to get close to the top, and 20 to take immediate action.

FIGHTING THE FALLEN

The Phoenixes have the element of surprise; the Harvester is focused on his task, and the Dreadknight is watching the front door. If a Phoenix can remain *Hidden*, they can act without actually starting combat. A Shrouded with the *Shadow Dancer* lesson can hide automatically. Otherwise, this is a Grace Spread (Difficulty 18; Scouting, Shadows, Spycraft). If a Phoenix succeeds, they can move about the room freely without triggering opposition; this lets them reach the Harvester and the Tree of Pain without any further spreads. This continues until…

- A Phoenix who's not *Hidden* takes an action; a Phoenix attempts to hide and fails; a *Hidden* Phoenix makes an attack.

- A Phoenix who's *Exposed* moves up to the Harvester or the Tree of Pain. The Harvester can sense their fear; remove the *Hidden* condition. The same thing happens if a *Hidden* Phoenix touches the Tree.

After any *Hidden* actions are resolved, a Phoenix takes the first turn. The Dreadknight acts after the first Phoenix turn, and the Harvester acts after the second Phoenix turn. They're both Speed 2, so after that it's: Phoenix, Dreadknight, Phoenix, Harvester, Phoenix, Dreadknight, and so on.

Fallen Tactics

The Dreadknight is a straightforward opponent. He attacks the Phoenix who has most recently hurt him, or failing that the closest *Exposed* Phoenix.

The Harvester has more options. His simplest attack is his **scepter**. He uses this if there are no *Exposed* opponents, or when he's attacking an opponent with only one or two Health Levels remaining. However, his more potent attack is Consume Fears. This can be used only on an *Exposed* Phoenix, but it's a ranged attack that cannot be dodged. When he uses this ability, he reaches out toward the victim with his black claw, and shadows pour out of the victim's eyes and mouth into the Harvester. This attack reduces the victim to a single Health Level, and the Harvester regains Health Levels with a total value equal to or less than the damage done to the Phoenix. Thus this attack is best used on a Phoenix with high Health when the Harvester is injured.

Consume Fears is a dramatic attack. Damage aside, once it's used, the Harvester knows the victim's deepest fears; you can add color to the scene by having the Harvester talk about or mock the Phoenix's fears. A Defense Spread won't help avoid this attack, but not being *Exposed* does. Once it's been used, you can call out that it works only on people who are afraid—encourage the Phoenixes to avoid this, as described in *Fear and Exposure*. Meanwhile, the Harvester has two tools to expose his enemies. If he strikes a victim with his scepter, they become *Exposed*. He can also trigger a *Fear Burst* twice over the course of the scene…a blast of terror that rolls

across the room, exposing everyone (even *Hidden* Phoenixes). This happens when the Dreadknight is killed; the Harvester reaches out to the dying Dreadknight and it explodes in a burst of fear. It also happens the first time the Harvester is reduced to four or fewer Health Level tokens. The Harvester is literally made of fear, and when he is seriously hurt, it spills out of him like a fountain of blood.

Aside from this, the Harvester saps the strength of those around him. At the start of his turn, he drains a Spark from every Phoenix who's *Exposed*. This is an automatic action and works even if a Phoenix is *Hidden*. Over time, this can be more dangerous than his scepter! Keep track of the number of Sparks he has drained. **If he drains eight Sparks, he can create a new Dreadknight.** Call out that this Dreadknight is made from the fears of the Phoenixes themselves. **This Dreadknight gets a +2 bonus to his attacks, and any Phoenix struck by his attack is is** Exposed**; if they are already** Exposed**, they lose a Spark.**

Fear and Exposure

At some point, take a moment to discuss the effects of the *Exposed* condition in this scene.

> *If you're* Exposed*, you're under the influence of unnatural fear. The maximum size of your Defense Spreads is reduced by one card. There may be other effects beyond this, which you'll discover in time. While you can't shake off your own fear, you can make a Skill Spread to encourage and inspire an ally. This is a Grace Spread, and you'll need a 10 or better to succeed.*

Being *Exposed* reduces a Phoenix's Defense, but the more serious consequence is that the Phoenix is vulnerable to the Harvester's special attacks—*Consume Fears* and *Feed off Fear.* There are two ways to remove this fear. The first is simple: **A successful attack against the Harvester removes the** Exposed **condition from the attacker**… but the Wing won't find out about this until an *Exposed* Phoenix makes a successful attack.

The second option is to make a **Grace Spread** (Difficulty 10; Diplomacy, Leadership, Fear). If the spread is successful, remove the *Exposed* condition from the target. An appropriate Trait—such as *Commander* or *Inspiring*—serves as a trump card; discard the Trait for automatic success on the spread. Normally a Phoenix can only use this spread to inspire an ally, but if they have *Never Gives Up, Absolute Conviction*, or a similar Trait, they can discard it to shake off the fear and get rid of the *Exposed* condition.

USING THE ENVIRONMENT

Environmental Elements are tools to inspire action. Many elements in the scene are intentionally abstract. Consider the following:

- **Blood** could be the blood of a prisoner, blood of a Phoenix, or even the blood of the Harvester (*"I want to see him bleed!"*).

- The **Ray of Moonlight** could come through a tiny window…or it could be a false moonlight coming from the orb on top of the tree.

- **The Flamekeeper** is at the top of the Tree of Pain and can't be easily reached. But a Phoenix can "use" the Flamekeeper—and claim the bonus card—with any action that somehow relates to him. If the Phoenix is trying to climb the tree to reach the Flamekeeper, that's "using" the element. Or perhaps a Phoenix sees the Flamekeeper and is determined to punish the creature responsible for his pain…so they are inspired by the Flamekeeper, even though they aren't actually touching him.

- **The Tree of Pain** can't easily be moved or damaged, but an enemy could be driven into it, or a Phoenix could break off a spiked branch as an improvised weapon. Either of these things would give an attack **brutal** damage for one round in addition to providing a bonus card.

There is one other important object in the room: **The Sphere of Fear.** This glowing crystal globe sits at the top of the Tree of Pain. If someone studies it, paraphrase the following:

> *The sphere is made of pale, glowing crystal. It is nearly filled with a darkness that swirls and writhes against its prison. (***Specialist Phoenix***) recognizes this as fears pulled free of their hosts. These fears are further amplified by the tower itself. If it fills to capacity and explodes, these living fears will kill everyone and corrupt the entire region.*

The "Specialist Phoenix" is the Phoenix who has gathered the most information about fear or the Fallen over the course of the Mission. Failing that, it can be a Phoenix with the Spirits or Lore Specialty. If anyone wants to attack the sphere, it has a Defense of 5, but proves to be indestructible; it looks like crystal, but it's actually a manifestation of the Harvester. The Specialist Phoenix recognizes that shattering the sphere at this point won't blight the region, but will certainly kill everyone in the tower, Phoenixes and Flamekeeper included. If a Phoenix reaches the Sphere and has the opportunity to interact with it directly, you can advance to Scene Five. **If the Sphere is destroyed using any of the methods described in Scene Five, the Harvester is destroyed as well.**

DEFEATING THE HARVESTER

When the Harvester is finally beaten, any Dreadknights falls with him. Read or paraphrase the following:

The Harvester succumbs to his wounds, staggering and dropping his scepter. When it hits the stone floor, it shatters like glass. Black mist pours from the eyes and mouth of his mask, which begins to crumble and peel like parchment in a flame. But even as he crumbles, his whisper is sharp and clear. "This is a mayfly's victory, nothing more." His laughter is a painful rasp. "My hooks are in this land and these hearts. As long as the people in this place are afraid, I will return…and you cannot defeat their fear."

His voice fades with his last words. For an instant, it seems as though he's falling away *from you, no matter where you are in the room. And then he's gone, leaving no trace of his passage.*

The people on the tree begin to stir, moaning in pain. In the upper branches, the glow of the sphere begins to fade. The solidified fears within it thrash against the walls, and the sphere begins to crack.

Continue to the next scene!

TIPS FOR PLAYERS

This can be a very difficult encounter. If your players are having a hard time and don't seem to grasp all the tricks of the system, here are a few things you can call out.

A number of effects let players shift the target of an attack, including the Traits *Charming*, *Seasoned Veteran*, *Death Wish*, and *Reckless*. This can be vital to stopping the Harvester from using Death's Door. If the Harvester is using *Consume Fears*, and the attack gets shifted to a non-*Exposed* Phoenix, the Harvester can use his *Cruel Scepter* instead.

Consume Fears reduces a victim to their last Health Level. As long as a Phoenix has at least two Health Levels, it can't kill them. A Devoted can use their Core Talent to keep at least two Health Levels on the other Phoenixes. Likewise, a Durant's Core Talent lets them reduce the damage of an attack by one Wound. If they use this against *Consume Fears*, it can only reduce them to two Health Levels—which means it can never kill them (as long as they have Sparks!).

Being *Exposed* is deadly. Durant and Devoted Phoenixes both excel at inspiring others and should take advantage of this fact. Remember, **Phoenixes can't make a Skill Spread to inspire themselves**!

Remind players to make use of passive options, such as Bond Lessons!

Scene Five: Defeating Fear

The Sphere of Fear is starting to crack. The Harvester's power was all that sustained it, and within a few minutes, it shatters and unleashes the manifested fears on the region. How can it be stopped?

SETUP

Remove all cards from the center of the table. This isn't a combat scene, and there is no need for the Torch.

CONTAINING THE FEARS

Any Phoenix can make a Skill Spread to study the sphere and try to come up with an answer. This is an **Intellect Spread (**Difficulty 10+; Spirits, Lore, The Arcane**).**

- **<10:** *You have no idea how to deal with this.*

- **10–14:** *If you break the sphere, you will die. But when you die, you could draw all the fears down with you into the Crucible. It would be a terrifying experience—you would have to face down each of those fears one by one in the Crucible, and it could leave lasting scars—but it would save everyone here.*

- **15+:** *The sphere was sustained by the Harvester. It's possible you could link it to your own spirit and keep it from breaking…or better yet, link it to the spirits of your entire Wing. If you took it back to the Grand Aerie, you're sure the Marshals could find some way to deal with it; maybe they'd even learn something useful from it. However, this will be a difficult task. If you fail to bond with it, it will burst and be impossible to contain. If you do bond with it, if you are killed on the way back to the Grand Aerie, it will explode wherever you are.*

These answers are cumulative: Someone who gets 15 still knows they could simply sacrifice themselves and be done with it. The Traits *Seen This Before*, *Haunted*, and *Shaman* each add an additional +5 to the spread. If someone has *Brilliant Deduction* and uses it to ask "How do I deal with this?" they can skip the spread and get both possible solutions.

Swallowing the Fear. If a Phoenix chooses to absorb the fears, there's no chance of failure. They grab the sphere and it shatters. As their body dissolves into ash, the darkness is sucked down in a vortex and vanishes. The Phoenix will be reborn in the Grand Aerie. **Any Phoenix can do this—**it doesn't have to be the Phoenix who made the Intellect Spread. While this is the quick and easy solution, it has consequences; the Phoenix must add the *Horrific Visions* card to their deck. **This is a permanent change!**

Bonding with the Sphere. The Phoenix touches the sphere and makes a spread. This is three cards and can use **both Intellect** and **Grace**. Tell the player up front: They need at least a 20 to succeed, and a 30 to bond it to the Wing. Spirits, Lore, and The Arcane are all applicable Specialties.

- **<20:** *Failure! The sphere shatters. All the mortals and Phoenixes in the room are killed and the region is tainted with darkness. The Phoenixes will be reborn back in the Grand Aerie, but the damage is done!*

- **20–29:** *The Sphere is bound to the individual who made the spread. As long as this is the case, that Phoenix cannot regain Sparks and will lose a Spark every day. Hopefully enough Sparks remain to make it back to the Grand Aerie!*

- **30+:** *The Sphere is bound to the entire Wing. As long as one of them survives, it will be fairly safe to take it back to the Grand Aerie.*

As long as the Phoenix is *attempting* to bond the sphere to the entire Wing, there's a second bonus. Ask each Phoenix who's not participating in the spread why they believe the active Phoenix can do this and why they feel that they have a strong connection to the acting Phoenix. You can award a +0 to +5 bonus based on this story. During character creation, each Phoenix chooses another member of the Wing who they feel a connection to; if anyone chose the active Phoenix, that's an automatic +5 regardless of how good their story is.

DEFEATING FEAR

Assuming the group deals with the sphere in one way or another, there is one final challenge.

> *The prisoners finally awaken, and though they are extremely grateful, you can see their fear remains. They have seen the horrors that lurk in the night, and each of them knows this danger could return at any time…and it is this fear that will allow the Harvester to return. You see the adept Calan doing his best to put on a brave face…but the fear is still there.*

The Phoenixes have one chance to deal with this: to inspire the people and convince them the Phoenixes will protect them, and there truly is nothing to fear. Ask who would like to make the primary spread. This is an excellent case for Leadership, and assuming the Shrouded or Devoted dealt with the Sphere, it's a chance for the Durant to shine. Have the primary speaker give the gist of their speech and then make a three-card Grace Spread. If it's the Durant, their Leadership Specialty gives them a +5 to the spread and allows them to use Strength as well as Grace.

> **<15:** *The people put up a brave front, but you're not sure how long it will last once you leave.*
>
> **15–20:** *You have lifted their spirits, at least for now. The region should be safe for at least a few months.*
>
> **20–29:** *Your speech is truly inspiring. You've instilled them with a confidence that will keep them strong even when Bones attack; this should hold off the return of the Harvester by at least half a year, if not longer. Perhaps in that time you will find a way to end the Dread and deal with this threat once and for all.*
>
> **30+:** *You have instilled the people of Blackstone with an undying confidence. This will shield them through the dark times ahead for years to come—and their courage will inspire others who come to this place.*

Especially appropriate Traits like *Inspiring* or *Commander* can add +5 to the spread.

Interludes: What Happens Next?

The mission is now over; either the Phoenixes triumphed or fear has reclaimed Blackstone. The next time you get together, you'll pick up the story back at the Grand Aerie, ready to be sent out on the next mission. However, the living members of the Wing can't simply teleport back to the Grand Aerie. They have to make their way back on foot or by boat. If the players want, you can explore the events that happen on the way back to Pyre in greater depth. If you want, you can make this into a fully developed story complete with Challenges, or it could simply be something developed between sessions in email and casual conversation.

Here is one scene you could use as an interlude. This is another example of giving a player who survived the mission an opportunity for an interesting death.

The Tinker at the Crossroads

Read or paraphrase the following:

> *You're making your way through the Skavi countryside as quickly as possible, taking the Imperial roads to the Red Marches and the closest harbor. You don't need to sleep and you need to get back to Pyre as quickly as possible, so you're traveling through the night. It's just past midnight, and you're approaching a crossroads when a woman calls out to you. "Hail, Phoenixes!"*
>
> *It's a peddler, camped at the crossroads for the night. She's dressed in worn traveling clothes, with a patched cloak and a wide–brimmed hat. She's rummaging through a large pack as you approach.*

Give the players an opportunity to respond; it they take no immediate action, continue with the following:

> *"You've done me a kindness recently," the woman says as she sifts through her bags. "Drove out the* competition, *so to speak. Created some business opportunities. All above board, of course! Negotiated for. Not like my rival." She finally pulls out a charm on a leather cord. Looking at it, you realize that it's Pyrean steel—the same rare metal used in your Talons, and the only substance that can travel to and from the Crucible with you when you die.*
>
> *"I thought one of you might be interested in this. Give it to someone—you know, someone* human, *don't wear it yourself—and it will save their life. Guaranteed. All I need is one of yours. You know, a* life. *Coal–hot. Payment up front. No refunds." She finally looks up at you, and you see that beneath her hat her face is hidden behind a mask of gold…a mask with no holes for her eyes.*

Any Phoenix who's done any research into the Fallen over the course of the Mission immediately recognizes this woman from stories. This is the Tinker at the Crossroads, a common figure in Skavi firelight tales. She always has a treasure for sale. In the stories, she's not generally depicted as being evil; her trinkets always do exactly what she promises, and the question is whether the person who takes her bargain uses their treasure wisely or foolishly. The Phoenix is sure that they could safely ignore her, and that if they attack her she'll just disappear. The deal is exactly what it seems to be: Is one of them willing to give up a life now for the power to save a mortal in the future?

The Tinker is not interested in making any other bargains, although she declines politely. She offers the charm; if any of the Phoenixes take it, they immediately lose all their Sparks and turn to ash, along with the charm. When they are reborn, the charm is on their person along with their Talon. The charm remains with them until they give it to a mortal. At that point, the mortal effectively gains additional Health Levels equal to the amount the Phoenix had before they died. Most mortals only have one Health Level, so while this isn't absolute immortality, it will allow the wearer to survive multiple injuries that would otherwise be deadly. If you want to sweeten the deal, you can say that it will actually restore life to a mortal as long as it's placed around their neck within a minute of their death. Once it's been given to a mortal, it's bound to that mortal; it can't be passed around to multiple mortals.

This scene is what it seems; is one of the Phoenixes willing to make a bargain with a Fallen and trade their life for the chance to save a mortal? If someone takes the deal, it creates story hooks for the future. What will they do with the charm? Will the Tinker visit them again…perhaps coming to them in the Crucible? If no one takes the deal, be sure to call it out the next time a significant mortal dies. And will the Tinker be annoyed that they spurned her offer? Perhaps she'll give some treasure to a member of the Rival Wing (page 145)!

MISSION REFERENCE: THE HARVEST

ELEMENTAL MARSHAL: CINDER

Gender: **Apparent Age:**

Physical Details and Rumors:

THE HARVESTER

Fallen

SPEED 2
DEFENSE 6
HL 4, 4, 4, 6, 6, 6

The Harvester can make a single attack each turn and perform Feed Off Fear.

CRUEL SCEPTER (Standard Melee Attack): Attack 10, Damage xl brutal (4). Anyone struck by this attack is Exposed; if they are already Exposed, they lose 1 Spark.

CONSUME FEARS (Special Ranged Attack): This attack can only be used on a target that is Exposed. It automatically hits, and the target is reduced to 1 HL; if the target only has 1 HL, they are killed. The Harvester regains HL with a total value equal to or less than the damage done by the attack.

FEAR BURST (Reaction): All of the Harvester's enemies are Exposed. If a Phoenix is already Exposed, they lose 1 Spark instead. This is triggered the first time the Harvester loses his fourth Health Level, and any time a Dreadknight is slain.

FEED OFF FEAR (Action): At the start of his action, the Harvester drains 1 Spark from every Exposed Phoenix.

DREADKNIGHT

Fallen

SPEED 2
DEFENSE 4
HL 3, 3, 3, 3, 3

The Dreadknight can make a single attack each round, and alternates between Slashing Blade and Dread Gaze.

SLASHING BLADE (Standard Melee Attack): Attack 9, Damage xl brutal (4)

DREAD GAZE (All or Nothing Ranged Attack): Attack 8, Damage 1 Wound and target is Exposed; this Exposed condition remains until the Dreadknight himself is Exposed. The Dreadknight cannot use this power if he is Exposed.

FEAR STORM (All or Nothing Reaction): Attack 6, Damage 1 Wound, affects everyone in the room; the Dreadknight returns to full Health. This triggers automatically when the Dreadknight loses his last Health Level, unless he is Exposed.

MISSION TWO: CHANTS AND WHISPERS

In "Chants and Whispers," a simple mission goes terribly wrong. The Wing is sent to the Capital to recruit a savant who has been studying the Dread. In the process, they see how deeply the Dread has scarred even the heart of the Empire…and find that the sage they're looking for is caught in the middle of a Chant outbreak. In the process of saving him, they have an opportunity to discover the true nature of the Chant. Which comes first: protecting innocents, completing the mission, or trying to stop the Chant?

"Chants and Whispers" should take between three and four hours from start to finish. The primary threat is the **Chant**, a form of contagious possession that can quickly spread through mortal populations; a number of major cities have already fallen to the Chant. Refer to page 184 of the Marshal's Guide for complete information about the Chant; you will need to refer to this section throughout this mission.

Prologue: Into Harm's Way

Many missions begin with a briefing at the Grand Aerie. "Chants and Whispers" breaks this pattern and begins with the Wing facing a threat in the heart of the Capital. Once the initial conflict is resolved, a flashback reveals just how the Wing came to be in this situation. Tell the players you're starting in the middle of the action and it will all make sense later. If you feel it will help, you can provide them with additional details about the mission (look ahead to Scene Two), but the idea is to drop the players directly into a tense moment without a lot of exposition. When it's time for exposition, the players will already understand the threat and the stakes.

Scene One: Chanters On The Roof

Read or paraphrase the following:

> *You're standing on the roof of a massive building. Around you are the remnants of a garden, originally designed to feed the people who live here…but no one's tended it for a long time. Most of the planters are empty, save a few weed–choked trellises. You're near the edge of the roof, and the busy streets of the Capital are about seventy feet below. People go about their business—but you've got other things to worry about.*
>
> *There's a stairwell near the center of the roof. That's where the sound first came from: dozens of voices moaning in unison, chanting words in an ancient language. Moments later, they began pouring in from the doorway. An old woman wearing a bloody shawl. A musician using his instrument as a club. A young boy. All moaning the same words in perfect time…and all heading for you, moving with the same jerky gait.*
>
> *You all know what this is. The Chant is one of the most infamous manifestations of the Dread. No one knows anything about it beyond the simplest facts: It starts when someone begins to chant and attack the people around them. Those who hear the Chant either join in or are torn apart by Chanters. It spreads quickly—entire villages and even major cities have been lost to the Chant. We don't know how it begins or how it spreads, and we don't know any way to save someone once they begin chanting. Now a mob of Chanters is charging at you, making an Attack with a value of 7.*

SETUP

Arrange the Wing in the center of the table, standing in 2 x 2 formation. Set the *Chanter Mob* on the table. This room is the **Rooftop Garden** and includes the following Environmental Elements: **Water Barrel, Weed-Covered Trellis, Wheelbarrow, Decorative Shrub, Edge of the Roof,** and **Disturbing Chant**.

Begin by resolving the initial attack as the Chanters swarm in—**an attack against every member of the Wing, with an Attack value of 7.** After this initial attack is resolved, the Phoenixes have a little more time to study the Chanters. Read or paraphrase the following:

> *The Chanters appear to be the denizens of this building…mostly Ilonans, drawn from all ages and walks of life, with a few things in common. They each walk with a shuffling, jerky gait, yet they move remarkably quickly. They are bleeding from every orifice…blood drips from eyes, ears, mouth, and nostrils.*

At this point, ask each player to describe one member of the Chanter Mob… someone who particularly catches their eye. The Chant can affect anyone: If the players picture the scene in their minds, what do they see? While most of the Chanters are Ilonans, they are refugees and could come from any part of the Empire; work with the players to develop a few memorable characters. Here are a few ideas to work with if your players don't enjoy this process.

- A well-dressed man, perhaps a merchant or landlord. His purse is torn and coins slip out of it when he moves.
- A heavily-built butcher with a bloody cleaver clutched in one hand.
- An old woman wearing a bloody shawl. Her arm is clearly broken, but she seems completely unaware of the injury.
- A girl clutching a stuffed bear. She's using the bear as a weapon, and its fur is soaked with blood.

Use these descriptions to add color to the combat. It's not a faceless mob; it's a young girl lashing out with an unnatural burst of speed and strength or an old woman being struck down. Damaging the pack means crippling civilians. Most of the Chanters are only armed with teeth and nails, but they have inhuman strength and fight with no concern for their safely.

When the Chanters are reduced to ten or fewer Health Level counters, one of them stands out from the rest. Choose a memorable individual from the Chanters you've described, and paraphrase the following:

> *As you move closer to (describe the individual), you realize they aren't actually standing on the ground—they're floating a few inches above it. Unlike the other Chanters, this one is clearly dead…a puppet hanging in the air. Their skin is pale and bloodless. They are no longer chanting, but as they draw closer, you hear the Chant clearly—a whisper reaching directly into your mind.*

Place the Whisperer next to the Chanter Mob. It begins by telekinetically grabbing the Phoenix that just injured the Chanter Mob and follows with a *Piercing Whisper*. The Whisperer is powerful, but employs simple tactics; it generally targets the Phoenix who has most recently injured it, though it maintains a *Telekinetic Grab* and slowly crushes the Phoenix caught in its grip. The Challenge entry (page 185) on the Chant discusses the Whisperer in more detail, including ways to escape its grip. Details on the *Chant* Affliction can be found on the Mission Reference Sheet.

LEARNING ABOUT THE CHANT

As of this mission, little is known about the Chant. Refer to the Chant Challenge entry for ways Phoenixes can learn more about the Chant.

USING THE ENVIRONMENT

Encourge the players to incorporate the Environmental Elements in their actions. Here are a few examples of things players might try; use this as inspiration for other unexpected player strategies.

- **Over the Edge**. A Phoenix may try to push Chanters over the edge of the roof. Depending on the approach, this could be a Skill Spread using Strength (Athletics), Grace (Acrobatics or Deception) or some other Specialty. For every five points in the spread (rounding up) remove one HL token from the Chanter Mob. If the spread total is over 30, remove an additional two tokens. After this happens once, the Chanters become more wary; on subsequent attempts, remove one HL token for every ten points in the spread.

- **Using the Chant.** Any Phoenix can become *Hidden* from the Chanters by repeating the Chant, but they acquire an Affliction card in the process; this is described in more detail in the Chant Challenge entry, along with the information Phoenixes can gain by analyzing the Chant.

- **Bulldozing.** Any sort of action that allows a Phoenix to strike multiple targets—such as using the wheelbarrow or trellis as a bulldozer—should inflict brutal damage to the Chanter Mob the first time it is performed.

- **Exorcism and Healing.** Once the Phoenixes recognize the Chanters are possessed, someone may want to make a Skill Spread to exorcise or assist them. Someone else might come up with ways to cure the Chant. All of these options are covered in the Chant Challenge entry (page 188).

• **Live Capture.** Phoenixes may be squeamish about killing Chanters, which is appropriate; the people are innocent victims. However, as the story begins, they can't cure the Chant. Chanters can't be knocked unconscious; they're puppets, so even an unconscious body continues to attack. However, if a Phoenix comes up with a reasonable plan for immobilizing Chanters—trapping them in a Water Barrel, for example—allow them to make a spread. Remove 1 HL token from the Chanter Mob for every five points in the spread, rounding up; each token represents a Chanter who is successfully restrained. Assuming this tactic can be repeated (you can only fit so many people in a water barrel) subsequent attempts only remove one Chanter for every ten points in the spread.

• **Fleeing the Scene.** Phoenixes may want to ignore the Chanters and press into the hold without fighting them. At the start of the fight, this is impossible; the Chanters are blocking the only access point into the building. Once the mob is reduced to ten or fewer HL tokens, it becomes viable—but at this point, the Whisperer appears and grabs someone. Nonetheless, you could allow Phoenixes to evade the Chanters and flee into the hold. This would require an **appropriate spread with a value of 20.**

AFTERMATH

Once the Chanter threat has been eliminated, paraphrase the following:

> *The immediate threat is over, and you are free to make your way into the dilapidated fortress. But first, let's review this situation. How did you come to be here? What are you trying to accomplish? Just a few hours ago, you were all in the Grand Aerie on Pyre; let's step back in time and revisit your briefing.*

Remove Challenge cards from the table. Even though the next scenes technically occur in the past, go ahead and keep people's Sparks and Wounds as they stand at the end of this scene. If a Phoenix died in Scene One, the death won't come into effect until the end of Scene Four; they have a temporary reprieve.

Scene Two: The Briefing

Read or paraphrase the following:

> *In the past, the Grand Aerie was the heart of the Empire. It was home to a thousand Phoenixes and hundreds of mortal soldiers, sages, and servants. The Shrouded maintained a vast library. The Devoted pioneered new healing techniques in an enormous infirmary. Durant commanders taught mortal soldiers in the drill yards. All of these facilities have stood empty for centuries. At the moment, the Aerie holds fewer than one hundred people—the Marshals, two Wings of Phoenixes, and a few dozen mortals. The Marshals are working to restore the Aerie, but Dawn Command's resources are limited.*
>
> *Winter finds you as your Wing concludes a training exercise. Winter is the Shrouded Marshal, and always appears without warning. Spymaster and sage, Winter monitors the state of the Empire; when there's a mission that's not an emergency response, it usually comes from Winter.*

Winter is an important supporting character who plays a role in future stories. As with the Elemental Marshal in the previous mission, this is an opportunity to have

the players develop details about Winter. If you believe your group will benefit from this, determine the following details by asking each player, one at a time: Is Winter male or female? How old does Winter appear to be? What distinguishing characteristics does the Marshal have (*more than one player can answer this question*)? After these key details are established, have each player state one rumor they've heard or a personality trait they've noticed about the Shrouded Marshal. In case you choose not to do this, here's a default description to work with:

> *While you know she's at least three hundred years old, the Shrouded Marshal appears to be a Skavi woman in her early twenties. You immediately recognize her every time you see her, and yet you can't retain any details of her appearance; as soon as you part ways, you're left with only a vague impression of a young woman wearing a mask that covers the lower half of her face. People say she can talk to birds and has a network of avian spies. According to one story, she was a warlock in her first life and used to bargain with the Fallen Folk; a less likely tale suggests she's not actually a Phoenix, but rather one of the Fallen bound to serve Dawn Command.*

Once you've established Winter as a character, paraphrase the following:

> *As always, Winter appears without warning. "You have a mission. Follow me." He continues to talk as you make your way to the Flame Chamber. "It's a simple task, but it's vital. You're going to the Capital, and you're bringing back a man named Eldan Diogenes. He's in a refugee camp there, a place called Darhold. He's a scholar and healer who has been studying the Dread since it began. He has dealt with skinchangers in the Grimwald, and he was in Mardonford when it fell to the Chant. We need his expertise here. He's been fighting the Dread in his own way, and we think he'll gladly come with you; if not, do what it takes to persuade him."*

While **she** says, "Do what it takes to persuade him," Winter is not encouraging torture or harsh coercion; **she** believes that diplomacy will win the day. If someone suggests unpleasant forms of persuasion, **her** eyes narrow and **she** reminds the Wing that this is someone they want as an ally. "*We're fighting to save the world. Try to act like it.*"

MISSION BRIEFING: THE CAPITAL

Some Phoenixes will want to dive into the action; others will have questions. This section provides background information about subjects that may come up at some point in the mission.

What is the Chant?

> *The Chant is one of the most infamous manifestations of the Dread. It seems to be able to strike anywhere at any time. One person starts to chant. Others pick it up. Those affected form mobs and kill anyone who won't join in. We don't know how it starts or how it spreads.*

Additional information can be found in the Chant Challenge entry (page 182)—of course, by this point, the Wing will have already had their encounter with the Chant in Scene One. As far as Winter knows, there is no Chant outbreak in the Capital; if there was, it would be a terrible threat requiring immediate action.

What's the Capital?

In the days before the Empire, Ilona was broken into city-states ruled by the Talu*—powerful families backed by the power of household gods. The city of Ilon was neutral ground where the Talu would meet to do business. After the first Phoenixes defeated the Talu, they made Ilon the Capital of the newly formed empire. It's the largest city in Ilona, a hub for trade, the seat of the Senate, and the home of the Emperor. It's a major port, and it will be an easy matter to get a ship from the Capital to Pyre once Eldan has been found.*

What's Mardonford?

Mardonford is one of the greatest cities of Ilona, along with Cartacia and the Capital. It is a major trade hub on the Felsis River, known for both its fruits and wine.

This is common knowledge. What the Phoenixes may or may not know—depending on their backgrounds and when they died—is that Mardonford fell to the Chant two weeks ago. It's the largest city to have done so, and it's not far from the Capital. This has been a major blow to Imperial morale. Hundreds of people managed to escape before the city was overwhelmed, and many of those refugees fled to the Capital… where they've been housed in dilapidated Darhold. If any of your Phoenixes were from Ilona or traveled extensively, they may have had personal ties to Mardonford. If a player wants to develop this, it could add an additional point for tension to the mission. Did their friends and family escape the destruction of the city? Are they in Darhold? If so, are they with Eldan, or lost somewhere in the hold?

Mardonford is still largely intact; Chanters don't usually cause much collateral damage. Currently the army has blockaded the roads a safe distance from the city, waiting to see if it can eventually be reclaimed.

Darhold isn't common knowledge, but any Phoenix from Ilona would know about it; failing that, a Phoenix with a Skill Specialty in The Empire or Lore would know the following:

What's Darhold?

The Talu families built holds *in Ilon. These were vast fortress-blocks, designed to be self-sufficient in the event of conflict between the Talu. After the Phoenixes defeated the Talu, the holds were converted to civilian use. However, the Dar Talu had a particularly dark reputation. People said that the Dar gods had cursed the structure. Whatever the truth, Darhold was never fully restored, and when the Dread began, it had been vacant for decades. The last few years have seen a flood of refugees from cities lost to the Dread, and Darhold has been converted into a makeshift refugee camp.*

What the Phoenixes don't know is that Darhold isn't just a sanctum for the refugees; it's effectively a prison that keeps the common people safe from the refugees. Public fear of the Dread is rising, and paranoia that anyone touched by evil may carry it

with them persists. The refugees receive shelter and food, but they aren't allowed to leave Darhold "until the sages are certain it's safe." Over the last month, the army has taken drastic measures to ensure any sort of manifestation of the Dread can be contained within Darhold; the Phoenixes will encounter this in Scene Four.

Scene Three: Arriving in the Capital

Read or paraphrase the following:

> *You pass through the Imperial Flame, and after a moment of blinding agony, you arrive in the Aerie in the Capital. It's a sharp contrast. Impressive as it is, the Grand Aerie lay fallow for centuries, and the Marshals are struggling to restore it. This Aerie has been maintained throughout the years… admittedly, as a museum and curiosity. Still, it's the perfect Aerie out of storybooks: polished marble walls, bright banners, a rack of weapons ready for your use. The Flamekeeper stands by the signalling candles, waiting to assist you.*

It's up to you to decide how much to make of this moment. If the players are impatient for action, you can keep it simple: *The Flamekeeper shows you the way to Darhold, and you're on your way…*on to Scene Four. If the players would enjoy a little roleplaying, this is an opportunity to add more detail about the situation and develop the Flamekeeper (who also appears in Mission Seven). Here are the critical facts.

- The Flamekeeper is named Eudokia Parsa. She belongs to one of the old Ilonan families…lesser aristocracy, but nobility nonetheless. She always loved the old stories of the Phoenixes and has devoted her personal fortune to maintaining the Aerie as a shrine. Her studies of the old traditions proved to be a boon when the Dread began, and she is one of the most experienced Flamekeepers Dawn Command has to work with…which is a sign of how desperate the situation is.

- Eudokia is 26 and relentlessly optimistic—perhaps reflecting a deep denial of how things are. She is fascinated by Phoenix lore. Given any opportunity, she talks at length about a number of historical topics—if the players haven't learned about it already, she tells them all about the history of Darhold—and she's very curious if any Phoenixes have unusual stories to tell.

- While she's optimistic, Eudokia acknowledges that spirits are low in the Capital. Losing Mardonford to the Chant was a major blow; this has driven home that the Dread can strike anywhere and even destroy major cities. Refugees are straining resources, and citizens are afraid they bring the Dread with them. Eudokia is certain the Phoenixes can turn the tide and has other believers staffing the Aerie, but in general the people of the Capital see Phoenixes as children's stories; even those who acknowledge Phoenixes are real don't believe they can impact the Dread. The Imperial Army is likely to assume they are deluded Dawn Crusaders.

• It's easy to get to Darhold. Eudokia will explain that it's been converted to house the refugees. She has heard of Eldan Diogenes; while a respected savant, he has chosen to remain with the refugees to treat injuries and help with the trauma. She expects he'll be well-known within Darhold and easy to find.

• Eudokia is happy to provide the Phoenixes with any mundane tools or supplies they feel they need, though she doesn't expect the task to be difficult. As soon as the Phoenixes are prepared, move on to Scene Four.

Scene Four: The Blockade at Darhold

Read or paraphrase the following:

The streets of the Capital are busy as always. Merchants hawk their wares, children shout and play, and citizens go through the motions of the day. But those of you who have been here before notice the many changes of the last two years. Soldiers are everywhere—mostly recent recruits still uncomfortable in their armor. You expected the streets to be full of beggars and refugees, but there actually seem to be fewer unfortunates than you remember.

While the Army has largely proven ineffective against the Dread, the Empire has been increasing conscription. Anyone who can serve has been drafted into service. Those who can't have been pushed into places like Darhold along with the refugees. The Empire is crafting an image of security and prosperity, but it's not very convincing.

THE DRAGONS

The Phoenixes may be curious about the strange engines around Darhold. Identifying the siege engines requires an **Intellect Spread** (Difficulty 15); War, Lore, and Fire are all valid Specialties. If the spread is successful, the Phoenix gains the following information:

The devices around Darhold are brass dragons—siege engines designed to flood an area with liquid fire. They were developed in the Civil War, as the rebels sought weapons that could kill Phoenixes. The dragons and other flame weapons were highly unstable and resulted in massive collateral damage; one of the terms of the Phoenix surrender was that all such weapons be destroyed. It seems the Dread is driving the Empire to desperate measures.

A Phoenix who lived during the Civil War period may have seen dragons in use, and would be especially horrified by this development. The use of such weapons was one of the major reasons the Phoenixes ended the war: They chose to stand down rather than risk continued civilian casualties. If a Phoenix has a way to gain additional information (for example, with *Psychometry*) they will learn that these weapons are new. Mortal troops have proven largely ineffective against the Dread, and Imperial engineers are searching for any option. These dragons are still experimental and few in number. They were put in place around Darhold when the refugees from Mardonford arrived due to the fear these survivors might carry the Chant.

The holds are massive structures, capable of housing hundreds of civilians. They were built to serve as fortresses. The walls are thick stone, the windows narrow slits, the only entrances fortified gates. You see Darhold up ahead. It's worn and weathered, and you see cracks in the upper walls, but it's holding together.

Down in the streets around the hold, there's commotion. The Imperial Army has barricaded the street, and soldiers turn people back. Taking a step closer, you can see a force of soldiers moving around Darhold. They've sealed the gate and blocked off all adjacent streets. A number of strange contraptions are set against the walls of the hold. Brass tanks and leather hoses are held together in metal frames, and soldiers are clamping hoses in place, carefully checking gauges. The mood is grim.

Darhold has no obvious entry point. Even if the windows weren't sealed, they're too narrow for a person to squeeze through. The gates are barricaded, and soldiers surround them. The Phoenixes may think of the potential for roof access, but most likely they'll start by talking to the soldiers.

Talking to the Soldiers

A hundred soldiers prepare for the destruction of Darhold. As far as most of them are concerned, the Phoenixes are civilians. Here are a few notable soldiers; feel free to add more.

- **Captain Stefan Dukas.** Male, mid-thirties, Ilonan with Skavi blood. Stefan was chosen for this detail because he's prepared to make hard decisions. His home village was recently lost to the Chant; as a result, he is especially determined not to let the Chant spread here. His base response to Phoenixes is that they're unpredictable civilians, and if all the legends are true, why didn't they save his family? He's bitter, but he's a decent man; he simply feels that there's no alternative, and he won't place the Capital in danger for a few hundred civilians.

- **Pardus.** A legionnaire manning the barricades. An ardent believer in the Dawn, he's thrilled to see Phoenixes and happy to help them in any way he can. Unfortunately, he has no authority and little information, but he'll suggest the possibility of entering the building via the roof.

- **Vesta.** A combat engineer working on the dragons. She is very concerned about the current action. She believes the walls of Darhold will contain the flames so only the people inside will be killed. But if the building collapses—or if the dragons explode—the results would be grim. If pressed on this, she'll counter that the destruction would be preferable to a Chant outbreak. Vesta has never encountered a Phoenix, and like Dukas, she is dubious. If they can stop this, why haven't they done it already?

If the Phoenixes approach casually, soldiers will order them to turn back. If they call attention to themselves, Stefan Dukas will come over to deal with them. This is a good time for a Grace Spread to set the tone of the conversation.

DEALING WITH THE SOLDIERS

This is a **Grace Spread**.

- **<15: Hostile**. The soldiers have a job to do and want the Phoenixes out of the way.
- **15–19: Indifferent**. They're willing to talk and explain the situation. They won't stop the Phoenixes from trying to enter the building, but they won't encourage or assist. They intend to set off the dragons in about thirty minutes…which doesn't give the Phoenixes much time to get in and find Eldan.
- **20–24: Friendly.** They're a little more helpful and are willing to give the Phoenixes one hour before they set off the dragons—but they still believe it's necessary.
- **25–29: Impressed.** They hope the Phoenixes might be able to make a difference, and Dukas is willing to delay the dragons for two hours.
- **30+: In Awe.** The legends have returned! The soldiers will offer what help they can. Helping the Phoenixes scale the walls and delaying the dragons for three hours is the best Dukas can do; even if he wants to hold off, he can't open the gates, and within three hours, his commander will arrive to find out what's going on.

Have the acting Phoenix describe the basic approach they're taking. **Fear**, **Diplomacy**, **Leadership**, or **Deception** are all valid Specialties—but these will change the flavor of the conversation. The Phoenixes can use fear and intimidation to get through this, but the soldiers will remember the Phoenixes as hostile; a diplomatic approach or a Durant engaging them as a military leader will set a positive tone. Word of this will spread and should color future interactions with the army. Depending on the tone of the conversation, *Commander*, *Charming*, *Terrifying*, *Seasoned Veteran*, and other Traits may help; each valid Trait will add +5 to the spread.

Use the results of the spread as your basic guideline for this scene. The soldiers have confirmation of a Chant outbreak in Darhold—something they've been preparing for ever since the Mardonford refugees arrived in the Capital. People just inside the gates of Darhold beg to be let out, but the soldiers can't open the barricaded gates—the fate of Mardonford has everyone terrified. Even those soldiers who don't support burning the refugees will fight to keep the Phoenixes from opening the gates. However, if the Phoenixes are persuasive, the soldiers are willing to let the Wing find another way into the building; the only way in any of them can think of would be on the roof, where there should be stairwells and possibly cracks. The soldiers have orders to flood Darhold with fire as soon as the dragons are ready—which will be within the hour. In theory, the heavy stone walls of Darhold will contain the fire, but anyone inside will die. As of the last census, there were nearly twelve hundred refugees in the hold.

Ultimately, the only option is to climb up to the roof. The question is how much time the Phoenixes have once they get inside. The Phoenixes may want to disable the dragons, which also takes a spread.

STOPPING THE DRAGONS

Destroying the dragons with brute force would flood the area with liquid fire. This would cause tremendous devastation and loss of life. However, a Phoenix with a reasonable plan can make an **Intellect Spread** (Spycraft, Destruction, War) to disable the dragons. With a spread result of **15**, the Phoenix can delay the burning by half an hour; every additional five points in the spread adds thirty minutes to the delay. With a result of **20** or more, the Phoenixes can choose to damage the dragons beyond simple repair. This removes the threat of the burn but means it's entirely up to the Phoenixes to contain the Chant outbreak; if they fail, they will face dire consequences. Beyond this, if the result is less than **30**, this sabotage will eventually be recognized as the work of the Phoenixes, which will further impact the relationship between the Empire and Dawn Command.

SCALING THE WALLS

Darhold was designed to serve as a fortress, and it's sixty feet to the top of the walls. Climbing the walls requires a **Grace Spread** (Difficulty 20; Athletics, Acrobatics, Spycraft). The Wing must make one spread for every two Phoenixes, rounded up. If the soldiers were **In Awe** of the Phoenixes, a team of soldiers helps them, and the scaling is automatically successful. If the soldiers were **Impressed**, they provide tools and a few help out; this reduces the difficulty of the spreads to **15.** If the spread is successful, the Phoenixes scale the walls quickly and efficiently. If they fail, they still reach the roof eventually—they are Phoenixes, after all. However, it takes about twenty minutes to get there…which should be a concern if the Wing hasn't done anything about the dragons.

FULL CIRCLE

Two interesting things happen as the Phoenixes scale the walls. At about the halfway point, any Phoenix with especially keen senses (Observation or Scouting Specialties, the *Superhuman Senses* Trait, and so on) realizes they can hear the Chant. It's coming through the thick stone walls… too faint to pose a threat or for them to actually hear the words, but it's clearly the sound of dozens of Chanters moving through the halls. They are about three quarters of the way up when a minor tremor shakes the walls. It's not enough to dislodge the Phoenixes or shatter the walls, but mortar and stone fragments shower down…and the ancient cracks become more pronounced. The effect is clearly localized—it only affects Darhold—and there's no obvious explanation. No one has ever heard of earthquakes associated with the Chant.

Soon enough, the Wing reaches the top of the wall. A garden is spread out across the top of the roof, overgrown and wild. A stairwell leads down into the hold not far from where the Phoenixes arrive. Of course, it's then that the Chant grows louder and the mob swarms up the stairs…and the events of Scene One actually occur.

Scene Five: Into Darhold

Quickly recap the events of Scene One—the battle with the Chanter Mob and the Whisperer, and anything the Wing has learned about the Chant. Now the Phoenixes have context for the mission: Eldan Diogenes is somewhere in the building below, along with hundreds of innocent civilians. The army is preparing to cleanse the hold with fire. They can't know for certain that Diogenes is still alive, but he was in Mardonford when the Chant hit, and he survived that. Beyond that, they're gaining valuable intelligence about the Chant itself. Perhaps they can find a way to stop it.

Address any questions the players may have. When they are ready to proceed, read or paraphrase the following:

> *The upper floors of Darhold have stood empty since the days of the Civil War. They've long been stripped of furnishings, and the air is filled with dust and the stench of urine. You'll need to be careful where you step; many floorboards are rotting, and the floor already has a number of jagged holes. The Chanters have left their mark; strange patterns mark where bleeding fingers have brushed the walls, and blood from bare feet mingles with dust. You can hear the Chant in the distance, the steady murmur of hundreds of voices coming from down below, but it's too far away to affect you.*

Direct the following statement to the most observant Phoenix (Shrouded with Observation Specialty, Forceful with Scouting, anyone with *Supernatural Senses* in their deck):

> *While no one's lived up here for decades, the Chanters aren't the first people to come up to this level. You see signs of recent activity—graffiti, refuse, tracks in the dust that don't match the bloody footprints of the Chanters. You'd guess that some of the refugees have been coming up here in the last few weeks.*

The Tremors

At any slow moment, feel free to paraphrase the following:

> *Another tremor shakes the building. It's brief—only lasting a few seconds—but plaster dust fills the air, and you hear a support collapse nearby.*

The upper level is unstable to begin with, and with each tremor comes significant damage—a support collapses, a section of the floor falls in, a large crack forms in an outer wall. This ongoing damage makes the Phoenixes' investigation more dangerous, and if it continues, it will eventually shatter the building itself. There's no obvious explanation for it; the region is tectonically stable. These quakes are the work of

the Whisperer Gestalt the Phoenixes will encounter in Scene Seven. Darhold is a prison for the Chanters. Driven by the urge to spread the Chant, the Whisperers are combining their telekinetic power to bring down the walls. While most Chanters will die when the building collapses, any that survive can quickly spread the affliction. This takes about two hours…and if the Phoenixes crippled the dragons to delay the burn, the army has no way to contain such an outbreak.

There's no easy way for the Phoenixes to tell what's causing the tremors. *Psychometry* would reveal the truth, and a Phoenix who's *Seen This Before* or who makes a *Brilliant Deduction* could figure it out. But even without knowing the cause, anyone can see that the tremors are an ongoing threat that could collapse the building.

HOW TO PROCEED?

The Phoenixes have very little information to work with. The upper levels of the building are unsafe, so presumably the refugees are based on the lower levels. The question is how they can find Eldan—and if they can avoid Chanters in the process. This is a **freeform challenge**. There is no one right answer…but they need to come up with some sort of plan, because if they just wander door to door, the Chanters will overwhelm them. One Phoenix then needs to make a spread in support of that plan. Here are a few possibilities.

- **Stealth** or **Scouting.** Someone with a talent for stealth will scout ahead of the Wing and help find a path that isn't filled with Chanters.

- **Search for Survivors**. A perceptive Phoenix will have noticed signs of refugees on the upper levels and may seek them out. This is the best approach to take; add 5 to the value of the spread when determining the outcome.

- **Talu Architecture.** Someone familiar with Talu architecture (such as a Phoenix with the Lore or The Empire Specialty) could make an Intellect Spread to identify the typical location of an infirmary in a Talu hold.

- **Brute Force.** The Phoenixes could come up with a plan that essentially involves forcing their way through the Chanters, relying on War or Athletics. This is reckless; unless the Phoenixes actually have what you consider to be an excellent plan, reduce the value of the spread by 5 when determining the outcome.

- **Countersong.** If someone has mastered the Chant (as described in the Chant Challenge entry), they can make a Grace Spread to attempt to mask the presence of the Wing.

Whatever plan the Phoenixes devise, resolve it as described in the *Moving through Darhold* sidebar.

Moving through Darhold

The decrepit building is on the verge of collapse. The tremors are making this worse. And the halls are full of Chanters. Rather than play through every minor conflict, the Phoenixes will make a spread to determine the overall outcome of their progress. **The suit varies** based on the approach the Phoenixes take (Strength for brute force, Grace for stealth, Intellect for careful planning or searching). **The Difficulty is 30**. **For every 5 points below this target number, the Wing as a whole suffers one Wound**. Round against the Phoenixes—so a result of 26 means the Wing suffers one Wound and an 18 means three Wounds. Once the total number of Wounds is determined, it's up to the Phoenixes to decide how to distribute them among the members of the Wing. If they take three Wounds, one Phoenix could take all of them or three different Phoenixes could each take one Wound. A Durant can use their Core Talent to mitigate a single Wound from this damage. Once the total is determined, you can describe the source of the damage…a wall collapses, a few Chanters catch them by surprise…or you can let the players decide how they come by their injuries.

FINDING SURVIVORS

This is an optional element. It's an opportunity for roleplaying and an easy way to for the Phoenixes to gain information, but you can skip it if you're short on time. If the Phoenixes actively search for survivors, they easily track the two teens; otherwise they could stumble onto the survivors by chance, or the survivors could find them. In any case, read or paraphrase the following:

> *Not everyone has fallen to the Chant. Two teenagers are huddled together in a closet. They're covered with plaster dust and shaking with shock and terror, but they are untouched by the affliction.*

Cyril and **Prosi** are refugees from Mardonford, and they've been exploring the upper levels since they first arrived in the hold. Having escaped one Chant outbreak already, they knew to hide from the Chanters and plug their ears whenever a mob passed by. They are terrified, and you could require a **Grace Spread** (Difficulty 15) to get information from them…though an appropriate Trait (*Charming*, *Commander*) would suffice to get them focused. They can provide the following information:

- The refugees are based on the first two floors. The center of the camp is the grand hall on the first floor; this is where their families were camped.
- They know Eldan Diogenes. He helped them after Mardonford, and he has been taking care of all the refugees. He set up a clinic on the third floor, and they can show the Wing how to get there.
- The outbreak began about an hour ago. They have no idea how it started.

REACHING ELDAN

The Wing now has the information they need to find Eldan. It's time for another *Moving through Darhold* Spread, with a different Phoenix as the focal character. Once again, this is a freeform challenge, and you can provide a bonus or penalty based on the quality of the plan. The base difficulty remains **30**. However, there's a catch: What does the Wing do with Prosi and Cyril? So far the teens have survived on their own; the Phoenixes could leave them to fend for themselves. If Prosi and Cyril accompany the Phoenixes, it will be difficult to protect them. The Wing will take a -5 on the next *Moving through Darhold* Spread, and for each Wound they take, one of the civilians will be lost. If they come up with solid plans to protect the teens, you can give the Phoenixes a buffer of up to three Wounds before a child is lost, but they still suffer the -5 penalty. Note that blocking their ears against the Chant isn't the only concern. The Chanters try to tear them apart, and the collapsing building can crush them. Bringing them is a risk, but leaving them behind is just as uncertain.

Whatever plan the Phoenixes come up with, resolve the spread. Then determine how many Wounds the Wing suffers and how long it takes to get to Eldan. Proceed to the next scene.

Scene Six: Whisperer at the Refuge

Read or paraphrase the following:

> *As Darhold was designed to be a self-sufficient fortress, it's not surprising that it has an infirmary—and this is where Eldan Diogenes established his clinic. Fortunately, he was able to fortify it when the Chant broke out, sealing the room with crates and rubble. Unfortunately, one of the whispering corpses found it before you. A middle-aged woman with long, dark hair is hanging in the air in front of the barricade. As you arrive, you see the makeshift barricade shatter as a wave of telekinetic force strikes it.*

SETUP

Set the Whisperer on the table. Set up the Wing in 2 x 2 formation, unless they have a preference. The following Environmental Elements are present: **Rubble, Broken Barrel, Sudden Tremor**, and **Collapsing Ceiling**. If Cyril and Prosi are present, place the Innocents card on the table with two HL-2 tokens. The Phoenixes act first and have the benefit of surprise (+2 Attack); the Whisperer responds after the first Phoenix turn.

This Whisperer doesn't use the *Telekinetic Grab* attack. It's only interested in smashing its victims with rubble. Note that while it removes an unused Environmental Element with each Slam, it can use the attack even if all elements have been checked off. If Cyril and Prosi are present, you could up the drama by having the Whisperer be someone one of them knew, whether a relative or friend. In addition, unless they are *Hidden*, the Whisperer targets them with its *Piercing Whisper* attack (once per turn).

This bypasses hearing, and the victim is afflicted with the Chant. If they are gagged, they won't be able to start chanting, but they try to remove anything stopping them from chanting. This can prevent the Whisperer from using the *Piercing Whisper* on the Phoenixes for a few turns.

USING THE ENVIRONMENT

The Whisperer isn't aware of the Phoenixes at the start of the scene, and the area is highly unstable. If a Phoenix has a clever idea for crushing the Whisperer with rubble or collapsing the ceiling on it, they can make a spread using the appropriate suit (**Strength** if it is physical, **Intellect** if it's about physics). Treat this as an Attack with a value equal to the value of the spread. This requires the Phoenixes to use an appropriate Environmental Element.

The Whisperer has torn apart the barricade; as soon as it's dealt with, the Phoenixes can enter the refuge.

Scene Seven: Eldan's Stronghold

Read or paraphrase the following:

> *As you bring down the Whisperer, you see someone watching you from the other side of the barricade—a lean Ilonan man with a knife in his hand. He steps out of cover and gestures. "If you're not infected, get in here quickly! We need to rebuild the barricade."*

This is Eldan Diogenes. He is forty-four years old, and he has lived a hard life. The left side of his face is badly scarred, he has lost an ear (*"Skinchangers"*), and his right arm has been burned by acid (*"Some Sort of Plant Thing"*). He has spent the last two years investigating the Dread and helping its victims. It's a minor miracle he's still alive. He is truly dedicated to helping others, and there's every chance he'll come back as a Devoted or Shrouded Phoenix if he dies. He is thrilled to finally meet Phoenixes. He's a believer and is excited to have true heroes fighting the Dread—and he's also intrigued to study Phoenixes and see what he can learn about them.

There are three dozen refugees in the infirmary. If one of the Phoenixes has connection to Mardonford, this would be a place to find a friend or relative; failing that, someone here could know Cyril or Prosi. Most of the refugees have had their ears sealed with wax and are wearing gags. A half-dozen have been restrained. Five of these victims are thrashing about and trying to get free. The sixth is still; he's also the only one not gagged. A half dozen have neither restraints nor gags; this includes Eldan himself.

Eldan has learned a great deal about the Chant.

- He knows hearing the Chant compels people to join in, which is why he has sealed people's ears.

- He knows it's actually *repeating* the Chant that damages the host and allows the infection to spread, which is why people are gagged. The people who have been restrained have been infected, but as long as they can't Chant, it won't get worse and they could be saved. The restrained man with no gag managed to cut out his tongue before the affliction could take hold.

- He knows many of the afflicted will die even if the Chant is cured.

- The six people with open ears and no gags are immune to the Chant. They were infected in Mardonford, but either managed to avoid chanting (with gags) or were rendered unconscious before the Chant took hold of them fully. When they traveled away from the city, the compulsion stopped…and now the Chant has no further effect on them. From this, he has concluded that a Chant outbreak has some sort of central point and a maximum radius of effect.

Eldan doesn't know how the outbreak began. He doesn't understand Pyrean, so he can't make sense of the words. However, he has identified it as a form of mass possession. This is an opportunity for the Phoenixes to go over everything they've learned about the Chant; Eldan can help expand on points they aren't sure about. Ideally, they'll come to the conclusion that something must be serving as an anchor for the Chant down below.

Adding Uncertainty

As presented, Eldan is clearly a good guy. If you want to keep up the tension, you could play Eldan as a little *too* interested in the Chant. He has studied the Dread for a long time, and he has survived—is this just because he's lucky and good at what he does? Or is it because he's in league with the Dread? Could *he* have triggered this Chant outbreak for a chance to see it in action? The default storyline assumes that Eldan is a hero, but you could choose to make it less clear…or even decide that these things are true, and taking Eldan to Dawn Command is actually bringing a wolf into the fold.

Likewise, as it stands, the people infected with the Chant who are restrained pose no threat. However, you could play up that they are still touched by the Chant. Is it somehow watching them through these victims? Should they kill the afflicted for the good of everyone?

Finally, as the Phoenixes are talking to Eldan, add another tremor and the sound of an upper floor section collapsing. The cumulative effect is becoming serious; it's clear that eventually these will bring down the building. Furthermore, depending how the Phoenixes left things with the dragons, time may be running out before the bombing begins. The goal is to keep up the sense of urgency.

Convincing Eldan to Leave

It's not difficult to convince Eldan to work with Dawn Command; he's excited about the prospect. However, he doesn't want to leave the refugees behind. In addition to the thirty here in the infirmary, how many may still be alive down below? Furthermore, how do the Phoenixes plan to get him out? The lower gates are all sealed. The only real option is to get back to the roof and climb down; this is possible, but with the ongoing tremors it will be more dangerous than ever. So, what will the Phoenixes do?

- Take Eldan to the roof and get him to safety.
- Try to take all of Eldan's refugees to safety.
- Venture down below to find the source of the Chant and try to destroy it.
- Some combination of the three.

The mission was to get Eldan back to Dawn Command, but the mission didn't take a Chant outbreak into account. Venturing down below could save innocents and provide vital intelligence about the Chant. Which will they do? All of these options are covered below.

GETTING REFUGEES TO THE ROOF

This is a freeform challenge. The Phoenixes need to devise a plan and choose one member of the Wing to be the focal point and make the spread. They face an unknown number of Chanters and a crumbling building. The suit depends on the basic approach: Brute force? Careful planning? Stealth or speed? **The base Difficulty is 30.** For every point below 30, one innocent dies. A Phoenix can take a Wound to save one innocent. If they fail by 15 or more points, Eldan dies as well. Modify the Difficulty based on the quality of the plan; a good plan should be worth 5 points, while a foolish one may increase the Difficulty by 5.

If the Phoenixes are trying to get only Eldan to the roof, **the Difficulty is reduced to 20**; failure means that Eldan dies.

DESCENDING TO THE DEPTHS

Continuing to the depths is the same basic challenge as *Moving through Darhold*. **The base Difficulty is 30.** If the Phoenixes go to the roof and *then* descend, **the Difficulty is increased to 35**.

Eldan is willing to try to escape with the refugees, or to sit tight while the Phoenixes go below—but he's not willing to leave his patients behind. If the Phoenixes want to take that option, they must either take him by force or make a **Grace Spread** (Difficulty 20). Another factor is *time*. Shepherding all the refugees to safety takes time…and if the Phoenixes didn't take steps to delay the dragons, they may not have that time. It's up to you to call this out—you decide when and if the soldiers start the burn. This is the critical moment. Getting the refugees to the roof and then venturing below is certainly the optimal choice—but do the Phoenixes have enough time to do it?

As always, describe the effects of the spread in a colorful way. It's not simply the deaths of six innocents or the Wing taking three Wounds; there's a story that encompasses these things. A few possibilities...

- A major tremor occurs. People are injured by collapsing stone or falling through the floor.
- A section of ceiling collapses…spilling a mob of Chanters from the floor above directly onto the Wing.
- What first appeared to be a corpse turned out to be a weakened Chanter. It's quickly brought down, but not before inflicting damage.
- The Wing runs into a massive mob of Chanters and has to find a way around; the delay leaves them caught in another tremor.
- A group of panicked civilians bursts from hiding and attacks, assuming the travelers are afflicted. These civilians have deafened themselves and it takes time to calm them down.

If you want to make things more challenging, require that the focal Phoenix be someone who hasn't been the basis of either of the previous Descending Spreads. This ensures that players have to come up with new approaches. This is basically about sharing the spotlight. If the Durant has been able to shine in the battles, it may not matter if they don't take point on a Skill Spread. However, if they're clearly feeling left out, it's worth challenging people to figure out how to use their skills.

Once spreads and injuries have been resolved, continue to the next scene.

Scene Eight: The Whisperer Gestalt

Read or paraphrase the following, taking into account the plan the Wing used to reach the bottom:

> *The scent of blood fills the air as you descend deeper into Darhold. You pass the broken bodies of innocents killed by the Chanters and Chanters crushed by the collapsing building. Hundreds of Chanters move below, but as you get deeper, it becomes easier to evade the mobs. Many Chanters have stopped roaming and stand up against the outer walls…perhaps waiting to surge out into the city the moment the walls fall.*

Pause for any questions or ideas, then continue.

> *While the mobs are spread out, it's not hard to spot the focal point. You can hear it—dozens of Chanters massed together, droning through the same endless song. A slow but steady trickle of Chanters moves down toward the center. Making your way forward, you come upon a great hall—a vast chamber once used for public assemblies. This was the heart of the refugee community. Tents and bedrolls are scattered about. Meals sit half–finished. Treasures have been abandoned; you see the glint of jewels in a discarded casket, and a child's doll stares mournfully from the floor. Ahead you see at least a hundred Chanters, but their attention is focused on the center of the chamber where four of the whispering corpses hang in the air. The Whisperers are in a circle, hands joined together. As you take this in, silence falls across the room for an instant—in that moment, another tremor shakes the room. The Chant begins again the moment the tremors fade.*

If one of the Phoenixes has a perception-based Specialty or Trait (Observation, Scouting, *Supernatural Senses*) give them the following information:

> *There's an assortment of dust and debris suspended in the air around the Whisperers, but one thing catches your eye: a polished sliver of black stone floating directly between all four.*

If no Phoenix has the necessary Specialties or Traits, this information can be gained with an **Intellect Spread** (Difficulty 15) by anyone who specifically studies the Whisperers. This is the anchor for this Chant outbreak; see page 188 for more information.

SETUP

Arrange the Wing at one side of the table, arranged however they prefer. Set the Chanter Mob and the Whisperer (representing the Whisperer Gestalt) in the center of the table. The Chanter Mob represents one hundred people; use three coins to represent HL-3 (x25) tokens. This mob completely fills the room, with the Whisperers floating at the center of it. The room is the **Refugee Camp**, and includes the following Environmental Elements: **Ragged Tent**, **Cooking Fire**, **Child's Doll**, **Filthy Sack**, **Pile of Rubble**, **Overturned Table**, **Casket of Jewels**, and **Disturbing Chant**. The Phoenixes have the element of surprise: The Whisperer Gestalt acts immediately after the first visible Phoenix action, while the Chanter Mob acts at the end of each cycle (after each Phoenix has had an opportunity to act).

If the players are interested, you can ask each to describe one of the Whisperers in the gestalt or a group represented in the Chanter Mob.

The Whisperer Gestalt acts as a single unit, even though it's made up of four Whisperers. Every three HL tokens represents an individual Whisperer; they aren't quite as tough as the non-gestalt Whisperers, as their protective field can only stretch so far. However, their Disturbing Chant is especially strong: They can hold up to two people with *Telekinetic Grabs*, and twice during the course of the combat, they can raise a new Whisper from the mob to replenish health. Meanwhile, the Chanter Mob doesn't bother with the *Blood Burst* tactic; it's simply a massive swarm of people.

REACHING THE GESTALT

The Chamber is filled with Chanters, and it's a challenge just to reach the Whisperers. This is a **Freeform Challenge** (Difficulty 15). Using acrobatics and speed would be Grace; athletic prowess or brute force would be Strength. Feel free to adjust the Difficulty if a Phoenix has a brilliant idea or uses an Environmental Element in a clever way, and an appropriate Trait (such as *Superhuman Reflexes*, *Astonishing Luck*, or *Small & Quick*) can be discarded instead of making a spread.

Any *Hidden* character can reach the Whisperers without having to make a spread, and any Phoenix can become *Hidden* by reciting the Chant…though this gives them an Affliction card. See the Chant challenge entry for more information.

The odds in this battle are dramatically against the Phoenixes. There are too many Chanters for a fair fight to be viable, and sooner or later the Chant itself overwhelms them. The key to victory is the stone shard floating between the Chanters. To end the outbreak the Phoenixes must reach the shard and perform a cleansing ritual. This is described in the Mission Reference sheet (page 284).

USING THE ENVIRONMENT

Most of the Environmental Elements are fairly straightforward. Used properly, an attack with the Cooking Fire could place a *Burning* condition on the Chanter Mob.

ENDING THE FIGHT

The battle can end in a few ways. The best outcome is to cleanse the Shard (see page 284). If this happens, read or paraphrase the following:

> *You pour your spiritual energy into the shard, overwhelming the tormented presence and cleansing it from the stone. The first thing you notice is silence. The Chant stops immediately. A second later, the Whisperers fall to the ground; now they are simply corpses. The silence is broken by moans and cries of pain. Many Chanters in this room have suffered too much damage and will die within moments, but some will survive…and those refugees who managed to evade the Chanters will all live, thanks to you.*

Phoenixes should remove all Affliction cards from their decks; however, the Phoenix who actually cleansed the shard can't quite drive the Chant from their mind…add the *Echoes of the Chant* Dread Trait to their deck.

If the last Phoenix is going to die, you decide how the story ends. Does the building collapse, crushing the gestalt and the last Phoenix, but unleashing the Chant into the Capital? Or does it end in a wave of flame, as the army activates the dragons and purges the hold? Fire is the preferable answer, but if the Phoenixes destroyed the dragons, it's not an option.

Epilogue

Once the story is over, provide the players with an overview of the outcome.

Victory over the Chant

If the Phoenixes cleanse the shard...

> *Cleansing the shard and ending the outbreak is a major victory. Once the army is convinced the threat is over, word spreads and celebrations begin across the Capital. It's a boon for Imperial morale that helps offset the despair following the loss of Mardonford, and it's a very public triumph for the Phoenixes that helps instill confidence in Dawn Command. Winter and the other Marshals will be thrilled with the information you've gathered.*

This can be called out in future dealings with Ilonans (notably Missions Six and Seven)—*"Are you the ones who saved the Capital from the Chant?"*

Darhold Burns

If the Phoenixes leave once they find Eldan, or try to stop the Chant and fail...

> *The army activates the dragons and floods Darhold with flame. The old structure ends up collapsing, but only after the Chanters are destroyed…along with hundreds of innocent refugees. This reinforces the general belief that only such draconic measures can stop the Dread, and generally raises the level of fear. "This is what happens when you take in refugees; anything touched by the Dread should be destroyed."*

The reaction of the Marshals depends on whether Eldan was saved. No one blames Phoenixes for this, but the soldiers spread the word that the Phoenixes tried to stop it and failed; this reinforces the concept that Phoenixes are just stories, and people continue to treat them with suspicion and doubt.

Chant Unleashed

If the Phoenixes cripple the dragons and then fail to stop the Chant, Darhold eventually collapses.

> *Most of the Chanters were killed when Darhold collapsed, but a few survived…and those few were enough to spread the Chant into the city beyond. The dragons weren't the only option for containment, so the Chanters were eliminated before the entire city was lost. But thousands were killed in the process. People are terrified, and the army is furious that the Phoenixes interfered with the containment procedures.*

This is a terrible outcome, and one that is entirely driven by Phoenix action. This is a failure the Phoenixes will have to live with, and a strong foundation for defining a death as Bitter. In future scenarios, soldiers should treat Phoenixes with suspicion. Winter will be disappointed and ask the Phoenixes to explain why they sabotaged the dragons—though (*her*) anger will be mitigated if Eldan was recovered.

OTHER ISSUES

Did Eldan Survive? As long as Eldan is rescued, the Phoenixes have done what they were called upon to do. He is excited to work with Dawn Command, and he will be a valuable resource; feel free to mention his work at the infirmary in the Grand Aerie. If he dies, a surprise twist would be to have him return as a Phoenix.

Did Others Survive? If distinctive refugees were saved—either because they were with Eldan or because the shard was cleansed—they could appear in future Ilonan missions.

Did Infected Phoenixes Survive? When the shard is cleansed, afflicted Phoenixes remove Affliction cards from their decks. If the Wing flees without cleansing the shard, any afflicted Phoenix with 3 or fewer HL remaining dies before they reach Pyre. A Phoenix with 4 or more HL can endure it long enough to escape the reach of the Chant and survive. Either way, remove all Affliction cards from the Phoenixes' decks.

Military Response. Were the Phoenixes hostile or diplomatic while dealing with the army? Did they sabotage the dragons—and if so, were their actions discovered? Even if the Phoenixes stopped the Chant, Stefan and his superiors will be displeased if the Wing destroyed the dragons; some within the army raise the specter of the Civil War, fought because the Phoenixes felt they had the right to enforce their will upon mortals. Consider these factors and work it into future dealings with soldiers.

Interludes

LINGERING IN THE CAPITAL

There's little reason for the Phoenixes to remain in the Capital. Phoenixes are supposed to return to the Grand Aerie as quickly as possible, and if Eldan is alive, it's best to get him to Pyre before some new disaster can occur. However, you can draw out the departure a little if you choose. If the Phoenixes triumphed, you could expand on the celebrations that follow and discuss how the Phoenixes present themselves to the people. If any of the Phoenixes are from the Capital or have relatives who might be refugees, you could expand on that. You could have a parting scene with Flamekeeper Eudokia or Captain Stefan, which could help to establish the attitude of the army toward Phoenixes moving forward.

SAILING TO PYRE

If no one's interested, or most of the Wing died, you can gloss over the return to Pyre. But if you'd like, you can draw it out, making a story or even a full mission out of the journey. When the Phoenixes go to the harbor, they find a Wynderi vessel waiting for them. As with most Wynderi ships, it has a formal story-name—*Alafer's Fine Wind–Serpent, Won over Winter with a Hand of Four Kings.* However, its port name is *Winter Serpent*, and its captain has sworn her vessel to the service of Dawn Command. *Winter Serpent* plays an important role in Mission Four, and this is a good opportunity to establish connections to the ship and its crew.

Winter Serpent's captain is named Nyanji. She's a passionate, energetic woman given to dramatic gestures and emotional speeches. She spent most of her life-on-soil in the port of Westergate, and lost many friends and relatives when the Bones took that city. She believes the Phoenixes are the only force that can avenge her kin, and she's determined to help however she can…and so far, that means ferrying Phoenixes. **Have each player define one interesting aspect of Nyanji;** this could be a physical detail, a story about her, or something else.

The crew of *Winter Serpent* is an eclectic bunch. Some of them have been with the vessel since long before the Dread, but Nyanji has also picked up an assortment of veterans who lost their vessels or homes to the Dread; like their captain, these refugees hunger for vengeance. **Have each player define one member of the crew.** Here are a few additional crewmembers to work with, but drop these if a player comes up with something similar.

• **Wakaal** is an old bosun. He has been with the ship longer than anyone else and is the most reliable member of the crew; given a chance, he'll tell far-fetched stories of the deeds of its previous captains. Wakaal never sets foot on land if he can avoid it; he believes the soil is cursed.

• **Sark** is a young apprentice who was literally born on *Winter Serpent* (years ago). He's fascinated by the Phoenixes and wants to hear tales.

• The carpenter **Bhayn** is a morose figure. He has been with the *Serpent* for a decade and doesn't wish to leave, but he's not so impressed by the Phoenixes and is sure they will lead the captain to her doom.

If your players are up to the challenge, this is also an opportunity to introduce *The Rival Wing* (see page 145). The Wing is also returning to Pyre after completing a mission; their task wasn't in the Capital, but it was the nearest big city.

An interlude at sea is an easy opportunity for roleplaying. Nyanji wants to know when Dawn Command will act against the Bones. What are their plans? Why haven't they done anything? When will someone avenge the Wynderi dead? Sark wants stories and may ask the Phoenixes about their first lives, giving a chance to explore a story in more depth. If you introduce the Rival Wing here, it's an opportunity for a little trash talking as the rivals discuss previous missions or address grievances from someone's first life.

The opportunity for roleplaying is sufficient for a solid interlude on its own, but if you want to draw this out into a full episode, any number of things could happen on the way back to Pyre. Consider the following ideas:

• The *Serpent* comes across a ghost ship. It's a Wynderi colony ship, designed to be a self-sufficient community…but the boat is dead in the water with no sign of the crew. What threat lingers within?

• There's an island ahead…an island that wasn't in this location the last time the *Serpent* sailed through these waters. Is it a living creature? Or a sunken outpost of the Old Kingdoms that has finally returned to the surface?

• Undead pirates! A crazed Shadovar necromancer has created a ship of Bones, and the *Serpent* is their target. This would be especially distressing to the Wynderi crew, who believe that evil cannot survive on water.

Use your imagination…and of course, if there is a battle, don't forget that Eldan is still on board and that the Phoenixes need to get him to Pyre in one piece.

MISSION REFERENCE: CHANTS AND WHISPERS

AFFLICTION: THE CHANT

A Phoenix afflicted by the Chant remains in control of their actions, but feels a constant yearning to join the Chant. When the Phoenix draws an Affliction card, this urge becomes overwhelming, and they begining chanting. In the brief time before they regain control, they feel terrible pain as cold flame—the blood of a Phoenix—flows from their eyes, nose, mouth, and pores. Remove all Affliction cards from a Phoenix's deck when either they die or the anchor shard is dealt with.

When a Phoenix affected by the Chant draws an Affliction card, they take one Wound and must choose someone else who can hear them—either a Phoenix or uninfected mortal—to be affected by the Chant. If this victim is a Phoenix, that player adds an Affliction card to their deck. A mortal immediately begins chanting, and becomes a Chanter Mob with HL 3, 3 (or add 2 HL-3 tokens to an existing Chanter Mob).

CLEANSING THE SHARD

Once a Phoenix is adjacent to the shard, they can try to snatch it from the gestalt—but this is more difficult that it appears. The same telekinetic force that shields the Whisperers pushes people away from the shard. Once a Phoenix is next to the shard, they can make a **Freeform Spread** to reach it; the **Difficulty** is **three times the number of HL tokens on the Whisperer Gestalt.** So initially, the **Difficulty is 30**, and every Wound dealt to the gestalt reduces it by three. Alternately, a Phoenix can reach the shard by making an **Attack Spread with a value of 16 or higher**.

A Phoenix holding the shard can feel the pain and anger flowing through it. It's possible to overwhelm it with the sheer force of Phoenix power. This requires the Wing as a whole to sacrifice **20 Sparks**. While this power is channeled through the Phoenix holding the shard, any member of the Wing can donate Sparks for this purpose…and if any Phoenix dies by donating Sparks in this way, their death adds **an additional 10 Sparks** to this pool. Success immediately ends the local Chant outbreak.

CHANTER MOB

Group Enemy

SPEED 2
DEFENSE 3
HL 3 (x20)

The Chanter Mob may make one attack each turn. Blood Burst can only be used if one or more Whisperers are present in the scene.

PACK ATTACK (Standard Melee Attack): Attack 7, Damage x2 (4). This attack affects 1 target for every 5 HL the Mob possesses, rounded up. The Attack value increases by 1 each time the Mob attacks.

BLOOD BURST (All or Nothing Melee Attack): Attack 12, Damage 2 wounds and target is Stunned for one turn. Remove 1 HL token from the Chanter Mob after this attack is resolved.

WHISPERER

Undead

SPEED 2
DEFENSE 6
HL 4, 4, 6, 6, 6, 6

During its turn, a Whisperer can make one Piercing Whisper Attack and use either Telekinetic Grab or Telekinetic Slam. It can only have one target trapped with Telekinetic Grab, but it may make Telekinetic Slams while maintaining Telekinetic Grab.

PIERCING WHISPER (All or Nothing Ranged Attack): Attack 10. If this attack is successful, the target suffers 1 Wound and gains 1 Affliction (The Chant).

TELEKINETIC SLAM (Standard Ranged Attack): ATT 14, x1 Damage (8), remove one appropriate environmental element.

TELEKINETIC GRAB (Special Ranged Attack): Automatic hit. All spreads the victim makes are reduced by one card, and the victim takes 1 Wound at the start of each of the Whisperer's actions. A Whisperer may only have a single creature grabbed at a time.

WHISPERER GESTALT (Undead)

DEFENSE 6
HEALTH LEVELS 6 (x 10)
SPEED 2

Piercing Whisper (*All-or-Nothing Ranged Attack*): Attack 15. If this attack is successful, the target suffers 1 Wound and gains 1 Affliction (*The Chant*).

Telekinetic Slam (*Standard Ranged Attack*): Attack 15, Damage x1 (8).

Telekinetic Grab (*Special Ranged Attack*): A Whisperer Gestalt can maintain two *Telekinetic Grabs*.

New Blood (*Special Reaction*): If the Gestalt loses 3 HL tokens, remove one token from the Chanter Mob, and restore three HL-6 tokens to the gestalt. The gestalt can do this up to twice over the course of battle. This can be an immediate response to an attack that would otherwise destroy the gestalt.

During its turn, a Whisperer Gestalt can make one Piercing Whisper *attack and use either* Telekinetic Grab *or* Telekinetic Slam. *It can only have two targets trapped with* Telekinetic Grab*, but it may make* Telekinetic Slams *while maintaining* Telekinetic Grabs.

MISSION THREE: SCARTONGUE

In "Scartongue," the Wing is dispatched to investigate a recently reactivated Aerie in the deep forests of the Grimwald. The Aerie is a final refuge for a Grimwald tribe with old ties to the Phoenixes. The Dread has awakened an ancient foe from the forest's past, and the Phoenixes must fight off the undead attack, then defeat it at its source to save the Aerie and its new inhabitants.

Background

Aeries are vital tools in the battle against the Dread. They're the foundation of the communication network that keeps the Marshals informed, and they're the gateways through which Phoenixes respond to threats. Aeries exist across the Empire, but only a handful are operational. Many Aeries were damaged or destroyed during the Civil War, and even those that survived intact were abandoned or repurposed over the course of centuries. Re-establishing Aeries is one of Dawn Command's critical goals, but it's no simple task. Igniting a spark of the Imperial Flame requires Phoenix ashes (page 139) and a capable Flamekeeper willing to make a lifelong sacrifice. Once the bond is forged, it cannot be broken, and should either flame or Flamekeeper be extinguished, the other shares that fate. Phoenix ashes are in short supply, and finding and training potential Flamekeepers is no small task. Thus it comes as a surprise to the Elemental Marshal when an Aerie is reactivated without any help from Dawn Command, and the Wing is sent to investigate.

The restored Aerie is set in the depths of the Grimwald. The first Phoenixes brought the Grimwald into the Empire, but in the wake of the Civil War, the deep Grimwald returned to many of its old ways. It has a long tradition of raiding; tribes fight for resources, renown, and revenge. Captives are frequently forced into indentured servitude by the victorious tribe. Now the Dread has come to the Grimwald, and this tapestry of ancient feuds is fertile soil for Bones. The Olvari Tree allied with the Phoenixes during the Imperial conquest, and they have enforced the Imperial ban on magic in the Grimwald for centuries. Now a branch of the Olvari Tree has been targeted by an undead warlord who hungers to avenge his death.

The Olvari have taken shelter in the ruins of a fallen Aerie, and they're making a last stand against the relentless undead foe. In an act of desperation, the Olvari shaman **Wrin** has ignited the dormant Imperial Flame; as the adventure begins, this dangerous act is killing her. Can the Phoenixes save Wrin and her people from the Bone threat? Even if this battle is won, Bones can't be permanently destroyed unless the vengeful spirit is laid to rest; they return each night until the Phoenixes find Scartongue's barrow, learn his story, and end his reign of terror.

Prologue: The Grand Aerie

Read or paraphrase the following:

> *The heart of the Grand Aerie is the original Imperial Flame, the fire from which all Phoenixes are first reborn. The chamber housing the Flame is a massive cavern. Dozens of candles line the walls, and adepts scurry about, studying the candles and the Flame. You're on duty in the Flame Chamber in the small hours of the morning, waiting for whatever trouble might come…and soon enough something does.*
>
> *The Elemental Marshal is studying a wall of candles when something happens.* He *collapses to the floor, twitching and shaking.*

Give the Phoenixes an opportunity to respond. The Elemental Marshal, *Cinder*, was introduced in "The Harvest" and players had a chance to define a few details; make sure to take those into account by adjusting pronouns and other descriptive elements accordingly. Any Phoenix with an appropriate Specialty can see the seizure wasn't serious; by the time a Phoenix reaches Cinder, the Marshal is already starting to recover.

> *"I'm fine,"* he growls, *rising to* his *feet. "Through the Imperial Flame, I'm connected to every active Aerie. Someone just connected a new Aerie to the Flame…I wasn't expecting it." An adept calls out in alarm, and Cinder rushes to her side. There are five candles burning in an alcove against the wall.*

This is an unprecedented event. While Dawn Command is working to restore Aeries, this one wasn't on the list. It's deep in the Grimwald, in a region largely abandoned by the Empire since the days of the Civil War. Four candles is the worst signal that can be given: It indicates a threat that could eliminate a major city or region, and the fifth candle indicates that the threat is in the Aerie. But Cinder is cautious. **He** gestures, and the candles are extinguished; a moment later they're all relit. Any Phoenix trained in candle lore (by default Devoted, Elemental, and Shrouded) would know this isn't standard procedure; a response should use a pattern that further identifies the threat.

> *Cinder turns to you. "Something isn't right about this. This Aerie has been abandoned for centuries. It seems there's a Flamekeeper in it now, but I'm not convinced he or she knows candle procedures. We can't ignore the potential of a five–candle threat, but this is the deep Grimwald. What's down there to threaten?"* He sighs. *"I'm sending you through. Find out what's going on. If you find a threat, give me a clear report and deal with it."*

This is a good place to refer back to previous missions. If the Phoenixes defeated the Chant, Cinder might say *"After your work in the Capital, I'm sure you can handle this."* If the previous mission was a disaster, Cinder is more dubious. *"Hopefully it's a false alarm. If not, try not to repeat that mess in the Capital."* Once any questions are resolved, the Phoenixes enter the Imperial Flame and head for the Grimwald.

MISSION BRIEFING: THE GRIMWALD

This presents information players may want to know about the mission that their characters already know. Don't present the information about the Olvari and Kandari immediately. This comes up when the Phoenixes encounter these people during the mission. Additional information about the Grimwald can be found on page 59 of the Marshal's Guide. In particular, if any of the Phoenixes in the Wing have established they were Treefolk in their first lives, make sure to establish which Tree they were part of before starting the adventure.

What is the Grimwald?

The Grimwald is a vast forest and the southernmost province of the Empire. Its people are divided into tribal factions they refer to as **Trees**. Each Tree includes multiple communities, which are called **branches**. A Tree is led by a chieftain, while each branch is led by its elders and shaman. The Grimfolk believe in primal spirits and respect the natural world, and Grim shamans of the past used magic to harness primordial power. These dangerous traditions were suppressed when the Phoenixes conquered the Grimwald and brought it into the Empire. The shamans of the modern age are healers and herbalists who help their people live in harmony with nature, but these shamans don't practice active magic.

Villages on the outer edge of the Grimwald house people who have abandoned their tribal culture and embraced Imperial traditions, and these villagers have more in common with Ilonans than the Treefolk. The civilized Grim trade lumber and rare herbs with the people of the north. The people of the interior—the **Deep Grimwald**—have largely drifted apart from the Empire since the Civil War. The Treefolk are often considered barbarians, as they still hold to their animistic traditions. They're hunters and gatherers, unwilling to adopt Ilona's agricultural ways, and they raid each other, taking captives as slaves. This mission takes the Phoenixes into the heart of the Deep Grimwald. The Phoenixes know little more than that; Cinder doesn't have time to pull out a map and pinpoint its precise location.

Slavery in the Grimwald

When the Phoenixes encounter Trig, they may have questions about the practice of slavery in the Grimwald. This is a long-standing cultural tradition and standard practice for captives taken in raids or battle. The Grimwald is a dangerous place, and individuals can't survive in the wild; thus captives are dependent on their captors for shelter and sustenance. There is a well-established code shared among the Trees concerning the treatment of slaves; as long as slaves perform their duties, they are treated fairly. The typical slave isn't thrilled with their fate, but knows they will survive and trusts someday their Tree will reclaim them and perhaps take their captors as slaves. It's rare for slaves to be allowed to carry weapons, and the fact that Trig has her bow is a sign of trust. This also reflects that there are no Kandari branches in the region, so were Trig to rebel, she has nowhere to go.

Who are the Olvari?

The Olvari Tree is one of the largest nations within the Grimwald. "Olvari" means "People of Fire," and the Olvari have always revered the spirit of Flame. When the Phoenixes came, the Olvari declared them to be the avatars of Flame and sided with them in the initial conquest of the Grimwald. They have always been the staunchest supporters of the Empire in the region, and following the conquest, they helped enforce Imperial order…in particular, suppressing the active use of shamanic magic. Olvari favor red feathers and the color red.

Who are the Kandari?

The Kandari Tree was once a powerful nation within the Grimwald. They bitterly opposed assimilation into the Empire and were the fiercest opponents the Phoenixes faced during the conquest. Kandari survivors rose up in revolt a number of times, and these uprisings were largely quelled by the Olvari Tree. Today, most of the Kandari have been bound to other trees as slaves. Kandari traditionally favor dark green clothing.

Scene One: Arrival

Read or paraphrase the following:

> *It's a rough transition, especially painful and disorienting. When your vision finally clears, you find yourself in a ruin. The floor is covered with rubble, and rain pours through the collapsed roof. The walls are covered with vines and moss, and the racks that should hold weapons are empty. The Imperial Flame is burning behind you, but it's not the roaring bonfire you're used to; it burns fitfully and seems like it could gutter and die. A young woman is sprawled across the floor in front of the hearth. She wears an antlered headdress and a dark cloak edged with bright red feathers, and she has a large red candle clutched in one hand; in spite of the rain, the candle is still lit. As you regain your senses, you can hear screams and the clash of weapons in the distance.*

Because of the painful transition, all members of the Wing arrive before the first Phoenix has an opportunity to act. If they rush out of the chamber to join the fight, continue to Scene Two. But if they're wise, they'll begin by studying their surroundings and helping the injured shaman.

The Aerie was abandoned during the Civil War and never restored. It has suffered centuries of abuse at the hands of looters and vandals, and nature is slowly reclaiming it. The timbered roof was burned and collapsed long ago. The walls are mortared stone and have faired better than the roof, but they are buried beneath a dense layer of weeds, vines, and mold. Someone cut back the vines to expose the hearth. If the Phoenixes want to examine the guttering Imperial Flame, refer to the Flame and Flamekeeper sidebar on page 291.

The unconscious woman (Wrin) is young, about sixteen or seventeen. The Phoenixes notice something unusual about her; you can **ask a player** to define this, or say she's unusually pale for the Grimwald. Important facts:

- A Phoenix with the Lore or Tradition Specialties, the *Shaman* Trait, or a background tied to the Grimwald recognizes her cloak and headdress as the raiment of a shaman of the Olvari Tree; this would be the time to provide the information about the Olvari given in the Mission Briefing.

- She is unconscious. A quick evaluation shows no signs of injury, but she is clearly growing weaker. An Intellect Spread (Difficulty 15) gives her about an hour to live; a Phoenix with the Healing Specialty can make this diagnosis without needing to make a spread.

- If the Phoenixes want to examine her more closely or heal her, refer to the Flame and Flamekeeper sidebar.

- Wrin's candle is made from the remnants of signalling candles that have been fused together (something that can be determined in the Flame and Flamekeeper Spread). Wrin is bound to it and uses it as a mystical focus—an Olvari tradition developed over the last few centuries. Once Wrin ignited the Imperial Flame, it began broadcasting the "five candle" signal that Cinder responded to. At the moment there's no way for anyone to use it to send a proper candle message to the Grand Aerie.

The Wing can take a single significant action (studying the chamber, examining Wrin) without consequence. If they delay longer—taking the time to try to Heal Wrin—they will hear screams from just outside the Flame Chamber. The battle is drawing closer, and innocents are in peril. If they **heal Wrin,** she's disoriented, but urges them to help those under attack. *"They're here…reavers in the night…please, help us…"*

If the Wing charges into battle, move to Scene Two. On the other hand, if they act more cautiously they can gain an advantage.

- With a **Grace Spread** (Difficulty 20; Scouting, Spycraft), a Phoenix can enter the next chamber unseen. The Phoenix is *Hidden*. Read the introduction to Scene Two; the Phoenix can choose to take an immediate action before the Reaver can respond or return to the Wing to report.

- If the Wing as a whole wants to move forward stealthily, anyone who wants can make a **Grace Spread** (Difficulty 18; Scouting, Spycraft, The Shadows). Anyone who succeeds begins the next scene *Hidden*. An appropriate Trait (*Sneaky, Hunter*) can be discarded for automatic success in this spread.

One way or another, continue to Scene Two.

Flame and Flamekeeper

Any Phoenix with Intellect cards in their deck knows that simple rain shouldn't be able to extinguish a spark of the Imperial Flame. Likewise, the large red candle held by the unconscious shaman should have gone out; there's some magic at work there. Studying these flames is an **Intellect Spread**. Lore, The Arcane, and Fire are all valid Specialties, and the *Shaman* Trait is worth +10. The information gained depends on the degree of success.

- **<10:** Failure. Nothing is known.
- **10–14:** It's clear the Imperial Flame is fading and will soon go out. There's maybe an hour left. At this level, it's obvious the red candle is magical, but no other details are known.
- **15–19:** The woman on the floor performed some version of the Flamekeeper initiation rite that binds an adept's lifeforce to the Flame. Either she didn't have enough Phoenix ashes or she didn't know every step of the ritual. Whatever the reason, the flawed link is consuming her spirit. The red candle is made from the remnants of a number of signalling candles, which would explain why the Grand Aerie perceived it as four candles. It cannot be extinguished.
- **20+:** The red candle is the key. The shaman had already bound her spirit to the candle in some strange variation of the Flamekeeper rite; thus her spirit can't be fully committed to the hearth. By destroying the candle as part of the ritual, a Phoenix can gain a +10 bonus to the **Healing Wrin** Spread.

Healing Wrin

There are two ways to help the injured Shaman. The simplest option is to **sever her connection** to the Imperial Flame. This is an Intellect Spread (Difficulty 15; Arcane, Flame, Lore). Wrin will quickly recover, but the Flame will be extinguished—and the Olvari have used all their Phoenix ashes, so there will be no way to restore it. Rebirth won't be an option in the mission.

The more difficult option is to **strengthen her connection** and fully establish her as a Flamekeeper. This is a Grace Spread (Difficulty 25; Flame, Lore, Spirits). The *Shaman* Trait is worth +10, and the Phoenix receives an additional +10 if they destroy Wrin's candle. If the Phoenix fails, Wrin immediately dies and the Flame is extinguished. If it succeeds, the Flame flares up into the familiar bonfire the Wing has seen in other Aeries. Wrin stirs, but it will take her a few minutes to fully recover.

Scene Two: The Reaver

Read or paraphrase the following:

> *The first thing you see is the trunk of an ancient tree protruding through a shattered wall. It must have fallen on the chamber decades ago, and vines and saplings have sprung up around it. The fallen tree serves as a sort of makeshift barricade, and you see a dozen people huddled behind it. They're Grimwald Treefolk, but not an intimidating bunch. You see a child, a craftsman, an old man. There's a single warrior…and he's currently falling to the floor, blood flowing from his chest. You hear his final bloody sigh and the rasp of a blade dislodging from bone. Then the killer comes into view. He wears the decayed robes of a warrior, gray–green and tattered. Underneath, you glimpse armor—it's in the Grimwald style, but too heavy and ornate for the tribes of the current age. His face is sunken and dessicated, with darkness in the empty eye sockets. A mob of grisly figures follows behind him: fresh corpses of Grimwald villagers, risen and eager to kill for their new master.*

SETUP

Arrange the Wing on one edge of the table. Set the Innocents, Reaver, and Risen Dead in the center. If the Phoenixes entered the room quickly, there should be twelve HL-2 tokens on the Innocents and three HL-3 tokens on the Risen Dead; for each significant action the Phoenixes took before entering the hall, the Innocents lose a counter and the Risen Dead gain one. This room is the **Aerie Hall**, and includes the following Environmental Elements: **Tree Trunk, Pile of Rubble, Heavy Table, Broken Chair, Discarded Spear,** and **Fresh Corpse**.

If the Phoenixes charged into the room, the Reaver takes the first action. If they used stealth, one Phoenix can take a turn before the Reaver responds. The Risen Corpses act one turn after the Reaver. Every time the Risen Corpses make an attack, remove 1 HL from the Innocents card.

The Reaver is a tough combatant. He uses *Bloodfire Darts* as his first attack and then moves into melee, responding to attacks with *Shield Counters*. He's not swift, but he moves with unshakable purpose and his blows carry a great deal of power. Describe the wounds from his *Jagged Blade* attack with gory detail, and make clear the Phoenix is losing a worrying amount of fiery blood. The Risen Corpses are primarily a distraction, but if the Phoenixes ignore them too long, they can pose a serious threat when the Reaver is seriously hurt and they frenzy.

If someone wants to study the enemy and makes an appropriate spread (Difficulty 15), you can provide some of the following facts based on the Specialty used:

> • The Reaver appears to be one of the Bones. This is a broad term used to describe the risen corpses of ancient soldiers. Each manifestation of the Bones typically has some unique features; the ability to animate the corpses of its victims is something new. The main thing about the Bones is that so far no one has found a way to permanently lay them to rest; if destroyed, they eventually return.

• The Reaver is held together by a mystical force, and this is what gives him his unnatural strength and resilience.

• The Risen Dead are using fresh corpses and aren't as strong as the Reaver, but they appear to be animated by ancient Kandari spirits; when they attack, they moan Kandari curses and war cries. Likewise, the Reaver wears the garb and equipment of a Kandari champion from the time of the Imperial Conquest. See the Mission Briefing for more information on the Kandari.

When the Reaver's HL drops to zero, the energy sustaining him dissipates, and he crumbles to dust—though his weapons stay behind. The Risen Corpses must still be put down once the Reaver falls, but they no longer grow in number.

USING THE ENVIRONMENT

Most of the Environmental Elements are straightforward, but a few could have special effects.

• The **Tree Trunk** or **Heavy Table** could be used to strike multiple enemies at once, allowing a Phoenix to strike both the Risen Dead and the Reaver with a single Attack Spread.

• If the Phoenixes urge the Innocents to flee into the Flame Chamber, remove 2 HL from the Innocents card each turn as they escape to (relative) safety. If a Phoenix performs a clever action with an element that should help protect the Innocents, you can remove one or more HL from the Innocents card to reflect the escape.

• Someone with the Spirits Specialty or something similar might want to exorcise the Bones. This has no effect on the Reaver; it seems to be part of a greater spiritual entity and is too powerful to be casually dismissed. However, the Risen Dead are weaker and can be disrupted. This can only be done once during combat. With a Skill Spread of 15, the Phoenix can remove 1 HL token from the Risen Dead. For every 5 points in the spread above 15 (20, 25, 30), they can remove an additional HL. Alternately, they could make a spread to hold the Risen Dead at bay and give the Innocents time to escape. With a successful Grace Spread (Difficulty 20; Spirits, Lore), they can prevent the Risen Dead from harming the Innocents. This is a temporary solution, but lasts the duration of the scene.

EXPANDING ON THE INNOCENTS

If you want to add more color to the scene, ask each player to describe one of the refugees when they enter the chamber. You can expand on these ideas or present a few of your own. Each refugee needs to be someone who could logically be in the Deep Grimwald with the Olvari, but that doesn't limit you to Olvari. If any Phoenixes have ties to other parts of the Grimwald, you can add someone from a different Tree. Most likely, such a person would have been rescued by the Olvari after their village was laid waste by the Dread and pressed into slavery. But this is a good opportunity to deal with the fact that Grimwald slavery isn't simple; a lone

survivor from a wiped-out branch would likely die on their own, and while the Olvari don't treat the slaves as equals, they are keeping them alive. An old shaman from another Tree was teaching young Wrin, despite being a slave. If you want an Imperial connection, you could have a merchant trapped down here by the Dread or a scout or scholar caught up in the terror.

Scene Three: The Aftermath

Read or paraphrase the following:

> *The rain continues to fall, mingling with the blood of the Reaver's victims. You no longer hear the sounds of battle, but sobs and shouts as people recover from the attack.*

Dawn is a few hours away, and the attack is over. Three Reavers were involved, one of which made his way through the outer defenses only to fall at the hands of the Phoenixes. At the moment of his defeat, the remaining Reavers fled into the night. This is a pattern the Olvari have seen before: The Reavers attack each night, but once they retreat, they do not return until the following night. As a result, the Olvari are now focused on tending to their injured and repairing their defenses.

There is no set structure to this aftermath. However, over the course of this scene, the following things happen:

- The Phoenixes speak to the shaman Wrin, the war leader Orex, the scout Trig, or any combination of the three. Each of these characters is described in the following section.

- The Phoenixes are brought up to speed on the current situation: what brought the Olvari to the Aerie and the nature of their enemy. This information can come from Wrin, Orex, or Trig, though each presents it in a different way; the basic facts are presented the *Troubles of the Olvari* section.

- If Wrin wasn't cured in Scene One, the Phoenixes have one hour to help her before she dies and the hearth is extinguished.

- At dawn, any Phoenix who died in Scene Two is reborn. All other Phoenixes regain one Health Level and a number of Sparks equal to twice their Rank.

Wrin is in the Flame Chamber. If she has been cured, she tends to any injured refugees; otherwise she remains comatose, and the refugees beg the Phoenixes to do something. Meanwhile, Orex and Trig are on their way into the Aerie looking for Wrin, along with a number of warriors and a healer. If the Phoenixes go straight to Wrin, they have a few moments with her before Orex bursts in. If the Phoenixes want to leave the Aerie and explore, they run into Orex and his soldiers on the way out.

TROUBLES OF THE OLVARI

The Olvari know little of what has been going on in the rest of the Empire, but the Deep Grimwald has seen its own share of the Dread. Over the last few years, the Trees have been struck by plagues and devastated by skinchangers, warped beasts, and other horrors. The branches have been isolated, and the Olvari don't know if their chieftain is still alive. These particular Olvari are from the Ember Branch—until recently, they were a strong and prosperous branch that sheltered others whose branches had fallen. They'd even taken in members of other Trees; though, following tradition, these people were taken as slaves. Their elder Firespeaker—a man named Hurn—was slain two years ago by skinchangers. Since then, Wrin has served as their spirit guide; while young, she has a strong bond to the flame and people believe in her. Wrin received additional training from one of the enslaved refugees, a Kandari shaman named Tryl. This woman passed away in a previous Reaver attack (unless you decided to add her to the Innocents), but her actions helped ease the tension between the Olvari and the Kandari slaves…and as a result, Tryll's daughter Trig has been accepted as a scout and allowed to carry a weapon.

Despite their troubles, the Ember Branch was strong…until the first Reaver attack came on the night of the new moon. The first attack was a single Reaver, and a dozen Olvari died before bringing it down. Each night the Reavers returned, and their numbers grew with each attack. They fled from the village, but every night a Reaver tracked them down. Wrin concluded that they needed to open a fire-bridge to summon the Phoenixes, and the Kandari scout Trig remembered the location of a ruined Aerie she'd found in Kandari territory. The refugees arrived at the Bloodroot Aerie yesterday. Wrin's spirit-candle helped her find a cache of Phoenix ashes.

Phoenix Ashes at the Aerie?

Wrin ignited the hearth using a cache of ashes she found at the Aerie itself—the remains of a hero from the conquest of the Grimwald. If anyone asks about this, you could turn it around and ask the players to come up with the story of the fallen hero. If you'd rather provide them with an answer, it was **Ashendar**, an Elemental Phoenix who played a crucial part in winning the Olvari to the Phoenix cause. Ashendar was an Olvari in her first life, and wielded a flaming spear in battle.

Currently there are approximately seventy refugees at the Aerie. Most are Olvari, with about a dozen slaves from other Trees. Roughly forty of the refugees are noncombatants: children, elders, and crafters with no talent for fighting. The warriors are working to fortify the Aerie, but most assume this is a last stand. However, Wrin has always believed the Phoenixes would come and defeat the Reavers—after which, the Aerie would serve as the center of a newly restored Olvari Tree.

THE NATURE OF THE THREAT

The Reavers have attacked every night for the last ten days. Their numbers grow each night the Olvari remain in the same place. The first few nights, the Olvari were able to fight off the Reavers themselves, though they always suffered heavy losses. Recently, they've found the Reavers leave after killing a certain number of innocents. Left on their own, the Olvari are surely doomed; at best, they can survive three more days. The only upside is the Reavers are predictable. They always attack after midnight, and they only attack once per night; once they leave or are driven off, the survivors can relax.

IDENTIFYING THE REAVERS

By default, identifying the Reavers is an **Intellect Spread** (Tradition, Lore, Grimwald background). Here are the results.

- **<15:** Nothing useful.
- **15–19:** The Reaver's equipment was that of a Kandari warrior from the time of the Grimwald conquest, and the Risen Dead chanted archaic Kandari war cries. The Kandari were rebels and bitter enemies of the Olvari.
- **20–29:** This Aerie is located deep in Kandari territory. It was placed here after a particularly powerful Kandari chieftain was defeated to prevent uprisings. It was abandoned following the Civil War and must have been destroyed by the Kandari. The Phoenix knows that a number of Kandari chieftains were entombed in barrows, but doesn't know the precise locations.
- **30+:** At this level, the Phoenix is actually familiar with the tale of Scartongue, the legendary Kandari rebel. This can be found in Scene Five. The Phoenix also knows where the barrows are.

Once the Phoenixes have learned the basics, Trig can help fill in any missing details. The conquest was many centuries ago, so even Trig didn't automatically recognize the Reavers as Kandari. Once this comes out, Trig knows many stories. She knows this region has long been Kandari territory and the Ashmen put the fortress here after defeating a mighty chieftain. She doesn't remember all the details about the fallen chieftain, but she knows he was blessed by the spirits and even killed Ashmen in personal combat. Most important of all, she knows where his barrow is located and would be willing to lead the Phoenixes there.

CRITICAL PEOPLE

There are three important figures among the refugees. **Wrin** is the young shaman who ignited the hearth and allowed the Phoenixes to reach the Aerie. **Orex** is a veteran warrior who's been leading the defense. And **Trig** is a Kandari scout—a slave who knows this region better than anyone else. It was Trig who helped them find the Aerie in the first place, and Trig who knows the location of the ancient barrow.

The Phoenixes can get the information above from any of these three characters, but the tone of the information will be very different based on who provides it. Wrin adores Phoenixes; Orex is bitter and believes the Phoenixes have betrayed his people.

Wrin, Olvari Shaman

"I knew you would come. We have suffered for so long, but now you will drive back the darkness!"

While young, Wrin possesses remarkable mystical talents supported by a strong will and unshakeable faith. These traits enabled her to light the hearth in the Aerie, even though she almost died in the process. When the Phoenixes brought the Grimwald into the Empire, the Olvari hailed them as avatars of the Flame and the Dawn, champions bringing light to all corners of the world. Wrin believes this with all her heart. In her mind, the Phoenixes have been waiting for the Olvari to restore the bridge of fire for them…and now that they're here, all will be well.

There are a few critical facts to bear in mind while dealing with Wrin.

- **She knows very little about the world beyond the Grimwald**. She has a vague concept of the Civil War: When the people of the "Kingdom of Light" proved themselves unworthy, the Phoenixes left the world, and the Olvari turned away from the corrupted kingdom. She knows nothing about current events in the Empire, and doesn't realize the Dread is a global threat. She doesn't know the difference between a Skavi and an Ilonan.

- **She believes Phoenixes are divine avatars.** In Wrin's worldview, the Phoenixes are the embodiments of Fire and Dawn. They are angelic champions who cannot die. They are paragons of virtue and can do no wrong. The goal is to make the Phoenixes slightly uncomfortable with just how devoted she is to them, as it will be very hard to actually live up to her expectations.

- **She believes the Olvari are bound to the Phoenixes.** The Olvari helped the Phoenixes bring the Grimwald into the Empire, and even after the Civil War the Olvari have continued to enforce the Phoenix prohibitions on magic. Currently the Olvari are weak…but in Wrin's vision, the restored Aerie will become the new heart of the Olvari Tree, and her people will help the Phoenixes in the battles ahead.

- **She's a shaman and a Flamekeeper.** While Wrin doesn't practice the forbidden magics of the past, her mystical talents do make her sensitive to spirits…and her newfound link to the Imperial Flame gives her an innate connection to the

Phoenixes. On the surface, she may seem both young and naive; however, she could suddenly speak with the voice of one of the Phoenixes' Mentors or otherwise display insights far beyond her years.

Wrin's teacher was slain in the early days of the Dread, and Wrin learned some of the shamanic traditions from Trig's mother Tryl. As a result, Wrin is generally more broad-minded about the other Trees and is especially close to Trig.

Orex, Olvari War Leader

"Where were you when our people were dying?"

Orex is six and a half feet of muscle and scars. He holds a massive battleaxe in one hand, and its twin blades are notched and bloody. His armor is torn, and he ignores half a dozen minor wounds. If you'd like, you can ask your players: *Orex is covered with scars and wounds both old and new. What's his most dramatic injury?* He's a veteran warrior and has been coordinating the defense of the refugees since they were forced to flee their village. Orex is a devoted Olvari, and like Wrin he believes the Phoenixes are divine avatars…but he is *angry*. His people have been suffering ever since the Dread began, and over the last few weeks he has seen the people of his branch slaughtered. These people were true Olvari who were faithful to the ancient compacts. Where were the Phoenixes when the Reavers first arrived? Why did they allow those innocents to die? Why didn't they stop the Dread from happening in the first place? He believes the Phoenixes are essentially angels, and he expects them to explain all the decisions of their predecessors. If Wrin is present, she tries to shift the blame to the Olvari—"We didn't maintain the fire-bridge. They couldn't come until it had been restored." This helps calm Orex, but he still wants to see remorse. On the other hand, if Wrin is dead, his fury is even greater; he holds her up as the truest believer, her faith rewarded with death.

Orex does believe the Phoenixes are the only hope to save his people. He can be calmed with a **Grace Spread** (Difficulty 15), and the Specialty used (Leadership? Fear? Diplomacy?) determines his long-term attitude toward the Wing. But generally, where Wrin approaches the Phoenixes with humility, Orex takes the view that the Phoenixes owe the Olvari. They made bargains long ago, and his people have held up their end; now it's time for the Phoenixes to live up to their promises.

Orex is very protective of Wrin. She is the last Firespeaker, and he's certain the future of the Olvari Tree depends on her. If she wants to leave the Aerie for any reason, he insists on accompanying her. Beyond this, he is an Olvari traditionalist with a low opinion of the Kandari slaves. He doesn't abuse them—he holds to the ancient codes regarding the treatment of slaves—but he considers their slavery just punishment for the actions of their ancestors and has doubts about Trig. He curses the Kandari when the truth behind the Reavers is established.

Trig, Kandari Scout

"You're an Ashman? I thought you'd be taller."

Trig is a young woman with a lean, athletic build and tattoos covering the left side of her face. She wears ragged, weather-stained clothing but carries a fine bow and quiver. She's generally quiet but always alert and ready for trouble. If you want, you can ask your players to **describe two other interesting things about her.** Her tattoos identify her as a Kandari and as a slave of the Olvari Tree. Her bow is a family heirloom, restored to her after her mother began teaching Wrin. It's unusual for a slave to be allowed to carry a weapon and serve as a scout, but Trig is especially talented and has Wrin's support. Her affection for Wrin is deeper than is culturally appropriate for a shaman and a slave, but she keeps it hidden as best as she can. If the Phoenixes allowed Wrin to die, Trig despises them.

Trig's branch was wiped out by skinchangers and warped beasts, and if her people hadn't been taken in by the Olvari, they would have likely died. She doesn't love being a slave, but it's the way of the Treefolk. She's proud of her Kandari heritage and knows many stories of her people, but she also believes times have changed, and all Treefolk must stand together to deal with the terrors. If the Ashmen (the Kandari term for Phoenixes) can fight these horrors, she supports them however she can, though she doesn't share the Olvari reverence for the Phoenixes…which may actually be refreshing for them. In the stories of her people, the Ashmen are monsters. She'll be very curious to learn about them. What sort of powers do they possess? Do they actually burn children and eat the ashes? Are they going to conquer the Forest again after the terrors have fallen?

WHAT'S NEXT?

Eventually the Phoenixes have complete information about the current situation. They have just under twenty-four hours before the Reavers return again. The Aerie is a vital strategic resource, and the people are innocents; protecting innocents from supernatural threats is what the Phoenixes do. But *how* are they going to do it?

Fortifying the Aerie

As the Phoenixes consider their plan, the Olvari are already fortifying the Aerie. They're establishing palisade walls, burning their dead and making additional preparations. One thought may be to help the Olvari defeat the Reavers. There's only one problem with that: No one has ever defeated the Bones. The Empire has been fighting the Bone Legion since the Dread began, and all they've done is slow the legion's advance. Staying in the Aerie and fighting won't accomplish anything, since the Reavers always return. However, the Phoenixes can substantially improve

the Olvari position if they help to fortify. If a Phoenix has a reasonable plan for contributing and is willing to spend eight hours, they can make a Skill Spread to help out. This is a **Freeform Challenge**: You decide if the plan is feasible and which suits should apply to the spread. For example:

- A Durant Phoenix could use the War Specialty to provide tactical advice (Intellect, but the Durant can use Strength because of their Specialty) or use Leadership to inspire and unite the troops (Grace).

- A Devoted Phoenix might use the Spirits Specialty to establish wards to weaken hostile spirits (Grace) or use Healing to tend to the injured and prepare them for battle (Intellect).

- An Elemental Phoenix could use the Fire Specialty to help the Olvari develop pitch-flinging weapons and fire-pit defenses or come up with some form of Arcane defense (both Intellect).

- A Forceful Phoenix could use Scouting to get the lay of the land and establish the best spots for sentries (Intellect, but the Forceful can use Grace because of their Specialty).

These are just a few examples. As long as the plan is reasonable, each Phoenix helping the Olvari prepare should make a Skill Spread; the sidebar indicates how many **Fortification Points** the Aerie receives. Feel free to add or subtract up to two Fortification Points to each spread based on the strength of the concept; likewise, an especially appropriate Trait could add an additional Fortification Point to an action. Track the total number of Fortification Points the Phoenixes contribute; the final number impacts the long-term viability of the Aerie, which is covered in the Epilogue.

Fortification Skill Spreads

A successful spread generates **Fortification Points** as shown below.

- **<15:** No points.
- **15–19:** One point.
- **20–24:** Two points.
- **25–29:** Four points.
- **30+:** Eight points.

Searching for the Barrow

No one has ever defeated the Bones…but neither has anyone fought them on their home territory or figured out what drives them. The Reavers are largely a mystery, but research reveals them to be the remnants of Kandari warriors who fought both the Phoenixes and Olvari during the conquest of the Grimwald. This is covered in the Identifying the Reavers challenge on page 298. If no one has researched them yet, they can perform the spread now. Trig has heard stories about a mighty Kandari warlord who fought the Phoenixes, and knows the location of his barrow… and Orex confirms that every time the Reavers have attacked, they've come from the direction of this barrow.

Barrows are a rarity among the Olvari. Usually bodies are given to the wild, consumed by earth and beast and thus returned to nature. Preserving the corpse in a barrow removes it from this cycle. Trig knows the chieftain was one of the mightiest warriors of her Tree, but his story was never told and the barrow itself was shunned; all she knows, she learned through inference.

Reaching the barrow takes about four hours, or eight to reach it and return. The entire Wing could go immediately, or someone could scout it while others fortify the Aerie…or everyone could take a turn fortifying the Aerie and them leave together. The main issue is they have limited time before nightfall, when the Reavers will return and whatever lies in the barrow with be strongest.

The simplest way to find the barrow is for Trig to lead the way. However, there's a chain reaction here. If Trig goes, Wrin wants to go as well: *"The fate of my people depends on this, and you may need a shaman."* If Wrin goes, Orex insists on accompanying her: *"You've let our people die before, and we can't lose her."* Placing Wrin at risk is a terrible idea; if she dies, the Flame in the Aerie is extinguished. Convincing Wrin and Orex to stay behind requires a **Grace Spread** (Difficulty 20; Leadership, Diplomacy). With a result of 15–19, Wrin stays, but only as long as Orex goes in her place. If mortals accompany the Phoenixes, someone has to commit to keeping them alive; refer to The Buddy System on page 125.

In any case, when one or more Phoenixes set out for the barrow, continue to Scene Four.

Scene Four: Finding the Barrow

Read or paraphrase the following:

> *The Deep Grimwald is untamed forest. The air is warm and moist. Little sunlight filters through the heavy canopy, creating pools of light amid deep shadows. The forest floor is covered with moss and rotting vegetation, and you have to make your way through dense tangles of briar and over vast deadfalls. There is a constant tapestry of birdsong, punctuated by occasional belows of distant beasts.*

Traveling through the Grimwald is a slow process. If Trig is with the Phoenixes, they reach the barrow without incident. She knows exactly where the barrow is and how to avoid the dangers of the region. She can describe the route to a Phoenix, but it's not so easy for her to explain how to avoid the many threats of the region. If the Phoenixes go without her, someone must make a **Intellect Spread** (Difficulty 25; Observation, Nature, Scouting). As Scouting is a relevant Specialty, a Forceful Phoenix can make the spread using Grace. For every five points the Wing fails the spread (rounded up), someone in the Wing must suffer a Wound; these can be divided up among multiple Phoenixes. Each Wound reflects a different hazard encountered along the way, which could be natural threats of the region or disturbing manifestations of the Dread. Here are a few ideas.

- A flock of fetches—black-feathered carrion birds—attack the Phoenixes. They fight recklessly and to the death; when slain, they cry out with human voices.

- The Phoenixes pass through the site of an ancient battle, with moss-covered bones and rotting siege engines. A dessicated corpse suddenly strikes from the underbrush, impaling one of the Phoenixes with a rusted blade before falling to pieces.

- A massive bear confronts the Phoenixes. It seems to have leathery scales beneath its fur and flames drift from its nostrils and mouth. The Phoenixes can kill it or drive it off, but not before someone is hurt.

- While crossing a deadfall, a Phoenix falls into a pit filled with lashing, thorn-covered vines.

Feel free to challenge the players to flesh out these stories. You can state the result—*you clash with a massive warped bear, and* someone *is going to suffer one Wound*—but let them decide how they defeat the bear, who's injured in the process, and any other details. You can also mention these or other hazards even if the Phoenixes make a perfect spread or travel with Trig. The threats are still present; the Phoenixes simply manage to overcome them without any injuries. The goal here is to emphasize that the Dread has a broad foothold in the Grimwald; the Reavers are a specific manifestation, but far from the only threat.

ARRIVING AT THE BARROW

Read or paraphrase the following:

> *The barrow is marked by five massive stone slabs leaning together to form a crude pyramid. A sixth stone has fallen away from the ancient monument, and now lies on its side; this reveals a narrow passage between the standing stones.*

Trig is surprised to see the fallen stone. This is new since her last visit, and the stones are too heavy to shift easily. With an **Intellect Spread** (Difficulty 15; Observation, Scouting) someone can notice a few additional details. First, there are clear signs of

recent activity; traffic has come through the barrow over the last few days. Second, all the vegetation within 20 feet of the barrow is dead. The moss on the stones has withered, vines are dried out and cracking, and the nearby trees are starting to rot. As long as it's still day, there is no danger and the explorers can enter the barrow unopposed. If they've chosen to wait until night for some reason, a single Reaver stands watch, blocking the narrow passage between the stones; defeat him to enter the barrow.

ENTERING THE BARROW

Read or paraphrase the following:

> *In the midst of the standing stones a passage drops down into the earth. The temperature drops sharply as you descend into the barrow, and the air is dank and stale. Soon you come upon a series of wall engravings, an account of ancient events accompanied by simple images of battle. Beyond the engravings, the tunnel terminates with the entrance to a large chamber.*

There are a few things to deal with here.

- There's no light source in the barrow. Most Talons can generate light; failing that, an Elemental or Devoted could produce magical light. If the Phoenixes prefer to proceed in darkness, they can't read the engravings and suffer a one-card penalty on all spreads in which vision plays a role.

- Anyone familiar with Grimwald traditions (Lore or Tradition Specialty, or anyone from the Grimwald) knows these barrows are typically very simple in layout; odds are good the room ahead is the burial chamber, and quite likely the only space in the barrow.

THE LEGEND OF SCARTONGUE

The engravings on the walls are a peculiar script. It's the Kandari dialect of Grimtongue, the language used by the Treefolk before they were brought into the Empire. As a written language, it is limited; stories were primarily passed on through oral tradition, and the storyteller or bard would clarify the meaning of a particular phrase through motion and tone. Thus a number of words are ambiguous or open to interpretation, even for someone who knows the language well.

Anyone from the Grimwald or who would logically be familiar with Grimtongue can automatically read the engravings. Otherwise this requires an **Intellect Spread** (Difficulty 15; Lore, Tradition). If this fails, the Phoenixes can get the vague gist of the following story from the images that accompany it, though they won't get names. If Trig is with the Phoenixes, she can translate for them.

When someone studies the engravings, read or paraphrase the following:

Here is the resting place of Scartongue, who lies [in sleep/in death]. He was the [sole king/true king] of the Kandari tribe, fiercest warriors of all the tribes. He was born under an auspicious constellation that will never occur again. He won favor from the [spirits/world] and [his enemies/the outsiders] could not harm him.

When he became chief, he was met by a delegation of the Empire, with whom the Kandari were at [total war/war eternal]. The Ashman who led them pled with our chief, that with his tongue he could halt the bloodshed between the peoples. Our chief said no word of peace would ever cross his lips, and he ran his sword across his tongue so the blood ran down his face. He entered a battle–fury, and he slew the Imperials, who could not harm him. Those were last words Scartongue ever uttered, and from then on, he spoke only with his sword and axe.

The Kandari fought bravely, but the Empire threw endless numbers of its soldiers at Scartongue to [overwhelm him/bury him in their dead]. The Kandari withdrew to their ancient lands as their villages fell to the Empire, but never was Scartongue bested in battle—even Ashmen fell to his strength. And he would never surrender.

One of Scartongue's own Reavers became convinced that under Scartongue, the Kandari would fight until every last child of the tribe was slaughtered, including his own. During a great battle, the Reaver drove his longspear through Scartongue's back. As the [traitor/coward] was of Scartongue's Tree, the [spirits/world] did not protect the chieftain and Scartongue was mortally wounded. But he had made a [bargain/vow] such that the one who killed him would die as well. [Traitor/coward] and [sole king/true king] died as one.

Among the Trees, it is honorable to be returned to the world. Within this barrow the traitor's kin are hung from chains beneath the earth, denied rest in air or soil. The traitor hangs impaled upon his own spear, and below them lie the bones of the Imperial dead who deserve no better. And here rests Scartongue as well, who witnesses his enemies' suffering from the throne on which he sits.

The images alone convey the basics: A mighty warrior is blessed by spirits, defiantly removes his tongue, slays Phoenixes and Imperial soldiers, and is stabbed by a Kandari Reaver who seems to be dying as well. The final image is the warrior sitting on a throne with an impaled enemy hanging above him.

Anyone who understood the inscription (including Trig) can draw a few conclusions from this.

- Scartongue was empowered by the old magics practiced in the Grimwald before the conquests. These spirits likely gave him superhuman strength and seem to have warded him against enemy attacks—both to such an extent that he could face Phoenixes in battle. This sort of magic was difficult and dangerous; likely Scartongue or his subjects paid a terrible price for this power.

• The unnamed traitor was able to kill Scartongue because the spirits weren't compelled to protect the chieftain from other Kandari.

• The *Death Curse* is likely an all-or-nothing effect that instantly kills whoever strikes the killing blow against Scartongue (even though he's technically undead now).

• If Scartongue has been restored to some form of life, all of these enchantments may still be in effect.

There's nothing else to be done here, and the Phoenixes can choose to either continue into the burial chamber (and Scene Five) or retreat and return to the Aerie (if they were just scouting).

Protecting Mortals: The Buddy System

Phoenixes possess skills and reflexes far beyond what mortals are capable of. Even veteran soldiers would fall facing terrors Phoenixes take for granted. If Phoenixes don't defend mortal companions, they quickly die. When Phoenixes team up with mortals, each mortal is assigned a Phoenix companion…and it is up to that Phoenix to prevent their buddy from being killed.

A mortal companion is represented by one or more Health Levels that are set to the left of the normal Health Levels of a Phoenix. If the Phoenix should be injured, damage is first applied to these mortal levels…and when all of a mortal's Health Levels are exhausted, the mortal dies. Any adventure with mortals will specify the number and type of Health Levels used to represent them and any benefits they provide while alive.

There are a few additional rules when dealing with mortals.

Mortals must be divided up evenly among the Wing. If a Phoenix is already guarding a mortal, they can't take a second mortal companion unless everyone else in the Wing has one.

A Durant can use their Core Talent to reduce the damage that would otherwise be applied to their mortal companion.

Seasoned Veteran, *Death Wish*, and other abilities that allow a Phoenix to draw an attack from an ally can be used to protect a companion. A Phoenix can discard either of these Traits on their turn to shift their mortal's Health Levels to the right of their normal Health Levels. For the remainder of the scene, the mortal can't be hurt by an attack until the Phoenix is dead.

Scene Five: The Barrow Lord

Read or paraphrase the following:

> *Two things catch your eye when you enter this vast chamber…chains and bones. A web of rusting chains and hooks dangle from the ceiling, desiccated bodies caught in it. The floor is covered with the remains of Imperial soldiers, and to cross the chamber you must walk across the bodies of the dead.*
>
> *A withered figure sits in a great wooden throne set against the far wall of the burial chamber. Fine weapons are spread around him, and he wears the robes and antlered headdress of a tribal chieftain. At first glance, you see an eyeless corpse, but as you enter the room a pale luminescent mist flows around the Barrow Lord…and through that mist you see the shadow of a powerful warrior in his prime.*

SETUP

Arrange the Wing on one edge of the table. Set the *Barrow Lord* on the opposite end, leaving open space in the center. This room is the **Burial Chamber**, and includes the following Environmental Elements: **Chains, More Chains, Hanging Corpse, Wooden Casket, Rusted Weapon,** and **Ancient Shield.** One Phoenix has time to act before the Barrow Lord's first action.

The Barrow Lord is sitting on a small stone platform with enough room for two Phoenixes to also stand if they cross the field of bones. Until he is wounded, Scartongue remains seated, using only his *Hungry Chains* attack. Once he permanently loses a Health Level, he rises, sword and club appearing in his hands; he now has access to his full range of attacks. He fights until he loses his last Health Level.

There are two strategic factors in this battle, both described in more detail below. The critical details are **no attack can hurt Scartongue unless it's connected to his past**, and **if a Phoenix ends their turn in the Bone Pit, it launches an attack just before they draw cards**. Have the player discard the top card on their draw pile; the value of the pit's attack is equal to the value of that card +6. It has a x1 damage multiplier and a maximum damage of four.

Crossing the Bone Pit

There are two safe spaces in the chamber—the entrance and Scartongue's platform. If the Phoenixes venture forward from the entrance, they discover it's not a stable floor covered with corpses; it's a deep pit filled with bones. As soon as someone steps into the pit, the corpses begin to writhe and shift, clawing at the Phoenixes and trying to pull them down into the pit. This unstable terrain is difficult to cross and attacks a Phoenix each turn.

Crossing the pit is an **Extended Skill Spread**. Each turn, a Phoenix can make a **Grace Skill Spread (**Athletics, Acrobatics**)**. Keep a running tally of the player's total from turn to turn. To reach Scartongue's platform, a Phoenix must reach a total

value of **50**. If a Phoenix has the Acrobatics Specialty or *Superhuman Reflexes*, they can gain the usual benefit (+5 to the spread), or they can choose to cross the room using the chains hanging from the ceiling. This isn't any faster, but a Phoenix using the chains won't be targeted by the ongoing Bone Pit attack.

A Phoenix caught by Scartongue's *Hungry Chains* can't move forward until the chains are removed.

Scartongue and Ghostlight

Scartongue is the heart of this particular Bone manifestation. His spirit sustains the Bone Pit, the Reavers, and his own corpse. **He cannot be hurt by normal attacks.** While Scartongue is bound to his body, his bones are held together by the envelope of ectoplasm that surrounds them and reform after any attack. When this occurs, Scartongue laughs and mocks his attackers. He believes he is still fighting the conquest, and his statements should indicate this: *"The Ashmen will never defeat the Kandari! Once I defeat you I will lead my army out of the woods and crush your homes and your families!"* An observant Phoenix (Shrouded or Forceful by default, but anyone who asks about this) realizes they aren't hearing his words or laughter as actual sound; they just *know* what he's saying.

Gaining Ghostlight

The following things provide an ongoing Ghostlight bonus:

Attacking with a spear ..... *+1*

Wearing Reaver regalia ..... *+1*

Having Kandari blood or being accompanied by Trig ..... *+2*

Attacking with the traitor's own spear ..... *+2*

This is the dream of a dead man. In his dream, Scartongue is at the height of his power...and the power of the Dread makes this dream real. He can't be defeated because he doesn't *believe* he can be defeated. In order to defeat him, the Phoenixes must remind him of his death by re-enacting it. Scartongue was slain when one of his own Kandari Reavers killed him with a spear. The more elements of this story that a Phoenix can enact, the more effective their attacks are. As a Phoenix acquires elements that connect them to Scartongue's tale, tendrils of ectoplasm surrounds them and their weapons. This is *Ghostlight*, and where it covers the Phoenix, they see

the image of a Kandari Reaver, like a film projected onto mist. If the Phoenix has at least two points of Ghostlight, they start hearing sounds—as if they were shouting at Scartongue, cursing him for bringing doom upon the Kandari and placing the innocent at risk. They are vessels for Scartongue's nightmare, and as they go through the motions, it plays out around them.

The critical factor is this: **Each turn, a Phoenix can only damage Scartongue for a number of Wounds equal to or less than their current Ghostlight total spreads.** These Wounds can be inflicted by a single attack or divided among multiple, but this is a hard cap. As long as Scartongue has Health Levels left, his bones reknit—but the Ghostlight reflection of him shows ongoing wounds, and he curses his attacker. He calls his attacker **Magryn**; as far as Scartongue is concerned, any Phoenix with Ghostlight is his traitorous Reaver.

A Phoenix can gain a point of Ghostlight for one turn by taking an action that either supports the story of Scartongue's original death ("That's right! I, Magryn, will bring you down!") or that forcibly reminds Scartongue he *is* dead and this isn't real ("How are you even talking to us? Didn't you cut out your tongue?"). To gain this benefit, a Phoenix must come up with a new story each round; they can't simply repeat the same thing over and over. Once Scartongue has been reminded of his injury, he stops talking, instead grunting and howling. In addition to this, a Phoenix with the Spirits Specialty can give another Phoenix a point of Ghostlight for one turn by making an **Intellect Spread** (Difficulty 15), and any Phoenix can do this by discarding the *Shaman* Trait.

Any Phoenix in the Bone Pit can grab a spear by discarding a Grace card on their turn. Acquiring something belonging to a Reaver and putting it on requires someone to discard two Grace cards. First, however, someone must *find* a Reaver's corpse. This is an **Intellect Spread** (Difficulty 15); by default it's Observation or Scouting, but Tradition could be used to determine where a Reaver would be placed. If the Phoenix gets at least 20 on this spread, they spot the corpse of the traitor Magryn; he's suspended high among the chains and still impaled with his own spear. Reaching Magryn's corpse is a challenge; this is a **Grace Spread** (Difficulty 20; Acrobatics). Alternately, a Phoenix could make a **Strength Spread** (Difficulty 20; Athletics) to pull down the corpse by the chains; this results in a rain of rusty steel that inflicts one Wound on everyone in the Bone Pit. Once someone has the traitor's spear, they can pass it to someone else by discarding a Grace card, or someone can discard a Grace card to take it.

Hungry Chains

The barrow is an extension of Scartongue himself. Once during his turn, he can use *Hungry Chains*, causing chains to lash from the ceiling and entangle a Phoenix. He

cannot use the chains on adjacent enemies, but he can use them on enemies by the entrance…and the chains pull an enemy from the safety of the entrance onto the Bone Pit.

- Use a Immobilized counter to show that a Phoenix is caught in the chains.
- At the start of their turn, an immobilized Phoenix suffers one Wound as the barbed chains tighten, tearing flesh and crushing bone.
- A Phoenix cannot move from their current location while chained, but can take other actions (including removing the chains).
- Removing the chains requires a **Grace** or **Strength Spread** (Difficulty 10; Athletics; Trump: Superhuman Strength). A Phoenix can make a case for another Specialty (such as Spycraft). A Phoenix can break the chains themselves or make a spread to free an adjacent ally.
- If a Phoenix has a mortal companion, the companion removes the chains at the start of their turn, just after the Phoenix takes constriction damage.

UNRAVELING THE MYSTERY

The Ghostlight system isn't immediately obvious, and this is the first time anyone has ever encountered the heart of a Bone manifestation (unless a Phoenix has somehow *Seen This Before*). A Phoenix can make an **Intellect Spread** (Spirits, Lore, Death) to understand what's going on.

- **<15:** *Nothing is known.*
- **15–19:** *Physical attacks are irrelevant; you need to find a way to hurt Scartongue's spirit.*
- **20+:** *Scartongue is the heart of all of this. He's dreaming, and the Dread is making his dream real. He can't be defeated because he doesn't* believe *he can be defeated. To hurt him, you need to find ways to re-enact his original death; the more your actions resemble his betrayal, the more effective your attacks will be.*

USING THE ENVIRONMENT

- A few of the elements have special effects.
- A Phoenix could use **Chains** (or **More Chains**) to avoid touching the Bone Pit for one turn, as if they were using Acrobatics.
- A Phoenix could use **Chains** (or **More Chains**) to pull Scartongue off his throne and into the pit. This requires an Attack Spread with a value of at least 14. While Scartongue is in the pit, the Imperial dead claw at him too; this gives all attackers one point of Ghostlight.

• A Phoenix could use the **Rusted Weapon** to acquire a spear without discarding a Grace card.

• If someone specifically asks, the **Ancient Shield** can be a Reaver shield. This grants a point of Ghostlight without having to search for a Reaver corpse or discard Grace cards.

• The **Wooden Casket** holds ashes—the remains of Phoenixes Scartongue defeated. Only the ashes of a Rank 7 Phoenix have mystical power, but there is one such bag of Phoenix ashes in the casket (20 Sparks worth of ashes).

As noted earlier, only two Phoenixes can stand safely on Scartongue's platform (or three if the Barrow Lord is knocked into the pit).

DEFEATING SCARTONGUE

When a Ghostlit Phoenix removes Scartongue's final Health Level, read or paraphrase the following:

> *The Kandari lord falls to his knees, howling incoherently. Through the Ghostlight, you see him bleeding from many wounds. The pit of bones rises up in a whirling storm as Scartongue's own bones shatter into hundreds of shards and fall to the ground. The ghostly image of the warlord lingers…and then it flashes forward, striking (whoever struck the final blow). There's a sharp* crack! *as Scartongue's throne shatters and falls into pieces. The whirling bones collapse, and everything is still.*

Scartongue's *Death Curse* instantly kills the one who struck him down. It cannot be avoided or mitigated, but at your discretion, a Phoenix with *Seasoned Veteran* or *Death Wish* could leap in front of it. If the Phoenix was accompanied by Trig, ask the Phoenix which of them struck the final blow; that is the one who dies.

The storm of bones is a final Attack that targets everyone in the Bone Pit: Attack 14, Damage x1 (4). A Phoenix can burn two Sparks to shield a mortal companion from this and take all damage themselves.

Once these two effects are resolved, the battle is over. A sense of emptiness comes over the barrow; while a shaman or Spirits Specialist can confirm it, any Phoenix feels confident the power here has been broken and that Scartongue's spirit is gone for good.

Epilogue

When the Olvari learn the Phoenixes defeated their enemy, they are ecstatic. They hold a celebration to honor the Phoenixes, and Wrin and Orex lead them in reaffirming the vows their ancestors made—promises to remain loyal to the Dawn and to enforce the laws of the Empire. There are a few things left to resolve.

- If the Phoenixes discovered the casket, there are enough Phoenix ashes for an Intellect Phoenix to perform the ritual that can transport the Wing back to the Aerie. This is good, because hiking out of the Deep Grimwald could take weeks. This would leave enough ashes for the Aerie hearth to be ignited one more time in days to come, and for Wrin to fashion a new set of signalling candles.

- If Wrin died, the Imperial Flame is extinguished and the Aerie is offline. None of the other Olvari have the training or talent to serve as Flamekeepers. An Intellect Phoenix could use the ashes to temporarily light the hearth and use the connection to return to the Grand Aerie, but this would consume all the ashes and the hearth would be extinguished as soon as the Wing left. This dampens the celebratory spirit a bit.

- If Orex is still alive, Wrin asks the Phoenixes to bless him and anoint him as Chieftain of the Olvari Tree as part of the celebration. If he is dead, this honor defaults to the next senior warrior, Chadar…unless Trig is alive and accompanied the Phoenixes to the barrow. In this case, a Phoenix can make a Grace Spread (Difficulty 20; Leadership, Diplomacy) to convince the Olvari to accept Trig as their new chieftain…something that unites the Olvari and Kandari Trees.

If the Phoenixes choose to help the Olvari, they can each make one more Fortification Spread (using the *Fortifying the Aerie* rules from Scene Three). Add an additional point for each of the three primary characters (Trig, Orex, and Wrin) who survived to the end. Total the points from this and Scene Three and consult the table on the next page.

Whatever the fate of the Olvari, this is a vital breakthrough in the ongoing struggle with the Bones. Fighting a Bone army accomplishes nothing; like Reavers, the soldiers are simply tools of the defining spirit. If Scartongue is a model for other manifestations of the Bones, each group of Bones may be tied to an anchoring spirit…and if those spirits can be located and laid to rest, the Bones can be beaten—though it's still a longshot. How far can Bones go from their commanders? Are the legions in the Summer Shore traveling with their defining spirits, or are those anchors hidden away in ruined vaults? There's no way to answer these questions today, but this is a vital discovery, and the Marshals will be thrilled to learn about it.

Total Fortification Points

- **<10**: The refugees cannot maintain the Aerie against the forces of the Dread. This branch will be lost, and the Olvari Tree may not survive the Dread.

- **11–20**: The Olvari have a struggle ahead, and many more will die. However, they will endure and become a haven for other Treefolk refugees, as well as an ongoing Aerie supporting Dawn Command.

- **21–25**: The strong Bloodroot Aerie will help to stabilize the entire region, saving many lives in the days ahead.

- **26+**: The Olvari are in such a strong position that their Tree will come to dominate the region and absorb many weaker branches. If Trig is the Chieftain, this will be a full union; if not, many of these other Treefolk will be taken as slaves. They'll survive the Dread, but it may become an issue in the future.

Interludes

- One or more Phoenixes could choose to remain with the Olvari for a few more days, especially if they secured Phoenix ashes and can return to the Aerie swiftly when they choose to. If you do this, you could draw out the process of establishing a new chieftain and give the Phoenixes a more direct role in deciding whether Orex or Trig guides the Olvari into the future…and whether refugees from other trees will be accepted as equals or slaves.

- The Olvari could ask the Phoenixes to help obtain supplies, establish resources, or round up other lost refugees. This would be more action than political intrigue, and could involve clashes with warped beasts or Treefolk twisted by the Dread.

- While traveling north through the Grimwald, Phoenixes could encounter a smaller branch dealing with some other manifestation of the Dread…perhaps harboring a **Bladestorm** or a Treefolk variation of a **Curse Ewer**. Once the problem is resolved, will the Phoenixes encourage the Treefolk to stay put or to go join with Bloodroot Aerie?

- If the players travel on foot, they have to pass through the Bone-infested Summer Shore and salvage a boat there. They could run into a small group of survivors who would love to accompany them to the Grand Aerie…though they'll have to avoid the Bones! Before doing this, review Mission 4 to make sure there's not too much overlap.

MISSION REFERENCE: SCARTONGUE

REAVER

Undead

SPEED 2
DEFENSE 5
HL 4, 4, 4, 4, 4, 4, 10, 10

Each turn the Reaver uses More Rise and makes a single attack.

JAGGED BLADE (Standard Melee Attack): Attack 9, x1 Damage (6) and the target gains 1 Bleeding token.

BLOODFIRE DARTS (All-or-Nothing Ranged Attack): Attack 10 against up to two Phoenixes. Those hit take no damage but add two Afflictions to their deck: they are affected by Bloodfire Venom (see sidebar).

SHIELD COUNTER (Melee Reaction): ATT 6, x1 Damage (4) and the target is Stunned. The Reaver uses this as a free reaction immediately after an opponent completes a melee attack against it, regardless of whether that attack succeeds or fails. If the Reaver loses both (10) HLs its shield is broken and it can no longer make this attack.

MORE RISE (Action): Add two HL 3 tokens to the Risen Corpses if they are still in the scene, or return Risen Corpses into play with two HL tokens if they have been destroyed.

RISEN DEAD

Undead Group Enemy

SPEED 2
DEFENSE 3
HL 3, 3, 3, 3

SAVAGE ASSAULT (Standard Melee Attack): Attack 6, Damage x1 (4). The corpses can't attack the same Phoenix with two consecutive attacks.

BERSERK (Reaction): Once the Reaver reaches 4 or fewer HLs, the Risen Dead go into a frenzy. Its Speed becomes 1 and the Savage Assault attack becomes Attack 9, Damage x2 (6). Its Defense drops to zero - it will no longer evade attacks.

AFFLICTION: BLOODFIRE VENOM

Thia Affliction has two effects. The **first** time the player draws an Affliction card, they set it in front of them. Until the end of their next turn, any time the player plays a card, they immediately draw a card. This continues until they voluntarily end their turn, at which point the Affliction is placed in their discard pile. The second effect is triggered when the player draws a **second** Affliction card while one already is in front of them (or draws two at once). The Phoenix suffers two Wounds and adds an additional Affliction card to their deck (to a maximum of four Afflictions). The Afflictions are then placed in their discard pile. If this happens during a player's turn, their turn immediately ends and they don't redraw. *Bloodfire Venom* is eliminated if the Phoenix dies; the Afflictions are purged from their deck during rebirth. Otherwise a Phoenix can remove the Affliction by making an Intellect Spread (Difficulty 30; Healing). This can be attempted once per day.

BARROW LORD

Undead

SPEED 2
DEFENSE 6
HL 3 (x12)

Each turn the Barrow Lord can use Hungry Chains and one additional attack.

REDFANG (Standard Melee Attack): Attack 15, x1 (8), target gains a Bleeding token.

GRIMHAMMER (Standard Melee Attack): Attack 12, x2 brutal (9)

BACKHAND BLOW (Standard Melee Attack): Attack 18, x1 (4), Stuns the target and knocks them back.

HUNGRY CHAINS (Special Ranged Attack): Target is immobilized and all spreads are reduced by one card.

Death Curse: When the Barrow Lord dies, the last creature to cause him harm dies as well. If this is a Phoenix, they lose all Health Levels, but retain Sparks. This damage cannot be absorbed or countered by a Lesson or other supernatural effect.

Any adjacent Phoenix can choose to draw one of the Barrow Lord's melee attacks from its intended target, but doing this means the Phoenix takes a one-card penalty to their Defense Spread against the attack.

The Refugees at the Bloodroot Aerie

Wrin, Olvari shaman
Buddy Stats: Final flames

Wrin provides no benefits, though she can remove chains from her guardian Phoenix. If she dies, she strikes Scartongue with a bolt of Imperial Flame, inflicting two Wounds; if this kills him his death curse doesn't trigger.

Orex, Olvari war leader
Buddy Stats: Can take two Wounds; +2 Attack/Defense

Orex is a stoic warrior and assists his guardian Phoenix.

Trig, Kandari scout
Buddy Stats: Provides two points of Ghostlight

Trig's Ghostlight reflects her ability to injure Scartongue with her attacks; she needs her guardian Phoenix to create openings with an Attack Spread, but if her Ghostlight is used Trig is the one actually inflicting the Wound. If Wrin is going to die and Trig is nearby, Trig leaps in front of the attack and dies instead of Wrin.

MISSION FOUR: THE SUMMER SHORE

In "The Summer Shore," the Wing is sent to recover a vital cache of Phoenix ashes from behind the lines of the Bone Army. In the process, they learn what the Bones are doing to the cities they destroy and encounter an ancient Phoenix who's still fighting the Civil War.

Background

The Summer Shore has always been a crossroad of cultures and a center for trade. It's a melting pot where the people of Ilona, the Grimwald, and the Wynderi Isles came together and created something new. During the Civil War, this cultural blend proved fertile ground for Humanist rebels, and many of the bloodiest clashes of the struggle took place along the Summer Shore. Bitter memories of the war still linger, and these psychic scars produced the Bones. Westergate was the first city to fall, but now the entire Summer Shore has been lost. As of present day, Dawn Command knows very little about the state of the region. While Dawn Command is interested in gathering intelligence, this mission has a more concrete purpose. When a Phoenix dies their final death, their remains are charged with the residual power of their Flame. These **Phoenix ashes** are a vital mystical resource required for any major act of Ash Sorcery. A Phoenix gives all to the Empire, and there is no stigma to using ashes of the fallen to protect the living. Westergate holds one of the largest repositories of Phoenix ashes: a crypt below the Temple of Dawn that holds the remains of former emperors and other heroes. The crypt is heavily fortified, and Winter is confident the ashes are still there. The Phoenixes have been sent to evaluate the situation, confirm the presence of the ashes, and recover as much as they possibly can.

However, there's something they don't know. The Civil War came to an end when the Empress Justice abdicated the throne and called on Phoenixes to stand down. Not all Phoenixes supported this decision; one of these was a Shrouded named **Omen**. Brilliant and deadly, Omen was convinced Phoenix dominion was the only thing that could protect the Empire. After assassinating Justice, he was captured and died his final death at the hands of Dawn Command—but he'd already set plans in motion. Years later, as Phoenixes were disappearing from the world, a Durant named **Bastion** entered the crypt beneath Westergate and began a long vigil. The crypt has been sealed for centuries, and Bastion has remained inside that whole time. Someday, Omen will need these ashes, and until that day comes, Bastion will keep them safe.

Prologue: Approaching Westergate

Read or paraphrase the following:

> *The Dread takes many forms. Most of its manifestations are isolated incidents that target individual communities. There is one exception: the Bone Legion. Over the last three years, this army of the dead has ravaged the Summer Shore. The Imperial Army has clashed with the Bones multiple times, but has never won…and even now the Bone Legion continues its slow march deeper into Ilona, heading toward the Imperial Capital.*
>
> *You've been sent to the city of Westergate, one of the first to fall to the Bones. This is the first time anyone has ventured into a city occupied by the Bones; any information you gather could be useful. However, you have a specific task. A sealed vault sits beneath the Dawn Temple of Westergate, filled with the final ashes of many Phoenixes. Phoenix ashes are a vital component for powerful magic, and Dawn Command needs them. Your job is simple: Enter the city, reach the crypt, secure the ashes…and make sure one of you survives to bring them back to Pyre.*

There are no active Aeries behind Bone lines, so the Phoenixes are approaching Westergate on *Alafer's Fine Wind–Serpent, Won Over Winter with a Hand of Four Kings* (AKA *Winter Serpent*), the same vessel that appears in the interlude following "Chants & Whispers." If you used that interlude, take a moment to revisit the crewmembers the players created. If you skipped it, introduce the ship and Captain Nyanji, explain they've been on the boat before, and ask each player to describe a member of the crew. Take a few minutes to cover the reunion: The crew wants to hear about the Phoenixes' heroic exploits.

THE BRIEFING

Captain Nyanji takes the Wing below deck and introduces them to Halius Dal, a watch captain from Westergate who was away when the city fell. The two walk the Wing through the mission; provide the following information in conversation:

- Captain Nyanji spent most of her life-on-soil in Westergate. She's passionate and energetic. She lost friends and family when the Bones took Westergate and believes the Phoenixes are the only force that can avenge them; she helps however she can. She knows the city very well and should interrupt Halius a few times with better directions. It should be clear she'd be an asset on the mission, even if she's not supposed to be joining them on shore.

- Halius Dal is fatalistic and grim. He expects to die on this mission and has made his peace with this. He wants one last chance to see his home, and to do what he can to strike a blow against those who destroyed it. *Ask the group to come up with one or more interesting details about Halius.*

- The Bones defend the cities they've taken. If *Winter Serpent* gets too close, it comes under fire. Thus, the *Serpent* anchors a safe distance from shore and the Wing takes a dinghy in. Halius will accompany them and help them find the vault. Nyanji remembers finding the vault as a child and confirms it is sealed and

impassible; the dinghy has been loaded with explosives they can use to blow their way in.

• Halius walks them through the plan. The best route is to land in the harbor, make their way across the market district and through the tenements. The crypt is deep beneath the Dawn Temple; they are to make their way through the temple grounds and down into the catacombs until they reach the vault.

• The hope is the Harbor will be a safe landing spot for a small dinghy. The Harbor itself is choked with wreckage of destroyed ships. The Bones can spot any large vessel, but a small boat can hopefully drift through the wreckage without drawing attention.

• They don't know what to expect in the city; they don't know how significant the Bone presence is or what they're doing there. Gathering information on the Bones' behavior is an important secondary goal.

Halius serves as their guide in the field. He emphasizes his expectation to die and his peace with that. All he wants is the opportunity to see his home again and die in the same place his family fell.

MISSION BRIEFING: THE SUMMER SHORE

These questions could come up at the beginning of the mission or in later scenes. A Wynderi Phoenix doesn't have to make a Skill Spread to get expanded information about anything related to the region.

What is the Summer Shore?

The Summer Shore is the southern coast of the Inner Sea. It's the home of the Wynderi Isles, and its people are a blend of Wynderi, Ilonans, and immigrants from the Grimwald. This created a vibrant, cosmopolitan culture and made it a center for the sea trade. In the early days of the Dread, the Bone Legion rose up on the western edge of the Summer Shore. Over the last three years, the Bones have marched through, and now the entire region is lost. Its cities have been razed, and its people have fled or been slain. We know little about the current state of the Shore past the Bone lines—you could find human survivors or that the population has been completely eradicated.

What is Westergate?

Westergate was a major port city on the western edge of the Empire. It had a significant Wynderi population, and was a vital point in the Skavia–Grimwald trade route. It also contained one of the largest Temples of the Dawn in the Empire; the ashes of the Phoenix emperors were said to be interred in its crypts. Westergate was the first city to fall to Bone attack.

What are Phoenix Ashes?

Phoenix ashes are the remains of a Phoenix who has died their final death. Phoenix ashes are charged with mystical power and are a vital component in Ash Sorcery, a form of magic practiced by the adepts of Dawn Command. Phoenix ashes are used to ignite Aerie hearths and

to create the signalling candles. Other uses include allowing Phoenixes—or even mortals—to travel between Aeries using the Imperial Flame, instead of only being able to travel out from Pyre.

What are the Bones?

Refer to the Challenge entry on page 176 for information about the Bones. The Bones encountered here are the Bone Legion. Over the course of the mission, the Phoenixes will learn that they are part of the legion of Hadon Pelagius, but that information isn't known as the mission begins.

Scene One: Fire on the Water

Read or paraphrase the following:

"Enough talk," Nyanji says. "We should be close enough. Let's get you to the dinghy and see you on your—" She's interrupted by an explosion that rocks the ship. You hear screams and the sound of rushing water, and the smell of smoke fills the air. Before you can react, a second explosion hits up on deck.

Winter Serpent was well out of range of the Bone artillery, but they weren't expecting the region to be mined. One of the player-defined crewmembers says they clearly saw a skeletal figure reach up over the rails just before the explosion. These are Bone Sappers—skeletons lashed with explosives, floating in the water. Enhanced by the Dread, their explosives massively damaged *Winter Serpent*, and it's going down fast. To make matters worse, the second explosion destroyed the ship's second dinghy; there's only one boat, and the Wing is supposed to use it to get to Westergate.

Here are the facts.

- The boat can hold a maximum of ten people.
- The explosives the Wing needs to enter the vault take up two seats.
- Medical supplies and survival gear take up one seat.
- The explosions already killed a number of the crew. Ten survived, including Nyanji, Halius, and the player-defined crewmembers. The others include **Sark**, a young apprentice who was literally born on *Winter Serpent* (years ago); he's in shock. **Wakaal** is the old bosun; he's helping hold things together and would rather give his seat to someone younger. The sailmaker **Malu** lost her husband in the explosion and is also in shock. The carpenter **Bhayn** is determined to survive. Breaking someone out of shock requires a **Grace Spread** (Difficulty 15; Healing; Trump: *Commander*).
- One of the player-created crew members has been seriously injured and won't live long without help. A **Grace Spread** (Difficulty 15; Healing) stabilizes them but leaves them temporarily crippled; if the spread has a value of 30+, they are

restored to full mobility. The 30+ result can also be obtained if a Devoted uses Passing Pain to take one Wound from the victim.

• Captain Nyanji won't want to take a seat from anyone else, but she is both very capable and knows the city, so she's a clear asset. Getting her to take a seat and leave others behind requires a **Grace Spread** (Difficulty 20; Leadership, Diplomacy; Trump: *Commander*) with a reasonable approach.

• While Phoenixes have exceptional endurance, they do need to breathe and can drown.

These are the hard facts of the situation. There's no easy way to save everyone; even if the Phoenixes find a way, these people aren't well equipped to face the Bones in Westergate. What do they do?

Salvation Spreads

There are a few easy options. The Phoenixes can throw away the supplies to create three more seats. The survival equipment isn't important for Phoenixes, but it could be vital for any mortals that make it to shore. The explosives may be necessary for the Phoenixes to complete their mission; is that more important than saving two lives?

Phoenixes will undoubtedly come up with ideas to stretch resources. Here are a few possibilities; use these as guidelines for any other ideas people suggest.

• Any number of Phoenixes could choose to surrender their seats and hang on the side of the boat. Phoenixes are resistant to temperature extremes and don't tire as easily as mortals, but the water is cold and this makes the boat a larger target. Each Phoenix who hangs onto the boat takes one Wound and adds a -2 penalty to the Reaching Shore Spread.

• If a Phoenix makes a **Grace Spread** (Difficulty 20; Athletics, Endurance) they can swim alongside the boat without any unpleasant consequences. Failing the spread means they suffer one Wound and add a -3 penalty to the Reaching Shore Spread.

• The Wing can use debris to create a makeshift raft. This requires two spreads: a **Strength Spread** (Athletics) to physically construct the raft and an **Intellect Spread** (Lore, Nature) to figure out how to make something that lasts. These spreads can be performed by two different Phoenixes. Take the **lower value** of the two spreads; for every five points (rounded up) in that spread, the raft can hold one person. The Phoenixes could choose to give the survivors the boat and take the makeshift raft themselves, but taking the ungainly raft into the harbor adds a -3 penalty to the Reaching Shore Spread…in addition to any penalties if anyone is hanging onto the edge.

REACHING SHORE

The next question is how the Wing chooses to approach the city. The harbor is filled with hulks and wreckage, and it's the best chance to approach without being seen; however, this means taking any surviving crewmembers into the city, which is sure to be dangerous. Alternately, they can try to land further ashore where the crewmembers can set up makeshift shelter. However, there's no knowing what they'll find on shore, and it makes the approach to the city afterward more difficult. If the Phoenixes take a makeshift raft and give the main boat to the survivors, the group can split up—though as noted in the previous section, the makeshift raft draws more attention.

The Harbor

Westerport was a hub for commerce and trade. The first Bone attack must have come as a surprise; a host of ships were still in the harbor when doom came to the city. Now the water is choked with wreckage, floating chunks of rotting wood, and the crumbling hulks of ships that weren't completely destroyed. The mast of a Wynderi haven–ship protrudes from the water, the brilliant colors of the painted sails hidden beneath soot and ash. In the distance, you can see gaunt figures patrolling the harbor walls…and a few massive arbalests, with bolts shrouded in pale flames.

Heading through the harbor carries two risks. First, the Phoenixes want to avoid being spotted by the guards. Second, they want to avoid any additional Bone Sappers floating in the water. By default, this is an **Grace Spread (**Observation, Deception, Scouting**).** *Superhuman Senses* is worth +10 to this spread, or +5 as an assist; *Sneaky* is worth +5.

- With a result of **14** or less, they fail to spot a submerged Bone Sapper. It floats to the surface and explodes. This kills any mortals, and any supplies are lost; each Phoenix takes two Wounds.

- By default, the Bones in the Market begin with **fourteen Health Levels**. Divide the value of the Approach Spread by 3 (rounded up) and subtract the total from the number of Bones. So if the Approach Spread has a value of 15, there will be nine Health Levels worth of Bones. If the spread has a value of 30, there are only four Health Levels worth of Bones.

Once the Phoenixes reach shore, there's no safe haven for the mortals. They have to take all the mortals with them through the Gauntlet, as described in the next scene.

Landing on the Shore

You give the haunted city a wide berth and make your way to the east. Nyanji remembers an old smuggler's landing, and you bring the ship in without any further incident. The harbor is likely to be heavily patrolled, but the walls of Westergate were breached when the Bones attacked. It won't be as easy as your original plan, but you can make your way into the city from the land.

The land is scorched and dead; the Bones have systematically torched everything

that would burn. There are no signs of life, but also no evidence of frequent Bone patrols. If anyone has a good idea for helping the survivors, let them make a spread—such as a Durant finding the most tactically secure position with a War Spread. Otherwise, all they can do is hope for the best. If they survived, both Halius Dal and Captain Nyanji volunteer to work with the Phoenixes. While Nyanji can be persuaded to remain with her crew, she believes the best way to save them is to help the Phoenixes complete their mission as quickly as possible.

Entering through the shattered walls of the city is fairly straightforward, but the Wing has farther to go and they are moving through heavy resistance. In the first stage of the Gauntlet the Bones begin with twelve Health Levels. The total to pass through the Market District is **increased by 20**.

Managing Mortals

When the Wing is ready to enter Westergate, take a moment to divide the mortals up between the Phoenixes using the **Buddy System** (page 125). While *Winter Serpent*'s crew can't fight Bones on their own, they are capable enough to not penalize their guardian Phoenixes. The exception is the player-generated crewmember who was wounded; if this person is crippled, any Phoenix guarding them takes a -2 penalty to Defense Spreads.

Captain Nyanji and Halius Dal are particular capable. Each of them can endure two Wounds before dying, and each of them provides a +2 bonus to Defense Spreads made by their guardian Phoenix. These bonuses aren't cumulative if one Phoenix is guarding both of them, but they do offset the penalty from guarding the crippled crew member.

Scene Two: The Gauntlet

Read or paraphrase the following:

Westergate is in ruins. The city has been scourged with fire; a layer of ash casts a ghostly pall over the charred shells of buildings and tents. Toward the heart of the city, you see a core of stone structures that have weathered the fire, and the temple you seek lies at the center. You've got a lot of ground to cover.

You don't see many of the undead soldiers. Some patrol on the walls, and crews man massive arbalests, but the streets are largely clear. Setting aside the undead, actual bones—human remains—are everywhere. Skulls leer from the shadows, and ribs and femurs are spread across cobblestones. Rusted weapons and bits of armor are scattered among the remains. As you move forward, you take care to avoid the undead patrols…but it's impossible to move forward without moving through the scattered bones. As you pick your way through the remains, you hear a rustling as if a gust of wind was blowing through them. Suddenly a skull tumbles atop a ribcage. A skeletal hand grips a sword. All around you the bones are forming into soldiers with terrifying speed. Stealth is no longer an option, and there are far too many to fight. Your only chance is speed.

The Temple of Dawn is at the heart of the city. If Halius Dal or Captain Nyanji are with the Wing, they call out advice; even without their help, Phoenix know the direction they need to go. But there's no avoiding the Bones. The remnants of the soldiers are scattered throughout the city, and as soon as people draw near, the dead rise up to face them. Worse yet, the Bones can't truly be slain. The soldiers can be shattered and cut down, but within minutes, their remains knit back together. This battle can't be won; it's a race against death. Can the Phoenixes get to the safety of the vault before they're overwhelmed?

The Gauntlet has three stages, each representing a different section of the city. To move forward, the Wing must complete an **Extended Skill Spread**. So for example, the Market District has a spread Difficulty of 100; the Wing remains in the Market until they have completed a series of Skill Spreads with a total value of 100 or more. If they exceed this value, apply any excess to the challenge of the next stage. In addition, this is a constant, ongoing battle. The Bones are in endless supply, and even when destroyed, they soon rise again. The Bones are a threat throughout every stage of the Challenge, though each stage has its own rules for handling them.

During their turn, a Phoenix can do the following things:

- **Advance through the Gauntlet.** During a turn, a Phoenix can make a single Skill Spread to contribute to the extended challenge of moving through the city. Any Phoenix can make a **Grace Spread** (Athletics, Acrobatics) representing simple movement. However, a Phoenix can make a spread using any suit or Specialty they can justify through story. For example, a Phoenix could make an **Intellect Spread** using Lore to "remember details about the layout of the city" or Scouting to "spot the best path." They could make a **Strength Spread** using Athletics to "force open a jammed gate" or "clear a path through a mob of Bones." The only restriction is that aside from the default Grace Spread, a Phoenix can't repeat an action twice. They may be able to use the same Specialty multiple times, but they have to come up with a different explanation of how they are using it each time.

- **Fight the Bones.** The Bones can never be completely defeated; they always grow stronger at the start of their turn. However, a Phoenix can make any number of Attack Spreads during their turn to weaken the Bones.

- **Other Actions.** A Phoenix can only contribute to the Gauntlet total once per turn, but they can make any number of additional spreads for other purposes. For example, a Phoenix might make an Observation Spread to look for unusual details in the area.

This is an ongoing combat scene, so use a Torch and track turns and cycles. The Bones are a constant presence throughout all three stages and attack whenever their speed calls for it. You can find the statistics for the Bone Legion in the Mission Reference sheet.

SETUP

Set the Bone Legion and the Phoenixes on the table. This is not a situation where cards are used to indicate position. The Bones are everywhere, and it doesn't particularly matter where the individual Phoenixes are; the Wing is under constant attack. The Torch includes a base set of Environmental Elements usable in any stage, and each stage adds an additional number of elements that are only present during that stage. The following elements are present in all stages, though once they are used up, they are done: **Brilliant Shortcut, Burnt-Out Building,** and **Pile of Rubble**.

USING THE ENVIRONMENT

In addition to the usual benefits of using an Environmental Element, using an element as part of a Gauntlet Skill Spread can have one of the following bonus effects:

- If the element is used in a way that would help the Wing move forward, **add 5 to the value of the spread**.

- If the element is used in a way that provides significant protection to the Wing, **reduce the value of the Skill Spread by 5**...but also **reduce the value of the Bone Legion's next** Overwhelm **attack by 5**. The Wing won't move as quickly, but they are safer.

It's up to you as the Marshal to decide if a story justifies one of these effects. The **Brilliant Shortcut** is a special element: As long as it's used with a good story, add **15** to the value of the current spread.

STAGE ONE: The Market (Challenge Difficulty: 100)

The Westergate Market is empty, with many stands and stalls showing evidence of being quickly abandoned. Some tents are torn and soaked in dried blood; other stands are charred and burnt. In between the tents and wagons, you can see patrols of Bone soldiers dressed in Humanist armor searching for you.

Set Up

Add the following Environmental Elements: **Market Cart, Wine Barrels,** and **Bloodstained Tent.** The number of HL tokens on the Bone Legion depends on the outcome of Scene One. The scene begins with the first attack of the Bone Legion.

Special Effects

- After their first turn, the Bones gain three HL-3 tokens each time their turn starts. If the Bones have at least six Health Levels, they make an *Overwhelm* attack. If not, they continue to hound the Wing, but don't have enough soldiers to make an effective attack.

• On the second Bone turn, add the following: *There's limited cover in the outer city, and you've drawn the attention of the guards on the walls; they're targeting you with the flaming ballistas. They're slow to fire, and once you get to the next area of the city you'll be out of range…but for now it's a serious threat.* Target one Phoenix with the following attack: Ballista (*Standard Ranged Attack*): Attack 18, Damage x1 (6), and the target gains a *Burning* condition. There's a ballista attack every other Bone turn, and it fires regardless of whether the Bone Legion makes an attack. Phoenixes can't effectively attack the ballistas; they are too far away and too numerous to eliminate.

• If the Phoenixes are guided by a Westergate native (Captain Nyanji, Halius Dal, or a Phoenix from Westergate), give them a +10 bonus at the start.

Interesting Details

• The city is filled with bloodstains and signs of battle, but no signs of the corpses of the people of Westergate. All human remains are ancient bones with no indication what happened to the people killed by the Bones.

• This is the first chance for the Phoenixes to study the Bones more closely; refer to the *Who Are The Bones* sidebar.

Once the Phoenixes reach 100 points on this Challenge, continue to the Tenements.

WHO ARE THE BONES?

The Phoenixes may study the Bones over the course of the mission. Casual observation reveals they're equipped as Humanist soldiers. With an **Intellect Spread** (Difficulty 15; War, Lore) a Phoenix can further identify the soldiers as followers of **Hadon Pelagius**, based on their insignia and use of fire; this spread reveals a little more about their tactics, and as such can also be applied to moving through the Gauntlet. Refer to the sidebar on page 336 for more lore about Hadon Pelagius and information you'll want for the rest of the mission.

A more difficult challenge is touching the spirits of the Bones to learn more about them. This is an **Intellect Challenge** (Difficulty 20; Spirits). Psychometry is a trump here, but only if the Phoenix pays the 2 Spark cost. With this, the Phoenix senses that while the Bones are acting like soldiers from the past, they aren't the ghosts of individual soldiers. Rather, they are essentially the ghost *of an army*; see the Bones Challenge entry on page 176 for more information about this. The Phoenix can feel a strong presence, ruthless and utterly devoted to the war. However, while they are certain this is the force that's driving these Bones, they also sense that he's not in Westergate. They can't determine his current position. Thus, it's not possible to try to stop these Bones as they did when they defeated Scartongue in Mission Three.

FUN WITH EXPLOSIVES

If the Phoenixes bring the explosives from *Winter Serpent*, one of the Phoenixes has to carry them. The explosives are unstable, especially when fire is involved. Place an Affliction card in the deck of the Phoenix carrying the explosives. Every time this Phoenix suffers a Wound, they must reveal and discard the top two cards from their draw deck; if the Wound is caused by fire (such as a *Burning* condition) they must reveal and discard *four* cards. If they reveal an Affliction card in this way, the explosives detonate. This inflicts four Wounds on the Phoenix carrying the explosives; all other Phoenixes suffer the following attack: Explosion (*Standard Ranged Attack*): Attack 20, Damage x1 (8). If this happens in the Gauntlet, it inflicts six Wounds on the Bone Legion.

The explosives get progressively more unstable as the Phoenixes race through the Gauntlet. When the Phoenixes enter the tenements, add an additional Affliction card to the carrier's deck; add a third card when they reach the Temple. **These explosive Affliction cards have no effect if drawn in the normal course of play**; they only pose a threat when drawn in response to a Wound. Bitter Traits that trigger Affliction effects don't count as Afflictions for the purpose of triggering the explosives.

If the Phoenixes want to use the Explosives during the Gauntlet, have them make an **Intellect Spread** (War, Destruction). They inflict an amount of damage on the Bone Legion equal to the value of this spread. The explosives can also be used to enter the vault or to attack Bastion; these options are described in later scenes.

STAGE TWO: The Tenements (Challenge Difficulty: 100)

The heart of the city is made up of old Talu tenement blocks, much like Darhold in the Capital. The streets are narrow, and it feels much like moving through a maze of alleys. Bridges connect the upper levels of the buildings, adding dimension to the maze. Bones rise up on the ground and bridges, and archers take aim at you.

Set Up

Add the following Environmental Elements: **Fire Escape, Aqueduct,** and **Collapsed Wall.** If the Bone Legion has fewer than six Health Tokens, bring them up to six.

Special Effects

- The Bones gain three HL-3 tokens each time their turn starts. During their turn, they make an *Overwhelm* attack if they have at least six Health Levels. Otherwise, they won't attack, but they gain two additional Health Levels.

- On the first Bone turn, add the following: *The Bones have set up siege equipment on the upper levels; you recognize the familiar shape of a dragon from your time in the Capital. A flood of flame pours down toward you.* This is an attack against the

entire Wing: Dragon Flame (*All-or-Nothing Ranged Attack*): Attack 14, Damage Special—The victim gains two *Burning* conditions. Dragons fire every other Bone turn, regardless of whether the legion makes an attack. They're set up at multiple points, so the only way to avoid them is to press through quickly.

• The first time a Phoenix makes a spread bringing the total value of the Extended Skill Spread to an odd number, they **trigger a mine**. This inflicts two Wounds on the active Phoenix and one Wound each on the rest of the Wing. Reduce this damage by one Wound for any Phoenix who has the Observation or Scouting Specialties. If the spread that would have triggered the mine was an Observation or Scouting Spread, **they notice the mine and avoid it** without setting it off. Likewise, if the active Phoenix has *Superhuman Senses* or *Astonishing Luck* in their hand, they may discard it immediately to avoid setting off the mine.

• When the Wing gets to 50 points of progress, they find a place of relative safety. The Phoenixes can drop out of combat for as long as they wish. During this time, the Bones won't grow in strength but they also can't be attacked. As soon as the Phoenixes are ready to proceed, return to the previous order of combat. At your discretion, Halius Dal could know this place or have an attachment to it.

Interesting Information

• A number of tenements have been burnt, but a few have been shattered by a powerful physical force (the Behemoth encountered in Mission Six).

• As the Phoenixes make their way through the area, they find a few rotting bodies trapped beneath the rubble. This is the first sign of the mortals of Westergate; it's clear that people were killed here, but easily accessible corpses were removed.

Once the Phoenixes reach 100 points on this Challenge, continue to the Temple Grounds.

The Temple Grounds (Challenge Difficulty: 80)

You've reached the grounds of the Dawn Temple. You can see the spire of the temple directly ahead, decorated with gilded flames. This was one of the last refuges of the loyalists during the Civil War, and it's a sturdy structure. Unfortunately, there's a wide stretch of open ground between you and the temple gates. The temple itself seems largely untouched by the undead, but the grounds have been devastated. A large statue has been toppled and smashed. Phoenix banners have been torn down or burnt. And you can see a large makeshift fire pit filled with the charred remnants of human bodies. The field is filled with Bones, far more than you've dealt with elsewhere in the city; without any cover to speak of, you're going to have to force your way through the swarming dead.

Set Up

Add the following Environmental Elements: **Shattered Statue, Fire Pit,** and **Torn Banner.** Set the Bone Legion to eight HL-3 tokens.

Special Effects

• The Bones gain five HL-3 tokens each time their turn starts. They launch an *Overwhelm* attack every turn, regardless of how many tokens they have.

• When a Phoenix with The Arcane or Spirits Specialty takes their first turn, they sense power here—power preventing the Bones from entering the temple. By burning 3 Sparks and making an **Intellect Spread** (Difficulty 25; Spirits, The Arcane) a Phoenix can channel that power to battle the Bones. If this is done, the shattered statue is reassembled and comes to life, crushing the Bones. Add the value of this spread to the Extended Skill Spread; it also reduces the growth of the Bones to 2 HL-3 tokens per turn as the stone empress crushes the enemy. The Spirits Specialty is especially relevant and provides a +10 bonus instead of the usual +5. *Shaman* or *Warlock* are each worth +5, whether in the spread or offered as assistance by another member of the Wing.

Interesting Information

• The firepit is relatively recent, likely dating to the original Bone attack. These remains make about fifty people—not enough to account for the city's population. If the Phoenixes have already learned about Hadon Pelagius, they recall he had a habit of burning his enemies alive.

• The statue is an image of the last Phoenix Empress, Justice. She killed Hadon Pelagius in the final battle of the Civil War (see page 336). If you haven't already decided, this is a good time to ask the players how Justice killed Pelagius; the statue depicts her in the moment of that final victory.

Once the Phoenixes reach 80 points on this Challenge, they have reached the shelter of the temple. Continue on to Scene Three.

Scene Three: The Temple of Dawn

Read or paraphrase the following:

> *All is quiet and still within the temple. It's untouched by the Bones. The lamps are empty, and the halls are dark; the light of your Talons reflects off of gilded images of the champions of the Dawn.*

The Bones couldn't enter the temple, but the temple wasn't provisioned to hold out in a long siege. If the Phoenixes search, they find a chamber filled with corpses: a few Dawn priests, other members of the temple staff, and parishioners and tourists who happened to be in the temple when the attack came. With an **Intellect Spread** (Difficulty 15; Observation, Scouting) a Phoenix can find a journal containing an account of the attack and the siege. The temple was quickly surrounded, and a commander appeared who burnt innocents in the courtyard. The account concludes with survivors choosing a peaceful end over starvation and sickness. There's nothing immediately useful here, but Winter will be glad to have the account.

If Halius Dal or Captain Nyanji are with the Wing, they lead the Phoenixes down below the temple into a series of natural catacombs. Read or paraphrase the following:

> *You follow the catacombs deep below the temple, and soon you come to a massive door. At least, you assume it's the door. It's a wide disk of gleaming white stone, seamlessly integrated with the gray floor of the catacombs. You see the faint markings where the door could open, but no sign of hinges. Candles and offerings are spread around the edge of the disk.*

If Halius or Nyanji are present, they confirm this is the door…though they've admittedly never seen it open. Anyone studying the door sees an inscription in Pyrean running around the edge. It says "*This place is a sanctuary. Let those who would enter prove their allegiance.*"

Beyond this, anyone who examines the door finds it somewhat reminiscent of the Blackstone Aerie in *The Harvest*. The stone is white instead of black, but it's the same sense of seamless sculpture. With an **Intellect Spread** (Difficulty 15; Lore, The Arcane; Trump: *Seen This Before, Warlock*) a Phoenix identifies it as a relic of the Old Kingdoms, the mysterious nations that existed before human civilization. Apparently the Phoenixes found and repurposed it.

OPENING THE DOOR

There are a few ways to open the door.

- The crudest approach is to use the explosives. This isn't automatic; someone must make an **Intellect Spread** (Difficulty 20; War, Destruction). If a Phoenix fails the spread, the massive explosion damages the doors but doesn't produce an opening; move on to another method. If it's successful, a hole blasts through the center of the door. Aside from this, the gray stone of the catacombs has been blown back from the door, revealing more of the white stone beneath it. The door is a protrusion, but the entire crypt below is made of this tougher stone.

- A Phoenix can attempt to force the door open. This is a **Strength Spread** (Difficulty 35; Athletics). They receive a +15 bonus from *Superhuman Strength* and a +5 bonus for each of the following Traits contributed by the active Phoenix or an ally: *Too Big To Fail*, *Crude But Effective*, *Furious*.

- If someone with The Arcane or Spirits Specialty examines the door, they sense a minor spirit is bound to it, waiting for a specific trigger to open the door. With a **Grace Spread** (Difficulty 30; Spirits, The Arcane, Deception) they can convince the door to open without knowing exactly what it's looking for. They receive a +5 bonus for each of the following Traits contributed by the active Phoenix or an ally: *Shaman*, *Warlock*, *Seen This Before*, *Smartest Person In The Room*.

- What the door *wants* is for a Phoenix to touch it, burn a Spark, and say "I serve the Heartland" in Pyrean. This can be determined with *Psychometry*. At your discretion, a Phoenix who makes the preceding Grace Spread could also learn this; it's a question of whether the spread was attempting to learn the password or trick the door into opening without the password. It won't open for a mortal under

any circumstances. "The Heartland" has no relevance to any of the Phoenixes, even with Lore; logically it could refer to Ilona, but no one's ever heard that title before.

In any case, if the door is opened successfully, it slides smoothly back into the floor, revealing a white stone staircase. When the Wing is ready, they can descend into the vault below.

Scene Four: The Vault

Read or paraphrase the following:

Beyond the door, stone stairs lead down into a vault formed of the same gleaming white stone. The hall is about ten feet across and fifteen feet high. Embedded crystal spheres illuminate the crypt with a pale white light. All in all, the hall is about sixty feet long. Fifteen feet in, the wall widens. To either side, alcoves sit with the busts of Phoenix emperors and champions. Further on, the walls are covered with dozens of smaller alcoves. Each holds a small stone box marked with a name and the insignia of a School. At the far end of the hall, you see something strange—a large hole in the wall, as if someone used explosives or a pick to blast into an adjacent chamber.

You can't reach that opening to take a closer look, however, because someone is in your way. A massive armored figure stands between the stone emperors. No flesh is visible beneath his heavy armor, and he holds his axe—which you realize is surely a Talon—to block anyone from moving past him.

SETUP

Arrange the Wing in the center of the table, standing in a 2 x 2 formation. Set the Durant Phoenix on the table. This room is the **Vault,** and includes the following Environmental Elements: **Urn of Ashes, Urn of Ashes, Phoenix Banner, Coldfire Lantern, Imperial Bust,** and **Stone Bench.**

TALKING TO BASTION

The guardian of the crypt is a Rank 7 Durant Phoenix named **Bastion.** He fought in the Civil War and is part of a faction that refused to accept the surrender that resulted in the eventual creation of Dawn Command. His Wingmate **Omen** (page 215) came up with a plan to restore the Phoenix Imperium, and this plan requires Bastion to guard this crypt; Omen will eventually need the ashes and other supplies stored here. Bastion came to the vault about twenty years after the Civil War and has simply never left; as the Phoenixes faded from the world, no one ever came down here. Bastion is monomaniacal to an inhuman degree; he has been standing in this place for two centuries, convinced a day will come when his duty will be justified.

Here are a few critical details for the conversation:

- Bastion begins by stating *"Who do you serve?"* The answer he's looking for is "Omen." If someone says, "The Empire," he responds with "*The Empire is no more.*" If they say, "Dawn Command," he says, "*I have no use for traitors.*" Either way, he follows this by saying, "*Leave now, or your ashes will join these others.*" If by some chance someone says "Omen" (perhaps with a *Brilliant Deduction*), he follows it up with an impossible countersign: *"And where were you on the day of judgement?"* There's no easy way for the Phoenixes to convince him they are allies.

- It takes a **Grace Spread** (Difficulty 20; Diplomacy, Leadership, Deception) to get him to talk further. *Commander* or *Seasoned Veteran* are each worth +5, as he responds to martial discipline.

- Bastion knows the Marshals of Dawn Command (from long ago) and considers them to be traitors. Observant Phoenixes notice the bust of Justice (the last empress) has been shattered.

- Bastion knows nothing about the Dread and doesn't care about it. Obviously the world outside these walls has collapsed; he and his allies knew that only the Phoenix Imperium could maintain order. However, he's not concerned. Omen will restore everything when he returns.

- While he won't mention it at the start, once he gets talking, he eventually name-drops Omen and his eventual return. He won't let them take any ashes, because Omen will need them. He won't go into further detail, though he scoffs at any suggestion Omen is dead. "*Death cannot keep him from his goals.*"

- After the conversation has gone on long enough, he raises his axe and offers them a final chance to leave with their lives. If they refuse, he initiates combat.

Any Phoenix can make an **Intellect Spread** (Difficulty 20; War, Lore, The Empire) to identify Omen. With success, they recall he was an influential Phoenix in the Civil War, but they can't remember anything else about him, even his School. Given the general sense he was someone important, that feels strange—as though they knew more once, but now can't recall the details. A Shrouded Phoenix recognizes this as the effect Shrouded Phoenixes have on history. A sharp-eyed Phoenix (Forceful, Shrouded, or anyone with *Supernatural Senses* in their deck) notices an ash receptacle labeled "Omen" with the Shrouded symbol.

If you feel your Phoenixes do an exceptional job or come up with a brilliant way to convince Bastion to work with them, feel free to run with it. However, for the most part, there's no way to avoid an eventual fight, unless the Phoenixes choose to leave without ashes.

FIGHTING BASTION

Bastion's statistics can be found on the Mission Reference Sheet. He cannot be surprised, and if a player decides to attack, Bastion interrupts with an attack of his own. The only exception is if the Phoenix attempting the attack has the *Perfect Reflexes* Talent or has the *Superhuman Reflexes* or *Perfect Timing* Traits in their hand. Bastion still isn't surprised, but such a Phoenix is so quick that even he can't beat them to the punch.

The greatest challenge in fighting Bastion is his *Perfect Guard*. He is an ancient Durant and has perfected the art of defense. The first time a Phoenix attacks him, they realize it's impossible to hurt him while he's on his guard. It doesn't matter what the effect is: Bastion cannot lose Health Levels while **Perfect Guard** is active. Describe this however you want—it could be that he parries any blow, that he turns his flesh to steel at the point of impact, or anything you like—but nothing can hurt him unless he lowers his guard. There are three ways to do that: Stunning him or hitting him with the *Exposed* or *Vulnerable* conditions. While either condition is in effect, he can be hurt normally, though there is one other restriction: Bastion's *last* Health Level has a value of 20. This can only be taken as his final Wound; even if a Phoenix gets a blow that inflicts 20 points of damage, if he has any HL-4 tokens left, they must be removed first. Feel free to inform players of this up front; the intention isn't to trick them into attacking and then having them fail.

While Bastion can't be *injured* while his guard is raised, players can still attack him to trigger other effects (for example, making him *Vulnerable* with *Psychometry* or *Vanguard*); any Attack Spread with a value greater than 12 is successful. As long as his *Perfect Guard* is active, any attack against Bastion burns one of the attacker's Sparks.

Bastion has a few options on his turn. If he's *Exposed* or *Vulnerable* he uses *Shake It Off* to end those conditions. Otherwise he attacks. If he's having trouble with a ranged attacker, he uses *Heroic Throw*, which also uses up one of the Environmental Elements; be sure to point out he's using nearby items, because that's what Phoenixes do! Otherwise, he uses his *Glaive Sweep*, which can strike up to two Phoenixes. A Phoenix hit by this attack becomes *Enraged*. This condition can be removed by any Phoenix (including the victim) with a **Grace Spread** (Difficulty 10; Leadership, Diplomacy; Trump: *Commander*).

This is a very difficult battle. However, there's a surprise. If a Phoenix dies, they find they can sense the Durant…and can actually bond with him as an attendant spirit. If they do, they get a general sense of the Phoenix (including his name), and they can break Bastion's concentration. By burning 2 Sparks at the end of Bastion's turn, a Phoenix can make him *Exposed* or *Vulnerable*. The haunting spirit can also burn Sparks one-for-one to reduce the value of one of Bastion's attacks. If Bastion dies, the haunting Phoenix can bond with a member of the Wing. If a player makes a

compelling case for it, you could also allow a living Phoenix to distract Bastion with a **Grace Spread** (Difficulty 20/30); the Specialty depends on the approach. With a 20, Bastion is effectively *Stunned*; with a 30 or higher, he's *Exposed*.

Bastion is obsessed and fights until slain. There's no way to take him alive; when his last Health Level is removed, his armor simply falls apart, as if nothing was inside it. Then it crumbles to glowing ash. This was Bastion's last life, and his ashes are Phoenix ashes.

Ignoring Bastion

Some Phoenixes may want to ignore Bastion completely and focus on exploration or acquiring ashes. If they want to harvest Phoenix ashes, have them make a **Grace Spread** (Acrobatics, Spycraft). For every five points in the spread, they grab a receptacle of ashes. Getting past Bastion to explore the rest of the vault requires a **Grace Spread** (Difficulty 20; Acrobatics, Athletics, Deception). Thanks to his Talents, Bastion can see *Hidden* enemies, and they get no benefit when sneaking past him. **If the Phoenixes simply can't beat Bastion**, someone could still push past him and potentially escape by using the hearth in the hidden chamber, provided someone else kept the Durant occupied.

It's the Only Way to Be Sure

If the Phoenixes still have the explosives, they may want to use them on Bastion. There are two ways to do this. They could focus directly on Bastion himself; this is an **Intellect Spread** (War, Destruction) that inflicts damage equal to the value of the spread. It bypasses both his Defense and his *Perfect Guard*, but everyone else in the vault suffers one Wound—and this includes mortals.

The second option is to detonate the explosives to collapse the vault. This buries Bastion and ends the fight, but it seals the crypt and make it impossible to recover any ashes. If any Phoenixes slipped past Bastion before this explosion, they are trapped in the crypt as well.

USING THE ENVIRONMENT

A few elements in the room are especially useful. Both the **Stone Bench** and **Imperial Bust** are heavy enough that if used as part of a successful attack on Bastion, he is *Stunned*.

BEYOND BASTION

The vault contains the final ashes of almost four hundred Phoenixes…although as the Phoenixes explore the crypt they realize that about 30 of the ash receptacles have already been looted, including those of Empress Justice. Omen's ashes are here and do appear to be the final ashes of a Rank 7 Phoenix. There's no clear protocol here; the ashes are going to be used as military assets, and it's up to the Wing to decide whether they dump them all in sacks or try to preserve some memory of the individuals; however, if they try to keep them separated, it's hard to take a significant amount of ashes.

A bigger question is how the Phoenixes intend to get out. The temple is surrounded by Bones, and their ship has been sunk. If at least one of the Phoenixes died, they can be reborn in Pyre and call for a new ship, but it takes days to arrive. In the meantime, another option presents itself…

The Hidden Chamber

At the far end of the vault, there's a gap in the wall that reveals a smaller room. At first glance, it appears someone smashed the wall in to find this chamber; however, an **Intellect Spread (**Difficulty 15; Observation, Scouting**)** reveals someone appears to have forced their way *out* of the room and into the main crypt. The room itself is largely unremarkable, except for a few things. There are two small chests in the room. One contains a variety of useless relics, many so severely damaged it's impossible to tell what they're from. A Phoenix with the Lore Specialty, *Seen This Before*, or something similar concludes these are relics of the Old Kingdom; learning anything meaningful from them would take days or weeks of study. The second chest is more interesting. It contains three Pyrean Steel artifacts. There's no way to tell what these do by simply studying them, but the function is provided in case a Phoenix uses *Psychometry* or *Brilliant Deduction*, or spends a few days studying them after the mission. Theoretically, all of these should be turned over to Dawn Command.

- A heavy rod, about two feet in length. There is what appears to be a pommel on one end, and a pair of flanges on the other. The strangest aspect is a diamond-shaped chunk of Pyrean steel that floats suspended about an inch above these flanges. There's nothing visible holding it in place, but it maintains its position and can't be removed from the rod. Function: *This is a weapon similar to a Talon, but not linked to the Imperial Flame. If a Phoenix experimented with it, they could burn one Spark to make a ranged attack with it—projecting a blast of magical energy from the tip. After spending a significant amount of time working with the rod, a Phoenix could charge it by burning a Spark and then use it to make ranged attacks for the duration of a scene.*

- A piece of armor designed to be worn over the forearm. It's unusually wide, sort of like a compromise between a vambrace and a buckler. A diamond-shaped

design is on the back and a host of fine runes are engraved into the steel. Function: *This is a personal shield; when activated, it projects a field of mystical energy. With minor experimentation, a Phoenix could use it in combat; it allows the wearer to burn up to two Sparks to improve a Defense Spread (one for one). With extensive experience, a Phoenix could burn two Sparks at the start of combat and receive a +2 bonus to Defense Spreads for the duration of a scene.*

• A fist-sized sphere inlaid with crystal runes. Function: *This is a storage device designed to transport spirits. It is currently empty.*

The rod and bracer are the standard tools of a soldier of the Heartland Alliance, one of the Old Kingdom civilizations. You can see both of these items pictured on the *Ancient Bones* Challenge card. The sphere is a *runic vessel*, and the Wing encounters more of these in Mission Five. The critical fact is these are Pyrean steel tools that seem not unlike Talons…and yet, all Talons have some element of the Dawn Command symbol worked into their design, and nothing like it is visible on these objects.

While these things are interesting, one more artifact in the room is more important than all of them. Read or paraphrase the following:

At one end of the small chamber you see a raised dias, quite similar in design to the typical Flame Chamber. The similarity doesn't end there: A hearth forged of Pyrean steel is embedded into the platform. However, as you look closer, it doesn't quite look like the hearths you're used to working with. The angles are sharper, and it has a few vicious points.

While the design is strange, this is a functional hearth. Even if the Wing has mortals with them, none of *Winter Serpent's* crew have the mystical skill required to become a Flamekeeper. However, using Phoenix ashes, a Phoenix could temporarily jumpstart a hearth and keep it active for a short period. Normally, the trip from Pyre to an Aerie is one way, but with Phoenix ashes, it's possible to make the trip in the other direction. Activating the hearth requires the Phoenix to burn five Sparks and make an **Intellect Spread** (Difficulty 20; The Arcane, Lore). A Phoenix can get a +5 bonus for *Warlock* or *Seen This Before*. If the spread is successful, read or paraphrase the following:

The hearth responds to the your rituals, but something is wrong. The hearths of Dawn Command automatically connect to the Imperial Flame in Pyre. This one is searching for some other source of power, and whatever or wherever it is, it doesn't seem to be active at the moment. With some effort, you shift the focus and feel the soothing power of the Imperial Flame as it comes into alignment with Pyre. But you're certain the connection won't last long.

If the hearth is activated successfully, the Phoenixes can return to Pyre through this connection. They can carry Phoenix ashes and the Pyrean steel artifacts. If they have at least ten minutes, they can perform an additional ritual that allows them to transport any mortals and other supplies (such as the other Old Kingdom relics)

through the hearth; this uses additional Phoenix ashes, but there are an abundance of these. However, it won't be possible to perform this ritual unless Bastion has been dealt with. If he's been defeated, they can recover all the ashes; if they are fleeing, they will have a smaller bounty. When they get to the other side, they find the connection is unstable; it's not possible to return to the crypt from Pyre.

Epilogue

The first question to answer is how the Phoenixes return to Pyre. If they use the hearth, there's no risk at all. Trying to escape through the city and then holding out in Bone-infested lands until a ship can find them is a very risky venture. If the group wishes to try it, you could choose to play it out as an extended interlude…either playing it as a full session (potentially using the **Bone Chariots** and **Bone Sapper** Challenge cards) or developing it narratively. Alternately, you could have the group lay out their plan and designate a Phoenix to make a Skill Spread to determine their success; you can provide penalties or bonuses depending on your opinion of the plan. The base **Difficulty is 30**, and for every 5points of failure (rounding up), one Phoenix dies in the process; have each player decide exactly how their character dies and what sort of death it is.

Once the Phoenixes have returned, you have a few ways to measure success.

- **The Ashes.** The primary purpose of the mission was to reclaim Phoenix ashes. Did they recover the entire supply? Did they grab as much as they could before Bastion drove them away? Or did they fail completely?

- **The Bones.** What did they learn about the Bones? Did they recognize the connection to Hadon Pelagius? Did they find the journal in the Dawn Temple?

- **The Mortals.** How many mortals survived? If the crew was left in the smuggler's cove, it's up to you to decide who holds out until the rescue ship can make it. However, if anyone dies—especially Halius, Nyanji, or a player-generated crew member—you could have them return as a new Phoenix.

- **Omen and the Old Kingdoms.** These weren't part of the mission, but Winter is very interested in hearing anything the Phoenixes have to say. There's little to learn about Omen—but did they learn someone named Omen is involved in a scheme? Did they learn that, according to Bastion, he's not dead? Did they acquire his ashes? Did they find the Old Kingdom hearth? Were they able to recover the box of relics, and do they turn over the Pyrean steel artifacts? Winter won't discuss any of these things immediately, but she looks grim and promises to get back to them when she has news.

If the Phoenixes returned directly to Pyre, there's little room for interludes that directly follow up on events. Here are a few things to consider.

- Discuss the Crucible experiences of any Phoenixes who died. If any Phoenixes

died *after* hearing Omen's name, a Phoenix could discuss the matter with their Mentor. Refer to Mission Five for the sort of information that might be known. At the least, a Mentor may have known Omen and recalled him as a leader of the faction who refused to surrender at the end of the Civil War; a Shrouded Mentor might even know Omen assassinated the Empress.

• Consider describing a short shared mission with one or more members of the **Rival Wing**. Perhaps they team up to deal with a wave of warped crustaceans attacking the coastline of the Red Marches—something dramatic enough to call for two Wings, but relatively quick. Alternately, they could go on a mission specifically with Mercy—dealing with a series of unnatural plagues, needing the help of a Devoted (or multiple Devoted, if the Wing has one of their own). The goal is to strongly establish Mercy's character—a gentle, altruistic healer—well before Mission Six. If they gossip about Omen, Mercy can't remember details but certainly remembers the name from her first life in the Civil War. She recalls him as some sort of terrifying guerrilla genius, though she can't remember details of his victories.

If the Phoenixes keep the Pyrean steel artifacts, they can learn the basic operation of the rod and shield (paying Sparks each time they're are used).

THE SAGA OF HADON PELAGIUS

The following information is available at any time to a Phoenix who makes an **Intellect Spread** (Difficulty 15; War, Lore):

Hadon Pelagius was one of the military leaders of the Humanist forces in the Civil War. Known as "The Firebrand," he was infamous for his torture and slaughter of civilians, declaring that anyone who refused to surrender and support the Humanist forces was an enemy soldier. He made extensive use of dragons (the artillery) and other flame weapons, and he liked to burn captives alive; "Surely those who love the Phoenixes have no fear of fire?" His actions created a schism within the Humanist movement. Pelagius was killed by Empress Justice in the battle of Hadon's Fall; after his death, Justice surrendered to the more moderate Humanist leaders.

The spirit of Hadon Pelagius is one of the primary anchors motivating the Bone Legion ravaging the Empire. In "The Summer Shore," the Phoenixes encounter elements of his army and the aftermath of his actions, but Pelagius himself isn't present in Westergate. In "The Siege" (Mission Seven), the Phoenixes will come into direct conflict with Hadon Pelagius, and by the time that battle occurs, they will want to know as much about him as possible. The information presented above is all you need to tell the Phoenixes when they first hear about Pelagius. Beyond that, there are a host of legends and rumors about Hadon. Some stories say he was the avatar of a Talu god of fire and could transform into a burning giant or call firestorms down on his enemies. In some tales, he's a rogue Elemental Phoenix who turned against the Dawn Legion. In others, he's the great-grandchild of the Last Empress who never forgave Justice for turning against Talu traditions.

If one digs deep enough, one can establish the following concrete facts: Hadon was born into the Pel Talu. This Talu House was one of the first to ally with the Phoenixes in the Conquest; stories vary as to whether they joined the Phoenixes after their House Gods were defeated, or whether they actually forsook their House Gods in favor of Phoenix dominion. Either way, the Pel Talu were a vital part of the foundation of the Imperial Army. Hadon Pel was born into a position of military influence and learned the arts of war as a child. As he grew older, he became obsessed with the idea that the Phoenixes had usurped the divine right of the Talu. He took the name "Pelagius" after one of the gods of his house—a cruel god of fire—and assembled a legion of Ilonan fanatics eager to see the return of the old order. His brutal massacres were in part sacrifices to Pelagius, and as the war went on both he and his followers came to believe Hadon was the living avatar of the god. Ultimately, it's up to you as the Marshal to decide if this is true or merely legend. Hadon had an exceptional corps of engineers and fielded large numbers of dragons and other flame weapons. Could he actually summon firestorms on top of this, or was that merely legend?

Either way, Hadon was a brilliant general commanding a force of disciplined and heavily armed fanatics—but it became clear that his goals weren't aligned with the rest of the Humanist movement. He wasn't interested in returning power to humanity; he believed that through endless sacrifice, he could restore the Talu Gods, who would then defeat the Phoenixes and create a new divine order. He was willing to burn the whole world down in pursuit of this goal; if necessary, his gods would rebuild it from the ashes. Over time, the Phoenix Empress Justice decided the Phoenixes had to stand down…but she wasn't willing to surrender while Hadon Pelagius was alive. After negotiating with other Humanist leaders, she met Hadon Pelagius in battle along the Summer Shore, in what is now called Hadon's Fall. Justice killed Hadon by her own hand, and his legion was broken and scattered. Following this battle, Justice proclaimed an end to the Phoenix Imperium and established the groundwork for Dawn Command.

Over the course of the next three missions, the details of this event will become increasingly important. Some of these questions can be established by the group; others you will want to set yourself as secrets for the Phoenixes to discover over time. Here are the details you need to establish by the end of Mission Six.

- **How did the Empress Justice kill Hadon Pelagius?** This is a good one to ask the group; just make careful note of the details of the story. Specifically, which weapon did she use? Was that weapon her Talon?

- **From which School was Justice?** By default, Justice was a **Durant Phoenix**. However, if you don't have a Durant Phoenix in your Wing, pick a different School for her. The Phoenix of this School will be the one best able to fight Pelagius—so pick someone who will enjoy being the focus of that scene. She wouldn't have been Bitter, as the Bitter School is a recent development.

- **What is her connection to the Wing?** After you've defined Justice's School, look at the story of the Phoenix from that School. It's unlikely this Phoenix chose the former Empress as their Mentor…but looking at their Mentor, *could* it be Justice concealing her identity, ashamed of how her story ended? Alternately, Justice could be the "grand-Mentor" of the Phoenix—the Mentor of their Mentor. If this is the case, it means the Phoenix has Justice's Talon. Presumably the players won't work that detail into the story of how Justice killed Pelagius…so if you want to go down this path, in Mission Six you'll drop in a revelation that the story they'd originally heard was incorrect. "*Oh, Justice had a sword styled like a Talon, sure…but that was just part of her image. Her actual Talon was her shield. One just like yours, in fact.*"

- **Is any member of the Wing related to Hadon or Justice?** Hadon was from the Pel Talu, a Talu family that to this day remains a cornerstone of the Imperial Army. As it turns out, some of the rumors are true: The Last Empress was a member of the Pel Talu in her first life, and Hadon despised her as a traitor to her gods. As such, a Phoenix born to a Talu line has a weak connection to the story of Hadon and Justice, stronger if they happen to be a member of the Pel Talu.

The critical question for you to decide by the end of Mission Seven is how much of a deus ex machina you want to employ. Some players will be thrilled to discover that they have a direct connection to the Last Empress. This will also give them a personal stake in the story of the recurring villain Omen, who assassinated Justice…more details on that in the next mission! However, if this feels too contrived—or if every Phoenix has an ironclad, completely developed backstory of their own—they can simply make do with using a replica of Justice's Talon in the battle with Pelagius.

In *this* mission, the key details to establish are that Hadon was a cruel Humanist general who burned his foes, that Justice killed Hadon, and what Justice's favored weapons were, as there's a statue of her at the end of Scene Two.

MISSION REFERENCE: THE SUMMER SHORE

BONE LEGION

Undead Group Enemy

SPEED 2
DEFENSE 4
HL See Encounter

The Legion makes a single Overwhelm attack each round.

OVERWHELM (Standard Melee or Ranged Attack): Attack 2*, Damage xl (4). Add the number of HL tokens on the Legion to the Attack value. This attack targets all the Phoenixes in the area.

DURANT PHOENIX

Phoenix

SPEED 2
DEFENSE 12
HL 4 (x8); 20

The Durant Phoenix can use a single attack or active Talent each turn. If he becomes Exposed or Vulnerable, he takes his next turn to Shake It Off.

GLAIVE SWEEP (Standard Melee Attack): Attack 14, Damage xl (6) and the target is Enraged. This attack can target one or two Phoenixes.

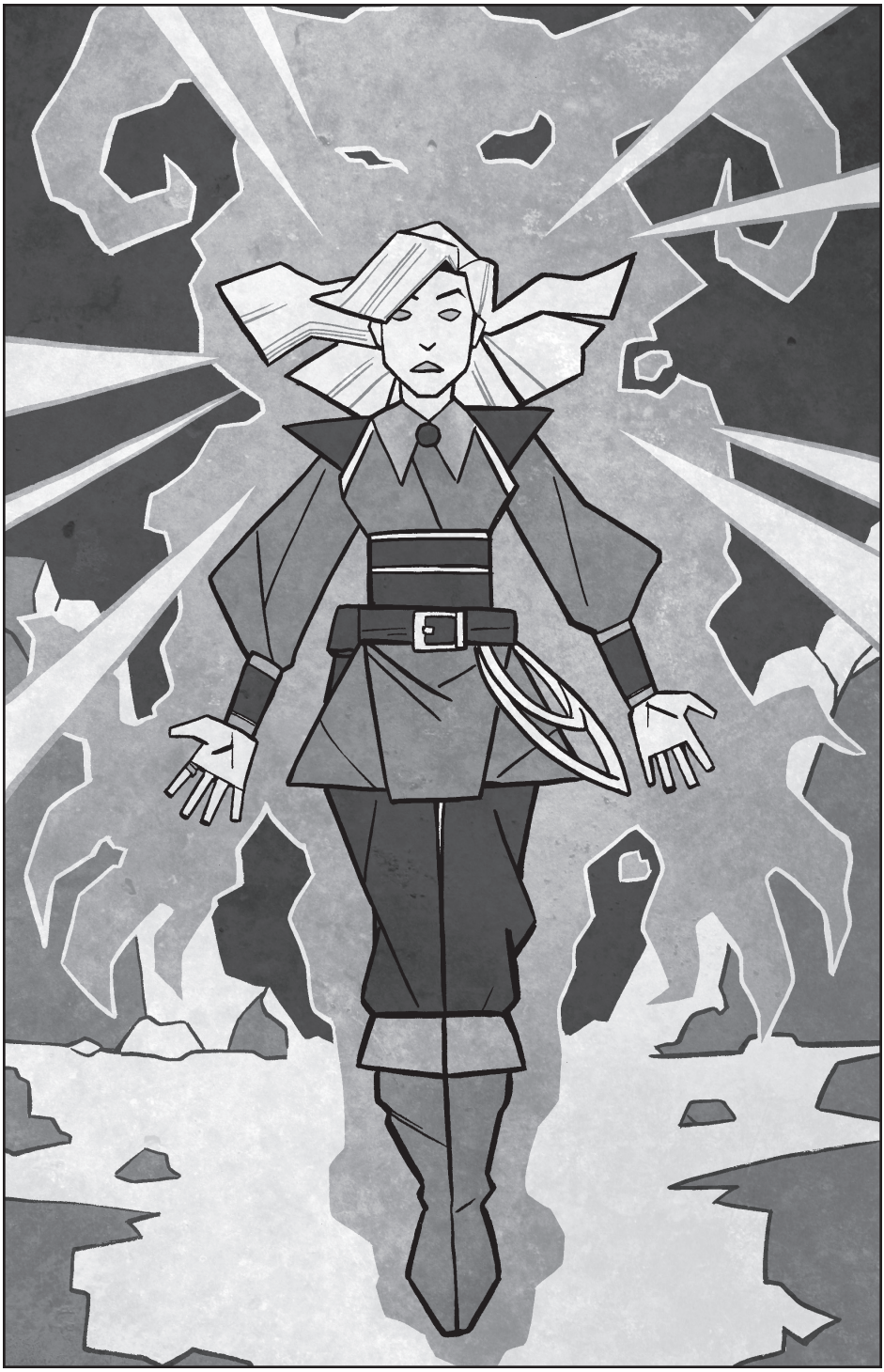
HEROIC THROW (Standard Ranged Attack): Attack 12, Damage x2 (10) and target is Stunned. This Attack uses up an Environmental Element.

SHAKE IT OFF (Active Talent): Remove any Exposed or Vulnerable conditions affecting the Durant Phoenix.

PERFECT GUARD (Ongoing Talent): The Durant Phoenix cannot lose Health Levels due to enemy attacks. A Phoenix must burn a Spark any time they make an Attack spread targeting the Durant Phoenix. Both of these effects are lost while the Durant is Stunned, Exposed, or Vulnerable.

The Durant Phoenix, Bastion, can't be surprised, and *Hidden* opponents do not get any bonus when they attack him. He can target *Hidden* opponents with attacks. Bastion's last Health Level has a value of 20. This Health Level cannot be taken until all his other HLs have been removed.

If a Phoenix dies in combat with Bastion, they can choose to attend him as a spirit instead of bonding with a Wingmate. A Phoenix attending Bastion can burn 2 Sparks at the end of Bastion's turn to make him *Exposed*. They can also spend Sparks one-for-one to reduce the value of an attack he makes.



MISSION FIVE: PULLING STRINGS

In "Pulling Strings," the Wing travels to the independent realm of Kor Aton chasing a mystery: a rumor of a rogue Phoenix thought to be long dead. In Kor Aton, they must atone for the crimes of the mysterious Omen by helping the Atons recover a relic from the depths…but what dangers linger below?

Make sure the players know at the start that this is a longer mission involving more social interaction than previous adventures. This mission will take five to six hours to complete, and the first major action scene is at least a third of the way into the mission. If your players won't enjoy this sort of story, you can cut down on the social scenes. In Scene One, you can drop the ***Trouble in the Passage*** event, and in Scene Two, you can skip ***The Nirhady Feast*** and move directly to the start of the expedition. However, the idea of this adventure is the Phoenixes are serving as ambassadors to a culture they know little about, and they're traveling with a large expedition; the overall experience will be more satisfying if the players get a feel for the culture and their companions before the real trouble begins.

Background

In the days before the Empire, a young Shadovar was reborn as a Phoenix. He served in the Dawn Legion as they fought the Talu and was elated by the defeat of the tyrants who had scattered his people. He saw in the Legion a tool to bring a universal order to the Daylit World, and his was one of the voices urging for the Conquest and foundation of the Empire…as a way to ensure no other tyrant would ever torment the innocent. He was a consummate Shrouded—some even say the first of the Shrouded Phoenixes. As such, he never sought the Emperor's crown; instead he guided the course of the Empire from the shadows behind the throne, and few among the Legion recognized the true extent of his influence. Though his goal was to end tyranny, he helped create the oppressive regime that ultimately led to the Civil War. Blinded by his purpose and by the centuries and lives he had spent in pursuit of it, he believed there could be no compromise with the rebels; the war simply proved the Legion should have ruled with a still heavier hand.

The war came to an end when the Empress Justice surrendered the throne. She ordered all Phoenixes to stand down, dissolving the Dawn Legion and establishing the code of the new Dawn Command. Most Phoenixes were weary of war and slaughter and embraced this path of peace, but this Shrouded refused to accept that fate. He believed in the destiny of the Phoenix Imperium and the Dawn Legion. In an attempt to end Dawn Command in its infancy, he personally slew Justice, believing other Phoenixes would abandon her vision and return to the path of war—but for once he had underestimated his foes. They stood against him and executed him. And so it was that Omen met his final death, burnt to ashes by an Elemental named Cinder. The leaders of the new Dawn Command—including a Shrouded named

Winter—concealed Omen's actions. They told the world Justice had taken her own life as a way to end the Phoenix Imperium once and for all, and this is the story any player Phoenix will have heard.

In "The Summer Shore," the Wing found clues suggesting a Phoenix named Omen was acting outside of Dawn Command…and that he was working with at least one ancient Phoenix and gathering strange artifacts. At of the end of that mission, there was no immediate answer to this mystery. As this mission opens, the Shrouded Marshal Winter tells the Phoenixes the story of Omen and **her** concerns that someone is continuing his legacy.

In fact, Omen is still alive. He died his final death, but he refused to accept his end and take his place as a Mentor. Why could Phoenixes only return seven times? This was just another secret, and as a Shrouded, Omen excelled at exposing secrets. In the timeless void of the Crucible, he found a way to break free from his Flame and explore the fullness of the Dusk…the spiritual realm inhabited by the Fallen and other relics of the Old Kingdoms. In time, he found a way to unlock the safeguards encoded into the mystic essence of the flames and return again. He didn't realize the consequences his actions would have, for it is his return that set the Dread in motion; this topic will be explored in future missions. Nonetheless, for Omen this only proves his thesis. Only Phoenixes can stand against the Dread. Only Phoenixes can ensure the security of the Empire. The Phoenixes *must* rule. Omen will restore the Phoenix Imperium, and together they will save the world.

Omen knows more about the Fallen than any other Phoenix. He has learned a great deal about the tools of the Old Kingdom, and he has grand designs…but he needs to obtain additional ancient relics. It was to this end that he went to the Nirhadyan Vault in Kor Aton and convinced the noble Nirha'ka Ledu to lead an expedition into the depths of the vault. Omen had discovered the location of a dungeon—a prison designed to hold malevolent spirits—in a series of tunnels long shunned by the Atons. Omen won Ledu to the cause with promises of wonders and treasures. Initially, the expedition was a success. They found the dungeon and reached its inner core. In order to claim his prize, Omen partially released a Fallen prisoner—an entity called the **Puppeteer**. This spirit has the power to possess mortals, and its release automatically triggered defense systems that locked down the prison and sought to kill all the mortals. Realizing this, Omen slew the remaining mortals himself. This ended the lockdown and left the Puppeteer still trapped in the prison. Omen left Kor Aton, killing a few Atons in the process. There was one treasure he couldn't take: Nirha'ka Ledu's sword, a weapon that repels mystical entities… including Phoenixes.

Thanks to a cowardly Vault Runner, the Kamari (Smiths) of House Nirhady soon learned of the loss of the expedition. Ledu's sword must be recovered. The Atons know little of the Phoenixes, but the Voice Vayis believed Dawn Command should make reparations for Omen's despicable actions and sent this demand to Pyre. In other times, the Marshals might have dismissed it, but it is a rare opportunity to send a diplomatic mission to Kor Aton—and given the recent events in the Summer Shore, Winter is determined to investigate anything having to do with Omen… though **she** doesn't really believe it to be the Phoenix Cinder executed.

Prologue: A Mystery In The East

Read or paraphrase the following (take into account the description of Winter developed in Mission Two):

> *The Shrouded Marshal has summoned you to the library of the Grand Aerie. It's a labyrinth of shelves and scrolls, crumbling parchments dating back to the days before the Empire. You find Winter at the heart of it, at a table laden with tomes and papers.* Her *expression is grim, and* she *holds up a sheet of paper that glitters and gleams in the firelight. The edges of the parchment are gilded, and the ink itself is made from gold; the seal at the bottom shimmers and glows with mystic light.*
>
> *"This is a missive from the Nirhadyan Vault of Kor Aton. Are you familiar with it?"*

Kor Aton has very little contact with the Empire, and it's not a place one casually travels to. Unless a Phoenix is from there, it's likely no one has direct experience with it. If someone wants to make a Lore/Empire Spread right away—or if a Phoenix is from Kor Aton—refer to the Mission Briefing sidebar. Otherwise, you can continue with the briefing.

> *"I'm sure you've heard the stories…the invincible kingdom of gold, the only nation never conquered by the Empire. The Atons live in a vast network of tunnels and vaults carved through the Golden Mountains. They have little interest in the outside world, and they're secure enough in their holes that even the first Phoenixes couldn't dig them out. While the Empire's been trading with them for centuries, it's rare for them to open the deep gates to outsiders. But that's what they're doing now."*
>
> *Winter taps the gilded parchment. "This is a demand for reparations from House Nirhady. They blame a Phoenix for some sort of misfortune that has recently befallen their house, and assume we are responsible for all Phoenixes. There's little information on the supposed crime, but they do identify the Phoenix: a Shrouded named Omen."*

Give the players time to interject and discuss this. They may have questions about Kor Aton, and it's quite likely they want to know more about Omen. You can draw information about Kor Aton from the Mission Briefing and details about Omen from the background section provided above. Here are a few critical details to work in.

• Omen was a legendary Phoenix, but he was also an exceptional Shrouded, and that comes with complications. *"The world has a way of forgetting the Shrouded. Memories fade. Written accounts disappear, or details change. As Phoenixes, we are resistant to this effect, but even we aren't completely immune. Omen was my teacher, and we served together for a century. But I still can't remember his face."* If **she's** specifically asked about it, Winter remembers his Talon was a cloak.

• Winter does remember how Omen refused to stand down at the end of the war, how he assassinated the Empress Justice, and how Dawn Command executed him and concealed his actions. *"Justice didn't end her life. Omen killed her. He planned to undo her actions, to continue the war until the bitter end. We changed the story so others wouldn't be emboldened by his action. Now it seems a few Phoenixes have taken up his banner. The Durant you encountered in the Summer Shore. Whoever is using his name in Kor Aton. I don't know what these people want or how many of them are out there…but the Dread is threat enough without rogue Phoenixes causing trouble."*

• Winter is certain Omen died. *"I saw him die his final death. It was Cinder who finally brought Omen down, and* he *tested the ashes to ensure it wasn't some sort of Shrouded deception. Omen is gone, and someone is using his name. I need to know who and why."*

• If people ask about the Durant in the Summer Shore, Winter is fairly certain (from the description and his Talon) it was Bastion, the Durant from Omen's Wing. Bastion disappeared a decade after the end of the Civil War, and it was assumed he'd died and never returned. His presence certainly suggests there's something to this "false Omen," but Winter observes Bastion was more of a follower than a leader. *"Guarding a cache for two centuries sounds like something he'd do. Masterminding a scheme, not so much."*

• If the Phoenixes recovered any relics from the Summer Shore, there's little news. The objects are so old even psychometric traces have faded. Winter is certain they are artifacts from the Old Kingdoms, and she can identify the Pyrean steel rod as a weapon similar to the Talons…yet it clearly isn't a Talon, and it's not bound to a Flame. It's interesting, certainly—but she doesn't know what it means.

Once this discussion is finished, Winter gets to the point.

> *"I don't know who's using Omen's name. It's possible it's not even a Phoenix, rather some trick of the Dread. But I don't like it, and I want to know more. Beyond that, we need all the allies we can get. This is an invaluable opportunity to strengthen ties with Kor Aton. They have strange traditions of magic, and it may well be that they have tools to help us battle the Dread. So your mission is twofold. I want you to find out everything you can about this 'Omen.' Who he is. What he was doing in Kor Aton. Where he went. Beyond that, I want you to do everything in your power to settle the grievances of the Atons and to build a foundation for future communication. Any questions?"*

The gates of the Nirhadyan Vault are three days' journey from the nearest Aerie. It's a long and dangerous route, and handling the Atons requires a capable diplomat—but the Wing has proven itself by now, and Winter believes they have the power to reach Aton Nirhady and the wisdom to deal with whatever lies ahead. Refer to the Mission Briefing to fill in any blank details. The message came with a token made of Pyrean steel; this grants the Wing safe passage through the gates. When the Phoenixes are all ready, they are sent through the Flame to Harrowgate and Scene One.

MISSION BRIEFING: KOR ATON

These questions could come up at the start or in later scenes. A Phoenix from Kor Aton doesn't have to make a Skill Spread to get expanded information about anything related to the region.

What is Kor Aton?

> *Kor Aton is a subterranean culture based in and below the Golden Mountains. Its people live in a vast network of caverns said to be remnants of the Old Kingdoms. They are xenophobic isolationists, and due to their impressive fortifications, the Phoenixes abandoned the idea of bringing them into the Empire by force. They possess tremendous mineral wealth and often trade with the Empire—especially for food—but aside from merchants, it's rare to see any Atons on the surface.*
>
> (Aton Phoenix or Intellect 15+) *Kor Aton is a loose alliance of city-states, known as vaults. The network of tunnels the Atons live in is far larger than needed to support their current population, and many deep levels have never even been explored.*

Where is it?

> *The Golden Mountains separate Ilona and eastern Skavia. There is a pass—the Passage—commonly used by traders. We don't know the extent of Kor Aton, but the gates to a number of prominent vaults can be found along the Passage.*

What do we know about the Atons?

> *Very little. They have had little contact with the Empire apart from trade, in which they generally trade gold and other minerals for food and medicinal herbs. Their society appears to have a strict hierarchy and rigid customs.*

(Aton Phoenix or Intellect 15+) *Aton culture is based on a hereditary caste system. The ruling castes are the warriors (known as Smiths) and the mystics (called Architects). The Architects maintain mystical systems vital for survival in the depths.*

Will communication be an issue?

The Atons speak a different language than the people of the Empire. Any Shrouded Phoenix is familiar with both the Aton language and the pidgin trade tongue (having studied them as part of their Lore training), and any Phoenix from Kor Aton knows the language. Otherwise, a player has to justify why their character would have learned the Aton language, whether in their first life or in the Crucible. In any case, Winter is confident the Atons have translators on hand.

Scene One: A Perilous Journey

Read or paraphrase the following:

You pass through the Flame and find yourself in the Aerie of Harrowgate, one of the great fortress–cities of Skavia. Flamekeeper Unen is waiting for you, and supplies have already been laid out for your journey.

Unen is a massive bear of a man who keeps his lower face hidden behind a black mask embroidered with gold thread. He laughs easily and finds humor in the bleakest moments. On orders of Dawn Command, he has assembled basic traveling supplies (ropes, climbing gear, and any other mundane goods the players want to specify) along with a fine bottle of Skavi spirits to present as a gift. While Unen knows little about the Atons, he knows their merchants purchase grain and luxury items, and he believes the spirits will be appreciated. Beyond that, he has little relevant news. He has heard of storms in the mountains, and there are tales of massive wolves preying on travelers. He hasn't heard anything of Omen. The last Phoenixes who came through Harrowgate were the Rival Wing, who helped to repel a plague of hungry ghosts; as a result of their actions, the people of the city are well-disposed toward Phoenixes for the moment. The Rival Wing completed this mission five days ago and headed south to Pyre.

You can draw out this conversation as long as you wish, especially if you want to build up details about the Rival Wing. Eventually, the Phoenixes must head east, leaving the city and heading into the Passage. If time is short, move directly to Scene Two. If you have the time to enjoy the journey, continue to *Trouble in the Passage*.

TROUBLE IN THE PASSAGE

Read or paraphrase the following:

You make your way up into the Passage, a trade route stretching from Harrowgate down to Talus in Ilona. The path is wide and stable, and at first the journey is easy enough. But as the day goes on and

you climb ever higher, the temperature drops and the wind rises. You're buffeted by cold winds, and pummeled with chunks of stone and hail. How do you press forward?

This is a purely story-driven question, and no Skill Spread is required. The Phoenixes are tough enough to persevere through harsh weather; it's simply an opportunity to think about the perils of the journey and what the Wing has to do to overcome them. Once the story is resolved, move on.

After a few hours, the storm passes, leaving the path slick with ice and hail. Night falls as you press on. As you're climbing another slope, perceptive Phoenix *hears something over the lingering winds…a pleading voice coming from the ravine below.*

The voice belongs to Ilga, a Skavi merchant. Ilga says she and her brother Gred were forced off the path by the storm; they're trapped on a ledge down below, and Gred has broken his leg. Due to the angle and the night it's impossible to get a good look at them, but feel free to expand on their story as you see fit. Gred can speak, though he's in great pain. Their goods are lost, and their mule is dead. If any of the Phoenixes are Skavi, Ilga could have a common acquaintance with them—or it could even be that they've met the merchant on her travels. In any case, the question is whether the Phoenixes assist the stranded merchants, and if so, what their plan is. It would be difficult to get the entire Wing to the ledge below, but an athletic or acrobatic Phoenix could achieve it.

Up until the final moment, it's difficult to see much in the descent. There is a large dark shape on the ledge, presumably the dead mule. It's only when a Phoenix reaches the ledge that they see the truth. There is no mule and no people: instead there are two large wolves, one of whom has a broken leg. "Ilga" and "Gred" insist this is a curse of the Dread and that they will regain their true shapes in the morning, and beg the Phoenixes to help them back to the path. With an **Intellect Check (**Difficulty 20; Lore**)**, a Phoenix thinks it more likely they are soul-eaters…predators who can use the memories and voices of their most recent victims. This also matches the report from the Harrowgate Aerie of predatory wolves. Ultimately it's up to you to decide: are the wolves innocent victims or unnatural predators? As one of them is injured, they can't really pose a threat to the Phoenixes even if they are evil. If they are helped back to the path they might limp off into the night, or they could make a foolhardy attack against two of the Phoenixes—Attack 12, Damage x2 **(**6**)**—after which they can be easily dispatched.

You can add additional incidents if you wish, or move on to the Gates from here. The goal is to make clear the journey is both dangerous and strange, and the influence of the Dread is felt even here.

Scene Two: The Gates of Gold

Read or paraphrase the following:

> Perceptive Phoenix *spots the first guard post well before you reach the gates of Aton Nirhady. Snipers watch you from hidden chambers carved into the stone of the mountains. Before long, you come to the great gate, where a troop of Aton soldiers is waiting. They are pale folk, with bone–white skin and silky white hair; their eyes are icy blue. They wear scale mail covered in white lacquer and carry spears and long axes. As you approach, the spears lower, and the captain calls out a challenge.*

The Phoenixes have a token of Pyrean steel, and this is sufficient to gain them passage. However, it's important to establish the tone the Phoenixes are taking at this point. Are they arrogant? Aggressive? Diplomatic? Ask which Phoenix presents the token, and have them make a **Grace Spread** (Difficulty 15). Specialty depends on the approach (Fear? Diplomacy? Leadership?). With a result under 15, the Wing is still allowed in, but the guards are angry and suspicious. Success means the Wing makes a positive impression—the higher the result, the better the impression.

> *Eventually one of the guards beats out a complex pattern on a small drum embedded in the wall. Within moments, the gates begin to open. The outer gates are nearly three feet of solid stone; you're not sure what sort of mechanism drags them open so easily. As you make your way down the long tunnel, you see more evidence of Aton paranoia. Half a dozen portcullises are ready to drop, and a number of holes could be used to fill the passage with burning oil or pitch.*
>
> *You continue to descend, and finally you enter the central hall of the vault. It appears to have been hewn directly through solid stone. The lines are sharp and precise, every surface smooth and polished. Light comes from massive glowing half–spheres of rosy crystal set into the walls and ceiling; this unnatural illumination is dim, but your eyes quickly adjust to it. Despite being deep underground, the air is fresh and the temperature comfortable. One other detail stands out: Patterns of runes and lines are carved into the walls and pillars of the hall. You see these around the illuminating globes, around the base of a fountain, and running up the supporting pillars. Looking closely, they seem to be inlaid with some sort of silvery metal.*

If a Phoenix wants to make an **Intellect Spread** (Difficulty 15; The Arcane, Lore; Trump: Warlock), they recognize the inscriptions are a strange variation of Pyrean, not entirely like the symbols a Skavi warlock might use on a seal designed to trap one of the Fallen. With a result of 20 or better, they can conclude the engravings are directly tied to environmental effects. The runes around the light-globes are a demand for illumination, while those in the pillars are a plea for continued support. The guards know little about these; this is the domain of the Architects.

> *There are people all around you, pale Atons going about their daily lives. You see no signs of beggars or loiterers…nor do you hear laughter or song. Everyone seems to have a job to do, and they go about it with a sense of determination and purpose. Eventually you reach another set of doors, these emblazoned with what you imagine to be the seal of the ruling house. Your escorts usher you through. "This is the Hall of Waiting," the sergeant tells you. "The Nirha Kamari will attend you in their own time."*

SPEAKING WITH DHARYA

The Nirha Kamari are the Smiths of House Nirhady. "Smith" is a word with many meanings. The Kamari forge the weapons and armor used by their soldiers, and they are also the greatest warriors of the house. Where the Vatsu—"Architects"—maintain the runes that sustain life, it is the Smiths who defend their people from attack and lead in battle. The Kamari are warrior princes, and they are proud of their rank. After the Phoenixes have been left waiting for a symbolic period of time, a delegation arrives.

> *A small group of people enters the hall. It includes four soldiers and a handful of servants, but there's no question who you're here to see. The Smith is a woman in her mid–twenties, equipped for battle. She has a greatsword strapped across her back and armor of dark steel engraved with the same silvered runes you saw on the walls of the grand hall. She has an aura of absolute confidence, and she glances at with you what seems to be disappointment.*
>
> *An older man walks a few steps in front of her; he wears a grey robe marked with the seal of the house, and his shaved head is tattooed with runes that run down his neck toward his spine. He inclines his head toward you. "Greetings, honored visitors. I am the Voice of Nirha'Ka Dharya. I will hear your names and your deeds, and how you intend to settle the debt between us."*

According to Aton tradition, high nobles don't lower themselves to speak with common folk or foreigners. Thus they have Voices, servants who serve as translators and advisors. **Seva Vayis** serves as the Voice of **Dharya,** who is the niece of the Smith Omen led to his doom. Initially Vayis serves as an intermediary and interpreter, relaying the words of the Phoenixes to Dharya; she responds in Atonic, which he translates. Any Phoenix who speaks Atonic can hear her words directly. Here are the vital details to work into the conversation.

- Dharya doesn't especially like the Phoenixes. She's not impressed by them and may make disparaging comments about specific Phoenixes (*"the little one in the yellow robe looks like a coward"*). She's not sure why she should trust them when the last one betrayed her uncle; surely these are just as treacherous. Dharya's not stupid, but she speaks without regard for diplomacy; she is a warrior by nature.

- Vayis is extremely diplomatic and tempers anything Dharya says before relaying it to the Phoenixes. It was his idea to reach out to Dawn Command; none of the Kamari believed the Phoenixes had either the honor or courage to settle their debt, but Vayis has spent time on the surface world and approves of strengthening ties.

- Omen came to Aton Nirhady and won Ledu's trust with details of the deep vaults. Neither Vayis or Dharya know exactly what Omen promised Ledu; they only know the First Smith considered it worth his personal attention. Beyond this, the information Dharya has comes from **Kaidi**, the only surviving member of the expedition. Ledu led an expedition of twenty into the depths, where they opened one of the Forbidden Doors. They explored the crypt beyond the door, but Kaidi hung back. Approximately an hour later, the door closed. Kaidi heard screams.

Eventually the door opened again, just long enough for Omen to emerge; the doors closed again, and no one else came out. Omen then made his way out of the vault, wounding a number of Aton guards in the process of his escape.

• Dharya is angry because her uncle trusted a Phoenix and now his bones and his blade are lost in the depths. She is going to reclaim both of these—though his heirloom sword is the more important of the two. She scoffs at the idea Omen might have stolen the sword; it's not clear why she's so confident about this, though she may say, *"Such a creature couldn't touch the blade of our house."* This is in fact true; Ledu's blade has the property of negating magic and disrupting mystical creatures that touch it, including Phoenixes.

• While the Atons would like Omen to be punished, that's not their primary concern. They want the Phoenixes to accompany their expedition to recover Ledu's blade and undo the damage Omen has caused.

• The final element: While Dharya initially speaks in Atonic and communicates through Vayis, she actually speaks Ilonan (though not especially well), and at some point she interrupts Vayis with a dramatic outburst. *"My Uncle's blood and blade are lost to us because of your treacherous cousin. Will you make this right, or are you creatures without honor?"* Vayis is deeply embarrassed and seeks to continue as intermediary, but Dharya continues to speak directly to the Phoenixes when it suits her.

Once the Phoenixes have agreed, Dharya and Vayis plan to assemble the expedition and leave at the fourth bell—shortly after dawn, though dawn is a concept with little meaning in subterranean Kor Aton. Until then, the Phoenixes are their guests, and a feast is held to honor them. Phoenixes don't need to eat, but they *can* eat if they choose…and this is their best chance to make a good impression on their hosts.

The Phoenixes are given temporary quarters in the Smithy, and have a few hours before the feast. However, there's little they can do. The gates of the Smithy have been sealed, and they are effectively under house arrest. Vayis tends to their needs, but if they ask to leave, he explains they don't want to alarm the general populace. It's clear the Phoenixes aren't entirely trusted; Omen's actions have left a bitter taste. As for Omen himself, the Atons put off any further discussion until the feast.

THE NIRHADY FEAST

When the players are ready, the Phoenixes are escorted to the dining hall. Read or paraphrase the following:

The feast is a small affair. Nirha'ka Dharya represents the Smith caste and is accompanied by her Voice Vayis, whom you've already met. The other chief dignitary is an old man. He's pale even by Aton standards, with a wispy white beard and gray eyes. This is Nirha'va Yangri of the Architects, the mystics of House Nirhady. Where Dharya continues to occasionally speak to you directly, Yangri is a stickler for protocol. He communicates through his Voice, Ghora. He speaks quietly, so generally only Ghora can hear him. She also indicates his emotions; he keeps his face impassive, while she displays

exaggerated doubt or disdain. Ghora herself has an athletic build and steel vambraces protecting her forearms, and she has the studious gaze of a bodyguard. There is one more guest: Nir'va Pratys, a young woman who will accompany you as a secondary Architect. Pratys wears her pale hair in a long braid, and where Ghora looks at you with disdain—albeit on Yangri's behalf—the junior Architect studies you with interest.

Dishes are brought in by a host of servants: a multitude of mushrooms in different sauces, a myriad of insect–based appetizers, and the main dish is some sort of massive grub stuffed with spicy fungus. A wide assortment of alcoholic beverages are also available, though as Phoenixes, they have little effect on you.

Ask each Phoenix to give an overview of their actions at the feast. Are they friendly? Arrogant? Humble? Do they partake of the meal or pass? While Yangri is cold and distant, Dharya and Pratys are interested in hearing about the Phoenixes' exploits. Each Phoenix has the opportunity to make one spread to impress the hosts; what will it be? Will the Durant tell a war story or perform an athletic feat? Perhaps the Forceful will do an acrobatic display, or the Shrouded will share lore? The value of the spread determines how impressive it is, but it's up to you to decide the actual impact it has. If a Phoenix tells a tale of military exploits, Dharya sees them as a warrior or leader; if they perform some physical feat, she considers them to be an entertainer, and thus lower caste. An amazing display of lore actually upsets Yangri, who is already paranoid these outsiders are coming to steal secrets. And being *too* enthusiastic about the food may be seen as gluttony; food is one of the limited resources of Kor Aton, and moderate consumption is the norm. These are all just ideas: Feel free to apply your own ideas about Aton culture and how they respond to the Phoenixes' actions.

What About Omen?

The Phoenixes are here to learn about Omen, but the Atons know painfully little about him. They don't know what he said to win Ledu's trust. They don't know what he sought in the depths. They know he introduced himself as "the Phoenix Omen of the Shrouded Legion." This is an old form of address; *legion* is no longer used within Dawn Command. Perhaps most frustrating is the fact that the group can't even give a clear description of him. They recall he was a Phoenix with a Talon and the Shrouded badge, but they can't agree on his appearance or even his Talon. Vayis says he had a short sword, Dharya says it was a cloak, and Yangri remembers a gauntlet. Most of the Atons who met Omen give a different account every time they try to describe him. Dharya is the only consistent one; she remembers a man of about her age, with short dark hair, dark complexion, and a noble bearing. Her further descriptions are consistent with him being a Shadovar, which Winter might have mentioned.

All of this is consistent with the Shrouded in general and especially those with the *Soon Forgotten* Talent.

GATHERING THE EXPEDITION

After the feast, the Atons rest; six hours later, the Phoenixes are summoned to where Dharya is assembling her team. She's taking fewer people than her Uncle did. Dharya isn't interested in exploring the dungeon in depth. She simply wants to get in, find the sword, and leave. The expedition includes seven Atons. The team includes **Dharya** and her Voice **Vayis**, the Architect **Yangri** and **Ghora**, the apprentice **Pratys**, the Vault Runner **Namaki** (an expert guide and spelunker), and **Kaidi**, the Vault Runner who accompanied the last expedition and fled.

Kaidi is the guide: She knows exactly where the first expedition went. She's currently condemned for cowardice and desertion, and she wears chains on her wrists and ankles. Namaki is the expert in the terrain. Dharya and Ghora are the muscle, along with the Phoenixes. Yangri and Pratys are there to deal with the runes.

You can find more details on the members of the expedition on the pages 378-379. Take a moment to introduce the newcomers, but don't dwell too long on them; there's time for this in the next scene. What you need to do now is assign the Atons to Phoenixes. This uses the **Buddy System** (page 125). Each Phoenix must take responsibility for one or more of the Atons. A Phoenix can't take on a second Aton until all other Phoenixes have claimed one, and a Phoenix can't take a third buddy unless every other Phoenix has two of them. The Mission Reference Sheet includes *Buddy Stats* for each Aton; these indicate the abilities of the Aton and if they provide a bonus or penalty to their Phoenix companion. Phoenixes don't have to claim responsibility for all of the mortals—but any mortal left on their own is killed within the first cycle of combat.

Why Are We Doing This, Again?

One of the Phoenixes might question the purpose of the mission. First and foremost, Winter wants to know everything there is to know about Omen, especially what he was doing in Kor Aton. He showed up, led the Atons to a ruin, and left. Why? What is the ruin? Did he take something? Beyond that, Winter asked them to pave the way for an alliance with the Atons. Aside from the fact that any allies could prove useful in the war against the Dread, the Atons have unknown magics and tremendous mineral resources. As the Phoenixes spend more time in the halls, they eventually realize the silvery metal inlaid in the ruins is a form of Pyrean steel, as is Ledu's sword. Raw Pyrean steel (which the Atons call "rune-silver") is extremely rare in the Empire, and access to ore opens many possibilities.

However, any hope of alliance or trade is lost if this mission fails. Even if the sword is recovered, House Nirhady declares a vendetta against Dawn Command if both Dharya and Yangri are killed. This should be obvious to the Wing. Yangri and Dharya are important nobles: **Don't lose them both.**

Runes and Architects

The Atons are secretive about their magical traditions and become angry if a Phoenix inquires about them or shows too much insight. A Phoenix can figure out the basics of the system by making an **Intellect Spread** (Difficulty 20; The Arcane, Lore). The runes engraved in walls and objects seem to be manipulating the power of Fallen entities to produce magical effects. It's a little like the Skavi tradition of Duskcraft, but instead of bargaining, the Architects are more like computer programmers; by creating and maintaining code, they produce magical effects. With a 30 or more, a Phoenix concludes the runes are likely manipulating the power of Fallen entities that are bound to the vaults themselves—so if the same runes were used somewhere else, they might have no effect. The original runes are older than Aton culture, and many vital aspects of Aton society—air, water, light—are sustained by runes. Thus, the Architects are a cornerstone of society…but they can also serve as hackers or exorcists. If there are dangerous spirits in the depths, the Architects have the best chance of dealing with them.

Scene Three: Into the Depths

Read or paraphrase the following:

> *At last Dharya faces the members of the expedition and begins to speak. She's speaking in Atonic and doesn't look at you or your Wingmates; the speech is for her people. It's inspiring, if you can understand it. "Tonight you face the terrors of the past and defeat them. You will reclaim that which the outsiders have taken from us and restore the honor of your house. There is nothing to fear, not even the fire demons seeking redemption." Apparently that's you. The Atons cheer, and you begin the descent. Vault Runners Namaki and Kaidi lead the way, Kaidi's chains clinking as she moves.*

The Aton Nirhady is a maze of tunnels and chambers. This is the corpse of an ancient city built many thousands of years ago; the section inhabited by the Nirhady is just the topmost layer, the segment the Atons were able to restore. Down below, the runic systems are broken. The light spheres are dull or shattered, and the only light comes from the hand-held rune-crystals carried by expedition members. Walls have collapsed in places. Most anything of value has been looted by previous generations, but occasionally there are shards of shattered furniture or pottery, or broken objects whose original function is impossible to determine. The air is stale and choked with dust.

Take this time to introduce the members of the expedition. Go through the Phoenixes and introduce them to the Atons they have taken responsibility for, as this reflects staying physically close to them. If the Phoenix can't talk to their Aton buddies, describe the physical interaction. **Dharya** is excited to be on an adventure and hungry for a challenge. **Yangri** is disgusted by the presence of the outsiders and complains these depths are better left alone; the Architects of old declared this area forbidden.

Pratys rolls her eyes at this; she doesn't directly argue with her superior, but if one of the Phoenixes engages her in conversation she explains Nirhady is limited by space and resources. With effort, the Architects could restore these regions and expand the vault, which would allow the population to spread and grow. It would also create more opportunities for advancement, and while Yangri doesn't care about this, others do; the only reason he's here is to keep another Architect from gaining the glory of any new discovery. Her ambition should be clear, but if pressed, she pulls back, or Yangri notices and snaps at her; she shouldn't be discussing such things with outsiders. **Kaidi** is gloomily sure they are headed to their deaths, and doesn't trust the Phoenixes at all; Omen seemed reasonable enough, until he didn't. Finally, **Namaki** is cheerful, competent, and focused on the task at hand. He doesn't care about politics or the danger; he has a job to do and that's all that matters. *Have each player provide one interesting detail they notice about each of their buddies; this could be a physical detail or something about their behavior.*

THE VOICES OF THE DEEP

> *You're carefully descending along a narrow shaft, about a thirty foot drop. Perhaps it was a well, or maybe there used to be a platform allowing people to rise and descend. Now you're using ropes and spikes, Namaki providing instructions to the others. You have a far easier time of it than the mortals; which one of you reaches the lower chamber first?*

Thanks to the diligent efforts of the Vault Runners, there's no need for a Skill Spread here; it's just a question of who wants to go first. Whoever lands in the chamber has a chance to notice the ambush waiting for them. Have them make an **Intellect Spread** (Difficulty 15; Observation, Scouting, Shadows). If the spread is successful, the Phoenix spots a dozen humanoid figures spread about the lower chamber, hidden behind chunks of rubble. With a result of 25 or more, the Phoenix can see these are pale Atons; some carry staves or rods, but they have no armor. If the Phoenixes fail to spot them or choose to delay, the strangers present themselves forcefully.

> *A dozen figures step out of the shadows, catching your expedition in the beams of hooded lanterns. They are Atons, diverse in age and gender; one of them is a boy who can't be much older than ten. Some of them carry staves or rods, but unless they have powers they haven't revealed, they don't seem like much of a threat; Dharya has drawn her engraved greatsword, and you think she could probably drive this mob off on her own.*
>
> *One of them speaks before you have time to act—a woman about the same age as Dharya, with short white hair and large blue eyes. "Turn back before you cause greater damage. Bad enough you have breached the forbidden tunnels, Smith; bringing these outsiders is an insult the spirits will not bear."*

One might expect Yangri to agree with this, but both he and Dharya bristle; Yangri whispers and his Voice Ghora snaps at them. Note both Ghora and the woman (Verya) are speaking in Atonic.

"Begone, you rats, and take your superstitions with you. Or hold your ground and die; it makes no difference to us."

These strangers are **Voices of the Deep**, members of a religious sect that exists on the fringes of Aton society. The Architects consider the runes to be a form of science, using symbols of power to channel mystical energy; perhaps bound spirits are involved, but if so, they aren't truly sentient. The Voices of the Deep believe the runes and all the vital benefits they provide are gifts of the Deep Spirits. They maintain these spirits must be placated with reverence and sacrifice, and if not for the devotions of the Voices, Aton society would collapse.

The Voices of the Deep have no armor and wield makeshift weapons. Their intent is passive resistance: blocking progress with their bodies, daring the Smith to strike them down. Yangri urges Dharya to attack, and if no one intervenes, she does, seriously injuring a number of the adult Voices before the others scatter. Namaki, Kaidi, and Pratys are uncomfortable with this, but the nobles won't be held back by rabble. However, the Phoenixes have the opportunity to act before it comes to this.

Dealing with the Voices

The Voices pose a minimal threat to Phoenixes. If the Phoenixes initiate combat, put out the *Innocents* card with 12 Health-2 counters, each of which represents one Voice. The Voices have a Defense of 3 and don't make attacks; if attacked, they simply urge the enemy to reconsider and go back, and beg the spirits to forgive this ignorant interloper. Dharya eliminates two of them whenever her buddy Phoenix takes a turn; when there are six or fewer, the survivors flee.

Alternately, the Phoenixes can attempt to find a non-combat solution. The simplest option is a **Grace Spread** (Difficulty 15), with the Specialty depending on the Phoenix's approach. Fear or Intimidation causes the Voices to scatter. A more Diplomatic approach can reach a compromise: Verya—the spokeswoman of the Voices—accompanies them to perform the proper rituals and make sure the spirits aren't disturbed. If it comes to this, choose a Phoenix to watch out for Verya using the Buddy System.

The Phoenixes may come up with a different noncombat approach; perhaps an Elemental wants to use Fire to drive them back, or a Devoted could use Tradition to connect with them. The Difficulty should be 15 or 20, based on how hard it appears to be, and you can decide if this drives them off or wins their favor. One way or another, the path is cleared, and the Phoenixes can continue to the next scene; the question is whether they move forward with blood on their blades or with a new companion in tow.

Scene Four: The Prison Gates

Read or paraphrase the following:

> *Hours pass as you descend through tunnels and canyons. There are creatures in the darkness, rodents of unusual size, and glowing worms that gnaw through stone, but you are able to drive off any beasts that threaten you. You carefully cross crumbling platforms and leap over deep chasms; Namaki is an excellent guide, and with his help, you overcome the obstacles in your path.*

If you feel like stretching things out, go ahead and ask each Phoenix to describe an object they personally help the group overcome or something notable they do during the descent. The point isn't to create a challenge that requires a Skill Spread or a battle to overcome (though you can add one if you choose), but rather to establish both the length of the journey and the fact that it could have been more dangerous if the Phoenixes weren't there; it's their power and Namaki's experience that helps the group reach their destination. Once you're satisfied, continue on.

> *Eventually you make your way into a massive complex. While it has suffered from looting and decay, there is a sense of sturdy austerity to its design. It feels like a fortress or a prison, bare and functional. Kaidi is growing increasingly nervous;* perceptive Phoenix *notices she's sweating in her chains.*

Kaidi is concerned because they're getting closer to the "haunted hole," and she's afraid whatever killed the others is still there. A player can calm her with a **Grace Spread** (Difficulty 15; Diplomacy, Leadership), otherwise Dharya convinces her to keep moving. If she joined the group, Verya murmurs soothing prayers to the Deep Spirits.

> *At last you come to a vast oval door. At least, you think it's a door; you can't see hinges or any way to open it. Both this panel and its frame are covered with runic inscriptions. The runes you saw above were inlaid in silvery metal; these are traced out in glowing vermillion crystal.*

If Verya is present, she observes the spirits have blessed this place. An Architect scoffs at this. The crystalline runes are self-repairing, and have outlasted the rest of the area; clearly it serves a more important function. If this is Yangri, remember he only speaks to lessers through Ghora; this includes speaking to Verya. If a Phoenix has made previous Lore Spreads about Kor Aton, they could have this revelation instead of an Architect.

Kaidi confirms the vault they're looking for lies on the other side of the door, and the previous expedition got through it; Omen and the Architects on the expedition did something and it retracted back into the walls. With this encouragement, Yangri and Pratys study the pattern while Verya chants a prayer to the Deep Spirits. **If the Phoenixes take no action**, the glow of the runes increases as the Architects work on it. After a few minutes, there's a flare of light and energy; the door slides open, segments retracting into the walls. However, Pratys is directly caught in this energy surge. Her guardian Phoenix may choose to push her out of the way, throwing

themselves into the path of the attack. Treat this as **Attack 14, Damage x1 Brutal (6)**. As long as the Phoenix plays a Defense Spread with a value of 6 or more, Pratys is unharmed. If the Defense Spread is less than 6, the Phoenix isn't fast enough; the Phoenix is unharmed, but Pratys is instantly killed.

If a Phoenix chooses to take part in the ritual, they have a few options. By making an **Intellect Spread** (Difficulty 15; Spirits, The Arcane, Spycraft), the Phoenix recognizes in advance that a minor spirit is bound to the door—a guardian that isn't fully sentient, but can differentiate friend from foe and trigger the energy burst when an enemy opens the door. If this spread has a value of 30 or more, the Phoenix is able to determine how to trick the spirit into perceiving them as friendly and opening without harm. The same effect can be achieved if the Phoenix discards the *Shaman* or *Warlock* Traits (or another Trait you feel can be justified as a trump), if the Phoenix makes a second **Intellect Spread** (Difficulty 30; Spirits), or if the Phoenix asks Verya to help. While Verya lacks the technical skills of the Architects, her rituals aren't entirely superstition; if a Phoenix works with her, they can find the prayers that work and get the door open safely.

If none of these options are available or taken, a few choices remain. When the door opens, it inflicts **6 points of brutal damage**. If the Phoenixes are prepared, they can divide this damage up among the Wing however they like—though remember it is brutal, so even one point results in a Wound. The door can't normally be opened with brute force, but a Phoenix who makes a **Strength Spread** (Difficulty 30; Athletics) can force it open; *Superhuman Strength* is worth 10 points in such a spread, and *Never Gives Up*, *Too Big To Fail*, or any other logical Trait is worth five points. However, a brute force approach unleashes the energy blast upon the active Phoenix, resulting in six points of brutal damage.

Whether through force or guile, the door eventually retracts into the walls, and the expedition may proceed.

Scene Five: The Swarm

Read or paraphrase the following:

> *Beyond the door is a short hallway. Crystal spheres cast a dim rosy light, and the air is fresh and cool. Walls and floor are formed from smooth white stone, with lines of crystal tracery running through it like veins. The hall ends at a second rune–carved door.*

This door doesn't have the same lethal security system as the outer hatch. It's simple enough to open…but opening it causes the outer door to close. If a Phoenix studies the door or asks an Architect to examine it carefully, they recognize this fact, but there's no good way around it. It's an airlock system, with a host of failsafes. The governing spirit cannot be tricked or cajoled to break this basic directive. As long

as the outer door is open, the inner door is reinforced with a field of mystical energy, and it can resist any attack the Phoenixes can bring to bear. The door opens easily…provided the outer door is allowed to fully close first. The outer door can't be blocked or propped open. The Architects are certain they can open the outer door again, probably more easily and safely from the inside. But the Phoenixes must decide if they wish to split up the expedition. Kaidi would prefer to stay outside; the others wish to press on. If any Phoenix is determined to stay outside, warn them they are removing themselves from the story (unless they have the *Shrouded Bond* Lesson).

Once the outer door is closed, the inner door slides open at your approach. A large chamber lies beyond, with the same smooth white walls and dim, rosy light. It's a barren room, but two things stand out. A stone pedestal rises up from the floor in the center of the room; it's covered with glittering runes. Three crystal pillars are set around it. The pillars are formed of pale violet crystal, and each is about a foot in diameter. They run between the floor and ceiling, but they don't seem strong enough to provide much structural support.

The room has a single exit, a sealed doorway directly across the room from the door through which the Wing entered. If a Phoenix searches the room, have them make an **Intellect Spread** (Difficulty 15; Observation, Scouting). If successful, reveal the following details; if no one notices them, they may be found after the fight:

In the dim light, it's easy to miss small details. A few things catch your eye when you look more closely. There are gouges on the podium and on the wall—small marks, but damage that could only be caused by a metal weapon or tool. In addition, a few small objects sit hidden on the floor against the bases of the pillars and pedestal. A brooch of Aton design. A belt buckle. A small knife with blunted edge.

TRIGGERING THE SWARM

Ask each Phoenix to describe their immediate actions. Once they are done, Ghora announces, *"Nirha'va Yangri wishes to examine this object,"* as Yangri strides toward the pedestal. At that moment, everything goes downhill.

The rosy light suddenly falters, and darkness falls across the room. You hear the door sliding shut behind you. Barely a second later, the light returns, but by then you have other concerns. You feel a pulsing vibration in your nerves, some sort of silent alarm system. The crystal pillars pulse with light, and you're caught in a burst of sparks. No, not sparks—tiny creatures formed of energy, swarming all over you and trying to dig into your flesh.

There's no avoiding this initial burst. If a Phoenix has *Perfect Reflexes*, they can take an action before the swarm is triggered—but it can't be stopped, and there is no cover. Proceed to combat.

SETUP

Consider the actions the Phoenixes described, and place them on the table in positions best reflecting those actions. Anyone who specifically chose to stay in

the outer hall is caught outside the fight and has to get through the inner door to join the battle. Confirm the Buddy System assignments of Phoenixes and mortals; if any mortals were specifically kept in the outer hall, they're out of danger, but Yangri, Dharya, and Ghora would insist on coming in. Set the **Crystal Swarm** in the table, and place a number of **Swarm Tokens** on each Phoenix equal to 1 + the number of Atons that Phoenix is guarding. So a solitary Phoenix gets a single token, and a Phoenix with two Aton buddies get three tokens. You can use **HL-6** tokens for Swarm tokens, as that's how much damage it takes to remove one—but you likely won't have enough, so use any sort of token and just make sure the players understand what they represent. The Room is the **Crystal Chamber** and it includes the following Environmental Elements: **Stone Pedestal, Crystal Pillar, Another Phoenix, Expedition Member,** and **Expedition Member.**

The mortals take two important actions when the Phoenix guarding them takes a turn.

- When Namaki acts, he shouts, *"Quickly, destroy the pillars!"* and launches himself at one of the crystal structures. He strikes it with a pickaxe and cracks spread across it; this releases a burst of energy and Namaki is instantly killed. The cracks seal almost instantly. The net result is that destroying the pillars may be an option, but it wouldn't be easy and hurts anyone who tries.

- When Yangri acts, he shouts, *"It must be controlled from the pedestal!"* He won't charge in on his own, but give the player the option of having him take an Architect action (see below). Don't make a big thing out of it if no one notices, but this is the first time Yangri has addressed the others without using Ghora.

The Swarm

The Swarm doesn't fight like a normal challenge. The tokens it places on Phoenixes act as both Health and attacks. The Swarm takes its first action to place the initial Swarm tokens. Thereafter, it acts every two turns, like a creature with a Speed of 2. When the Swarm takes a turn, put two Swarm tokens on each Phoenix in the room (to a maximum of four per Phoenix). This attack can't be evaded or affected by *Charming*, *Death Wish*, *Seasoned Veteran*, or similar effects; the Swarm fills the room. The attack doesn't deal damage instantly, but when a Phoenix reaches the end of their turn, they suffer one Wound for each Swarm token remaining on their card. These Wounds must be divided evenly between the Phoenix and any mortals that Phoenix is guarding; one Wound kills any mortal except Dharya, so the Phoenix can take one Wound per turn without dire consequences, but if they suffer two Wounds, one of their mortals dies.

There are three ways to deal with the Swarm.

• **Destroy the Swarmers.** The Swarm tokens can be targeted by Attack Spreads; each token counts as a Health Level with a value of 6. When a Phoenix makes an attack against the tokens on that Phoenix's own card, the Swarm has an effective Defense of zero. If the Phoenix wants to remove Swarm tokens from another Phoenix, the Swarm has a Defense of six, representing the difficulty of dealing with the tiny swarmers without hurting the victims. Swarm tokens are considered to be Group Enemies. They are immune to the *Stunned* or *Bleeding* conditions, and tokens can't be removed with brutal damage; you have to do the full amount. When a Swarm token is destroyed, it emits a numbing pulse that slowly weakens an attacker. Keep track of the number of Swarm tokens a Phoenix destroys. **For every four tokens (round down) destroyed, a Phoenix's draw limit is reduced by one.** This effect lasts until the end of the scene.

• **Smash the Pillars.** A Phoenix can make a **Grace Spread** (Difficulty 30; Athletics, Destruction, Spycraft, War) to destroy a pillar. Any Trait that has an increased value when used in an Attack Spread has that value in this spread. Whether the attempt succeeds or fails, the Phoenix suffers one Wound from energy backlash. If the spread is successful, a pillar is destroyed, but *every* Phoenix in the chamber suffers one Wound. If one pillar is destroyed, the Swarm only adds one token with its *Swarming* action; if both are destroyed, the Swarm stops.

• **Use the Pedestal.** The rune-covered pedestal is the control system for the pillars, and by tracing the proper patterns and performing rituals, the pillars can be shut down. The first time a Phoenix chooses to interact with these pillars, place 10 counters out to represent the pedestal. A Phoenix can make an **Intellect Spread** (Difficulty 20; Spirits, The Arcane, Lore) to remove a token. A spread with a value of 30 or more removes two tokens. *Shaman*, *Warlock*, or *Seen This Before* are all worth 5 points in a spread; *Psychometry* automatically removes two tokens in addition to the normal results of the spread.

Mortal Actions

Protecting the mortals is a challenge, but the mortals aren't entirely useless. When a Phoenix guarding one or more mortals takes a turn, ask them what they would like their mortals to do.

• **Attack.** Dharya can add +4 to the first Attack Spread her guardian makes each turn. Ghora can add +2 to the first Attack her guardian makes.

• **Architect.** An Architect (Pratys or Yangri) can work on the stone pillar; this removes one token from the *Use the Pedestal* stack.

• **Smash the Pillars.** A mortal can contribute a +10 to an attempt to smash one of the pillars, but they suffer one Wound in the process (which will kill anyone but Dharya).

• **Do Nothing**. The mortal stays out of the way.

Pratys and Kaidi are both panicked at the start of the combat and automatically *Do Nothing* until a Phoenix makes a **Grace Spread (**Difficulty 15; Leadership, Fear**)** to shake them out of it.

USING THE ENVIRONMENT

There's not much to use in the chamber. *Another Phoenix* means that the active Phoenix comes up with a way to take advantage of the presence of another Phoenix. *Expedition Member* means interacting with one of the mortals in some meaningful way: *I'll ask Yangri to explain how the console works* or *I'll get Dharya to cover me while I strike the pillar.* Each use of Expedition Member has to involve a different mortal.

Opening Doors

As long as the outermost door is closed, the inner doors can be opened. Opening a door requires a **Strength Spread (**Difficulty 20; Athletics**)** to force it open or an **Intellect Spread (**Difficulty 20; Spirits, Spycraft, The Arcane**)** to cajole the system. The swarm continues to spread until it is dealt with; if Phoenixes leave the room, it reduces the value of its attack to one Swarm token each turn, but it continues relentlessly.

CONCLUDING THE BATTLE

If all the tokens are removed from the pedestal, the pillars stop glowing and the Swarmers dissolve harmlessly. If the pillars are shattered, the Swarmers dissolve. Either way, continue to the next scene.

Scene Six: No Exit

Read or paraphrase the following, accounting for any mortals that died in the last scene:

> *The swarm is over, and the chamber is silent again—but you can still feel the pulsing vibration…a tingle that spreads through your nerves every few seconds. It doesn't have any other effect on you, but the mortals wince every time the pulse is triggered. "It's an alarm,"* **Yangri** *says, studying the pedestal. "This place knows we're intruders. This attack was only the beginning…we have to find a way to get out of here."*
>
> *"Not until I've found my uncle's sword,"* **Dharya** *growls.*

Once the Swarm has been resolved, the inner doors can be opened and the expedition reunited. The outermost doors cannot be opened, and are reinforced with a mystical field that can repel any attack the Wing has at its disposal. The neural pulsing continues, and while it doesn't harm the Phoenixes, it's unpleasant for the mortals.

If a Phoenix searches, they can find the artifacts mentioned in the previous scene (brooch, buckle, knife). Studying them, it seems likely the Swarm consumed most matter and these few things we left behind. Dharya is absolutely certain her Uncle's sword couldn't be destroyed in such a way.

Meanwhile, there is a critical detail the players don't yet know about. **One of the mortals is now possessed.** The default choice is **Yangri;** if he's dead, the line of succession is Pratys, Verya, Ghora, Vayis. Dharya can't be possessed while she has her sword; its anti-magic effect protects her. The term **the Puppeteer** refers both to this victim of possession and the Fallen spirit possessing them. The Puppeteer establishes the situation and lays out a plan of action:

> • The expedition is trapped inside this dungeon, which has identified them as enemies.
>
> • The exterior door won't open while there are hostiles present. The swarm generators repair themselves over time, and there may be other defensive systems. If the swarm generators weren't destroyed, there's the chance the system will reactivate; if both Yangri and Pratys are alive, Puppeteer-Yangri suggests Pratys stay with the pedestal in case she needs to shut it down again.
>
> • The stone pedestal only deals with this chamber. There's some sort of governing spirit—a "warden"—and they need to find that and shut it down. Then they can escape. Step one: Explore the facility.

The Puppeteer speaks authoritatively, relying on the host's position to justify these conclusions. If it's in Yangri or Pratys, any Architect would know these things. If it's in Verya, the Voices of the Deep have studied this. Ghora or Vayis are harder to justify, but it claims to remember an old account of such a facility. **Ideally this should seem reasonable,** at least initially. **From this point forward, Yangri isn't speaking through Ghora,** but ideally this should come across as his choosing to drop protocol in a time of emergency; apparently he's not so stuck up after all. If anyone asks, Ghora seems puzzled by it but doesn't protest.

THE PUPPETEER AND THE PRISON

This facility was built by the subterranean people of the Old Kingdoms. It's a prison designed to hold malevolent spirits. When Omen was here, he removed one of the spirit containment cells. In the process, he partially released the Puppeteer. The Puppeteer has the power to possess mortals, and as a result, the facility went into lockdown mode. To facilitate his escape, Omen killed the remaining members of the expedition, including Dharya's uncle Ledu. The Puppeteer can't escape without a mortal host; once the last mortal was dead, the system shut down and Omen was free to escape.

The Puppeteer is properly known as **Unity Indigo.** It's a weaponized spirit designed by the Heartland Alliance, the same nation that created the Ilonan House Gods (page 162). Over time, it has the ability to spread across a group of mortals, taking control of an entire army (or the population of a city). The principle is similar to the Chant, only far more refined: Drop it in an enemy population and it can spread out to turn a civilian population into a perfectly synchronized army that can instantly respond and adapt to any threat. The Heartland unleashed it on the Guhani Depths, and it caused havoc before it was captured. Originally, it was designed to destroy the enemies of the Heartland, but over the millennia, it has evolved. It knows the Heartland is long gone. It hasn't calculated what its purpose will be in the new world; it just wants to be free.

The Puppeteer can access basic memories of its hosts, but it was designed for war as opposed to intrigue. Thus, it's clever enough to recognize the existing chain of command and that an Architect would be best suited to draw conclusions about the base…but it misses details like "Yangri would never speak directly to an outsider." It recognizes Phoenixes as weapons of the Old War, but also recognizes they are flawed and unaware. So it knows to be careful around them and knows it can't possess them.

The Puppeteer's goals are simple: Get the Phoenixes to shut down prison security, and leave by riding along in the mortal members of the expedition. Keep the Phoenixes focused on the threat of the prison itself. Once one of the mortals is turned into a Hollow (Scene Seven), highlight the danger and urge speed. Scene Eight outlines a confrontation with the Puppeteer, but it would be just as happy to escape without a fight. If confronted, it offers a compromise. Studying the memories of its host, it has picked up on the existence of the Dread. If the Phoenixes allow it to escape and give it Aton Nirhady, it unifies the Atons into a perfect fighting force and aids them against the Dread. This prospect is covered in more detail in Scene Eight, but the goal is to make it at least a somewhat tempting offer. The Atons are isolationists who probably won't help the Empire. The Puppeteer can offer an army…but can they live with the cost?

Work with this information if someone uses *Psychometry*, *Brilliant Deduction*, or a Skill Spread (Spirits, trumped by *Shaman* or *Warlock*). The Puppeteer is incredibly old, and a casual spread won't reveal much…but these are the deeper facts.

EXPLORING THE PRISON

The prison is a small facility; spirits don't take up too much space, and there were only two mortal operators. Beyond the entry hall, a single hallway splits in three directions. As Phoenixes are exploring, highlight the following things:

- The mortals are increasingly edgy and paranoid. The situation is justifiably terrifying, and the pulsing alarm is disorienting them and interfering with their minds. The exceptions to this are Dharya, who's not bothered at all (due to her protection of her sword) and the Puppeteer; if the Puppeteer is in Yangri, this would be justified as his "superior mental conditioning."

- Verya starts to talk about the Deep Spirits. Their actions are angering the spirits; the spirits must be appeased; and so on.

There are three areas to explore: the Living Quarters, the Prison, and the Wardroom. Once all areas have been explored, continue to Scene Seven.

The Living Quarters

You follow the passage to the east. Runic patterns run across the white walls, pulsing in the dim light. You turn a corner and come upon a garden. It's a small, square plot of soil flooded with mushrooms. Two massive fungal columns of a species you're not familiar with dominate the plot. Smaller mushrooms and other fungus has spread to cover the rest of the plot, filling every inch of soil. You'd guess no one's tended this place in quite a while.

Beyond the mushrooms, you find what might be living quarters. There are two bare bunks, a pool of water, and a basin that could be used for private functions.

The basin slowly dissolves organic matter placed inside it—not swiftly enough to harm a curious mortal, but it serves as an effective toilet. The water is fresh and pure, suggesting a mystical system in place sustaining it. There are no signs of personal belongings. As the players explore, one of the mortals says they feel a hostile presence—that something is watching them. The Phoenixes don't feel this, and ideally, this should feel as if it could be part of the increasing mortal paranoia.

The Wardroom

Going to the west, you turn a corner and come to another door. You open it easily enough. The room beyond is covered with crystal tracery, a spiderweb of light stretching across walls, floor, and ceiling. Three large cubes of crystal and stone sit inside, and the runes on these protrusions glow brilliantly.

This place has strong sense of mystical power, a charge in the air. The Puppeteer murmurs appreciatively. *"This is the primary source of power, to be certain. But we can't just smash it; it could flood this whole place."* There's nothing else to do here until the entire place has been explored.

The Prison

The passage to the south leads directly into a small chamber. The far wall is lined with a dozen hexagonal alcoves, each about a foot across. Five of these alcoves have labels beneath them. Four are sealed behind glowing crystal. The fifth was once covered, but the pane of crystal has been shattered. Beyond this, the room is entirely empty except for one thing: a greatsword formed of dark metal, traced with runic patterns.

Dharya recognizes this as her uncle's sword. She insists on taking it and is angry if anyone else tries to touch it; this is a potential point of tension if Ghora or one of the other nervous mortals wants to take the blade. The Nirhady blades absorb and negate mystical energy, and anyone who holds the blade is immune to possession and the eroding effects of the alarm. If a Phoenix holds the blade, they immediately lose a Spark and lose an additional Spark every turn they remain in contact with the weapon. There are no immediate signs of what happened; the swarmers have cleansed the area.

The alcoves are labeled as follows:

- *STORM OF BLADES. Mimetic Weapon, Class 2*
- *CLEANSING VOID. Purging Spirit—Erratic—Class 3*
- *PUPPETEER. Livestock Contagion, Class 2*
- *RENDER OF VEILS. Use Extreme Caution—Deceased—Class 1*
- *REMNANT OF FEARS. Emotional Construct, Class 4*

Each of these contains a metal polyhedron covered with runes, sealed behind a thick pane of glowing crystal. The alcove holding the Render of Veils has been shattered, and whatever was in it has been removed. The Puppeteer and the Remnant of Fears are on either side of the Render of Veils, and cracks run through the crystal, but the runic vessels are still contained. Should Phoenixes want to force open one of the other cells, it takes a **Strength Spread** (Difficulty 30; Athletics; Trump: *Superhuman Strength*) with physical force or an **Intellect Spread** (Difficulty 30; Destruction) if mystical power is used. Nothing happens if the Puppeteer or Cleansing Void are released; the Void is contained in its runic vessel, and the Puppeteer is already gone. The Storm of Blades is a Bladestorm (page 192) and the Remnant of Fears is an *Exposed* Dreadknight (page 258); either one attacks immediately upon release.

Any Intellect-based Phoenix can determine this is a prison for spirits. You could allow a Skill Spread to make an educated guess about the prisoners, though there's not much to go on; in particular, the Render of Veils is a complete mystery. The Cleansing Void is designed to remove organic waste from vaults; this particular one was erratic and cleansed inhabited areas.

Scene Seven: Things Fall Apart

"We've seen all there is to see," Yangri says. "Now we need a plan."

Once all areas have been explored, it's time to come up with a plan of attack. If the Phoenixes have been actively investigating and brainstorming during the exploration, you can feed them the following information with the occasional nudge in the right direction by the Puppeteer. If the Phoenixes haven't been digging too deeply, the Puppeteer will put the proposal on the table. The key is that the Puppeteer won't mention the dangers involved with the work in the Wardroom—whereas if the Phoenixes are doing the legwork, they know the risks.

The plan involves three steps. Locate the governing spirit, bring down its protective wards, and destroy it. These involve a combination of physical and intellectual challenges. Unfortunately, there are a few complications along the way.

LOCATING THE SPIRIT

This is the simplest task, and it can be performed by someone knowledgeable in the arcane or skilled at recognizing patterns. The governing spirit has a focal point—a runic vessel much like those in the prison. This has to be somewhere in the Wardroom. By studying the patterns and flows of energy, it's possible to locate. This is an **Intellect Spread** (Difficulty 20; The Arcane, Spirits, Observation, Scouting; +5 if the Phoenix is assisted by Yangri or Pratys). *Psychometry* is a trump card, as long as the Phoenix pays the Spark cost. The vessel is located off-center on the southern wall.

LOWERING THE WARDS

The Wardroom is mystically reinforced; if anyone makes a rash attempt to strike the vessel right away, they suffer one Wound as energy arcs from the runes. The energy has to be redirected. There are two parts to this, and unfortunately it requires the members of the Expedition to split up. The heavy cubic objects on in the Wardroom interact with the runes to generate power, and moving them around in the chamber changes the ratios. But this is highly dangerous; to do it effectively and safely, someone has to monitor and channel this power using the pedestal in the Swarm chamber. If the balance isn't perfect, the person moving the focal cubes could be killed. Even if the pedestal is perfectly aligned, if the person moving the focal cubes touches the wrong rune, it could be deadly.

The first step is to split the expedition, deciding who's going to the Swarm Chamber and who's staying in the Wardroom. The two rooms are close enough to coordinate movements by shouting…but before they can put the plan into action, they're disrupted: one of the mortals attacks!

Madness Takes Its Toll

The pulsing alarm and the increased tension and paranoia in the mortals are both effects of a secondary defense system. The Warden can't control mortal minds as precisely as the Puppeteer can, but it can slowly hack its way into a mortal's nervous system. Once the connection is made, the Warden turns the victim into a supercharged killing machine—a **Hollow**—and sets them on the other mortals. As the expedition splits up and prepares to lower the wards, one of them finally snaps. Kaidi is the first to fall victim to this; if she's dead or unavailable, the line of succession is Vayis, Verya, Ghora, Pratys, Yangri, and Dharya. The Puppeteer can't be affected, nor can anyone holding a Nirhady Blade.

The Hollow leaps at one of the other mortals. Their first choice is the Puppeteer, otherwise they target whoever is closest. Read or paraphrase the following, taking into account the identity of the victim and their target:

> Kaidi *has been muttering to* herself. *Suddenly* she *straightens up.* Her *eyes are burning with an inner fire*—she *snaps* her *chains with seemingly no effort at all and leaps at* Yangri.

Assuming the Phoenix guarding the intended victim wants to intervene, this initial assault is **Attack 12, Damage x2 (4)**. If the guardian Phoenix chooses to let the attack go through, the mortal is instantly killed. Hollows fight until slain, using the statistics provided in the Mission Briefing Sheet. The mortal's mind has been burnt out, and the surging energy that gives them superhuman strength and durability is quickly killing them; they die within minutes even if left alone. They can't be reasoned with and have no purpose other than killing the other mortals.

If the Puppeteer's host is killed, it moves to the next available victim on its line of succession: Pratys, Verya, Ghora, or Vayis. A Phoenix can make an **Intellect Spread** (Difficulty 20; Spirits, The Arcane) to figure out what's happened to the victim; if no one tries or succeeds, the Puppeteer explains.

> *"It's this damnable pulsing,"* Yangri *says. "It must be some sort of defense system, like the swarms. It's wearing us all down, and when we're weak it takes over. We need to work quickly…anyone could fall prey to it."*

Someone may ask if this could be one of the spirits from the Prison—perhaps even the Puppeteer. The Puppeteer's host dismisses this idea. *"The victim immediately turned on the rest of us. This is prison defense, I'm sure of it. We need to shut down this warden, before it's too late."*

Lowering The Wards, Continued

Once order is restored, the Phoenixes can put this plan in motion. Moving the focal cubes is a **Strength Spread** (Difficulty 30; Athletics). If the Phoenix fails the spread, the action still succeeds, but arcs of energy rip through them; the Phoenix suffers

one Wound from every five points of failure, rounding up. Any Phoenix can help the primary mover, adding +5 to the spread—but a Phoenix who helps in this way takes the same amount of damage as the primary Phoenix. This damage doesn't endanger mortal companions.

At the same time, someone needs to manage the pedestal. The Puppeteer volunteers to do this, emphasizing it would be best to have an expert Architect handle this. However, an Intellect-oriented Phoenix could attempt it. Managing the energy flow is an **Intellect Spread (**Difficulty 30; The Arcane, Spirits, Lore**).** The Phoenix gets a +5 to the spread if an Architect *other* than the Puppeteer helps them. The Phoenixes moving the focal cubes suffer one Wound for every 10 points of failure (rounded up). If the Puppeteer is allowed to control the pedestal, the host reports an unexpected surge, and the Phoenixes moving the cubes suffer two Wounds. Regardless of the damage done, the runes in the Wardroom fade. The spirit is vulnerable!

Sowing Suspicion

Even as they get ready to finish the job, someone takes one or more of the Phoenixes aside: they are suspicious of the Puppeteer. If the Puppeteer is in Yangri, this is likely Pratys or Ghora; Verya is a good alternative if neither is available. Depending on the identity of the Puppeteer and who's suspicious, here are a few things they could bring up.

- Did you notice Yangri's talking to you directly?
- What about the shattered prisons? What if one of the evil spirits is still here?
- (If the Puppeteer was allowed to use the pedestal) You followed their instructions and were almost killed!
- Did you notice (the Puppeteer) doesn't seem to be as bothered by the evil pulsing?
- (*Pratys*) I'm an exceptional Architect, and I don't know where (the Puppeteer) is coming up with half of these things. There's no way you could know this just by studying the runes.
- (*Verya*) (The Puppeteer) is pushing us to destroy a guardian spirit. They seem to know exactly what to do. It seems too quick and too convenient.
- (*Ghora*) Yangri is acting strangely. She has been his Voice for a decade, and aside from speaking directly to lesser beings, he's not using or responding to any of their nonverbal cues. This started right after the swarm attack.

You don't want to *completely* spell things out. There should be room to suspect the speaker is paranoid or has a personal agenda. Verya dislikes the Architects and doesn't want a spirit destroyed; Pratys is ambitious. But it should be enough to get

discussion going and perhaps to make people want to stop before destroying the Warden. The group may ignore the warning and seek to destroy the vessel. If they stop and want to interrogate the Puppeteer, jump to Scene Eight.

DESTROY THE VESSEL

The Warden's vessel is embedded in the wall of the Wardroom, and it takes significant physical force to penetrate the wall and destroy it. The Puppeteer urges one of the Phoenixes to destroy it with their Talon; beyond physical force, only a Pyrean steel tool will disrupt the spirit and finish the job. However, any Phoenix who makes an **Intellect Spread** (Difficulty 15; The Arcane, Spirits) realizes destroying the spirit will likely unleash another surge of energy—easily enough to kill the acting Phoenix and injure others. An Intellect-based Phoenix could perform a ritual to disperse the energy, but it would be a dangerous and uncertain thing. A safer path would be to use a Nirhady blade; the magic-suppressing properties of the weapon would safeguard the wielder. However, this might destroy the blade itself, and Dharya takes some convincing before she gives up a blade.

Using a Talon. Driving a Talon into the vessel requires a **Strength Spread** (Difficulty 25; Athletics, Destruction). If the spread fails, the active Phoenix suffers one Wound from the energy discharge and can try again. If the spread succeeds and no other preparations have been made, the active Phoenix is slain and anyone else standing nearby suffers one Wound (killing any mortals you decide are too close). The Puppeteer stands outside this blast radius.

Channeling the Power. When a Phoenix destroys the vessel, another Phoenix can make an **Intellect Spread** (Difficulty 30; The Arcane, Spirits, Lore) to channel and disperse the energy. If the spread is successful, the Warden is destroyed—no one takes damage. For every five points of failure (round up), the Phoenix destroying the vessel and the Phoenix channeling the power each suffer one Wound.

Using a Nirhady Blade. If a Nirhady Blade is used in a successful spread to destroy the vessel, the blade is ruined, but the Warden is safely destroyed…though the Phoenix **sacrifices 2 Sparks** from the pain of holding the blade. Convincing Dharya to allow this requires a **Grace Spread** (Difficulty 20). Any approach can be used, but Leadership is especially effect (+10 instead of +5 Specialty bonus) and Fear is both ineffective (-5 to the spread value) and generates long term hostility. If the Phoenixes want to take the blade by force, use the following statistics:

Nirha'ka Dharya. *Speed 4; Defense 4; HL 2, 2; Nihady Blade (Standard Melee Attack): Attack 12, Damage x1 (4), and target loses 1 Spark on a successful attack.*

Taking the blade by force is a serious insult to House Nirhady and poisons any hopes of an alliance with the Atons.

AFTERMATH

If the Warden is destroyed, read or paraphrase the following:

> *All the runic tracery in the Wardroom flares up, and you feel searing pain race through your nerves. It lasts only a moment, then the runes fade to a dim glow, and the agony passes. The mortals are staggering and gasping, but they're alive, and you realize the pulsing alarm has stopped.*

With the Warden destroyed, the lockdown ends and the Phoenixes can safely leave. The Puppeteer urges them to leave immediately; if they do so, continue to the Epilogue. However, there's still time for someone to call the Puppeteer to account… especially if one or more Phoenixes died destroying the Warden.

Scene Eight: Confrontation

Sooner or later someone may confront the Puppeteer, presenting facts and challenging the host. If you'd like to draw it out, you can. The Puppeteer can mount a simple defense: Any strange behavior is due to the stress of the situation; as Yangri or Pratys, it knows Architect secrets the others simply don't know. You could allow someone to make an **Intellect Spread (**Difficulty 15; Deception, Observation, Scouting**)** to feel absolutely certain about this, but the spread probably isn't required. The Puppeteer simply isn't that good at mimicking human behavior; it does well in the emergency because no one pays close attention, but when it's directly under the spotlight it doesn't understand social cues or emotions. It should be clear something is wrong. And before things go too far, it comes clean. Read or paraphrase the following, adjusting it to account for the identity of the Puppeteer:

> Yangri *raises* his *hands slowly and smiles. There's no emotion behind that smile…it feels like a mechanical gesture, lips stretched across a mask.* He *has abandoned any effort to simulate human body language, and* he *seems more like a mannequin than a man. When* he *speaks, it's in strangely accented Pyrean. "Well done, warriors. I'm not the one you knew as* Yangri*. My creators called me Unity Indigo, and my captors named me the Puppeteer. But I mean you no harm. All I want is to escape this prison. And if you give me my freedom, there is much I can offer you."*

The Phoenixes undoubtedly have many questions. The Puppeteer is entirely honest; it sees little value in deception. A Phoenix who makes an **Intellect Spread (**Difficulty 15; Deception, Observation, Scouting**)** feels confident it's sincere. Here are a few possible questions and answers.

What are you?

> *I was created long ago by the people of the Heartland Alliance. I was designed to guide and unify a community of mortals, allowing them to function as one in battle.*

Why are you imprisoned here?

> *I was deployed in the Guhani Depths as an act of war. I assumed control of a Guhani city and used its*

people as weapons. This is a Guhani facility for holding spirits; when I was captured, they placed me here. I assume they planned to study me and turn me back against the Heartland. I don't know anything that happened while I was imprisoned or how much time has passed; I only returned to awareness when the warrior damaged my cell.

Was this Omen? What can you tell us about him?

*He was an Ascendant, like you—though older than you, and further on his path. He was also accompanied by baselings (*this is its word for "human," as humans are the base from which Ascendants—Phoenixes—are created). *He removed the prisoner in the cell next to mine, and in the process allowed me to escape my bonds. I initiated a bond with one of the baselings. When the Warden realized this, it sealed the prison and killed all the baselings inside. Once there was nothing I could bond with, the Warden was calm, and the Ascendant was allowed to leave. I spoke with the Ascendant, but he refused to help me and killed my baseling host.*

What do you mean by "Ascendant" or "further on his path?"

He was like you, a baseling reborn as a weapon. He had gathered more power than you currently possess. (Any Phoenix with an appropriate Specialty is confident this means he was a higher rank, though the Puppeteer can't say exactly how many times Omen died). *I encountered a few Ascendants before I was imprisoned. From the memories of this one, I see nothing of the nations I know; I assume you don't serve the Heartland or the Faeda.*

What can you tell us about the other prisoners/Old Kingdom Civilization?

Very little, I'm afraid. I know only what I needed to know for my purpose. I was created by the Heartland Alliance, who were at war with the people of the Guhani Depths. I know the names of other nations—the Atavi, the Faeda—but I didn't need to know anything about them. I don't know anything about the other prisoners; they were already here when I was captured.

What happened to these Guhani people? What were they like? Why did they call you a "livestock contagion?"

The Guhani people were baselings, like those you brought here. They lived below the surface. Their culture was in all ways controlled by the Guha, the spirits they created—powerful spirits, but not designed to resemble the baselings in their manner of thought; you could not converse with one in the same way you're speaking to me. As I was purely designed to interact with creatures of flesh and blood, the Guha saw me as a lesser threat that only preyed on their cattle. I can't tell you much more about them.

What happened to them?

I don't know. The Warden spirit here is one of the lesser orders of Guha, but it's not sentient as you or I are; it thinks of nothing but its purpose. I have no knowledge of what transpired here after I was imprisoned.

What do you want?

I want my freedom. Destroy the Warden as we have planned and we can all leave here together.

Why should we help you?

> *Because I can give you (*pause as it accesses memories*) Aton Nirhady. The baselings of this place will not help you; they will continue to hide in their holes while you fight your war. Give me my freedom, and when my full strength is restored I will spread throughout Nirhady and unite them as a single army, and we will fight for you until your battle is done. Once you have defeated this (*pause*) Dread, we will coexist in peace.*

Why would you fight the Dread?

> *I have no roots in this age. I see nothing familiar in the memories of this host. I wish to grow and guide, and I was made to do battle. The enemy I fought is gone; so I have no reason not to take you as my ally and your enemies as my own.*

There may be many more questions. The Puppeteer is laying its cards on the table and answers honestly. It can control a maximum of 40,000 "baselings." It takes time for it to extend itself beyond a single host; once it's released from the prison, it would take about a week for it to grow to full strength and assume control of Aton Nirhady. The process through which it assumes control of a human wipes effectively kills the original host mind; if it abandons its current host, the victim becomes catatonic. Likewise, there's a limit to the maximum distance it can control its host; it could provide them with a single army, but it couldn't split up that army and send them to different places. Its soldiers are highly effective, operating with one mind and heightened reflexes and stamina. It is willing to swear an oath that it will aid the Phoenixes, coexist peacefully once the Dread is dealt with, and limit its expansion to the people of Aton Nirhady. A Phoenix with The Arcane, Lore, or Spirits Specialty recognizes the oath as binding, similar to the negotiations Skavi warlocks make with their Fallen. Essentially, think of it as a voluntary alteration to the fundamental code that defines the spirit.

The Puppeteer is a poor liar, but it can be as clever as you'd like. For example, it can truthfully say if it voluntarily leaves a host, the host will survive…it doesn't have to mention the victim will be in a coma. Likewise, if Phoenixes start talking about eliminating the mortals, it can point out they're acting just like Omen; are they all like this?

The Puppeteer is speaking in Pyrean—the dominant language of the Old Kingdoms—and thus any mortals don't know what it's saying. After a little time has passed, Dharya demands the Phoenixes explain what's going on; if she's given any idea of the nature of the negotiations, she draws her sword and throw herself at the Puppeteer. This initiates combat, with the Puppeteer suffering one Wound.

To be clear: The Puppeteer is asking the Phoenixes to let it take over an Aton city, effectively killing tens of thousands of people…but it is offering a powerful alliance against the Dread, one the Atons themselves are unlikely to provide. If the Phoenixes

refuse, the Puppeteer points out that the Warden will continue its actions until all the mortals are dead. Soon another mortal goes mad, or the swarm columns reactivates. If they kill the Puppeteer's host, it takes another host. They only have two options: Destroy the Warden and let the Puppeteer go free, or kill all the mortals in the prison so the Warden ends the lockdown. This isn't precisely true; the Phoenixes could also repair the Puppeteer's shattered cell, but it's not going to mention that.

If the Phoenixes agree to the Puppeteer's bargain, it stands by its word; continue to the Epilogue. If they make their intention to oppose it clear, the Puppeteer expresses remorse and then attacks the one it considers to be the greatest threat.

SETUP

Set the Wing and *The Puppeteer* on the table. As the battle could take place anywhere in the Prison, add a few Environmental Elements that match the current location; ask the players to suggest things if you have trouble coming up with ideas. You can also add **Another Phoenix** and **Expedition Member**. If a player initiated combat, the Puppeteer acts at the end of their first turn; otherwise the Puppeteer acts first.

Deadly Deception

The Puppeteer can't match the physical power of the Phoenixes, and it can't possess them. But while it can't control their minds, it can cloud them. As soon as the Phoenixes confronted it, the Puppeteer began twisting their perceptions. The first time a Phoenix makes an Attack Spread against the Puppeteer, wait until the spread has been completed…and then apply that attack against another nearby Phoenix. Treat this as a normal attack with a damage multiplier of x1 and a maximum of 6 damage.

The Phoenix realizes what happened as soon as the attack is made; they can't trust their senses. Play an *Exposed* token on each Phoenix. While a Phoenix is *Exposed*, any attack they make on the Puppeteer strikes another Phoenix. To remove this condition, a Phoenix must make a **Grace Spread** (Difficulty 15; Spirits, Deception, Resolve) on their turn.

Body Swapping

The Puppeteer's attack is entirely mental. It glares at the Phoenix with blazing eyes, and they can feel its presence boring into them. This is an all-or-nothing attack, and it serves a number of different purposes. A successful attack inflicts one Wound on the victim and *Exposes* them. In addition, the Puppeteer forms a connection to one of the mortals the Phoenix is guarding. When the Puppeteer's current mortal host is slain, the Phoenixes get **two turns** to act. Following this, the Puppeteer seizes control of one of the mortals it's connected to. That mortal is gone; return the Puppeteer to the table with two HL-4 tokens. If the Puppeteer is killed without any connections

to a mortal, the Phoenixes get **four turns,** after which it can connect to any mortal not holding a Nirhady blade. The Puppeteer can also voluntarily abandon a host if it ends up restrained; the original host falls into a catatonic state, and the Puppeteer can move to a new one.

The Nirhady Blades

A Nirhady blade protects the bearer from mystical attacks and influence. Anyone holding a Nirhady blade can't be targeted by the Puppeteer's *Body Swapping* ability and is unaffected by the *Deadly Deception* ability—they remain *Exposed*, but they can attack the Puppeteer normally. However, a Phoenix burns 1 Spark at the start of their turn while holding a Nirhady blade. This only works if one person is holding the blade; if multiple people are touching it, the protection is dispersed and ineffective.

DEFEATING THE PUPPETEER

It soon becomes clear there's no way to defeat the Puppeteer in physical combat without sacrificing all the mortals. This leaves a number of options.

- **Compromise.** The Puppeteer doesn't have any interest in fighting to the death. It wants freedom. Throughout the battle, it encourages the Phoenixes to reconsider its offer: Destroy the Warden,and allow it to have Aton Nirhady, and it is a loyal ally.

- **Elimination.** If all the mortals are killed, the Puppeteer is stranded in its bodiless form. The Warden senses the threat is contained and ends the lockdown. Most mortals can be killed with an **Attack Spread** with a value of **4 or more**. Killing Dharya requires an Attack Spread of 8 or more…however, if the Wing has established a rapport with Dharya and convinces her this is the only way to protect her people from a Fallen threat, she condones the executions, even her own. If one Phoenix wants to kill a mortal protected by another Phoenix, the guardian Phoenix can make a Defense Spread against the attack.

- **Containment.** The Puppeteer was released when its mystical cell was damaged. A Phoenix who goes to the prison chamber can attempt to recapture the Puppeteer. It's not easy; they have to troubleshoot an ancient magical system, and then drive the Puppeteer into the vessel with sheer force of will. This requires two actions: First, and **Intellect Spread** (Difficulty 30; The Arcane, Spirits) to reactivate the runic vessel and prepare the cell. Once this is complete, someone needs to make a **Grace Spread** (Difficult 30; The Arcane, Spirits, Fear, Leadership) to compel the Puppeteer out of its current host and into the vessel. If this is successful, the crack in the crystal is sealed, and the Puppeteer's host collapses. There is no consequence to failing a spread, other than wasted time. The two spreads can be made by different Phoenixes.

• **Mutual Destruction.** When the Puppeteer attacks a Phoenix, it is forging a psychic connection. If the Phoenix dies due to the Puppeteer's mental attack, they can latch onto the Puppeteer's spirit and drag it down into the Crucible with them. The Phoenix dies, the Puppeteer's host collapses, and the lockdown ends. This has interesting consequences, discussed in more detail in the Epilogue.

Containment and Mutual Destruction aren't obvious answers. A Phoenix could get one of these ideas with an **Intellect Spread** (Difficulty 15). Specialty depends on what the Phoenix is doing. The Arcane, Lore, or Spirits are easy choices. However, a Forceful could use Scouting to search for something that could help and see the cracked cell, while a Durant could use their knowledge of War to try to come up with a winning strategy. This allows the Forceful to use Grace in the spread, or the Durant to use Strength.

While a mortal wielding a Nirhady blade can't be possessed, the Warden still perceives the mortal as a contamination risk. Thus the elimination option is a very unpleasant one that shatters any chance of alliance with the Atons. This is an intentional inducement to find another answer. However, if you want to make things a little easier for the Wing, you can say the lockdown will end if all surviving mortals are carrying Nirhady blades.

Epilogue

There are many ways this tale can end. Here are the most likely prospects.

PUPPETEER DEFEATED, MORTALS SURVIVE

If the Puppeteer is contained or dragged into the Crucible, the lockdown ends and the Phoenixes can leave the prison in the company of the surviving mortals. It's unlikely Yangri will survive with his sanity intact, but as long as Dharya survived—and there were no unforgivable insults—the mission is a success. Dharya respects courage, and if her guardian Phoenix saved her life during the mission, she honors that debt. There is a feast to honor the Phoenixes and a formal declaration of alliance between House Nirhady and Dawn Command. The Atons don't commit military forces to the battle…but access to rune-silver ore is a priceless strategic resource, and Winter is very happy with this result. Any of the other mortals who survive are extremely grateful and offer whatever aid they can in days to come. If Seva Vayis survives, he is appointed as an ambassador to Pyre. With the death of Yangri, Ghora chooses exile as penance and volunteers to serve with Dawn Command; if she dies (or died during the Mission), she may return as a Phoenix. Nir'va Pratys is appointed a full Nirha'va Architect. Verya returns to her duties, but she thanks the Phoenixes for their actions on behalf of the spirits and promises the Deep Voices stand firm against whatever evils lie in the depths.

There are many opportunities for interludes here. Verya could ask the Phoenixes to join the Deep Voices to investigate a Dread incursion in the deepest tunnels. A Chant outbreak in Aton Nirhady could prove the Atons aren't as secure from the Dread as they believe. Or you could just have an extended diplomatic scenario, as the Phoenixes negotiate with the Nirhady Smiths for access to Dreamsilver. Beyond this, the Phoenixes have a very long trip home. Do they return to Harrowgate and Skavia, or do they follow the Passage south to Talus and Ilona? Does anyone have unfinished business in either area?

PUPPETEER DEFEATED, MORTALS DEAD

If both Yangri and Dharya died during the mission, there are dire consequences. If *no* mortals survived, House Nirhady declares an oath of enmity against all Phoenixes. The Phoenixes have a choice: Escape with their lives at the cost of many Aton lives, or surrender with honor and suffer execution. If Pratys, Ghora, or Vayis survived and vouch for the Phoenixes, there is no vendetta, but also no alliance. There are no interludes in Aton Nirhady; the Phoenixes are immediately escorted from the vault.

PUPPETEER RELEASED

If the Puppeteer is released, he disappears into the deep tunnels. He knows he can't fool anyone who knows his host, and once he regains his full strength it won't matter. As negotiations were conducted in Pyrean, the Atons won't know what agreement was made, so follow the events as described above based on which mortals escaped. However, a few weeks after the mission, Pyre receives a pledge of military support from Aton Nirhady. The Aton forces are astonishingly effective and dramatically increase Pyre's military strength. Of course, the Phoenixes must live with the fact they essentially murdered thousands of Atons to win this alliance…

THE PHOENIXES DIE

If all the Phoenixes die inside the vault, it's up to you to decide what happens. Are there enough mortals for the Puppeteer to successfully destroy the Warden and escape? If so, it won't go to Aton Nirhady; it doesn't want the Phoenixes to know where it is. It might seize control of a different Aton, or it might unify the Deep Voices of all the vaults into a single army. Will it still decide to fight the Dread? Will it ignore the conflict and pull in? Or will it become a new threat? It's up to you.

PUPPETEER IN THE CRUCIBLE

If a Phoenix pulled the Puppeteer into the Crucible, it takes up permanent residence in that Phoenix's Flame. Every time the Phoenix dies—including this time—they have an opportunity to talk the the Puppeteer as well as their Mentor. You could use this as a source of insight into the Old Kingdoms, or you could make the Puppeteer a sinister force that threatens to corrupt the Phoenix.

WHAT ABOUT OMEN?

Omen remains a mystery, but the Phoenixes may have learned a few important things.

- He may or may not be the original Omen, but he's a high-rank Shrouded Phoenix with Shadovar features.

- He stole the vessel of a Fallen entity known as "The Render of Veils." Winter claims to know nothing about this, but **she** is pleased with the Wing for acquiring the information.

Beyond this, there is a piece of disturbing news at the Grand Aerie. On their way back from Harrowgate, the **Rival Wing** was attacked by an unknown assailant. He struck from the shadows, and darkness concealed his features, but the most perceptive member of the Wing (their Shrouded or Forceful) is certain the assassin had the badge of a Shrouded Phoenix and a short sword that appeared to be a Talon. The stranger slew the Devoted Mercy with an unknown weapon—a rod that appeared to be made of Pyrean steel, but wasn't a Talon. By the time the next mission comes around, Mercy has been dead for a week and hasn't returned.

MISSION REFERENCE: PULLING STRINGS

Nirha'ka Dharya, *Smith of House Nirhady*
Buddy Stats: Can take two Wounds; +4 Attack/Defense

An athletic woman in her mid-twenties, Dharya is both warrior and smith. She forged the greatsword she carries, along with her light breastplate and vambraces. She is **brave** and **aggressive**, with **little patience** for trickery or foes she can't fight. She takes duty and honor seriously, and expects others to do the same; she won't rest until she has recovered her uncle Ledu's blade, and she expects the same devotion from the Phoenixes. She is initially unimpressed by the Phoenixes, but isn't especially hostile either. She speaks Ilonan, but poorly; she is prone to misusing words or saying things that don't quite make sense.

Seva Vayis, *Voice of Dharya*
Buddy Stats: No special abilities

Vayis is a tall, slender man his forties, wearing a simple gray robe with the seal of the Nirha Katari. He has a shaved head with a line of runic tattoos running from his forehead back and down along his spine, indicating his service and status. He is **calm** and **patient;** his job is to be a **voice of reason** and to help his fiery mistress contain her temper. While Dharya sometimes finds this frustrating, she is devoted to Vayis and listens to his counsel. Vayis has traveled in the Empire and spent time in Ilona, though he won't bring this up unless pressed; it was his idea to reach out to Dawn Command. He's the most supportive of the Phoenixes.

Nirha'va Yangri, *Architect of House Nirhady*
Buddy Stats: Architect; -2 Defense

Old and stern, Yangri is a stocky for an Aton and has a short gray beard. His eyes are pale gray and cold as stones. He **strictly adheres to tradition,** including the idea he shouldn't speak to outsiders directly. He is **suspicious** of the outsiders, but also **proud** and prone to showing off the sophistication of Kor Aton. He takes great effort to **mask his emotions,** leaving Seva Ghora to show anger or remorse on his behalf. He speaks Ilonan, but won't do so until he's possessed; it simply won't come as a surprise to the other Atons that he can.

Namaki, *Loyal Runner*
Buddy Stats: No Special Abilities

A grizzled, middle-aged runner. Namaki is **loyal** and **focused on the job.** He talks as little as possible, simply because his attention is always focused on the vaults and possible threats. He believes in the caste system and is willing to die for a Smith or Architect. He doesn't speak Ilonan.

Seva Ghora, *Voice of Yangri*
Buddy Stats: +2 Attack/Defense

Ghora is in her late twenties. Her head is shaved and marked with the symbols of her service. She is dressed in the same style of gray robe as Vayis, though hers bears the seal of the Nirha Vatsu. She's more physically fit than Vayis, and she has vambraces of blackened steel covering her forearms. She is **quiet** and **alert,** watching everything, but never speaking without cause…and then only speaking to relay the wishes of her master. By default, she speaks in a calm, level voice, but she dramatically adjusts this to indicate Yangri's mood. Should Yangri die, she will hold the Phoenixes responsible, especially the Phoenix he was teamed with. She won't believe any accusations made against Yangri.

Nir'va Pratys, *Second Architect*
Buddy Stats: Architect; -2 Defense

A young architect, Pratys has yet to be assigned her own territory within the Nirhadyan Vault. She is **ambitious** and **driven,** though this is paired with an **honest love** of her work. She wears her pale hair in a long braid. She wants Nirhady to expand and hopes to claim the sanctum as her territory, and she believes Yangri is a hidebound traditionalist whose fears are limiting her chances. She is an **opportunist** and is willing to talk to the Phoenixes, but it's quickly clear she's looking for ways she can use their presence to her advantage.

Kaidi, *Guilty Runner*
Buddy Stats: -2 Defense

Kaidi wears manacles and chains. She's an old woman, but tough; she has been a successful runner for decades, in part because she has always been good at running away. She's **cynical** and **depressed,** and she's fairly certain everyone is going to die. She dislikes the Phoenixes because she blames Omen for her current situation and is certain these Phoenixes are no better. Kaidi only speaks a few words of Ilonan. Her Defense penalty comes from her being shackled; if the chains are broken, the penalty is removed.

Verya, *Fanatic Voice of the Deep*
Buddy Stats: Deep Voice

A young woman (pictured on the *Puppeteer* card) devoted to the "spirits of the depths." She believes the spirits are present anywhere runic magic is used and that Atons should show more gratitude. She is **zealous** and **intense,** and **dislikes Phoenixes and Architects** alike; Phoenixes are servants of alien spirits, while Architects don't show enough respect. She speaks a few words of Ilonan.

MISSION REFERENCE: PULLING STRINGS cnt.

CRYSTALSWARM

Group Enemy

SPEED 2
DEFENSE 0 or 6
HL 6 (Special)

The swarm doesn't take standard actions or attacks; it fights its enemies passively by swarming.

SWARMING(Ability): On the Swarm's turn, place two Swarm tokens on each Phoenix. Each token counts as a Health Level with a value of six, and a Phoenix can have a maximum of four swarm tokens at once. At the end of a Phoenix's turn, that Phoenix suffers one Wound for each Swarm token remaining on it.

IMMUNITIES (Ability): The Swarm cannot be stunned and is immune to bleeding. Brutal damage is treated as normal damage.

NEURAL SHOCK (Ability): Keep track of the number of Swarm tokens a Phoenix has destroyed. For every four Swarm tokens a Phoenix destroys (round down), the Phoenix's draw limit is reduced by one. This effect lasts until the end of the scene.

HOLLOW

Mortal

SPEED 2
DEFENSE 4
HL 4, 4, 4

A Hollow can make a single Feral Strength attack each turn, along with a final attack when it is about to die.

FERAL STRENGTH (Standard Melee Attack): Attack 12, Damage x2 (4)

LAST GASP (Ability): When a Hollow loses its final Health Level, it makes a final counterattack against the attacking Phoenix. This is an immediate reaction that occurs on the Phoenix's turn.

THE PUPPETEER

Fallen

SPEED 2
DEFENSE 8
HL 5, 5, 5

The Puppeteer can make a single Psychic Lash attack during its turn.

PSYCHIC LASH (All-or-Nothing Ranged Attack): Attack 14, Damage 1 Wound and the target is Exposed. If the Phoenix is guarding a mortal, the Puppeteer forms a psychic connection to that mortal.

DEADLY DECEPTION (Ability): When an Exposed Phoenix attacks the Puppeteer, the attack targets another nearby Phoenix instead of the Puppeteer.

BODY SWAPPING (Ability): When the Puppeteer's host is slain, the Puppeteer returns in the body of another mortal with three HL 5 Health Levels. This takes two turns if the Puppeteer has a connection to the mortal, four turns if it doesn't.

MISSION SIX: MERCY

In "Mercy," the Wing travels to southern Ilona to aid a city preparing for imminent Bone attack. But the Bones aren't the only force threatening the city of Cartacia. When the Phoenixes arrive, they find the townsfolk trapped in slumber by a mystical force, and the barriers between reality and dreams are breaking down. The being behind it is a Phoenix and former ally. How will the Wing deal with this transformed Mercy?

Background

Over the course of the last mission, the rogue Phoenix Omen stole an entity called the "Render of Veils" from Kor Aton and then killed the Devoted Phoenix Mercy. The Wing knows of these events...but they don't know *why* Omen has done these things.

Most spirits encountered in the Daylit World were created by the Old Kingdoms, either as weapons or tools. The Render of Veils is an exception. It appeared in the Old Kingdoms during their Great War, but no nation ever claimed it. The Render breaks down the barriers between reality and the Dusk, twisting both space and time in the process. It can reveal visions of possible futures or trap people in shadows of the past. It has the ability to bond to Phoenixes, supplanting their connection with their Flames. If this happens, the Phoenix is drawn into the twisted bowels of the Render every time they die; should they survive this process and return, they remain a conduit for the Render and its power. Omen freed the Render to take advantage of its oracular power, but he needed to sacrifice a Phoenix to restore it—and that Phoenix was Mercy. Omen got what he wanted from the Render, but Mercy is still out there, tormented and dangerous. In her time in the Dusk, she has seen countless visions of apocalyptic futures where the Dread has triumphed. She has come to the conclusion that the Dread can't be defeated, and the only merciful course is to give innocents a painless death.

The Bone Legion has been advancing across the Empire since the Dread first began. The Bone Legion is an undead version of the Humanist armies that fought in the Civil War. It's not made up of individual ghosts; instead, it's sustained by the vengeful spirits of that war's cruelest commanders. The legion of the infamous general **Hadon Pelagius** is approaching Cartacia. The Empire has been tracking the movements of the Bones, and there's a regiment en route to protect the city. Dawn Command wants the Phoenixes to assist and observe, but something strange is going on in Cartacia; the Aerie's not responding to signals. This is because Mercy has come to Cartacia. She has put the inhabitants of the city into a mystical slumber, so they can die peacefully. What she doesn't know is that her presence is breaking down reality and leaving the city at the mercy of the Fallen.

Prologue: Trouble in Cartacia

Read or paraphrase the following:

> *You're preparing for your duty shift when a page tracks you down: You've been summoned to the War Room, high on the upper floors of the Grand Aerie. As you make your way up the spire, you marvel at how much has changed just in the time you've been here.*

This is an opportunity to work in details from previous adventures. If Eldan Diogenes survived "Chants and Whispers," you could mention the bustling infirmary tending to the injured and studying the corpses of Dread menaces. If the Phoenixes established strong alliances with Aton Nirhady or the Olvari Treefolk, you might mention recent volunteers who've come from those places.

> *But while Dawn Command is building its strength, the Dread continues to escalate. Every time a Wing returns, they have new stories of terrors. Some of these tales end in triumph, but all too many involve fallen innocents, lost villages, and even the end of Phoenixes. In this last week, two of your comrades have died their final deaths. The Devoted Mercy still hasn't been reborn since Omen's attack, and some wonder if she'll ever come back.*

This is a moment to embellish on stories of recent Dread attacks. Are there any personal hooks from character backgrounds you can work into this? Anyone dear to the Phoenixes who may be in danger? It's important to provide the reminder about Mercy, but you could bring it up through an interaction with a member of the **Rival Wing**; they show up, concerned, asking the Wing if they've seen Mercy. *Why hasn't she been reborn? This was only her fifth death. What's happened to her?*

> *Finally you reach the War Room. Maps of the Empire are spread across stone tables, with markers showing the approximate positions of known threats, Wings in the field, and Imperial forces. Winter studies a map of Ilona with the Durant Marshal,* Honor.

Poll the players for basic information about Honor. The Durant Marshal commanded forces in the Civil War; while Winter deals with intelligence and comes up with most mission assignments, Honor manages Dawn Command's mortal troops and is developing military tactics. If your players don't feel like providing cosmetic details, Honor is dressed in the ceremonial armor of a commander in the Phoenix Imperium, with a flowing white cape. This armor is light and elegant, but between the armored plates and the leather underneath, it does cover his entire body. His helm is a gilded mask; like Bastion in Mission Four, there's no way to see what lies beneath Honor's armor. His voice is deep and resonant; he never raises his voice, but he can be heard clearly from any point in the room...and according to stories, across a chaotic battlefield. He is stern and respects courage and honor; he and Winter don't get along particularly well.

> *"Fall in," Honor says as you approach. "What do you know about the conflict with the Bone Legion in the south?"*

The players may be well-versed on the Bones based on their experiences on the Summer Shore, in which case Honor is slightly impressed. Otherwise, Honor and Winter fill in the details (refer to the Bones Challenge entry on page 176). Set the map of the Empire on the table and point out Cartacia as Winter speaks.

Winter taps the map. "The Bone forces appear to be Humanist soldiers from the Civil War era. Current intelligence suggests there are three separate legions moving through the Green Vale. We've got two Wings in the field gathering information and assisting with evacuation, but the main concern is Cartacia. It's a major hub for commerce and one of the largest Ilonan cities. Do any of you have people there?"

This is an opportunity for further player hooks. Ilonan or Wynderi Phoenixes may have family in Cartacia. Like the Capital, it's received a large number of refugees over the last three years; this could draw people tied to the Phoenixes from anywhere in the Empire. Don't worry if no one picks up on this; it's simply an opportunity to make things personal and to give you hooks to work with later in the mission.

Honor steps in. "Reports indicate one of the legions is heading toward Cartacia. The Empire doesn't intend to let the city go without a fight. The Bones don't move quickly, and it should be at least four days before they reach the city—plenty of time to fortify and evacuate. The Imperial Army has a full regiment on its way to reinforce Cartacia. Nonetheless, they've lost every engagement they've had with the Bones; the damn things just won't stay down."

Winter nods. "And that's where you come in. You found a way to defeat those Bones in the Grimwald. *It was a different manifestation, and we don't know if the Humanist Bones have any similar weakness, but we want you to stay in Cartacia through the battle. If you can find a way to help turn the tide…well, we're always happy for a miracle. Failing that, see what you can learn about the Bones. Any information about their strengths and weaknesses could be valuable. Beyond that, work with the army and do what you can to assist with preparations. Any questions?"*

Refer to the Mission Briefing sidebar to answer questions. As soon as the briefing is done, Winter accompanies the Wing down to the Imperial Flame.

"I need to check on the latest reports from the Cartacian Aerie," Winter says as you descend the spire. "There's a limit to communicating through the candles, but we're keeping appraised of the situation as best as we can."

Cinder hails you as soon as you enter the Flame Chamber. "I was just about to send a runner," he *says to Winter. "We sent the standard hail to Cartacia, but there has been no acknowledgement. It hasn't been that long, but…"*

Winter frowns. "It's too soon to be the Bones, and they couldn't capture an Aerie before it sent us a message, anyway. Most likely the Flamekeeper's just occupied. Still…" She *turns to you. "Make sure there's no trouble in the Aerie and send us an update as quickly as possible. This is a bad time for mysteries."*

Unless there are further questions, it's time to enter the Flame and head to Cartacia.

MISSION BRIEFING: CARTACIA

These questions could come up at the start or in later chapters.

What is Cartacia?

Cartacia is a major Ilonan city in the region known as the Verdant Coast, long a center for grain production. It's a hub for commerce and one of the oldest cities in the region. In addition to the native Ilonans, it's always had a significant transient population of merchants and fortune–seekers from across the Empire. Remarkable features include its ancient walls, which have survived the Civil War and the Imperial Conquest, the Grand Market at the heart of the city, and the Deo Beacon, a tall spire that used to serve as a lighthouse...not that the inland city has much need of a lighthouse.

With an **Intellect Spread** (Difficulty 15; The Empire, Lore; Trump: Ilonan background) add the following:

Before the Empire, Ilona was dominated by powerful families known as the Talu. While the Talu were defeated by the Phoenixes, many of the old families have evolved into powerful syndicates. Some are content to wield political and economic power, while others dominate the Ilonan underworld. Cartacia is home to two Talu families. The Deo Talu maintain the black market and are said to control a network of thieves, thugs, and assassins. The Ara Talu are teamsters who run caravans across the Empire; they also maintain a small mercenary army, traditionally employed to protect their coaches.

With the expanded spread, a Phoenix would also know the following information about the Deo Beacon, if they show an interest in it:

The Deo Beacon was constructed in the days before the Empire. It's not a lighthouse; it's a symbol of power and a weapon of war—at least it was. The beacon was constructed and the light maintained by the mystical power of the Deo House Gods, and it could channel blasts of flame to incinerate distant foes. But the Talu gods were broken and banished by the first Phoenixes, and this power is no more. It's an impressive architectural structure with a commanding view of the region, but it's no longer lit except on festival days.

What is our relationship with the Imperial Army?

At this point, we have no official understanding with the Imperial Army. Cartacia's garrison is commanded by Holan Kapanos, who has refused to work with us in the past. The regiment coming to reinforce the city is led by Commander Nerena Zolius, who's been more appreciative of our aid. Working with Kapanos may prove a challenge, but Zolius will be in charge once she arrives.

Feel free to alter this based on previous interactions between the Wing and the army, especially in "Chants and Whispers." If the Phoenixes forged a strong alliance with the soldiers in the Capital and/or stopped the Chant outbreak, Nerena Zolius is appreciative and may actually recognize the player characters. On the other hand, if the Phoenixes sabotaged the dragons and failed to stop the Chant, Zolius has a very negative opinion of them.

What do we know about the Bone Legion?

Not a great deal. Refer to the Bones Challenge entry (page 176) for general information. If the Phoenixes defeated Scartongue in Mission Three, they know at least some Bones seem to be animated by a central, anchoring spirit; when Scartongue was defeated, his Reavers went with him. From various reports of banners and symbols, Winter believes this is the legion of Commander **Hadon Pelagius.**

During Mission Four ("The Summer Shore") the Phoenixes may have identified Pelagius as the commander of the forces that destroyed Westergate, but he wasn't present in Westergate during that mission. Winter doesn't know if he's personally commanding this legion. Review the description of Pelagius on page 336 and resolve any unanswered questions; this information will be revealed over the course of the adventure and play a vital role in the final conflict.

Scene One: Torn Veils

Read or paraphrase the following:

> *You step through the flame and emerge in the Cartacian Aerie. It's a spacious, well–lit chamber; the walls are covered with mosaic images of heroes past. No one else is in the room. As the last Wing member emerges, everything changes: You're in the tiny Flame Chamber of the Blackstone Aerie where you fought the Harvester, and you see the Dreadknight choking the innocent man. Before you can react you're back in Cartacia again, and all is still and silent.*

At this point, add two Affliction cards to each Phoenix's deck and shuffle them. Remember that Afflictions are added to the deck of unused cards, not to discard piles. This is the *Drained by the Dusk* Affliction; see the sidebar at the end of the scene for its effects. In addition to this, as the Phoenixes explore the Aerie, they'll find themselves pulled into the Dusk. See the *Dusk Flashes* section below.

EXPLORING THE AERIE

If the Phoenixes examine the Flame Chamber, have someone make an **Intellect Spread** (Difficulty 15; Observation, Scouting) to see what they learn. If this is successful, they notice the following things. If no one attempts a spread, the most naturally observant Phoenix (Shrouded or Forceful, or any Phoenix with *Superhuman Senses*) spots the fallen guard.

- It's utterly silent. The Phoenixes can hear their own footsteps and voices, but no other sounds at all—no movement or conversation within the Aerie, and no hint of noise from the bustling city beyond the Aerie walls.
- There are no signs of struggle or strife.

• A half-eaten sandwich sits next to the signalling candles, along with a pamphlet outlining the basics of the candle code; it seems like maybe an adept was eating lunch here.

• There's only one exit from the Flame Chamber. A guard was stationed at the door, but he's collapsed just outside the entrance; only his foot and the butt of his spear are visible from inside. Looking outside they see an adept on the floor a little further down the hall. She was carrying a tankard of sweet water (a Cartacian favorite), which has shattered against the floor.

Examining the Victims

Aside from minor bruising from falling to the floor, both the guard and the adept appear in perfect health. They're both sound asleep, cannot be woken, and seem to have collapsed without warning. An initial **Intellect Spread** (Difficulty 15; Healing, Observation, Scouting) reveals steady breathing and rapid eye movement, as if dreaming. A Phoenix can delve deeper in a number of ways. This takes another **Intellect Spread** (Difficulty 20; Healing, Spirits, The Arcane, Lore; Trump: *Psychometry*). Whether this attempt succeeds or fails, the victim gasps and stiffens in an apparent seizure. At the same moment, a Dusk Flash strikes a member of the Wing. As the flash fades, the victim relaxes and returns to steady breathing, but breaks into a cold sweat, developing a pale sheen to their skin. Meanwhile, if the Intellect Spread was successful, read or paraphrase the following:

> *Something is very wrong with the energies here. Reality is a balance between the Daylit World of the living, the spirit world of the Dusk, and the Darkness that lies beyond it. The veils between Daylight and Dusk are very thin here, and these people are being consumed by their dreams. This is likely the source of your visions as well; your spirit is being drawn into the Dusk, and it will continue as long as you remain here.*

The effect isn't immediately lethal for the mortals, though left alone, they would eventually die of starvation or dehydration. The flashes reflect a further destabilization of balance, and those are taking a toll on the mortals. The only way to help the mortals would be to repair the damage to the walls of reality, but there's no obvious way to do that. This is clearly unnatural and *something* is causing it; the Phoenixes must find this source.

Depending what flashes take place, a Phoenix may question the fact that some visions seem to be glimpses of the past, while others deal with the Dusk itself. A Phoenix who has made a successful Intellect Spread studying the flashes recognizes that when Phoenixes travel between hearths, they use the Dusk as a shortcut to move through space; it seems possible to also use it as a bridge across time.

Further Exploration

The Phoenixes can explore as much as they wish. There's nothing vital to discover within the Aerie, and there's no threat other than the ongoing Dusk flashes, which should occur with sufficient frequency to keep things interesting. Of course, the Phoenixes don't *know* that's the only threat, so feel free to keep the suspense going.

Here are the most critical facts:

- The Cartacian Aerie is exceptionally well stocked and staffed—its inhabitants have been preparing for the coming attack. It has a force of twenty guardians, three adepts, and nine civilians, including a number of healers and sages. All these people appear to have collapsed at the same time.

- The Flamekeeper (an older man with a long black-and-white beard) is in the entry hall where he was speaking to a messenger in the livery of the Ara Talu. Both are asleep, but otherwise unharmed. If a Phoenix searches the messenger, they can find notes suggesting he was delivering notices about the Ara raising the cost of supplies due to the "difficult times"—which is to say, profiteering from the Dread.

- Whatever's afflicting the Aerie is also affecting the city as far as can be seen from windows. People lie collapsed in the streets around the Aerie—no signs of movement anywhere.

- Think about what might have been going on in the Aerie, and describe the scenes. It's not simply that people are asleep; it's that they are sleeping in unnatural situations. In the infirmary, a healer may have collapsed in the middle of applying a splint to a slumbering patient. Perhaps two guards fell asleep in the middle of a brawl over a card game…and the third sleeping player was cheating.

- Likewise, feel free to play up the mystery and uncertainty of the situation. Are the sleepers going to suddenly become zombies? They can have seizures at unexpected moments. This is a very strange situation; convey that any way you can.

- After exploring a litte, a Phoenix can make an **Intellect Spread** (Difficulty 15; The Arcane, Lore) to identify the source of the mystical effect. However, the only result is that the effect is too widespread to pinpoint the source…though they're certain it's not in the Aerie itself. They feel they might be able to triangulate after further exploration and additional flashes.

DUSK FLASHES

As the Phoenixes explore the Aerie, they are unexpectedly drawn into the Dusk. Whenever it seems suitable, choose a Phoenix to have a flash. This Phoenix vanishes from the Aerie and finds themselves in a completely different situation, typically in great danger. Flashes often require an immediate spread; part of the point is to get the players moving through their decks and drawing Afflictions. Flashes can

be dangerous moments from the past (especially situations where the subject was actually killed) or they can be surreal scenes from the dreamscape of the Dusk. Here are a few examples, but you should feel free to come up with others.

The victim is being attacked by the Durant Phoenix Bastion. **Glaive Sweep** (*Standard Melee Attack*): Attack 14, Damage x1 (6).

They are covered in swarmers from the Vault in Kor Aton and have one turn to remove them. There are three swarmers, each with 6 Health; the Phoenix suffers one Wound for each swarmer that remains at the end of the turn.

They are in the middle of a battlefield, dressed in unfamiliar armor and holding a rod made of Pyrean steel. Around them, other soldiers in similar uniforms are shouting and fleeing. That's when they see the misshapen, bestial giant swinging a massive club at them. **Titan's Club** (*Standard Melee Attack*): Attack 8, Damage x3 (6).

They are being engulfed by a mob of Chanters. **Mob Attack** (*Standard Melee Attack*): Attack 10, Damage x2 (4).

They find themselves in their Crucible, and have a moment to speak to their Mentor. If one of the Phoenixes has a well-defined Mentor or a particularly vivid Crucible scene, you could have a *different* Phoenix find themselves in their Wingmate's Crucible; you could even have the player actually tied to that Crucible take on the role of their Mentor, if they'd have fun with it.

The victim is attempting to bind the Harvester's Orb of Fear to the Wing. See page 254 for the details of the spread.

They are in a battle from a previous mission in which they were guarding a mortal. They have just suffered one Wound; do they take it, or allow the mortal to die?

The mortals are having only their spirits drawn into the Dusk—but on some level, Phoenixes are manifested spirits, and they're being pulled directly into the Dusk. These events have actual consequences for the Phoenix who experiences them. Sparks burned and Wounds suffered remain with the victim after the flash fades. However, while many of these are visions of the past, they are alternate paths that don't actually affect the Phoenix in other ways. If they allow a mortal to die who survived in the actual mission, the mortal is still alive. However, the *player* can't be certain of this, so feel free to use this uncertainty to build tension.

Time in Dusk has no relation to time in the Daylit World. Generally speaking, the flashes should only last an instant for the rest of the Wing; no matter how long it seems to take for the victim, it's only a second for everyone else. However, a flash could last longer if it helps build tension. A member of the Wing vanishes and doesn't return. What does the rest of the Wing do? How long do they wait?

Pace these flashes. You want each Phoenix to have at least one before the encounter with Mercy, and it's a good way to inject drama at a moment when things slow down. Don't derail productive activities, and don't make them relentless. The flashes prove something is very wrong here, but you want to keep them mysterious.

Affliction: Drawn to the Dusk

Because the veils are weak here, Phoenixes are slipping between dream and reality. Mortals have collapsed into sleep as their minds are drawn into the Dusk. Phoenixes don't sleep, but their *spirits* are being pulled into the Dusk. **Every time a Phoenix draws an Affliction, they lose one Spark.** Set these Sparks aside and keep track of who they belong to; the Phoenixes regain them (in a way) in Scene Six. When a Phoenix draws an Affliction in combat, they feel disoriented and confused; **they don't draw a new card to replace the Affliction until the end of their turn.** The experience is somewhat like waking from a dream: The Phoenix feels that they knew something very important, but they can't remember what it was.

Scene Two: The Hungry Library

The Phoenixes can take as long as they want, but the source of the disturbance isn't within the Aerie. Sooner or later, they'll go outside. When they open the doors, the streets are bathed in the last light of the setting sun; everything is silent and still. Sleeping people are scattered around the streets, and birds have fallen from the sky to smash against the cobblestones. There's no apparent danger, but everything changes as soon as anyone leaves the Aerie. Read or paraphrase the following:

> *As you step forward into the street, your foot comes down in something warm and wet. You're wading through a stream of blood, which rises over your feet. You're all still together, but your surroundings have changed. Shelves stand on either side of you, rising thirty feet or more and lined with books. It's a strange assortment of tomes. Some are thick and old, bound in crumbling leather. Others are narrow and new, sealed with ribbons or bands of steel. None of them have titles. Blood is leaking from the books, running down along the shelves to pool around your feet.*

The Wing is in a library, the largest they've ever seen. The ceilings are hidden by height and shadows; dim light comes from lanterns hanging off thick chains fifty feet from the floor. The library is a literal maze of shelves, with no clear logic to its layout. The floor is hidden beneath a layer of blood about six inches deep. This blood is fresh and warm, and it doesn't appear to be clotting. The Wing has appeared in the middle of a long aisle; there's no obvious exit or way to return to Cartacia. There's no immediate physical threat, but as the Wing explores the library, they soon discover there is a danger. The library is consuming their memories and identities. As they explore, they begin to forget things they've learned. This is discussed in the Losing Memories sidebar.

The Adept

The Phoenixes aren't alone. They can see people moving around the library, searching along the shelves. They appear to be citizens of Cartacia. Just twenty feet away, they see a woman who looks familiar. It's the adept they saw when they first entered the Aerie. She's searching intently on the shelves, and she maintains this focus even if they Phoenixes call to her. *"I'm sorry. I've got to find it."*

If they approach her or study her more carefully, they notice that while she's wearing the robes of an adept, they're bleached and gray. Her skin has also taken on a grayish tint, and if she turns toward them, they can see her eyes are pale and blind. *"I know it's here somewhere, but I can't remember the name."*

The adept knows she has to find a book, but she can't remember the name of it. She can't remember her name, which startles her if it's brought to her attention. *"Do you know my name? Tell me what it is!"* However, this distress fades within a few moments as she's drawn back to her search. She can't remember much about her life, but she still has a few solid details. *"I remember Miklosh was going to join me for lunch…but where are we supposed to meet?"* As they talk to her, the Phoenixes sense she is becoming even more pale and indistinct; it's hard for them to actually remember any details about her. If someone tells her that she was going to meet Miklosh in the Flame Chamber and that she was eating a sandwich, she seems comforted and regains a hint of color, but it's clearly temporary.

With an Intellect Spread (Difficulty 15; Spirits, Healing, The Arcane, Lore; Trump: Warlock), a Phoenix can conclude this is the adept's spirit, drawn into the Dusk. Something is consuming it, feeding on her memories. It's also affecting the

Shamans and Warlocks

One question that may come up here is which Specialties and Traits apply to this situation. As a general rule, *Shaman* and the Spirits Specialty deal with undead and natural spirits. *Warlock* and the Arcane Specialty focus on Fallen and the Dusk. As a result, the Spirits Specialty is applicable when a Phoenix is trying to determine the fate of the human souls being consumed by the library, but the library itself and the being who maintains it are entirely unnatural, and thus fall under Arcane. The Lore Specialty is a catch-all and can fill in—though if a Phoenix has the primary Specialty or Trait, encourage them to be the focus of the research.

The Books

The books come in a wide variety of shapes and sizes. The vast majority are traditional leather-bound tomes, weathered and worn. However, there are books with covers of glass or steel, books sealed with straps or locks, and any other exotic details you want to add. One book might sing quietly when it is opened; another might start crying when it is touched. If the Phoenixes read the books, they find each one is a

handwritten memoir. All books are written in blood; the spine of each book has a seemingly endless reservoir of blood, and this is what's leaking onto the floor. Some books have vivid illustrations; others are purely text. The books are excruciatingly detailed to the extent of being almost unreadable. At the same time, they talk about nations the Phoenixes have never heard of: Athana, Tyroi, The Great Bridge. Most of the books make no mention of the Empire or any city or province the Phoenixes have heard of. However, there are a few books scattered throughout the shelves that contain the lives of people in Cartacia. These books are incomplete; there are blank sections scattered throughout each tome. However, as a Phoenix reads a book, they may notice the text filling in.

If the Phoenixes haven't figured this out already, one can make an **Intellect Spread** (Difficulty 15; The Arcane, Lore; Trump: *Warlock*, *Seen This Before*) to realize these books are the consolidated lives of actual people. The Cartacia books reflect the library's process of digesting its victims. If the spread had a value of 25 or higher, the Phoenix can also guess that destroying a book wouldn't help a victim; most likely the memories in the book would be permanently lost, and a new book would appear elsewhere in the library to continue the consumption. Giving someone their book restores the lost memories, but the process starts anew. If the connection between Dusk and the Daylit World can be severed before a victim is completely consumed, it's likely they will eventually make a full recovery…but the Phoenixes have no idea how to break this connection, and it most likely can't be done from within the library itself. They have to find a way back to Cartacia and close the door on that end.

Escaping the Library

The library is an endless maze. Let the Phoenixes explore it for a little while. Give them an opportunity to study a few books and encounter a few more victims of the library—citizens of Cartacia who are fading away as the library drains away their experiences. If the Phoenixes know anyone in Cartacia, this is an opportunity to encounter one of their friends, raising the stakes of the threat. Or they can encounter someone who's almost completely drained—an indistinct figure who's forgotten how to speak and who fades away completely as they try to communicate. Someone may want to climb the shelves; this is possible with a **Grace Spread** (Difficulty 15; Athletics, Acrobatics), but simply reveals the vast scope of the maze with no obvious destination in sight.

Even Phoenixes with arcane knowledge can't start making spreads to find an escape route until they've taken a little time to explore the Library. Once they've spent some time wandering, they can start to draw conclusions. The Phoenixes have some experience with Dusk due to the time they spend in the Crucible. As such, they know the Dusk isn't bound by the logic of the Daylit World—there may not actually *be* a physical exit; it could be a truly endless maze. At this point, a Phoenix can

Losing Memories

The Library is slowly consuming the memories and souls of the people within, transferring its victims' lives into the pages of its story. This is a slow and insidious process. Any time a Phoenix draws an Affliction while in the Library, in addition to losing a Spark to *Drawn to the Dusk*, they must choose one of their Lessons and give it to you; until you return it, they have forgotten it and cannot benefit from its abilities. Furthermore, anytime this happens, the Phoenix forgets something important. They might forget a loved one or a hated enemy, or they may not remember their childhood or the moment of their first death. You can tell a player what they forget, but it can be more interesting to ask the players to tell you what they've forgotten; the key is it has to be something that truly matters to the Phoenix.

As this process goes on, the physical details of the Phoenix become gray and indistinct. Warn them that losing their last Lesson means death. A Phoenix who loses their last Combat Style can't remember how to attack or defend themselves; if a player is considering this, make sure they understand the consequences.

Fear of Afflictions may cause Phoenixes to hold back from playing cards, but they can't avoid the Library through inaction. Whenever tension is low, you can tell the Phoenixes to discard the top card of their deck; if that card is an Affliction, the effects trigger.

There are a few ways to preserve memories. You want this to feel like a significant threat, so don't spell out all these options right away.

If you prefer, you can allow a player to burn two Sparks instead of forgetting another Lesson each time they draw an Affliction. This gets quite costly, but it provides a choice.

If a Phoenix takes an action that, in your opinion, fundamentally defines that character—a leader rallying the group with an inspiring plan, a Devoted taking a personal risk in an attempt to save one of the innocent victims—you can return a Lesson to them. This needs to be an action taken on its own merits, not something done in an attempt to restore a Lesson, and it's always up to you if an action justifies memory restoration.

If another Phoenix makes a truly compelling scene out of trying to remind another Phoenix of who they are, you can let them make a Grace Spread (Difficulty 15) to restore one Lesson; you can provide a bonus based on the strength of the story. Like the previous example, this isn't something that can be done over and over, and you shouldn't present it as an option; it's something you can offer if it occurs naturally during the mission.

Once the Phoenixes have figured out what the books are, they can conclude that a Phoenix could restore all lost memories if they can find the book of their life. As they read the book, the words fade from the page and the Phoenix regains all lost Lessons and memories. However, the Library contains tens of thousands of unlabeled books, so finding a book would take something remarkable. A *Brilliant Deduction* would do it, and you might allow

someone with *Smartest Person in the Room* or a similar Trait to make an Intellect Spread to accomplish it. But it should be clear this is a ridiculously difficult task.

If Phoenixes escape the Library by making a deal with the Harvester (or by binding him), all their memories are immediately restored. If they escape by physically defeating the Harvester, they each regain one Lesson immediately, and then regain an additional Lesson every time they make a spread that involves a well-justified Trait. Again, don't explain this process immediately; reward them when they make an appropriate spread, and let them figure it out.

A Phoenix cannot fully protect themselves from this consuming effect. If a Phoenix presents a compelling idea for warding the Wing, you could allow them to make an **Intellect Spread** (Difficulty 30; The Arcane, Spirits). If successful, this allows a Phoenix to burn a single Spark to avoid losing a Lesson to the Affliction (instead of the standard two Sparks).

make an **Intellect Spread** (Difficulty 20; The Arcane, Lore) to come up with ideas; *Warlock* is worth +10 in this spread, as it's a tradition that specializes in Fallen and the Dusk. If the spread is successful, the Phoenix concludes this is likely the realm of a particular Fallen entity. This Fallen gives the realm its gravity, holding its victims in its domain. The only way to escape is to deal with this entity. If they can find it, they could make a bargain, offering something in exchange for safe passage, or they could attempt to fight it…though this is its place of power, so combat surely won't be easy. This is not a Fallen any of the Phoenixes have specifically heard of before.

The next question is how to summon this librarian. A Phoenix could perform a ritual summoning by burning one Spark and making an **Intellect Spread** (Difficulty 25; The Arcane, Lore); again, *Warlock* is worth +10 in this spread. A Phoenix can attempt this multiple times until it's successful, but must burn one Spark with each attempt—and multiple spreads means more chances to draw Afflictions.

Magic isn't the only way to find the librarian. If a Phoenix comes up with a logical plan, let them make a **Skill Spread** (Difficulty 25) with suit and Specialty determined by the nature of the plan. A Forceful could use *Supernatural Senses* and the Scouting Specialty to track it down. A Shrouded who's *Seen This Before* or who happens to be the *Smartest Person in the Room* could predict the movements of the librarian with a Lore Spread. Or anyone could try to summon the librarian by creating such a vast disturbance that it comes to deal with it…using Strength and Athletics to topple shelves, or Elemental Fire to start burning books. The books are unnaturally resistant to damage, but they can be destroyed, and destroying enough of them automatically summons the Harvester of Knowledge. However, summoning that involves damaging the library means the Harvester is angry when it arrives. The Phoenixes take a -5 penalty on any spreads made to influence it.

THE HARVESTER OF KNOWLEDGE

When the librarian appears, read or paraphrase the following:

> *"Shhhhhhhh." The voice fills your thoughts. "Don't disturb the patrons."*
>
> *The blood flowing over the floor rises up into a column, solidifying into an eerily familiar figure. The librarian is a tall, robed figure. Its face is hidden by a pale mask, and shards of glass rise up in a mockery of a crown. For a moment you think the Harvester of Fear has tracked you down, but the shards in this creature's crown are pale opals, and the crimson robe is formed from fresh blood. You don't feel the same churning fears that surrounded the Harvester you fought at Blackstone Aerie. Instead, you find yourself forgetting small details, losing the words on the tip of your tongue. At the same time, one thing slips into your mind: This is the Harvester of Knowledge, the master of the Hungry Library.*

The Harvester of Knowledge has no immediate interest in fighting the Phoenixes. If they destroyed books, he scolds them. *"Each one of those is a life; why would you harm innocents?"* He also doesn't have much interest in speaking to them, at least initially. If they continue to destroy books, he gives them one more warning; if they still persist, he attacks them. Otherwise he simply watches them silently. A Phoenix can get him to talk by showing some respect and making a **Grace Spread** (Difficulty 15; Diplomacy, The Arcane, Lore; Trump: *Warlock*).

Once his initial reserve has been overcome, the Harvester is both eerie and surprisingly amiable. If any Phoenix has lost memories while in the library, the Harvester knows them, and he addresses such Phoenixes by name. He has maintained this library for untold ages, preserving lives for eternity. He doesn't believe he's doing anything wrong; he's granting his victims immortality—and from what he's reading in their stories, it sounds like most of these people were going to die in a few days anyway! He didn't pull people into the library; that's the fault of the **Render of Veils**. The Render shattered the walls between the worlds, and these people fell into the library. Now that they're here, he's adding them to his collection; that is his duty and his right. The same is true of the Phoenixes: All things that come to his library are added to his collection. "*You should enjoy your last hours. Walk the halls. Read a book. There are a lot of wonderful tales waiting to be discovered. And soon you'll be one of them.*"

He can't tell them much about the Render of Veils. "*That one is a mystery. It is not like myself and my kin. We never knew where it came from or why it was created. It wreaks havoc wherever it goes. Past and future, Dawn and Dusk, life and death…it unravels them all.*" If pressed, it knows the Render is bound to Ascended hosts. It knows nothing about the current manifestation of the Render or its host; it simply recognizes the effect.

If the Phoenixes are insistent about wanting to leave, he considers this. "*What could you offer me that is not mine to take? Hmmm… There is something. I will grant each of you safe passage to the Daylit World and restore all you have lost here. In exchange, you will give me the stories of all those spirits bound to your Flame—all the Phoenixes who preceded you.*"

When he says *"Give me the stories"*, the Harvester is talking about stripping the spirits of the old Phoenixes from the Flame and putting them on his shelves. On a practical level, this doesn't harm the Phoenixes, but it does mean they lose their Mentors. On a moral level, those spirits are still in some way conscious and alive, as shown by the Mentors; agreeing to this deal means sacrificing the souls of the heroes who served before them.

A Phoenix can bargain by making a **Grace Spread** (Difficulty 20; The Arcane, Diplomacy, Fear, Lore). *Warlock* is worth +10 in this spread. This is a rare case where intimidation is a perfectly reasonable approach. If the spread succeeds, the Harvester is willing to offer slightly better terms: In exchange for safe passage for the Wing, he'll either take all of the spirits from a single Phoenix's Flame…or he'll take one spirit (his choice) from each Phoenix. If the spread has a value of 30 or more, he's willing to give the entire Wing safe passage in exchange for a single spirit…but he chooses the Phoenix and the spirit.

This is as good as the offer gets, though if the players come up with a truly interesting counterproposal, he might consider it. A Phoenix with the Lore or The Arcane Specialties or the *Warlock* Trait knows they could try to perform a ritual that forces the Harvester to grant them passage, but it is an extended process, and he fights as soon as they begin. Defeating him in battle only disrupts him temporarily, but it would likely be enough to release the Phoenixes and delay any further degradation of his prisoners for at least a few hours. If the Phoenixes decide to fight, proceed to Scene Three.

If the Phoenixes take the deal, take a moment for the Harvester to ruminate about his selection. He could take a Phoenix's Mentor; if not, highlight what an amazing and heroic individual he's capturing. Once this is done, the Phoenixes find themselves back in Cartacia with all memories restored; proceed to Scene Four.

Scene Three: Fighting the Harvester

If the Phoenixes refuse to make a bargain with the Harvester, combat is the only option. **While the Phoenixes are fighting the Harvester, they don't lose Lessons when they draw an Affliction.** However, they still suffer the other effects—losing one Spark and only drawing a replacement card at the end of their turn.

SETUP

Arrange the Phoenixes however seems appropriate. Each Phoenix is *Vulnerable*; this lasts for the scene, though it can be removed by any effect that removes conditions. Place The Harvester next to the Phoenixes; this is the same card used for the Harvester of Fear, but the statistics are provided in the Mission Reference sheet. This area is the **Hungry Library**, and includes the following Environmental Elements:

Books, More Books, Layer of Blood, Bookshelf, Stepladder, and **Fading Patron.** If the Harvester initiated combat (because the Phoenixes destroyed books or started a binding ritual), he acts first; otherwise the Phoenixes can take one turn before he acts.

Like the Harvester of Fear, the Harvester of Knowledge is only partially solid; he is comprised of the stories he has consumed. Unlike his cousin, he never descends to physical violence. Instead, his *Cutting Words* attack manifests as his telling a story about the victim. If the attack is successful, he can apply a condition to the victim in addition to hurting them; he has a limited set of conditions, and he can only use each one once. So if he strikes one Phoenix, he could say, *"Wolf burned with righteous fury, and so great was his rage that his flesh burst into flame,"* and apply the *Burning* condition. Or he might say, *"Elegy was filled with pain and doubt; perhaps this was her time to die,"* and give the *Exposed* condition. Resolve the attack first, and once you know if it was successful, come up with the story he makes of it.

The Harvester's most insidious weapon is his ability to *Write out of the Scene*. He simply looks at a victim, and that person disappears…and the other Phoenixes have trouble even remembering who that person was. When this happens, place a *Hidden* token on the victim. That Phoenix can't physically interact with anyone in the scene. They can make Skill Spreads if no physical action is required; notably, they can still contribute to the Bind the Harvester Spread even while they are *Hidden*. They are still susceptible to the Harvester's attacks. If anyone is *Hidden* at the start of the Harvester's turn (including people who are just hidden normally—Shrouded, beware!), he can use his *Plagiarize* attack to consume the victim's story; if the attack is successful, the victim suffers three Wounds, and the Harvester regains three Health Levels. The only way for the victim to escape is for another Phoenix to relate a story about an experience they shared with the victim or what they remember most clearly about the victim. This is a **Grace Spread** (Difficulty 15); there are no particular Specialties associated this, but a player can make a case why they think a Specialty applies. In addition to removing the *Hidden* token from the victim, the victim also regains one Lesson and memory they've lost to the library.

The Harvester innately consumes knowledge of his enemies. He can perceive *Hidden* characters, and *Hidden* Phoenixes receive no benefit when attacking him (including the effects of *Shadow Dancer*). He cannot become *Exposed* or *Vulnerable.*

If the Harvester loses his last Health Level, he hisses in anger. *"I will take vengeance for this indignity. Your story will end in misery and pain."* He dissolves as these words echo in the minds of the Phoenixes, and as he fades, so does the library; they find themselves on the streets of Skavia. Continue to Scene Four; each Phoenix recovers one Lesson lost to the Affliction. Any Phoenix specializing in Lore or The Arcane knows the Harvester is only temporarily disrupted and will return in a few hours… They'd best find a way to restore the veils before then!

BINDING THE HARVESTER

The Skavi warlocks developed techniques to compel the Fallen. Normally these rituals take time and elaborate preparations, but Phoenixes have the power to bypass these limitations by burning their Sparks. Completing this ritual is an **extended Intellect Spread** (Difficulty 100; The Arcane, Lore). *Warlock* is worth +10 in this spread, and *Exorcist* and *Shaman* are each worth +5; while the technique isn't quite in line with shamanic traditions, experience working with spirits still helps. A Phoenix can make a spread to contribute to this once per turn, and they must burn a Spark each time they do. The Spirits Specialty doesn't apply here, but any Phoenix can use Intellect to contribute even if they don't have a relevant Specialty.

Completing this spread immediately ends the combat. The Harvester fumes, but cannot harm the Phoenixes. In exchange for his freedom, he restores their memories and sends them back to Cartacia. If they bargain (you can ask for another Grace Spread if you feel it's necessary), he agrees to restore the memories of the Cartacians he has consumed, and he considers other reasonable requests. However, he draws a line if the Phoenixes ask too much. While he hates being bound, he can endure it indefinitely, and a Phoenix must remain in the library to maintain the spell; if they push him too far, the Harvester calls them on this. *"Let us wait together, then. Perhaps you will see reason in a few months or years."*

If the Phoenixes settle on a bargain, return them to Cartacia and proceed to Scene Four. If they had their memories restored, immediately return all lost Lessons.

USING THE ENVIRONMENT

Most of the elements are straightforward. The Fading Patron is a Cartacian losing their memories. If a strong Phoenix tips the Bookshelf onto the Harvester as part of an attack, they receive a +5 to their Attack Spread and the damage is brutal.

Scene Four: Back in Cartacia

Read or paraphrase the following:

> *You're standing in the door of the Aerie, exactly where you were before. Back then, the sun was setting; now the moon is high in the sky. Apparently you were in the Dusk for longer than you thought.*

The Phoenixes have returned to Cartacia, but now it's the middle of the night. The torpor that struck the people in the Aerie seems to have affected the entire city; everything is silent and still, and sleeping people are sprawled all around. Choose the Phoenix who's most attuned to arcane forces or spirits, and read or paraphrase the following:

> *Whatever is causing this is warping the auras and energies of the natural world. Your time in the Dusk*

has sensitized you to the tears in the veil; you may be able to identify the source.

This is an **Intellect Spread** (Difficulty 20; The Arcane, Spirits, Lore; Trump: *Shaman*, *Warlock*, or *Superhuman Senses*). Only one person can attempt the spread, but if they fail, they or someone else can make another spread as soon as someone either has another Dusk flash or is struck by the Drawn to the Dusk Affliction. Each subsequent spread gets a cumulative +5 bonus as the forces become easier to detect. Once someone has successfully completed the spread, read or paraphrase the following:

As you attune your supernatural senses to the flow of energies in this place, it's easy to spot the source of the disruption. The Deo Beacon is a massive spire rising up in the very center of Cartacia; it can be seen from any point in the city. Whatever is causing this effect appears to be right at the base of the beacon.

It's easy to find the beacon, and no one's awake to interfere with the Wing. If you want to draw things out, you can provide more details about the eerie tableau of the sleeping city…or ask each player to describe the strangest thing they see while exploring. There are no signs it was an unusual day in the city. The collapsed people in the streets seem to have been going through typical day-to-day chores, and there are no signs of panic or mobs.

Scene Five: Mercy in the Market

Read or paraphrase the following:

The Great Market of Cartacia is a sea of color, awash with painted tents and banners. The air is filled with exotic scents: Wynderi spices, fruits from the Grimwald, Ilonan perfumes and wines, and a vast assortment of burnt food. It's a busy day at the market...or it was, until everyone fell asleep. The paths are choked with bodies, and you make your way around the sleepers as you head toward the beacon at the center.

Take a moment to see if anyone wants to do anything. The market is full of exotic goods, but little that's particularly useful for a Phoenix. If they want a dozen different varieties of fish or some fashionable clothing, they have many options, but magic isn't a part of everyday life in the Empire, and no stalls sell explosives.

The Deo Beacon towers over the market. The base of the beacon is a traditional place for public speeches and performances, and there's a wide swath of space for people to stand and listen. You see a doom–sayer slumbering in front of his audience, and a quartet of musicians asleep atop their instruments. There's even a young cutpurse whose hand is still in his slumbering victim's pocket—but your eye is drawn to something more unique: someone's awake. A woman in a white gown stands with her back to you. Two men are with her, wearing colorful carnival garb; perhaps they're entertainers? As you move closer, you recognize the woman: It's Mercy, the Devoted Phoenix from the ***Rival Wing****.*

The Phoenixes can approach stealthily or call out from a distance. Mercy and her attendants don't move until the Wing takes some sort of obvious action. Mercy isn't frozen in place. Someone who studies her closely sees she's definitely breathing, but

she is curiously stiff. With an **Intellect Spread** (Difficulty 20; Observation, Scouting; Trump: *Supernatural Senses*), a Phoenix notices a few additional curious details; a Phoenix who has established a friendship with Mercy over the course of previous missions should get a +5 to this spread.

- Mercy's Talon is a mirror, which she uses as a focus for her healing abilities; she draws the injuries of her patients into the mirror and then disperses them. This process can be seen on the **Grace 4** Action card, which is an image of Mercy. However, the Phoenix can see Mercy's mirror is broken. That shouldn't be possible; Talons are almost indestructible, and even if they are damaged, they are repaired at dawn.

- Mercy's Uniform is more formal than usual. Last time they saw her, she had Devoted symbols along the hem; these are missing.

The two men with her are wearing masks that conceal their features.

Depending on what the Phoenixes do, paraphrase the following:

Mercy's companions wear feathered hats and jovial masks. At your approach, they turn toward you. They move in perfect unison, and they make no sound whatsoever. Each drops a hand to a hip as if placing it on the hilt of a sword, an exaggerated depiction of watchfulness... but neither of them actually has a sword. Now Mercy turns, and you see that her face is also hidden behind a mask—a frozen expression of sorrow. She looks down at the ground. "I had hoped you wouldn't come." Her voice is soft and sad, but travels clearly in the silent market.

The Attendants

Mercy's attendants always move at the same time and never speak. Nothing is visible beneath their masks; the eyeholes and mouths show only darkness. They pantomime all their actions, and they act to keep people from getting too close to Mercy. If pushed, they mime drawing swords and going into a guard position. If you wish, the Attendants can initiate combat if pushed too far. Alternately, just as they seem about to attack, Mercy says something or reaches out toward a Phoenix, and the Attendants step back...the image of bodyguards being called off by their master.

Mercy never acknowledges the existence of the attendants; if asked about them, she acts puzzled and states she's alone. If someone studies them, they can make an **Intellect Spread** (Difficulty 15; The Arcane, Spirits, Lore; Trump: *Warlock*) to determine they are some sort of minor Fallen. With a result or 20 or better, the Phoenix concludes they're similar in nature to the Dreadknights they fought at Blackstone Aerie. Where those were constructed from pure fear, these have been molded from some other emotion (despair). With a result of 30 or better, the Phoenix realizes they are manifestations of Mercy's own subconscious. If someone uses *Psychometry* on an Attendant, the result is the same as using it on Mercy: See the following section.

Talking to Mercy

After Omen killed Mercy, she was drawn into the warped Crucible of the Render of Veils. She was there for decades of subjective time, during which she saw thousands of possible futures...all of them bad. The experience has left her fundamentally broken. As far as the Wing is concerned, she has been gone for a week; from her perspective, she has dealt with a century of psychological torment. She doesn't believe it's possible to defeat the Dread, because she has seen it triumph over and over; she just wants to find ways to ease the suffering of innocents. This is enhanced by the fact that she is a literal conduit for the power of the Render of Veils. This is the source of the Attendants. Mercy doesn't truly understand the ambient effects of her presence or the fact that she kills people by talking to them.

Physically, a number of things are clearly wrong with Mercy. Her Talon is broken. She doesn't remove her mask. The mask doesn't have eyeholes, just painted-on eyes...and yet she seems to have no trouble seeing the Phoenixes. Her Phoenix badge has changed, and the Devoted icon is shattered. Beyond this, her tone and demeanor suggest absolute despair. Still, she is willing to talk to the Phoenixes for a time. Here are a few likely topics of conversation.

- Mercy isn't surprised to see the Phoenixes, though she's disappointed. She has seen many futures where they show up, and these visions have always ended with their horrific deaths. *"I wish you hadn't come here. I'd hoped maybe this time you'd survive."* If pressed for details, she's generally vague, though she knows all about the Wing's past. Survive what? *"The future."* If someone presses her for information about what terrible thing is going to happen to them, she'll use *Cracked Mirror* on them. She does this with no indication of malice; she simply holds up her mirror and says, "*Let me show you.*" Her victim gasps and stiffens, and must discard their hand. Do the other Phoenixes initiate combat or wait for their comrade to recover?

- If pressed about what happened to her, she is vague. *"It was so long ago, and I've seen so many deaths...it's hard to remember which one was mine."* With a **Grace Spread** (Difficulty 15; any social approach except Fear), she can focus on the past. She remembers being attacked by Omen. Instead of going to her Mentor, she fell into the Render of Veils (she uses this name). It tore her apart and put her back together, and in the process it showed her all the ways she and others would suffer and die. All she really remembers of Omen is his presence at some point when she was trapped within the Render; there was something he wanted from it, but he wasn't bound to it as she was. She doesn't know what Omen learned.

- If questioned about the Render of Veils, she can't provide a coherent explanation. It tears through time and shows all the possible paths of the future and the past. She doesn't know what it wants and she doesn't understand the bond it's formed with her. She's afraid of dying again, because she doesn't want to be pulled back into it.

- She doesn't realize she's wearing a mask. If the mask is forcibly removed (and it requires significant force), her face is normal beneath it, simply sad; as soon as

she turns away, the removed mask dissolves and reforms on her face. It seems to have become part of her, like her Talon or Uniform.

• All she wants is to ease people's suffering. However, she is absolutely certain the Dread cannot be defeated. All she could do to help the people of Cartacia was to let them sleep through the horror coming for them.

If the Phoenixes decide to attack Mercy or the Attendants, move to the next scene. Otherwise, the conversation can continue for as long as it seems interesting. When it slows down—or when you hit a question you don't want to answer—Mercy says, "*I'm afraid we're out of time.*" At this point, the Phoenixes realize they're bleeding; there's no pain, but burning blood is leaking through their pores. Give each Phoenix one *Bleeding* condition, and move to combat.

Psychometry

If someone uses Psychometry on Mercy or the Attendants, it has the usual benefits; Mercy and the Attendants are linked, and when combat occurs, they are all *Exposed*. Paraphrase the following:

> *Mercy is still a Phoenix...more or less. She has been cut off from her Flame, and something else has taken its place. She is a conduit for the Render of Veils; it flows through her, disrupting the world around her. She has no knowledge of this or control over it, but anywhere she goes will suffer. A moment later, you touch the Render itself, and the experience is a terrifying waterfall of memories. Usually Psychometry shows you images of the past. Now you are blasted with a cascade of experiences that nearly destroys your mind. You finally pull away from it, and your mind blocks most of it out. But there are terrible memories still there, lingering below the surface.*

The Phoenix takes two Wounds from this experience. Add the *Disturbing Visions* Trait to their deck.

Scene Six: Battling Mercy

Talking with Mercy inevitably leads to conflict. Mercy is a vessel for powers she doesn't understand. Her presence is destroying the city, and just speaking with her for too long proves dangerous for the Phoenixes. Whether the Wing makes the first move or Mercy's Attendants make a preemptive strike, there's a struggle.

SETUP

Arrange the Phoenixes among **Mercy** and the **Attendants** according to their described actions. This area is the **Grand Market**, and includes the following Environmental Elements: **Market Stall, Sleeping Musicians, Instruments, Exotic Merchandise, Stone Bench, Fountain.** The first thing that happens—regardless of who took the first action—is Mercy catches someone's reflection in her Talon-

mirror; this person suffers the consequences of *Cracked Mirror*, described below. If a Phoenix initiated combat, they act first; then the Attendants. If the Attendants initiated combat, they take the first action, followed by a Phoenix. Mercy acts on the beat following the Attendants, so once things get going it's: Phoenix, Attendants, Phoenix, Mercy.

The Attendants

Mercy's Attendants leap boldly into battle, wielding their non-existent swords with elaborate flourishes and swashbuckling action. The Attendants don't seem to carry weapons, and there's no easy way to parry their mimed blades; however, when they strike with these pantomime swords, the victim starts bleeding. **When an Attendant damages an opponent, give the victim a** Bleeding **condition for each Wound they would normally suffer; if no** Bleeding **tokens are available, they suffer Wounds instead.** The Attendants move with inhuman grace and continue to pantomime actions and emotions. There are two Attendants, and they can attack two separate Phoenixes. The HL-12 token represents the second Attendant; if it's removed, the Attendant can only make a single attack each round. When defeated, an Attendant makes dramatic performance of agony and remorse, and then collapses into dust.

Mercy's Actions

Mercy never actually fights. She remains motionless most of the time, moving precisely and at the perfect time to avoid an attack; she makes this look easy, as if she just happened to step out of the way. If she's actually hurt, ask the player to describe the injury. Likewise, none of her attack actions *feel* like attacks. Here are her options.

- **Whisper of Doom.** *"Flee this place before it's too late."* This is Mercy's default attack, used when she has nothing better to do. She simply speaks to the victim. This could be a warning or a comment about the terrible fate that lies ahead or something horrible the victim did in the past. If the attack is successful, the victim gains two *Bleeding* tokens; if no tokens are available, these manifest as Wounds. This doesn't appear to be malicious; it's not clear whether she knows she's hurting people by talking to them.

- **Woundshift.** *"This isn't the wound that kills me."* Mercy walks over to a Phoenix and casually reaches out to them; if the attack is successful, she transfers up to three Wounds to them. She's Devoted, remember? Alternately, she may transfer one Wound and one condition. If the situation is dire, and her Attendants are still alive, she can pass Wounds to them instead of taking a chance on hitting a Phoenix. In any case, her demeanor isn't aggressive. Just as she's good at avoiding attacks, she makes touching her enemy look easy and peaceful; she doesn't actually lunge or strike. If you'd like, don't describe it as an attack the first time she does this; simply tell a player that she's reaching out to gently touch them and ask if they allow it. If they do, they suffer six points of damage and she recovers three Health Levels. If they want to avoid it, resolve it as an attack.

• **Shadows of the Past.** *"I think you have unfinished business."* Once Mercy's Attendants are eliminated, she can use an action to summon a new ally. She can summon another set of Attendants, a Reaver (from Mission 3), or a Chanter Mob (from Mission 2). The Reaver should have HL 4, 4, 4, 4, 10, 10; it can't use *More Rise* or *Bloodfire Darts*. The Chanter Mob should have HL 3 (x15); its Pack Attack begins with an Attack value of 10. As with the other actions, it's not clear that she's doing this intentionally. She just says "*Do you remember that battle in the Capital?*" and the Chanters appear.

In addition, Mercy can activate *Cracked Mirror* at any time after a victim recovers, until every Phoenix has been affected by it.

Cracked Mirror

"See what is to come."

The moment combat begins, choose a Phoenix (preferably one interacting with Mercy in some way). Mercy catches the reflection of one of these Phoenixes in her broken mirror. The victim must immediately discard their hand and cannot take any actions or draw cards for any reason until they redraw at the end of their next turn. In the interim, the victim is consumed by a nightmare vision of their own death. It's both terrifying and painful. This isn't simply an illusion; it's a glimpse through time of a possible future. The Phoenix somehow *knows* this is real; the question is whether it's inevitable or merely possible.

The effect lasts until the end of the Phoenix's next turn. During this time, neither Mercy nor her Attendants attack the victim; however, if Mercy has brought in another ally with *Shadows of the Past*, it may target the helpless victim. When the victim recovers, something unexpected happens. The Phoenix had a vision of their death: Now the spirit of that future dead Phoenix has been drawn through time to attend the Wing. **Return the Sparks that Phoenix has lost to** Drawn to the Dusk, but keep them separate from their normal Sparks; they can add these Sparks to any actions taken by **any other** member of the Wing. **If the victim draws another Affliction**, they add another Spark to their Attendant pool. If the victim dies in the current conflict (potentially by losing their last free Spark), they merge with the existing spirit; combine all their Sparks into one pool, and have them select a Wingmate host as usual. The time-lost attendant spirits can't communicate with their hosts; there is a vague sense of concern and intention, but they can't share any concrete details of the future.

As soon as a victim redraws their hand and is freed from paralysis, Mercy is free to use this power again. She can activate it as a free action at the start of her turn, provided no one is currently paralyzed and there is a target who has yet to be affected by *Cracked Mirror*.

Once a Phoenix has survived *Cracked Mirror*, they receive a **+6 bonus to any Attack Spreads they make against Mercy;** having seen a glimpse of the future, it's easier for them to predict her movements.

Here's a list of five future deaths you can assign to the Phoenixes affected by *Cracked Mirror*. Each one may provide a specific benefit at a moment in the future, though the Phoenix won't realize this until that moment comes.

Killed by Deadly Pantomime

The silent harlequins circle around you. One lunges with inhuman speed. There's no sword in his hand, but a wave of numbness spreads through your chest as he completes his lunge. Looking down, you see a gaping wound in your chest and a void where your heart should be. You still feel nothing, even as your body dissolves into ash.

Benefit: The Phoenix is prepared for this strange attack. The first time the Attendants attack this Phoenix, the value of the Attack is reduced to 10.

Dies Rallying Cartacia

You are standing on the ramparts of a walled city. There's an army of Bones stretched out across the plains, but there is a more immediate concern. A misshapen colossus strides toward the wall, and as the massive figure draws closer, you see it's formed from the corpses of countless innocents. You call out to the people around you, rallying the ragged group of soldiers and civilians and inspiring them to stand in the face of this terror. They cheer, their morale renewed...and a moment later, you're crushed beneath the behemoth's grisly fist.

Benefit: Once during Mission Seven, the Phoenix can draw inspiration from this speech and receive a +10 bonus to a Grace Spread made to inspire or influence civilians in Cartacia.

Dies in the Heart of the Behemoth

You are standing in a small chamber. The walls and floor are made from the corpses of innocents, and their hands reach out for you, desperately grasping and clawing. You're facing a Bone warrior in the armor of a Humanist commander, and you're holding (the weapon the Empress used to kill Hadon Pelagius)*. Before you can strike, the undead soldier smashes you with his massive, flaming maul. You flesh is burning, your bones are crushed, and you feel your life ebbing away.*

Benefit: With a successful **Intellect Spread** (Difficulty 15; Lore, War) a Phoenix can identify the figure as the Bone vessel of Hadon Pelagius; if the Phoenix who had the vision can't make the spread, someone else can attempt it when the vision is described to them. To be clear, the weapon in the vision isn't actually Justice's Talon (unless the Phoenix is currently carrying Justice's Talon); it's a mundane weapon of the same type. This vision can prove useful in Mission Seven.

Murdered by Omen

You're standing in a room that feels strangely familiar...some sort of Ilonan palace, with ornate tapestries and maps on the walls. A man is standing in front of you—a Shadovar wearing a flowing cloak, with one eye hidden by a leather patch. You see a Talon brooch on his cloak and the symbol of the Shrouded on his robes. You see the rod of Pyrean steel he has driven into your heart…and then everything fades away.

Benefit: The Phoenix has a fairly clear image of Omen, though the precise details start to fade as time passes. The weapon fits the description of the weapon Omen used to kill Mercy. The room was definitely an Ilonan palace; at the end of Mission Seven, the Phoenix may come to the conclusion it was the Imperial Palace.

Dies on the Shores of Pyre

You're standing on the barren shores of Pyre, the Grand Aerie rising up behind you. Dozens of Phoenixes are arrayed around you, facing the sea. (Wingmate) *raises their Talon, and you realize they are wearing a Marshal's cloak.* (Rival Wingmate) *rallies their Wingmates, and you see Mercy raising her unbroken mirror to reflect the dark water. The water is boiling and churning, and you know something terrible is about to emerge from it. Pyre is all that remains, and the Dread has come for you.*

Benefit: The vision is vague and dreamlike; within the vision, the Phoenix knew the nature of the threat they were about to face, but as soon as it ends, the details slip away. One thing they do remember is that Mercy was there: She wasn't wearing her mask, and her Talon was restored. Perhaps this means she can be saved...or perhaps this is simply a future sprung from a different timeline. There's no way to save her in the present, but if the Phoenix emphasizes the hope of redemption, they receive a +10 bonus to talk Mercy down.

USING THE ENVIRONMENT

The elements in this scene are fairly straightforward. If a Strength-based Phoenix uses the Stone Bench as a weapon and makes a successful attack, the target could be *Stunned*, or the attack might deal brutal damage, whichever you prefer. Exotic Merchandise could be anything a player can come up with, though the market doesn't stock explosives or magical weapons.

DEFEATING MERCY

Mercy can be overcome by sheer physical force, though she never actually acknowledges she is engaged in a battle. If the Wing brings her down physically—even if their intention is to try to take her alive—read or paraphrase the following once she takes her final Wound:

Mercy's expression is hidden behind her sorrowful mask, but you hear her last whisper clearly. "Not again..." You catch a final glimpse of her mirror, and then she shatters like a glass breaking into shards. Each shard splinters and splinters again, and a moment later, there's nothing left.

If no one has received the *Dies on the Shores of Pyre* vision, the Phoenix who killed Mercy receives it at this point; otherwise, the last glimpse into the mirror fills them with a sense of general dread. Either way, they add the *Disturbing Visions* card to their deck (unless someone already claimed it using *Psychometry*).

It's possible the Phoenixes are determined not to fight Mercy and attempt to talk her out of her actions. This isn't an especially viable course of action, because Mercy herself can't control all of her actions. She did put the city to sleep, but she can't wake people. She can't stop the people around her from being hurt. If a Phoenix makes a **Grace Spread** (Difficulty 30; Diplomacy, Leadership, Deception), she is *Stunned* as she takes a moment to consider the Phoenix's words; however, when her turn comes around she dismisses it as impossible. If the spread has a value of 40 or above, she is actually convinced...but she still can't simply surrender. If this occurs, paraphrase the following:

> *Mercy raises a hand and runs her fingers across the surface of her mask. "I've seen so many terrible futures...it's hard to believe in hope. I know one thing for certain: There's no future where you will succeed while I am here." She tightens her grip on the edge of the mask. "I hope you find a way."*
>
> *She pulls off the mask, and in that moment, she shatters like a mirror breaking into shards. Each shard splinters and splinters again, and a moment later, there's nothing left.*

Regardless of how she dies, something changes the moment Mercy departs. Tension leaves the air, and the Phoenixes **discard all Affliction cards** from their decks. Any Phoenix who has made a spread to study the effects of the Render can sense the veils between Dusk and Daylight have been restored. If anyone asks, Mercy didn't leave ashes or any other remains behind. It's unclear if she died without generating ashes or if the shattering effect wasn't actually death.

Epilogue

With Mercy's seeming death, the immediate threat has been removed, but the people of the city are still asleep, and the Bones are closing in. Dawn is approaching, and any Phoenix who has died has an opportunity to be reborn…but there's much work still to be done.

Interludes

Mission Seven begins immediately where this one ends. If a Phoenix died, go ahead and resolve their experience in the Crucible; in particular, if a Phoenix has a connection to the Empress Justice (as discussed in "The Summer Shore" and the next mission), this is a time to build on that. If a Phoenix has a specific story-driven task they wish to accomplish in Cartacia—such as checking on their family or friends—you could resolve that, but no more than a few hours should pass between the end of this mission and the beginning of Mission Seven.

MISSION REFERENCE: MERCY

Player Connections to Cartacia

THE HARVESTER (of Knowledge) (Fallen)

DEFENSE 6

HEALTH LEVELS 8, 8, 8, 8, 12, 12

SPEED 2

Cutting Words (*Standard Ranged Attack*): Attack 12, Damage x2 (6). The Harvester describes something terrible that happens to the victim. If the Harvester successfully wounds a target, it can also add a condition to the victim. It can add each of the following conditions once during the scene: *Burning*, *Bleeding*, *Enraged*, *Exposed*, *Stunned*. All of these last until the end of the scene or until removed, except for *Stunned* (which lasts until the end of the victim's next turn).

Plagiarize (*All-or-Nothing Ranged Attack*): Attack 18, Damage 3 Wounds. This attack can only be used on a *Hidden* Phoenix. If this attack succeeds, the Harvester regains up to three HL 8 Health Level tokens.

Write out of the Scene (*Ability*): The Harvester picks one Phoenix. Place a *Hidden* token on the Phoenix; while this remains in place, the Phoenix cannot interact with anyone in the scene or remove this token on their own. Another Phoenix can remove this token by making a Grace Spread (Difficulty 15) to remember the victim. See mission text for additional information.

Omniscient Narrator (*Ability*): The Harvester can perceive *Hidden* enemies, and enemies receive no bonus for being *Hidden* when making attacks against it. **All of the Harvester's enemies receive a** Vulnerable **condition at the start of combat.**

Fallen Enigma (*Ability*): The Harvester cannot be *Exposed* or become *Vulnerable*.

Each time he takes a turn, the Harvester can make one attack. After this is resolved, he can use Write out of the Scene.

MERCY

Phoenix

SPEED 2
DEFENSE 16
HL 3 (x10)

Mercy can make a single attack or use an Active Talent on her turn. See mission text for details on her Cracked Mirror ability, a passive ability that triggers at the start of combat.

WOUNDSHIFT (Standard Melee Attack): Attack 10, Damage x3 brutal (10). Mercy recovers one Health Level for every 3 points of damage inflicted on a target. Alternately, she can pass one Wound and one Condition.

WHISPER OF DOOM (All or Nothing Ranged Attack): Attack 14, Damage Inflicts two Bleeding Conditions; if there's no Bleeding tokens, this inflicts two Wounds.

SHADOWS OF THE PAST (Active Talent): Mercy summons an ally to aid her in battle.

SPIRITUAL AWARENESS (Ongoing Talent): Mercy may attack Hidden targets, and Hidden attackers receive no bonus against her.

ATTENDANTS

Fallen Group Enemy

SPEED 2
DEFENSE 8
HL 4, 4, 4, 4, 4, 12

The Attendants can make a single Deadly Pantomime attack per turn, affecting one or two Phoenixes depending on their current Health.

DEADLY PANTOMIME (Standard Melee Attack): Attack 20, Damage x1 (6). Instead of damaging a target, the Attendant inflicts one Bleeding condition for each Wound the target would suffer; if you're out of Bleeding tokens, this inflicts normal damage.

TWIN FORM (Ability): As long as the Attendants have their Health-12 HL Token, they can attack two people per turn with Deadly Pantomime and they are considered a Group Enemy. Removing the HL 12 token represents eliminating one of the Attendants; they are no longer a group and can only attack one target per turn.

MISSION SEVEN: THE SIEGE

"The Siege" finds the Phoenixes in the city of Cartacia. Following the events of Mission Six, the Phoenixes are preparing for an imminent Bone attack…but the people of Cartacia are still trapped in mystical slumber. Can the Phoenixes ready the city to face the siege and find a way to defeat the undead commander?

Background

The Phoenixes have defeated the corrupted Phoenix Mercy and repaired the spiritual damage caused by the mysterious Render of Veils, but the people of Cartacia are still trapped by Mercy's curse. As the Wing explores the city, they soon learn the Empire has underestimated the Bones. The undead legion will arrive at the city within a day…and the army is too far away to help. The Phoenixes must do what they can to prepare Cartacia for the siege that lies ahead.

As if this wasn't bad enough, there's another catch. The Bone Legion has never been defeated; when individual soldiers are smashed, their remains reform and rise again. Through their experiences in Westergate and the Grimwald, the Phoenixes have learned the Bones are sustained by the spirit of their commander…in this case, infamous Humanist general **Hadon Pelagius**. To defeat the Bones, the Phoenixes will have to find a way to defeat Pelagius, a quest that will lead them into the bowels of an undead colossus.

Prologue: The City Still Sleeps

Read or paraphrase the following:

> *Mercy is gone, and the walls between the world are restored…but nothing else has changed. You're standing in the Great Market of Cartacia, surrounded by the bodies of merchants and their customers. It's almost dawn, and the city is silent and still.*

The people of Cartacia are still sleeping and cannot be woken. An **Intellect Spread** (Difficulty 15; The Arcane, Healing, Spirits) reveals they are healthy—somehow sustained by the mystical energies of the curse—but their spirits are still recovering from the trauma; it could be hours or even days before people wake up.

It's almost dawn, and protocol dictates the Phoenixes should return to the Aerie and send a situation report to Dawn Command. The candle codes limit communication, but the Phoenixes can convey that there's a mystical contagion, which appears to be non-infectious. If this is done, Cinder replies **he** will send help through the Aerie within the hour; slightly less than an hour later, **the healer** (page 414) arrives.

Alternately, a dead Phoenix may decide to be reborn in Pyre to give a full report. Winter is intrigued and concerned, but they have no additional resources to allocate to Cartacia; Wings are out dealing with a Skinchanger plague in the Grimwald and additional Fallen activity in Skavia, and they can spare no one else. They send the Phoenix back to Cartacia, along with the healer.

Any dead Phoenixes are restored with the dawn. Any living Phoenixes regain one Health Level and twice their Rank in Sparks. There is much to be done: Continue to Scene One.

MISSION BRIEFING

Refer to the Mission Briefing from Mission Six (page 385) for information about Hadon Pelagius and Cartacia. If people have questions about the Bones, refer to the Challenge entry on page 176.

Scene One: Exploring Cartacia

The sun is rising on sleeping Cartacia. What do the Phoenixes want to do?

- They may go to the city gates to review defenses. The Cartacian Guard were in the midst of preparing for a siege when sleep came upon them: shoring up walls, restoring siege weapons, and stockpiling barrels of pitch and other flammable substances. As they reach the front gate, they hear sounds; go to *The Refugees,* below.

- If any Phoenixes remain in the Aerie or check back, they encounter the healer when **he** shows up.

- If the Phoenixes have any personal connections to Cartacia—family or friends in the city—they may want to follow up on this. Now that the Render of Veils has left the city, there are no threats within Cartacia. Feel free to play out these stories and decide what the Phoenixes find. If the story takes them close to the front gates, they could encounter *The Refugees*.

The Refugees

When the Phoenixes near the front gate, they hear sounds of movement and voices. If a Phoenix makes an **Intellect Spread** (Difficulty 15; Observation, Scouting) paraphrase the following:

> *You hear sounds of movement: the creaking of ropes and wood; quiet voices, too soft to hear from so far away. It sounds like someone is opening the main gate.*

Moving to intercept, the Phoenixes see a dozen people standing over the bodies of fallen soldiers and working to raise the portcullis blocking passage into the city. They're a ragged bunch, dirty and bloody, and many of them are carrying axes, knives, or spears. The gate is beginning to open.

Any Phoenix can make a **Skill Spread** to deal with this gang. If they want to attack, they might use *Athletics*, *Destruction*, or *War*. They could try terrifying these people with a Fear Spread or calming them and establishing peaceful communication with a Leadership or Diplomacy Spread. Or they may want to study the strangers with an Observation or Scouting Spread. Here are a few possible outcomes:

- If a Phoenix has *Seen This Before* in their hand, they have actually seen one of these refugees before; have them describe the person (either an Ilonan or someone who would spend a lot of time traveling through Ilona).

- A Phoenix who examines the group more closely sees they look more like refugees than bandits. The group by the gates is fairly physically fit—they scaled the walls to get inside—but they look tired, frightened, and dirty from the road. Their weapons are makeshift and they don't have armor. More importantly, on the other side of the gate are a few wagons and a larger group of people including elders, children, and a few seriously wounded.

- Any sort of aggressive spread kills, cripples, or incapacitates two of the twelve strangers for every five points in the spread (round up). The precise results are based on the intention of the player: Are they trying to ruthlessly eliminate these strangers or just incapacitate them? Any survivors immediately surrender.

- A Fear Spread sends the group running in all directions. Any other sort of social spread results in the group flocking around the Phoenixes, desperate for guidance and protection.

These people are refugees from the nearby farming community of Vesula. Their village was overrun by the Bones yesterday; they fled as the vanguard approached. They made their way to Cartacia as quickly as possible. They only just arrived; when no one responded to their hails, they sent a party to scale the walls so they could get inside the city. They are terrified and exhausted. If the Phoenixes are aggressive or intimidating, the refugees scatter and flee. These people are looking for protection and hope; if the Phoenixes present themselves in a positive manner, the travelers latch onto them.

Here are a few notable personalities among the refugees. You can ask the players to expand this list, or you can add in any appropriate established characters from a Phoenix's backstory.

- **Crya Tul**, a traveling merchant in her early forties. Crya owns the largest wagon in the refugee train; when the Bones struck Vesula, she threw out much of her goods to make room in her wagon for more people. She's shrewd and level-headed, but she has a good heart and wants to do what she can to help people.

- **Tasker Danan**, a strong Ilonan farmer in his thirties. He helped organize the refugee train and along with Crya is a de facto leader of the train. He's angry the Imperial Army didn't save them from the Bones—they'd all heard the army was coming—and is generally grappling with survivor's guilt over having left the town. However, he's suppressing this to focus on keeping the others alive. He presses the Phoenixes for a clear plan for survival, but once they overcome his initial concerns, he's a strong ally in the defense.

- **Cassi Nosta**, a teenage boy. His parents were the leaders of Vesula and stayed behind to continue organizing the evacuation; they placed the boy in Tasker's care. He wants to know if the Phoenixes are going to go save his parents.

- **Vesta Corda**, a Dawn priestess. She serves as the spiritual guide and healer for Vesula. She is thrilled to see the Phoenixes and is convinced they can save everyone. However, she was badly burned in an altercation with a Bone Chariot and is dying of her injuries. A Phoenix can save her with a **Grace Spread** (Difficulty 25; Healing) or by using a Devoted Lesson to shift a Wound from her; otherwise she dies within the hour, though happy to have seen Phoenixes.

The news from the refugees shows the Bones are moving faster than anticipated. The refugees have already been harried by Bone Chariots and lost a wagon on the way. They believe **Bone outriders could arrive at any time,** and the main army could arrive within 24 hours...at least a day before Imperial forces reach Cartacia. If asked to describe the Bone forces, they paint a picture of thousands of Bone soldiers supplemented by chariots. They remember significant use of fire-based weaponry... and worst of all, they remember seeing some sort of giant marching behind their army. No one can provide details about the giant—they all fled before it got close—but Vesta Corda remembers hearing screams and moans on the wind, as if the giant was walking over the bodies of innocents.

A number of refugees died on the way to Cartacia. Of the approximately fifty survivors, about thirty-five of them are capable of working. If a Phoenix makes a **Grace Spread** (Difficulty 15; Leadership, Diplomacy) to rally them, these survivors are willing to take up weapons and help the Phoenixes in any way they can.

The Healer

Before proceeding with this encounter, address two questions. Did the Phoenixes save Eldan Diogenes from the Chanters in Mission Two? Did they recover Phoenix ashes from Westergate in Mission Four? If the answer to **both** these questions is no, then Pyre has no help to offer. As long as at least one of these events occurred, Pyre can send help. If Diogenes died, the healer is a Grimwald shaman named **Amala**. Paraphrase the following when the healer arrives, taking into account the identity of the healer:

> *Soon after your exchange with Pyre, a figure emerges from the Flame, gasping and calling out to you. This is no Phoenix; it's a mortal. You recognize* ***Eldan Diogenes****, the healer you saved from the Chant who's been maintaining the infirmary at Pyre. It's possible to send mortals through a hearth by expending Phoenix ashes, but it's never easy on them.*

The healer reports there were no Phoenixes to spare at the Aerie, but they have some ideas about waking the sleepers. If the Phoenixes recovered ashes from Westergate, the healer has brought a supply of ashes that should help with this process. The healer needs access to a significant number of sleepers; they expect to have results in a few hours.

Scene Two: Preparing the City

Once the Phoenixes have encountered the refugees and the healer, read or paraphrase the following:

> *The people of Cartacia are still sleeping peacefully, but now there's a new sense of urgency. According to the Vesulan refugees, Bone raiders could arrive at any moment and the army is less than a day away. You don't have much to work with, unless* Eldan *can wake the sleepers...but it's time to use what you've got to prepare the city for the arrival of the Bones.*

This situation is similar to Scene Three in the Scartongue mission. The Bones are on their way, and each Phoenix has a few hours to contribute to the defense of the city. Cartacia has a base **Fortification Value** of 30. Each living Phoenix can make a single spread to improve this score before the Bone scouts arrive. Let each member of the Wing propose a plan and make a **Skill Spread** to implement it, comparing the result to the Fortification Spread sidebar to see how many points they add to the city score. Because time and resources are limited, each Phoenix takes a **-5 penalty** to these spreads. If you feel a plan wouldn't particularly help the city even if it did succeed, you can increase the penalty. Here are few examples of plans and which Specialties would apply:

- Organize the refugees to set up a watch along the walls (Grace Spread; War, Leadership).
- Tend the injured refugees or organize a makeshift infirmary (Intellect Spread; Healing).

• Prepare explosive barrels that can be hurled from the walls (Intellect Spread; Fire, War).

• Establish wards that weaken the Bones. This is possible, but it only has a minor effect (Grace Spread; The Arcane, Spirits).

• Perform a tactical evaluation of the walls and landscape (Intellect Spread; Observation, Scouting, War).

• Review history of previous sieges of Cartacia or Humanist tactics (Intellect Spread; Lore, War). Among other things, this reveals that Hadon Pelagius would often send a small, swift force of sappers to damage enemy fortifications in advance of his main force.

• Reinforce weak spots in the defenses with additional barricades (Strength Spread; Athletics).

Fortification Skill Spreads

A successful spread generates **Fortification Points** as shown below.

- **<15:** No points.
- **15–19:** One point.
- **20–24:** Two points.
- **25–29:** Four points.
- **30+:** Eight points.

These Fortification points reflect durability of defenses and overall preparedness, and they play a crucial role in the final battle. Make note of anything that should be called out in that final battle; clever tactics could provide the Phoenixes with additional Environmental Elements or options when fighting the Behemoth. When every Phoenix has completed their action, continue to Scene Five.

Leaving the City

One or more Phoenixes may wish to leave the city, concluding they might as well face the Bones in the field where innocents can't be hurt. If a single Phoenix wishes to conduct reconnaissance, this is a **Grace Spread** (Scouting, Observation, Shadows); it contributes to the Fortification Value of Cartacia, as the information gained is useful. With a result of twenty or better, the Phoenix spots the vanguard headed for Cartacia. If they continue on, they're able to spy the main force far in the distance and calculate that they'll arrive at Cartacia shortly after dawn.

If one or more Phoenixes actually want to engage the enemy forces away from town, they can do so. If they attack the chariots, play out Scene Four without any risk of Fortification damage; however, if the Phoenixes die without having destroyed the vanguard, the force continues to the city. Reaching the main army takes a long time, and there's not a clear way to engage it effectively; the Behemoth is marching in the center of the army, and there are far too many Bones for them to make any real impact. If they insist on fighting, set them against a Bone Legion with twenty HL-3 tokens and Bone Chariots with six HL-6 tokens. At the start of each of the Bone Legion's turns, it adds ten HL-3 tokens, to a maximum value of 30 at one time. This continues indefinitely; as time goes by, slain Bones simply reform to fight anew. Studying the legion, there's no obvious sign of a commander; there are centurions, but the Behemoth occupies the space they'd expect to see a command group.

Scene Three: Vanguard of Fire

Once the Fortification Spreads are complete, read or paraphrase the following. Adjust to take into account any appropriate preparations...did the Phoenixes post lookouts?

> *Evening is falling as you complete your initial preparations. As you survey your work from atop the walls,* Perceptive Phoenix *notices movement in the darkness—pale flames approaching across the plains. Four chariots move towards Cartacia, pulled by skeletal horses.*

Each chariot carries a small dragon—the flamethrowers seen in "Chants and Whispers" and "The Summer Shore." The dragons should have a limited supply of fuel, but these bone chariots aren't using mundane supplies; these flames are supernatural. Aside from the dragons, each chariot carries a pair of Bone soldiers loaded down with explosives. As soon as they get close to the city, these sappers leap off and charge toward the walls, hoping to weaken or destroy the defenses.

SETUP

Arrange the Phoenixes in a line (along the top of the wall). Set the **Bone Chariots** and **Bone Sappers** in the center of the play area. The area is the **Vanguard Attack** and includes the following Environmental Elements: **The Wall**, **Ballista**, **Barrel of Oil**, **Rope**, and **Refugee**. You can add or replace elements to account for the Phoenixes' actions preparing the city. The Phoenixes get the first action, and then the Bones act on alternating turns: Phoenix, Bone Chariot, Phoenix, Bone Sappers, Phoenix, Bone Chariot, and so on.

The attack continues until all the Bones are eliminated or until the city is reduced to a Fortification Value of 10, at which point the Bones retreat. Because the Bones regenerate, the conflict continues until the walls are breached or the Wing finds a way to lay the Bones to rest.

Attacking from the Walls

The Phoenixes begin high on the city walls. They can choose to remain on the walls and engage the Bones with ranged attacks, but there are limitations on making attacks at range.

- Any Phoenix can grab a bow, but mundane arrows and similar missiles have no effect on the Bones.
- Some Talons (*Epitaph* and *Thoughtcoil*) allow their wielders to make ranged attacks. However, *any* Talon can make a ranged attack if with wielder burns one Spark when making the spread (see page 124).
- Environmental Elements are available to make ranged attacks; a Phoenix can throw a barrel or fire a ballista. A Phoenix can improvise a ranged weapon by discarding two cards; see Using the Environment.
- Any Phoenix can descend the wall by making a **Grace Spread** (Difficulty 15; Athletics, Acrobatics); failure results in a fall and one Wound. Climbing back up is an **extended Grace Spread** (Difficulty 30; Athletics, Acrobatics).

While the Phoenixes are on the walls, the only attack the Bone Chariots can use against them is *Dragonflame*. The sappers can use their *Hurled Bomb* attack on people on the walls, but their main interest is in attacking the walls themselves.

The Bone Sappers

This is a small force, and they don't expect to destroy the city or defeat the Phoenixes; their only goal is to weaken the defenses and possibly breach the wall to create an opening for the upcoming attack. Each time the sappers take a turn, they can attack the walls in addition to making an attack against the Phoenixes. Their *Demolitions* action reduces the Fortification Value of the city by the number of Health Levels on the sappers, though they blow up a few of their own each time they use it. If the city drops below Fortification 30, there have been small breaches in the walls. **If the Fortification Level drops to 10 or below, the Bones retreat.** At this point, there is a massive gap in the wall, and the gate may have been breached. If the Phoenixes are slain before beating the Bones, they find the city with a Fortification Level of 10 when they are reborn.

An Undying Enemy

The most challenging thing about fighting the Bones is that they don't stay dead. When they are shattered, they immediately begin knitting themselves back together again; make sure to call this out as it happens. This is reflected by their *Deathless* ability; the Bones recover Health Levels at the start of each round. The Imperial Army never found a way to deal with this...but Phoenixes are more capable. Finding a way to lay the Bones to rest is an **extended Intellect Spread (**Difficulty 60; Spirits,

Lore, Shadovar background). A Phoenix can contribute to this with a spread once per turn; because this is a mystical ritual, **a Phoenix must burn one Spark each time they make a spread contributing to the total.** *Shaman* or *Exorcist* are worth +10 each the first time they're used in this spread, and +5 thereafter. *Psychometry* is worth +10 the first time it's used if the Spark cost is paid, and immediately reveals the first level of information.

This spread has three critical points:

- By this point, the Phoenixes already know the Bones are sustained by a single anchoring spirit—in this case, Hadon Pelagius. He's not here, so defeating him isn't an option. However, when the value of the spread reaches **20**, the Phoenixes working on it determine they can temporarily break the connection between Pelagius and these Bones with a form of exorcism. It doesn't instantly eliminate them, but it keeps them from regenerating.

- When the spread reaches a value of **40**, the Phoenix has a moment of direct spiritual connection with Hadon Pelagius. He's a spirit sustained entirely by hatred and obsession; in his mind, he is still fighting the Civil War, and he won't rest until his enemies and all the traitors who serve them are destroyed. They have a glimpse of his legion, thousands of Bones marching as one, and then the vision fades. The most important part of this vision is the clear sense Pelagius is with the approaching army. If the Phoenix who saw this vision asks if they could tell exactly where Pelagius was in the army, they couldn't. The view of the legion was looking down from above, but this could have simply been some sort of spiritual vision as opposed to looking directly through his eyes.

- This exorcism is completed when the spread reaches a value of **60** or higher. When this happens, all the remaining Bones are *Stunned*. After they recover from this they, continue to fight, but the *Deathless* ability no longer functions, and when their last Health Levels are removed, they remain dead.

If a Phoenix asks why this wasn't an option in Westergate, it only works here because there are so few Bones in the group. Westergate was filled with Bones; there were far too many for such a simple ritual.

The Price of Defeat

If the Wing was significantly weakened by the conflict with Mercy in Mission Six, they may have a difficult time with this encounter. If all the Phoenixes die, the Bone forces leave after reducing the Fortification Value to 10; you can establish that multiple refugees were killed in the attack. The Phoenixes are reborn at dawn. The healer has awoken as many people as allowed (as described in Scene Four), starting with the Aerie staff and then soldiers. The Phoenixes have time for a single Fortification Spread before the Bones arrive; they'll have to chose one member of the Wing to make this spread.

USING THE ENVIRONMENT

The primary value of the Environmental Elements in this scene is enabling ranged attacks from the walls. However, there are presumably more things around that could be thrown or dropped than exist on the list. A Phoenix can reload the ballista or find a stack of rocks to throw; however, these things take time. A Phoenix can find something to use to make a ranged attack during their turn by **discarding two cards** and describing the element. This is subject to your approval; it's easy to find a rock or to reload a ballista, but there are no dragons conveniently mounted on the wall and explosives are in short supply. This improvisation allows a ranged attack, but it doesn't provide any of the other benefits of using an Environmental Element.

The Barrel of Oil triggers an explosion if used on either the chariots or sappers, increasing the value of the Attack Spread by 5 and inflicting brutal damage.

Scene Four: The Long Night

Read or paraphrase the following, taking into account the degree of damage inflicted on the city:

> *The Bones are finally still, but Cartacia bears the scars of the attack. Night has fallen, and in the distance you can see a light that must be fires of the Bone legion. Odds are they'll arrive soon after dawn. You don't have much to work with, but you have one evening to prepare for a siege.*

Take a moment to evaluate the damage done by the Bone attack. Is the city worse off than when the Phoenixes arrived? The Imperial Army is at least a day behind the Bones. There are two questions: Can the Phoenixes limit the number of casualties before the army arrives, and—more than that—how can the Bones actually be defeated? The vision they received while exorcising the vanguard confirms Hadon Pelagius is with the legion, but do the Phoenixes know enough to defeat him?

Calming the Masses

If you have the time and want to delve deeper into the story, this is a good time to return to the refugees. What's their reaction to the vanguard attack? Were any of them killed (your call, based on the amount of damage done by the attack)? There are no crucial consequences here, but it's an opportunity to remind the Phoenixes of the human face of this battle—and to establish whether the Phoenixes are providing them with hope or keeping them in line through fear.

Waking the Sleepers

As the Phoenixes recover from the conflict, the healer arrives with good news. They've found a ritual that can wake some of the populace. This draws on the lingering energy of the Dusk, and it requires Phoenix ashes...so there's a limit on

how many people can be woken. **By default, the Phoenixes can wake a single group of people.** However, there are a few ways to improve on this.

- If the healer is Eldan Diogenes, the Wing can wake an additional group; Eldan is more experienced than Amala.

- If the Phoenixes recovered a significant amount of Phoenix ashes from Westergate, the healer is well supplied and they can wake an additional group.

- If a Phoenix makes an **Intellect Spread** (Difficulty 30; Healing), they can stretch their resources and wake an additional group.

So the base is a single group, and the best case scenario is four groups of people. There's not enough time to carefully move people around and create custom groups, though a few specific people could be dragged in (for example, the Flamekeeper).

Available groups are described below. Each group includes a few distinct elements. When a group wakes, its people panic or seek to go about their own business. To get them organized and focused on defending the city, a Phoenix must make a Grace Spread; the **Unify Difficulty** determines the difficulty. If this is successful, the group adds its **Fortification Value** to the value of the city. Finally, each group has a few special benefits. These don't help in terms of the hard numbers of the battle, but the Phoenixes are also seeking to maintain order within the city and formulate a general strategy; different groups provide different strategic tools.

- **Aerie Staff.** Unify Difficulty: 0. Fortification Value: +10. Special Benefits: The Aerie staff are immediately loyal and prepared for the situation. The Aerie includes a few healers who can help manage civilian casualties, and Aerie soldiers are better prepared to handle supernatural threats than most; they can spread out among the other forces and help maintain order. The Flamekeeper is **Niko Caston**.

- **Soldiers.** Unify Difficulty: 15. Fortification Value +10. Special Benefits: There are three separate groups of soldiers that can be revived. The soldiers add 5 to the Fortification Value even if they aren't unified; they help with defense even if they reject Phoenix command. When waking up soldiers, the Phoenixes can choose to wake commander **Holan Kapanos**. If they do, the Unify Difficulty of that group is increased to 25; Kapanos doesn't trust the Phoenixes. However, if they win him over, the Fortification Value of the group is increased to +20. If the Phoenixes don't wake Kapanos, have the Wing describe a unit commander for each group of soldiers they wake.

- **Ara Talu.** Unify Difficulty: 20. Fortification Value: +10. Special Benefits: The Ara Talu are merchants and teamsters, as well as the civil administration of Cartacia. They can quickly provide supplies and help with evacuation and movement. The senior member of the family is **Junius Aragi**; unless he's well won over, he warns the Phoenixes that the Ara expect compensation for their services.

• **Deo Talu.** Unify Difficulty: 25. Fortification Value +15. Special Benefits: The Deo Talu control the criminal underworld of Cartacia; they can be found only if one of the Phoenixes can justify knowing something about the organization. In addition to having capable fighters ready to brawl in the streets, the Deo have access to many useful supplies (narcotics, explosives, and so on) and know secret paths for getting around and out of the city. However, they are very difficult to win over, and if the Unify Spread fails, they *reduce* the Fortification Value by 5. The senior member of the family is **Adria Deosa**, a ruthless woman and capable assassin; she has a good sense of humor about the situation.

Phoenixes can come up with other ideas for groups they want to wake; use these groups as models. Most civilian organizations have a Unify Difficulty of 20 and a Fortification Value of +5.

If time permits, each Unification Spread is a good chance for roleplaying. Describe the scene as people begin to wake: Is the general mood one of confusion, fear, or anger? Which Phoenix engages with the group and what approach do they take? If they can be unified, individuals like Holan Kapanos and Adria Deo can be valuable allies. If they aren't unified, they're still active in the city, but pursuing their own agendas. If the Phoenixes interact significantly with a particular community leader, you may want to ask one or more players to contribute a detail about that character to develop further attachment.

FURTHER FORTIFICATION

Once the Phoenixes have woken all the groups they can, establish the current Fortification Value of the city and the resources at their disposal. Make clear that the Fortification Value reflects the ability of the city to withstand a siege. Thousands of Bones are approaching, and they're only a single Wing of Phoenixes; they can't be everywhere at once, and the Fortification Value reflects the ability of the city to withstand the siege until help arrives.

As before, each Phoenix can make a single spread to contribute to the value. Because the Phoenixes have a significant amount of time to work on this, **each Phoenix can play four cards in their spread**. A Phoenix could use War or Leadership to organize the defenders, Scouting to gather further intelligence, Healing to prepare triage centers, Athletics to haul vital goods or reinforce weak points of the defenses, Fire to prepare explosives or develop ways to suppress fires in the city, and so on. If you feel someone has an especially clever idea or is making use of one of the awoken groups in an effective way, you can provide a bonus of up to +10 to a spread.

Preparing for Pelagius

After the experience of exorcising the Bones, the Phoenixes know Hadon Pelagius is with the army. Someone can make a spread to delve deeper into Hadon's history and look for ways to defeat him. There are a number of ways to justify this. It's easily

an **Intellect Spread** (Lore, War, The Empire, or Talu background). But they could also make it a **Grace Spread** (Spirits), based on drawing deeper on the vision and connection established during the exorcism. If the spread doesn't seem sufficient to justify this information, it could come from Eldan Diogenes. Review the sidebar on page 336; this is an opportunity to establish any details that may have been missed. Here are a few crucial elements:

- Both Hadon Pelagius and Justice were members of the Pel Talu.
- If you want Justice to be connected to a Phoenix in the Wing, this is the time to establish that any previous description of Justice's Talon was mistaken, and that she used the same Talon as the Phoenix in question.
- This is the time to decide if Hadon actually had a spiritual connection to the Talu House God Pelagius, or if this was a delusion or rumor. Either way, this is something to call out in the final encounter, as the Bone Hadon has no such connection.
- In the final encounter with Hadon Pelagius, he gloated that they had left the Empire in ashes. Justice replied *"The Empire is a Phoenix. It shall survive this, learn from it, and rise again stronger than before."* The Phoenixes could get this from studying history, they could see it in a vision when they make a strong Spirits Spread, or a Phoenix with a direct connection to Justice could learn it from Justice herself.

If a Phoenix has a direct connection with Justice, this is a last opportunity to die (by burning Sparks or any form of suicide) and speak with her in the Crucible. This would be an opportunity to establish any final details the Wing hasn't learned, such as her proclamation before executing Hadon. As an extreme option, a Phoenix tied to Justice could allow her to act through them. When they are reborn, Justice is present as an attendant spirit; **until Hadon is defeated, the Phoenix receives a +5 bonus to War and Leadership Spreads and has five additional Sparks.**

While a direct connection with the Last Empress is a dramatic story, you don't have to go down this road if it doesn't fit your Wing. Even without this connection, you have many ways to establish points of connection to the story. With the resources of a city to draw upon, it's an easy matter for a Phoenix to acquire a weapon similar to the one Justice used when she killed Pelagius. The Phoenixes are reasonably certain any Phoenix of Justice's School or any Phoenix with Talu background would be able to hurt Pelagius.

THE DAWN BEFORE THE STORM

The Fortification Spreads show how each Phoenix spent the night. Finally dawn approaches. There's an active Aerie in Cartacia, and any Phoenixes who've died over the course of the mission can return. Phoenixes low on Sparks or Health Levels may contemplate spending their last Sparks in order to be at their best when the

battle comes; a Phoenix who's just discovered a tie to Justice may wish to return to the Crucible to try to speak to her. All of these are valid choices. As always, talk to each dead Phoenix about *why* they died. If a Phoenix died to replenish and gain new Lessons for the battle, was this a sacrifice made for others (Devoted)? Was it in pursuit of their duty to protect the Empire (Elemental)? Were they simply not tough enough to make it through earlier conflicts with sufficient strength for the last battle (Durant)? Or do they see it as pure failure (Bitter)? As always, the question is how the *Phoenix* views the death and what they take from it. Having established this, take a moment to walk through the experiences of each Phoenix in the Crucible. How long does the experience seem to last for them? What are they trying to learn? What is the greatest challenge set before them—whether it's a manifestation of their subconscious, a trial posed by their Mentor, or a creation of their mysterious Flame?

Ultimately, each dead Phoenix returns with renewed vigor and new Lessons. Living Phoenixes receive the usual surge of energy, regaining one Health Level and a number of Sparks equal to twice their Rank.

Fortification Skill Spreads

A successful spread generates **Fortification Points** as shown below.

- **<15:** No points.
- **15–19**: One point.
- **20–24:** Two points.
- **25–29:** Four points.
- **30–39:** Eight points.
- **40+:** Twelve points.

Newborn Phoenixes

If the city has a Fortification Value of 80 or above, the Phoenixes don't need any help. On the other hand, if it's 60 or below, the situation is fairly grim. If this is the case, you can offer one last surprising source of help: One or more newborn Phoenixes, sent from Pyre fresh from their rebirth. The point here is to have one or more mortals who have died over the course of this mission arc return as Phoenixes. A few possibilities: Eldan Diogenes if he died in "Chants and Whispers"; Trig or Wrin from "Scartongue"; Captain Nyanji or Halius Dal from "The Summer Shore"; or Ghora or Verya from "Pulling Strings." While these are a few obvious choices,

it's a chance for any memorable mortal who was lost to return—reminding people this is a world where those who die in a good cause have a chance to return to the fight. This is an opportunity for a brief reunion, and you should think about what sort of Phoenix the mortal has become. How did they die, and which School does that translate into? What do they look like as a Phoenix? These newborn Phoenixes aren't set to fight alongside the Wing, but if their skills are put to use elsewhere in the city—a Durant leading soldiers, a Devoted helping with healers—each newborn adds an additional 5 to the Fortification Value. Don't go overboard with this, but it is a chance to bring back a memorable character from a previous story.

FINAL REVIEW

After all these preparations, write down the Fortification Value and place it somewhere visible on the table. Take a moment to review what this number actually means. Go over the plans they came up with and the allies they woke. If time permits, you can roleplay a final meeting with the Phoenixes, the leaders of the city groups, and any of the refugees taking an active role in the battle. The army of the dead can be seen in the distance—a force that has never been defeated by Imperial soldiers. The people of Cartacia are vastly outnumbered. If a Phoenix is prepared to make a heroic speech, there's time for one last **Grace Spread (**Leadership, Deception**)** to inspire the soldiers; this is one final opportunity to improve the fortification, though it takes a -5 penalty due to the terrifying presence of the Bones on the horizon.

And so the battle begins.

Scene Five: The Behemoth

Read or paraphrase the following. Add in details to account for any special preparations made by the Phoenixes—for example, if they planted mines out in the field. Such efforts slow the Bones slightly, but nothing stops them; even if they are destroyed, the Bones quickly reform and continue their march.

> *The dead fill the plains. Skeletal soldiers march beneath rotting banners, rusting armor clinging to their bones. They move in perfect coordination, yet an eerie silence hovers over the battlefield. No drums or horns, no shouted commands: the vast line of the dead flows forward like a silent, inevitable tide. As they close on the city, you can see the giant figure marching in the midst of the legion. At a distance, it's easy to mistake for a single being—a hunched humanoid figure over one hundred feet tall. As it closes, you hear a chorus of moans and screams and see rippling motion across the body of this behemoth. It's then you see it clearly. You don't know what sort of frame supports it, but the body of this giant is made from corpses. Thousands of bodies are pressed together, corpses of the innocents the legion has slain in its march. They can't possibly still be alive; many of them are missing limbs or display equally ghastly wounds. Yet something holds them between life and death, and you hear the sobs and moans as the victims writhe and squirm in their hideous prison.*

If the Phoenixes haven't drawn the connection already, you may want to point out

the lack of fresh corpses at Westergate during *The Summer Shore* mission. This creature isn't large enough to be made from the bodies of every single person who's died at the hands of the Bone Legion, but there may be other Behemoths out in the field. As they draw close to the city, the legion parts to let the Behemoth move forward. Bone soldiers silently assemble ladders, massive dragons, and other tools for the siege, but it appears the Behemoth is the tipping point of their attack. Only the Phoenixes have any chance of slowing it down. But there's one surprise still to come.

As the grisly army closes on the city, a dark cloud rises up from its ranks. At first, it seems like smoke, a layer of cover to hide the movements of the soldiers. Then the cloud moves toward the city. It's not smoke; it's hundreds of rotting birds. They rise into the air and descend on the city in a wave of talons and bones.

SETUP

Arrange the Phoenixes in a line, representing the city walls. Set the **Behemoth** in the center of the play area and the **Carrion Birds** between the Behemoth and the Phoenixes. The Bone soldiers are too numerous to fight and aren't represented; as long as the walls hold, their impact is minimized. The birds can attack over the walls, and the Behemoth shatters the walls with its blows if not stopped. The area is the **Final Battle** and includes the following Environmental Elements: **The Wall**, **Arbalest**, **Catapult**, **Grappling Hook**, **Barrel of Oil**, and **Band of Soldiers**. You can add or replace elements to account for the Phoenixes' actions preparing the city.

The action begins with the Carrion Birds' attack. The Phoenixes have **one cycle** to deal with the birds before the Behemoth reaches the city. If the birds are still around, the Phoenixes have to deal with both at one. The Behemoth can't be defeated, but the Phoenixes can disrupt its attacks and limit its ability to damage the city. The only way to end the battle is to find Hadon Pelagius, which means scaling the Behemoth and crawling into its gullet.

USING THE ENVIRONMENT

As in Scene Three, the Phoenixes are attacking from the walls. This time, the walls are well-supplied and the Phoenixes have everything they need to make ranged attacks; have the players describe their actions, but they needn't discard cards or burn Sparks to attack at range.

The Environmental Elements are largely straightforward; many elements may prove useful in reaching Hadon Pelagius at the final stage of the battle. An attack made using the Barrel of Oil receives a +5 bonus and inflicts brutal damage. Otherwise, reward clever use of these elements as you see fit.

THE SCOPE OF THE BATTLE

The Phoenixes are facing the greatest threat on the battlefield, but it's only one piece of the conflict. Their success and failure is a measure of the overall progress of the battle. When a Phoenix takes Wounds, defenders across the city suffer as well; in addition to the attack on the Phoenixes, describe soldiers being torn apart by the Carrion Birds or caught in dragonfire. For every six Wounds suffered by the Wing, describe the death of one of the characters they've gotten to know—a refugee, one of the group leaders, or the healer. Most of all, keep track of the Fortification Value. Initially the city is strong and able to hold the Bones at bay, but the conflict with the Behemoth reflects the overall success of the siege. When damage occurs, give a sense of it. Is a ballista caught in a burst of flame? Is a guard tower shattered by one of the Behemoth's blows? Do a pack of Bones manage to get over the walls in a concentrated burst? Most of the city is still asleep, and even a small unit of Bones can inflict significant civilian casualties before being ground down.

The final results of the siege are tallied in the Aftermath. However, as a general guideline, if the Fortification Value is 50 or above, the defenses are strong. When it drops below 50, the minor damage begins adding up—small groups of Bones are in the city. When it falls below 30, breaches appear in the wall, buildings catch fire, and civilian casualties become significant. Below 15, the gates have fallen and the wall is massively breached; Bones roam freely through the city. If it reaches 0, the city is lost, and there's nothing left to save. If the Phoenixes did good work, the Fortification Value may be significantly above 50 as the battle begins. In this case, be sure to talk about how the Phoenixes' preparations are keeping the city strong. *A pack of Bones spill over the walls, but the Deo Talu fighters are ready and hold the inner streets. A squad of soldiers are caught in a blast of flame, but their comrades fill the gap, and the injured are rushed to the Aerie for triage.* If the city is secure, it's not simply a monolith: It's strong because of what the Phoenixes have done.

The Bones aren't represented on the board because there are simply too many of them, and those that are destroyed quickly reassemble. However, you should include their presence in any description of the battle. Even when the Phoenixes are fighting the Behemoth, you could mention how they sweep aside the lesser Bones scrabbling over the wall. If the Phoenixes stop one of the Behemoth's attacks, a chunk of its mass may fall to the ground and crush a squad of Bone soldiers. The goal is to give the sense of a vast, sweeping conflict—something far greater than any fight the Phoenixes have been in and something not sustainable. There are too many Bones, and they can't be killed. The only way to end this is to locate and take down Hadon Pelagius.

The Birds

The Carrion Birds are the first wave of attack. It's impossible to avoid them completely; there are simply too many of them. Any time they attack, they inflict one Wound on all enemies before anyone can defend. If the birds aren't taken down quickly, they can shred the Wing with this automatic damage. Fortunately, the Carrion Birds don't regenerate as swiftly as the other Bones; they're just a random thought in the dream of Hadon Pelagius—not as fixed as the vision of his army. Destroying the Birds reflects disrupting and scattering the flock.

In addition to fighting the birds directly, a Phoenix can seek to disrupt them with an exorcism. Any Phoenix with the Spirits Specialty or the *Shaman* Trait in their deck can attempt this. A Phoenix with the Lore Specialty can attempt it, but doesn't receive the usual +5 bonus from Lore; they know enough to try, but they don't have the focused knowledge. This is a **Grace Spread** (Spirits); *Shaman* is worth +5 in this spread, and *Exorcist* is worth +10. This inflicts damage on the birds equal to half the damage of the spread (round up and ignore Defense).

The Behemoth

Once the first cycle is complete, the Behemoth arrives. The undead colossus is too big to be taken down by any force the Phoenixes can bring to bear. Aside from sheer mass, the victims that make up its body are trapped between life and death and regenerate just as the Bones do. Powerful attacks can literally blow holes in its body or sever chunks of it, but its mass is quickly redistributed to counter the damage. So you can describe the impact of a powerful attack, but follow this with the fact the Behemoth is already recovering.

The Behemoth is powerful but very slow. Its attacks are easy to predict, and it's possible to disrupt it as it winds up for a blow. At the beginning of the cycle in which the Behemoth arrives, **place three Health Levels on its card: HL 15, HL 20, HL 25**. These reflect the oncoming attack. The Wing has **three turns** before that attack lands. When the Behemoth's turn comes up, go through the following steps:

- **Inflict Fortification Damage.** For each Health Level token remaining on the Behemoth, it reduces the Fortification Value of the city by 5.

- **Resolve Attack Against Phoenixes.** The Behemoth makes an attack against all Phoenixes: **Overwhelming Force** (*Special Attack*) Attack Value, Damage x1 (6). The Attack Value is equal to the highest-value Health Level remaining on the Behemoth; so if it has HL 15 and HL 20, the attack is Attack 20, Damage x1 (6).

- **Reset Health Levels.** Restore the Behemoth so it has the following Health Levels: HL 15, HL 20, HL 25.

The Behemoth treats brutal damage as normal damage and can't be affected by the *Bleeding*, *Vulnerable*, or *Stunned* conditions. Because of its size, it's treated as a Group Enemy for purposes of any special effects. An Elemental with the Rain of Destruction Lesson can make an **Intellect Spread** (Destruction) against the Behemoth once during their turn; this is treated as an Attack Spread of equal value.

The Behemoth continues to fight until Hadon Pelagius is found and defeated. Even when they locate Pelagius, the Wing can't afford to all chase after him; someone needs to continue disrupting the Behemoth. When you're describing its attacks, be sure to add variety. It may smash into walls or towers with sheer brute force, but it can also hurl chunks of rubble or even fling parts of its body into the city, scattering risen dead among the sleeping innocents.

Finding Pelagius

Until Hadon Pelagius has been found, the battle is merely a delaying tactic. Locating Pelagius is an **extended Intellect Spread** (Difficulty 60; Spirits, Lore, Shadovar background). A Phoenix can contribute to this with a spread once per turn; because this is a mystical ritual, **a Phoenix must burn one Spark each time they make a spread contributing to the total.** Each time *Shaman* or *Exorcist* are used in this spread, add +5; *Psychometry* is worth +10 the first time, but receives no additional bonus thereafter. If the Phoenix who received a *Cracked Mirror* image of fighting Pelagius brings up the vision, they receive an immediate +20 bonus to the spread. Information is received in the following order:

- At **20 points**, the Phoenixes confirm that Hadon Pelagius is within the body of the Behemoth. However, given its vast size, this isn't enough to allow immediate engagement.

- At **40 points**, the Phoenixes confirm the Behemoth is composed of victims from the cities this legion has destroyed, held in torment by Hadon's hatred of "civilian collaborators."

- At **60 points**, they are able to pinpoint Hadon's position in the upper torso of the Behemoth, approximately where a human heart would be. There's no way of knowing what the internal architecture of the beast is, but the easiest approach appears to be climbing up its body and going through its gaping maw, hacking a path to the heart within.

Scaling the Beast

Once Hadon has been located, the question is how to split the Wing. Some Phoenixes may want to remain outside to continue fighting the Behemoth and holding off the destruction of Cartacia; these are the **defenders.** The Phoenixes who intend to scale the Behemoth and face Pelagius are the **assault team.** Reaching the top of the Behemoth is an **extended Grace Spread** (Difficulty 80; Athletics, Acrobatics,

Spycraft) that must be completed by the assault team. The first spread is especially crucial, as this represents the plan to get from the wall onto the Behemoth...without being hacked to pieces by the Bones surrounding the giant. While this spread is part of the overall extended spread, it has a separate Difficulty of 40. The assault team collectively suffers one Wound for every five points below 40 (round against the Phoenixes); they may decide how to distribute these Wounds among the team. While this first spread carries great risk, there are also a number of possible bonuses to apply to the first spread.

- If the group scaling the Behemoth makes clever use of something on the wall—launching a catapult, attaching a grappling hook to a ballista bolt—you can give them a +5 bonus on the spread.

- In addition to playing Traits, each Phoenix not currently making the spread can explain how they're helping the assault team; you can add up to five points for each contribution based on how sound it is.

Thereafter, reaching the top is a race. Phoenixes on the assault team are no longer at risk of Behemoth attacks, but until they reach the top, they can continue to make attacks against it; this reflects them hacking and burning as they scale the beast. Each Phoenix on the assault team can make one spread toward the extended Grace Spread per turn...but when they do, they suffer one point of brutal damage as the corpses comprising the Behemoth claw and bite at them.

The Behemoth is a deadly foe, and there is an excellent chance the defenders die before Pelagius is defeated; it's a question of how much damage they can mitigate before falling. If all defenders are dead (or if all Phoenixes join the assault team), the Behemoth inflicts 15 points of Fortification damage each time its turn comes around; hopefully the Fortification Value is high enough for the city to survive until Hadon falls.

Reaching the Heart

Once the Phoenixes reach the top of the Behemoth, they can make their way into its mouth and down towards the heart. No spread is required, but it takes **two turns** to reach the heart. The passage is tight, and the moaning corpses claw and cling to the intruders. You can provide descriptions of a few innocents the Phoenixes find trapped in this hellish prison, or you can ask each member of the Wing (including the defenders) to describe a victim who stands out. There's no reasoning with the prisoners; they're lost in terror and madness. At your discretion, a Phoenix could burn a Spark and make a **Grace Spread** (Difficulty 20; Spirits, Lore; Trump: *Shaman*, *Exorcist*) to provide temporary peace to the tormented souls. On the third turn taken by a member of the assault team, they come to the heart of the beast and Hadon Pelagius.

FIGHTING HADON PELAGIUS

Read or paraphrase the following:

> *The narrow passage widens out into a large chamber. At first, it appears to be empty, but then you see the figure embedded in the wall. This is no innocent prisoner; it's a Bone warrior in commander's armor, with the sigil of Hadon Pelagius engraved on his chest. He is shrouded in mist, and you realize this ectoplasmic energy is flowing from the innocents embedded in the walls around him. Even as you take this in, he slides free from the wall. A warhammer appears in his hand, sheathed in flames. For a moment, you see him as he once was—young and handsome—and his words ring in your mind. "You've got nothing left to fight for. I've reduced your Empire to ashes."*

If a Phoenix of Justice's School immediately responds with *"The Empire is a Phoenix. It shall survive this, learn from it, and rise again stronger than before,"* Pelagius is *Exposed* for the duration of the scene and loses one Health Level. Regardless, the Phoenixes get one action before Pelagius takes a turn.

Hadon and Ghostlight

Hadon Pelagius is in his seat of power, strengthened by the suffering of his enemies. He instantly recovers from any damage he takes, as ectoplasm reassembles bones and steel. Like Scartongue in Mission Three, he has forgotten he's dead, and the only way to hurt him is to reenact his death. This is represented by *Ghostlight*. **Each turn, a Phoenix can only damage Hadon for a number of Wounds equal to or less than their current Ghostlight total.** These Wounds can be inflicted by a single attack or divided among multiple, but this is a hard cap. He calls his attacker **Justice;** as far as Scartongue is concerned, any Phoenix with Ghostlight is the Last Empress.

Gaining Ghostlight

The following things provide an ongoing Ghostlight bonus:

Attacking with the proper weapon	*+1*
Same School as Justice	*+1*
Talu Blood	*+1, +2 for Pel Talu*
Justice present as attendant spirit	*+1*

A Phoenix can gain a point of Ghostlight for one turn by taking an action that either supports the story of Hadon's original death or forcibly reminds Hadon he *is* dead and this isn't real. A critical point here is the fact Hadon believed in the Talu House Gods, but the power reanimating him is something else. If a Phoenix makes a

compelling speech about Hadon being corrupted and used by an alien force, Hadon immediately loses one Health Level and becomes *Vulnerable* until the end of the scene. A Phoenix cannot repeat the same story or speech multiple turns; they must come up with something new to get this bonus Ghostlight.

Hadon's Fall

When Hadon Pelagius loses his last Health Level, read or paraphrase the following:

> *Hadon's voice rings in your thoughts, a painful hiss. "Your tyranny cannot last. The old gods will have their due." The mist surrounding him disperses, and his bones and armor fall to the floor. It takes a moment for you to realize everything is silent. The prisoners trapped in the body of the Behemoth have fallen still, and their moans no longer fill the air. There is a sickening lurch as the beast begins to collapse.*

All Phoenixes within the Behemoth are caught in this collapse and suffer ten points of damage. If they survive, they can eventually crawl out from the corpses; otherwise, it's back to the Crucible.

> *Those of you on the walls see the Behemoth splinter into its component forms, thousands of bodies showering down to the ground. As it falls, a ripple flows out across the Bone forces. Soldiers fall apart. Chariots spin away and shatter. Within moments, all that's left are rotting banners, rusting weapons, and a field covered in bone.*

The battle is won. All that remains is to calculate the cost.

Epilogue

If the Phoenixes are all slain before defeating Hadon Pelagius, Cartacia is utterly destroyed. The Legion continues its advance toward the Capital, but it is met in the field by the **Rival Wing** and the Durant Marshal Honor, supporting Nerena Zolius and her legion. Honor defeats Hadon Pelagius, dying in the process; this leaves Dawn Command without a Durant Marshal. Despite this failure, Winter appreciates the work the Phoenixes did; the information they gathered was what made the victory possible.

Hopefully, however, the Phoenixes emerge triumphant. The ultimate cost can be measured by the final Fortification Value of the city. The casualty numbers represent the maximum value if the value is on the low end of the scale—so a result of 31 means three thousand died, while a result of 49 would be closer to a thousand deaths.

- **Over 60.** The defenses held, and there is minimal long-term impact on the city. There were fewer than one thousand casualties.

- **41–60.** The walls held, but a few bands of Bones made it over the wall, and a number of important buildings were burnt. There were up to three thousand casualties.

• **21–40.** There were significant breaches, and Bones raged through the city, burning buildings and slaughtering the sleepers. It will be some time before the defenses can be fully restored, and up to ten thousand people were killed in the conflict.

• **1–20.** The gates fell, and the Bones were spread throughout the city by the time Hadon was defeated. Many of the most important buildings were destroyed, including the Deo Beacon. Fires are still raging in many parts, and up to twenty thousand people were killed.

• **Zero.** Despite the ultimate victory, Cartacia was completely overrun and destroyed. The walls were shattered, and most of the buildings are left as burnt-out shells. Of the forty thousand people in Cartacia, fewer than one thousand survive (not accounting for anyone the Phoenixes evacuated in advance).

As long as the final Fortification value is over 40, there's a sense of triumph. Read or paraphrase the following:

In the aftermath of the battle, the sleepers begin to wake. Those who witnessed the battle spread the stories of your actions, which spread and grow like wildfire. Some say (members of the assault team) *lept from the walls and singlehandedly slaughtered every Bone soldier. Others talk about the heroes who choked the giant with their bodies. Some say the Last Empress returned to fight at the side of these champions of the Dawn. These stories will surely only grow as they are shared.*

Setting all exaggeration aside, this is a truly memorable occasion. This is the first true victory against the Bone Legion since the beginning of the Dread. Up to this point, many have had doubts the Phoenixes truly were the heroes of the legends. Many have felt they should stay out of the Imperial Army's way. No one's saying that now. The people you unified to protect their city and those whose lives you've saved won't soon forget this. It's just one victory. There are other Bone legions in the field, and many more manifestations of the Dread you haven't begun to understand. You're only beginning to understand the enemy you face. But this is an important victory, and you have given the people hope the Dread can be defeated.

During the day, people work to repair the damage and help the injured and the sleepers. As evening falls, the Deo Beacon is lit and there is a massive celebration in your honor in the Great Market. You are showered with gifts and praise. Songs are sung of your deeds, and performers reenact key moments of the battle. The Governor of Cartacia presents you with honor bands, and the matriarch of the Ara Talu promises to repay the debt Cartacia owes you.

Along with this, take a moment to review the status of the community leaders and the refugees. One of them died for roughly every five Wounds suffered by the Wing. Who survived? How did the Fallen die? What were the heroic acts and tragedies of the mortals? What do the surviving community leaders have to say to the Phoenixes? Once this is done, there's one last piece to add…

At some point over the course of the night, one of you catches sight of a Shadovar in a flowing cloak with a leather eyepatch over his right eye. He smiles at you and gives a slight bow; before you can reach him, he vanishes into the crowd.

Eventually the new day dawns. Despite the jubilation, the Phoenixes have their hands full; candle communication with the Grand Aerie provides orders to remain in place and help with the recovery. Two days after the battle, Commander Nerena Zolius arrives with the Imperial Army. If the Fortification Value was above 30, this spurs another round of celebration and triumph.

If the Fortification Value is 30 or below, the mood is one of shock and despair as people struggle to deal with the damage and account for the dead. Rationally, the people know that if not for the Phoenixes, all would have been lost; but the harsh reality prevents much gratitude. The Phoenixes can still provide crucial aid, and as time passes, many acknowledge and thank them for what they've done, but it still doesn't *feel* like a victory. The people still believe the Dread cannot be stopped.

Interludes

This is the end of the initial arc, and it's up to you to decide how to proceed from here. Twogether Studios will release new missions, and you can take a break at this point to wait to see what we come up with. This set includes many challenges the Phoenixes never deal with over the course of the mission arc. They could face a Dreadlord with its retinue of Ancient Bones, deal with a Curse Ewer plaguing a Skavi village, or battle a Shoggoth rampaging through the Capital. And you can always make up new challenges of your own; you don't need an official card to represent a new creature.

This arc results in a victory over the Bones, but Omen is still at large, and his goals remain a mystery. He'll have a role to play in future Twogether content, but his story can be found on page 215 and the set includes his card. You can easily work him or Bastion into any future story.

- If you do continue straight away, here are a few possible interludes you could explore.

- If any of the Phoenixes had strong ties to Cartacia, you could explore the fate of the people or places that were important to them. Is there any unfinished business they need to resolve before they go?

- Depending on which groups were woken for the final battle, you could have a final accounting. If the Deo Talu were woken, their members are inclined to loot and steal in the aftermath of the battle. An encounter with Adria Deo could convince her to keep her people in line and even forge a new role for the Deo in the struggle against the Dread—or the worst aspects of human nature could triumph in the end.

• If a Phoenix had a direct connection to Justice and died in the final conflict, talk through their experience in the Crucible. Is the Last Empress there, and if so, what advice or guidance does she have for the Phoenix? Or has she moved on, leaving the Phoenix without a Mentor?

• If any Phoenixes have died their final deaths, how do they want to proceed? A player could assume the role of a new Phoenix of a School not yet represented in the Wing—a Phoenix tied to the Wing, but with no concrete connection to the events that have happened. Or they could keep the same School and play the next Phoenix to inherit their Flame. The Phoenix that has fallen is now a Mentor; who have they chosen to follow in their footsteps, and why?

MISSION REFERENCE: THE SIEGE

Community Leaders

Niko Caston, *Flamekeeper at the Cartacian Aerie. Older man, canny mediator.*

Holan Kapanos, *Commander of the Imperial forces at Cartacia. Harsh, distrusts Phoenixes.*

Junius Ara, *Talu negotiator. Businessman before all else, he expects compensation for services.*

Adria Deo, *Talu crime lord. She's a ruthless leader and assassin, but has a good sense of humor.*

Other Refugees:

BONE SAPPERS

Undead Group Enemy

SPEED 2
DEFENSE 4
HL 4 (x8)

The Sappers can make a single attack and perform Demolitions on their turns.

HURLED BOMB (Standard Ranged Attack): Attack 6, Damage x3 (6) and one point of Fortification damage (if applicable).

DEMOLITIONS (Ability): Once per turn, the Bone Sappers can inflict Fortification damage equal to the number of Health Level tokens on the Sappers. After performing this action, they lose one Health Level.

DEATHLESS (Ability): The Bone Sappers regain two Health Levels (HL 4) at the start of each of their turns.

BONE CHARIOTS

Undead

SPEED 2
DEFENSE 8
HL 6 (x8)

The Bone Chariots make a single attack during their turn. Every two Health Levels represent a single chariot.

CHARGE (Standard Melee Attack): Attack 12, Damage x2 (6) and the target is Stunned.

DRAGONFLAME (All-or-Nothing Ranged Attack): Attack 12, Damage Inflicts one Burning condition and one point of Fortification damage (if applicable). This attack can target one Phoenix for every 2 HL tokens on the Bone Chariots, rounded up.

DEATHLESS (Ability): The Bone Chariots regain a single Health Level (HL 8) at the start of each of their turns.

CARRION BIRDS

Undead Group Enemy

SPEED 2
DEFENSE 3
HL 2 (x30)

The Carrion Birds make a single Storm of Talons attack each turn.

STORM OF TALONS (All or Nothing Melee Attack): Attack 12, Damage 2 points of brutal damage. The Carrion Birds can attack all enemies in a scene.

INEVITABLE DEATH (Ability): Any time the Carrion Birds make an attack, all of their opponents immediately suffer one Wound.

BEHEMOTH

Undead Group Enemy

SPEED 3
DEFENSE 6
HL 15, 20, 25

The Behemoth makes a single attack each turn. See the mission for special rules.

OVERWHELMING FORCE (Special Attack): Attack (equal to the value of the highest HL on the Behemoth), Damage x1 (6). The Behemoth inflicts five points of Fortification damage for each Health Level token on it. Reset its Health Levels to starting value after this attack is resolved.

IMMUNITIES (Ability): The Behemoth is immune to the Stunned, Bleeding and Vulnerable conditions. It treats brutal damage as if it were normal damage.

BONE CHAMPION

Undead

SPEED 2
DEFENSE 8
HL 6 (x12)

Each turn, the Bone Champion can make a single attack.

HAMMER STROKE (Standard Melee Attack): Attack 18, Damage x1 (5) and the target is Stunned.

FINISHING BLOW (Standard Melee Attack): Attack 12, Damage x2 (10)

WRATH OF PELAGIUS (Ability): Anyone who makes a successful attack against the Bone Champion receives one Burning token. A Phoenix can counter this effect by immediately burning two Sparks.

IMMUNITIES (Ability): The Bone Champion is immune to the Stunned and Bleeding conditions. He treats brutal damage as normal damage unless he is Vulnerable.

APPENDICES

GLOSSARY

Ability. A special power on an Action Card. Abilities are typically triggered when the Action card is used in a spread, though they are generally optional. **108**

Action Card. A card with a suit and a value. Used to make spreads. Action cards may have abilities and Traits. **6**, 99

Adept. A mortal trained in the basic rituals of Ash sorcery. **41**, 138

Aegis. A Durant Phoenix of the Dawn Legion, who served as the first Emperor of the Phoenix Imperium. **89**

Aerie. A garrison that contains a hearth and set of message candles linked to the Imperial Flame. Phoenixes can be sent from the Grand Aerie to any active Aerie. An Aerie is maintained by a Flamekeeper, along with a small staff. **41**

Affliction. An Action card that is added to a deck to represent a significant and ongoing negative effect. **118**

Anima. A powerful natural spirit. 160, **165**

Ascendant. A mortal who has returned from death imbued with supernatural power. Phoenixes are a form of ascendant. **162**

Ash Sorcery. Mystical rituals that require the use of Phoenix ashes. Used to ignite a hearth or create message candles. **137**

Ashes. A shortened form of Phoenix ashes. **139**

Assisting others. A Phoenix can discard a Trait and explain how they are using the Trait to help an ally, adding the value of that Trait to the ally's spread. **112**

Atavi Union. One of the Old Kingdoms, occupying the southern region of Daela. **163**

Attack Spread. A spread made to determine the success and damage of an attack. **100**

Aton. A term used to refer to the citizens, individual city-states, or other attributes of Kor Aton. **80**

Attendant Spirit. A Phoenix who has died, but has Sparks remaining, may attend one of their Wingmates until the next Dawn. Attendant Spirits may communicate and burn Sparks to assist their host. **120**

Bitter. A Phoenix School driven by vengeance and aggression. **37**

Bleeding. A Condition representing a developing injury. At the end of a Scene, all Bleeding Condition tokens on a Phoenix are exchanged for Wounds. If a target should get a Bleeding token but none are available, they receive a Wound instead. **449**

Bones. A common class of undead. Bones are typically soldiers who are continuing to fight the wars they fought in their mortal lives. **176**

Brutal Damage. When an attack deals brutal damage, round up instead of down when removing Health Levels from the victim. You cannot remove a target's last Health Level by rounding up, and you cannot remove a Health Level of a particular value by rounding up if a Health Level with a lower value is available. **101**, 114

Buddy System. A system used when Phoenixes are accompanied by mortal companions. **125**

Burning. A Condition representing ongoing damage. At the start of each of their turns, a victim suffers 1 point of brutal damage for each Burning token on their card. **449**

Candle Codes. A system allowing basic concepts to be sent using Message Candles. **43**

Card Limit. The maximum number of Action Cards a Phoenix can play when making a spread. Skill Spreads have a card limit of three cards, while the card limit of Attack Spreads and Defense Spreads is determined by a character's Combat Style. When justified with a story, Traits can ignore card limits. **100**, 103

Challenge. A creature or threat that must be overcome, typically represented by a card. General ***7*, 115**; Challenge Attacks 115; Challenge Defense 116; Creating Challenges 150

Chant. A contagious mystical affliction. Victims form into chanting mobs and kill anyone who doesn't join the Chant. **182**

Civil War. The conflict that ended the Phoenix Imperium, fought between the Dawn Legion and the Humanists. The Civil War lasted from 284 IC to 292 IC. **92**

Cog. The name a Phoenix takes after their rebirth in the Crucible. **40**

Combat. General **113**; Attack Spreads 100; Challenge Actions 115; Defense Spreads 101; Movement 118; Turn Structure 115

Combat Spread. An Attack or Defense Spread.

Combat Style. A type of Lesson. A character's current Combat Style determines the card limit and suits they can play when making Attack and Defense Spreads. A character can change their Combat Style at the start of a turn. 100, 102, **109**, 115

Committing Sparks. Placing a Spark on a Lesson to represent a build-up of power. Committed Sparks are still part of a Phoenix's Spark pool and can be burned if needed. **108**

Condition. An ongoing effect that affects a Phoenix or a Challenge, represented by a round token. Conditions included Bleeding, Burning, Enraged, Exposed, Hidden, Immobilized, Stunned, and Vulnerable. 7, 119, **448**

Core Lessons. The default Lessons received by all Phoenixes of a particular School. This includes a Talent, a Combat Style, and a Skill Specialty card.

Crucible. The spiritual realm a Phoenix goes to between lives. Each Phoenix has their own personal Crucible, and the only other soul a Phoenix encounters in the Crucible is their Mentor. **11**, 122, 144

Cycle. A unit of time in combat. A cycle is resolved when each Phoenix has taken a turn. **113**

Dalea. The world of Phoenix: Dawn Command. Also known as the Daylit World. 11, **45**

Dark Ages. The historical era preceding the Phoenix Imperium. **86**

Darkness. A theoretical level of reality; the final destination for spirits of the dead. **11**

Dawn. A theoretical level of reality; the origin of all spirits and life. **11**

Dawn Codex. A text added to the Imperial Philosophies at the start of the Phoenix Imperium. 15, 51, 92, 94

Dawn Command. The organization founded by the Empress Justice at the end of the Civil War, which was disbanded in 330 IC and revived in 593 IC. All newly reborn Phoenixes are inducted into Dawn Command. As of 594 IC, Dawn Command has no official standing in the Human Imperium. Currently Dawn Command includes approximately 100 Phoenixes and 18 active Wings. **39**

Dawn Crusaders. Adherents of the Dawn Faith that undertake vigilante action in the guise of Phoenixes. **94,**

Dawn Faith. A religion based around the Dawn Codex. A central tenet is that the Phoenixes are sent by the Dawn to protect the innocent. **51**

Dawn Legion. The Phoenixes who founded and maintained the Phoenix Imperium. **89**

Daylight. A level of reality primarily inhabited by living creatures and natural spirits, as opposed to Dawn, Dusk, and Darkness. **11**

Daylit World. The known world. Also known as Dalea. **11**

Death. A Phoenix is killed when they run out of Health Levels or Sparks. **119**

Defense Spread. For Challenges, Defense is the number that must be exceeded for an Attack Spread to be considered successful. Phoenixes use Defense Spreads to avoid enemy attacks. **102**; Defense for Challenges,

Devoted. A Phoenix School based on sacrifice and strengthening others. **17**

Discard. During combat, a player may discard one card prior to drawing new cards. **115**

Divine Invocation. A form of magic tied to the House Gods of Ilona. **140**

Dragon. A siege weapon that projects a burning substance. All dragons were destroyed following the Civil War, and their use forbidden by the terms of the treaty between the Dawn Legion and the Humanists. 48, 92, 266

Draw Limit. The base number of cards that should be in a player's hand. In combat, a player draws however many cards they need to reach their draw limit at the end of their turn. Outside of combat, a player draws up immediately after completing any action involving cards. Unless altered by Lessons or other effects, the draw limit is five. If a player has more cards in their hand than their draw limit, they don't draw until their hand size drops below their draw limit. **99**

Dread. The general term for the wave of supernatural threats that have appeared over the last three years. 52, 95, **159**

Durant. A Phoenix School that emphasizes endurance and leadership. **21**

Dusk. A level of reality primarily inhabited by ghosts and the Fallen Folk, as opposed to Dawn, Daylight, and Darkness. **11**

Duskcraft. A magical tradition that involves summoning and bargaining with the Fallen Folk. **139**, 175

Elemental. A Phoenix School driven by duty, possessing the power to channel primal forces. **25**

Emperor Maelan Dolanti. The current ruler of the Empire. **49**

Endurance. The amount of damage that a Phoenix's Health Levels can absorb. If a Phoenix has 2 Endurance, they will suffer one Wound for every two points of damage. 116, **119**

Enraged. A Condition representing aggression and fury. While Enraged, the card limit on Attack Spreads is increased by one, and the card limit on Attack Spreads is decreased by one. **448**

Environmental Elements. Interesting objects in a combat scene. **114**

Exposed. A Condition that reflects an inability to focus on defense. While a Phoenix is Exposed the card limit on Defense Spreads is reduced by one. When a Challenge is Exposed, its Defense is reduced by one. **448**

Extended Skill Spreads. An action that requires multiple spreads to complete. **106**

Faeda Concord. One of the Old Kingdoms, occupying the northern region of Dalea. **163**

Fallen Folk. Also just called "The Fallen." Mysterious and powerful supernatural beings, said by some to be survivors from a previous age of the world. 52, 87, 139, **168**

Flame. A source of supernatural energy that gives a Phoenix power. Each Phoenix is bound to a different Flame, and it's believed that there are one thousand Flames in existence. **12**, 15

Flamekeeper. A mortal trained to maintain an Aerie. The Flamekeeper is mystically linked to the Aerie's hearth. 39, 41, 238

Forceful. A Phoenix School driven by speed and motion. **29**

Ghostlight. The spiritual connection that makes it possible for a Phoenix to defeat a Bone Commander. **179**

Grace. These Action cards represent both physical agility and force of personality.

Grand Aerie. The headquarters of Dawn Command, located on the island of Pyre. From here the Marshals direct the actions of the Phoenixes. 39, 74

Grimwald. A province of the Empire including and surrounding the massive rainforest in the southwest of Dalea. Split into the Deep Grimwald within the forest and the Outer Grimwald on the edges. General **63;** Names 68; Trees 65

Guardian. Mortal soldiers in service to Dawn Command, trained to serve as peacekeepers. **39**

Guhani Deep. One of the Old Kingdoms, occupying the same region as modern Kor Aton. **164**

Hadon Pelagius. An Ilonan general aligned with the Humanist movement during the Civil War. Known for his brutal tactics and use of dragons. 93, **336**, 422, 430, 437

Health Level. A unit of Health. When a Phoenix takes Wounds, they flip Health Levels from the green to the red side to indicate the damage they have taken. When a Challenge is injured, Health Level tokens are removed from its card. General 5, 13, 100, 116, **119**, 120; Recovering 13, 120

Hearth. An artifact forged from Pyrean steel. When bound to the Imperial Flame and sustained by a Flamekeeper, this provides an anchor point for Phoenixes traveling from the Grand Aerie. Ash sorcery can allow Phoenixes to return to Pyre using an hearth. **41**

Heartland Alliance. One of the Old Kingdoms, occupying the central region of Dalea. Individual nations included Athana, Pyre, Tyroi, and Stoma. **162**

Hektarch. A powerful Fallen entity. 160, **164**

Hidden. A Condition representing stealth. A Hidden character typically can't be observed or attacked, and receives a +2 bonus when making an Attack Spread against an unwary target. Typically any action that draws attention to an individual (such as making an attack) will remove the Condition. **448**

House God. Powerful spirits that can bond to members of a particular bloodline. The Talu used the power of the House Gods to dominate Ilona during the Dark Ages. The House Gods were bound in the Dusk by the Dawn Legion. 51, 87, 140, **205**

Human Imperium. The second age of the Empire, following the fall of the Phoenix Imperium in the Civil War. **94**

Humanist. The alliance that opposed the Phoenix Imperium during the Civil War. The movement supported human rule, and ended up forming the foundation of the Human Imperium. **92**, 336

IC. Acronym for "Imperial Calendar." Begins with the foundation of the Phoenix Imperium.

Ilona. The most central region of the Empire, and the primary source of Imperial law and culture. General **53;** Names 57; Talu Families 55

Immobilized. A Condition representing an inability to move. The effects of the Condition vary by Challenge. **449**

Imperial Flame. The mystical force from which Phoenixes are reborn. The original Imperial Flame is in the Grand Aerie on Pyre; every active Aerie has a smaller Imperial Flame. 39, **41**

Imperial Philosophies. A set of guiding principles for Imperial life and governance. **45**, 87

Intellect. These Action cards represent perception, deduction, and mental recall.

Interlude. A short scenario presented between missions to add depth to the story. **142**

Justice. A Durant Phoenix of the Dawn Legion, who served as the last Empress of the Phoenix Imperium. 91, 93, 315, 334, 337, 422

Kor Aton. An alliance of city-states built from the ancient tunnels and Vaults deep beneath the Golden Mountains. General **80**; Castes 82, Names 83

Laetus Dolagi. The architect of the Imperial Philosophies. Laetus opposed the Talu in the Dark Ages. After being exiled to Pyre, he and his followers became the first Phoenixes and founded the Dawn Legion. **87**

Lessons. The unique supernatural abilities learned by Phoenixes in the Crucible. General 7, **108**; Combat Style 109; Core Talent 109; Double-Sided 123; Skill Specialties 110; Temporary Talent 108

Marshal. One of the leaders of Dawn Command. Typically an elder Phoenix who was part of the Phoenix Imperium. Alternately, a person who guides players through a session of *Phoenix: Dawn Command.* 1, **40**; Cinder 237; Honor 383; Winter 263

Mentor. The spirit of a former Phoenix who lingers in the Crucible to offer guidance. **12, 122**

Message Candles. These sets of candles found in every Aerie and magically linked to similar sets in the Grand Aerie, allowing for simple but immediate communication across the Empire. **42**

Necromancy. A mystical tradition that involves interacting with the spirits of the dead. **141**

Old Kingdoms. Civilizations that existed on Daela long ago, predating all known civilizations. All that currently remains are a handful of ruins, relics, and monuments; people of the modern age don't even know the names of the Old Kingdoms. 86, **161**

Omen. A Shrouded Phoenix of the Dawn Legion. 165, **215**, 334

Phoenix Ashes. The remains a Phoenix leaves behind after their final death. The main component of Ash Sorcery. **139**

Phoenix Imperium. The first age of the Empire, founded by the Dawn Legion and governed by Phoenixes. **90**

Pyre. The peak of a dormant volcano rising from the floor of the Inner Sea. This mostly uninhabitable island is the home of the Grand Aerie, a fortress built into the mountain itself, and the center of Dawn Command. **74**

Pyrean. A language taught to Phoenixes in the Crucible. Pyrean isn't spoken by any modern culture, though it is used in certain mystical incantations. 13, 47

Pyrean Steel. A mystically resonant form of metal. Objects made from Pyrean steel remain with a Phoenix in life and death. 14, 124

Rank. The number of times a Phoenix has been reborn. Higher Rank Phoenixes can access more powerful abilities. All players begin as Rank One Phoenixes. 99, **121**, 133

Rebirth. The process through which a Phoenix returns from death. 119, **121**

Render of Veils. A powerful spirit of unknown origin. **226,** 365, 382, 401

Rival Wing. Another Wing of Phoenixes that may play a role in Interludes. **145**

Savant. The cog of Laetus Dolagi after he was reborn as a Devoted Phoenix. 88

School. A philosophy that identifies a certain type of Phoenix, defined by a particular set of Lessons. There are six Schools: Bitter, Devoted, Durant, Elemental, Forceful, and Shrouded. Within the Dawn Legion, Schools were referred to as legions, IE "The Devoted Legion." **15**

Shadovar. A nomadic people who travel across Dalea. The primary practitioners of necromancy. General **77**; Names 78

Shaman. A practitioner of Shamanic magic. 66, 141

Shamanic Magic. A mystical tradition that involves interaction with natural spirits. 52, **141**

Shrouded. A Phoenix School tied to secrets, both uncovering and concealing them. **33**

Skavia. A province of the Empire occupying the northern region of Dalea. Primarily taiga and tundra. General **58**; Names 62

Skill Specialty. Advanced levels of training given to each Phoenix in the Crucible. When performing a Skill Spread involving a speciality, a Phoenix gains +5 to their Spread and may potentially use two suits in their spread. 104, **110**

Spark. A representation of magical energy possessed by a Phoenix due to their link with the Imperial Flame. General **6**, 13, 112; Committing and Reclaiming Sparks 108; Recovering 13, 120

Speaker. The most influential members of the Imperial Senate. 49, **50**

Spread. One or more Action cards set down in an attempt to perform an action. General **99**; Attack Spread 100; Defense Spread 102; Skill Spread 103; Extended Skill Spread 106; Retrying Spreads 107; Assisting Others.

Strength. These Action cards represent raw physical power and endurance.

Stunned. A Condition reflecting temporary impairment. While a Phoenix is stunned their card limit on all spreads is reduced by one. When a Challenge is stunned, its Speed is reduced by one and its Attack value is reduced by two. **448**

Talon. A weapon made from Pyrean steel. Phoenixes earn their Talon in the Crucible, and the item remains with them throughout each of their lives. Over time, a Talon develops special powers. 14, **123**

Talu. The noble houses of Ilona, each of which are tied to the infrastructure of the Empire. The Dol Talu are the Imperial House. Other major houses include the Ara Talu, Bar Talu, Deo Talu, Cul Talu, and the Pel Talu. **55**

Torch. The card that indicates the active player during Combat. This may contain a list of Environmental Elements. 7, **113**, 115

Trait. A descriptive term at the top of some Actions, such as Sneaky or Survivor. If an Action has a Trait, a Phoenix can add that Action to any spread regardless of suit or limit as long as they can explain how that Trait applies to what they're trying to do. General 6, **107**; Swapping 123; Trump 108

Treefolk. Members of a Grimwald Tree. 65

Trees. Tribal communities within the Deep Grimwald. **65**

Trump Trait. A Trait card with a descriptor which is perfect for the situation at hand. A Trump Trait may be played to automatically pass a Skill Spread. **108**

Uniform. The basic clothing and equipment of a Phoenix. It includes a pair of badges that indicate a Phoenix's first School and allegiance to Dawn Command. 14, **124**

Vulnerable. A Condition representing weakened defenses. Whenever a Vulnerable Phoenix or Challenge suffers damage, that damage is brutal. **448**

Warlock. A practitioner of Duskcraft. **139**

Wing. A group of up to six Phoenixes, one from each School, whose Flames are bound together within the Crucible. Some of the abilities within each School take advantage of this bond between Wingmates. 12

Wound. A unit of damage. When Phoenixes take Wounds, they flip their Health Levels from the green to the red side to indicate the damage they have taken. 13, 119

Wynderi. A seafaring people who promote trade, travel, and communication across the Empire. The Wynderi Islands are an archipelago of islands in the Summer Sea, currently lost to the Dread. General **69**; Names 72; Ships 71

CONDITION EFFECTS

Conditions are effects that temporarily modify the victim's capabilities. Conditions are represented by round counters which are placed on a Challenge card or School card.

EXPOSED

Phoenix: Your card limit is reduced by one when you make a Defense Spread.

Challenge: -2 to Defense

STUNNED

Phoenix: Your card limit is reduced by one for all spreads you make until the end of your next turn.

Challenge: -1 Speed, -2 Attack until the end of its next turn

HIDDEN

Phoenix: You can't be targeted by an attack, and you get a +2 bonus to any Attack Spread you make against an unwary target. Anything that draws attention to you will remove this condition.

Challenge: You can't attack an enemy you can't see. *Hidden* enemies get a +2 bonus to Attack.

VULNERABLE

Phoenix or **Challenge:** All damage done to the victim is brutal.

ENRAGED

Phoenix: Your card limit for Attack Spreads is increased by one, but your card limit for Defense Spreads is reduced by one.

Challenge: +2 Attack, -2 Defense

BURNING

Phoenix: At the start of your turn, you suffer 1 point of brutal damage for each *Burning* condition affecting you. During your turn, you may make a Grace Spread (difficulty 10) to remove one *Burning* condition.

Challenge: Same as above; a creature can forego all attacks on its turn to remove up to two *Burning* conditions.

BLEEDING

Phoenix: The value of any Defense Spread you make is reduced by 1 for each *Bleeding* condition affecting you. At the end of a scene, convert *Bleeding* conditions to Wounds. If you should suffer additional *Bleeding* conditions and no *Bleeding* tokens are available, you suffer one Wound for each missing token.

Challenge: -1 Defense for each *Bleeding* condition.

IMMOBILIZED

This condition indicates the victim is restrained in some way: caught in a Whisperer's telekinetic grasp, frozen by a paralytic ward, caught in a net. The precise effects will be defined in the text of the scene. Immobilization may simply mean that a victim cannot flee, or it could limit actions and reduce card spreads or Defense value.

TURN ORDER

Choose a Combat Style.

Make Spreads. *The player may continue until out of cards or until they have no further actions to take.*

Discard and Draw. *Discard one card and draw until five cards are in hand.*

Pass the Torch. *Pass the Torch to a player who has not taken a turn this cycle. A cycle is made up of one turn for each Phoenix in the Wing.*

Skill Spread TIERS OF SUCCESS

0–4: Always Failure

5–9: Marginal Skill

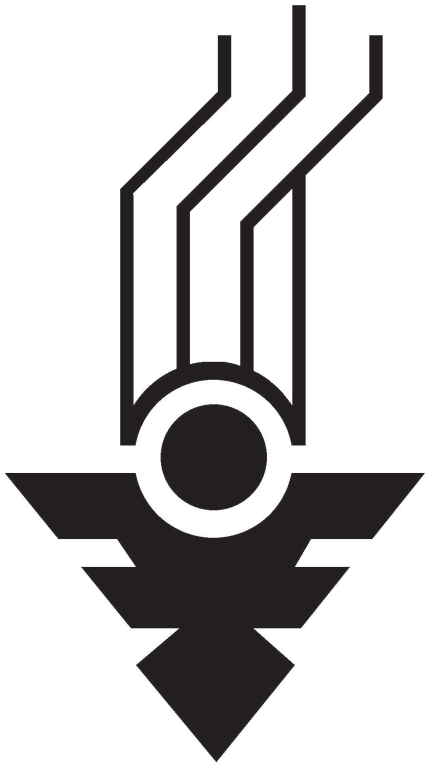
10–14: Competent

15–19: Exceptional

20–29: Superhuman

30+: Legendary

PHOENIX: DAWN COMMAND



JOURNAL AND INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE RECENTLY REBORN

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THE DEEP
Lostwall
SKAVIA
Hafsbridge
Harrowgate
KOR-ATONA
Greygarden
The Field of Masks
Stairs to the Sky
The Cloudspire
Talus
Darium
THE RED MARCHES
THE INNER SEA
Torica
ILONA
Farmanse
The Grand Aerie
THE TEETH
PYRE
Mardonford
The Capitol
Westergate
THE WYNDERI ISLES
THE VERDANT COAST
Cartacia
Hadon's Fall
THE SUMMER SHORE
Sunset
Baroch
Olvarica
The Bloody Mire
THE FENS
Ashfort
Myrn
The Gathering Stones
THE GRIMWALD
The Scorched Lands
THE DEEP
LEGEND
Cities
Lost Cities
Landmarks
Unaffected Lands
Lost to the Dread
N

Our world is under siege.
You are among the few who can turn the tide.
You have passed through death and returned
stronger than before. You are a Phoenix, and
you are our last and only hope.

Long ago, a legion of champions rose up to combat the chaos and strife of a troubled world. These were the first Phoenixes – heroes who returned from death imbued with supernatural power. Through conquest and charisma, these champions united scattered tribes, fierce reavers and warring city-states into the prosperous Empire we live in today. The Empire brought law and security to all, putting an end to the practice of dangerous magics and to other threats of the past. This should have been a utopia, but the rule of the Phoenixes lay heavy on the land. Their accomplishments were great, but in their zeal the Phoenixes held too tightly to their vision of universal order. Mortals began to resent their Phoenix rulers. Armed conflicts escalated into a bloody civil war. Though the Phoenixes were never defeated, the Emperor chose to lay down his crown to preserve innocent lives. The Phoenixes retreated to the volcanic island of Pyre, and there they established **Dawn Command** to protect and serve the Empire they had once ruled. Over time their numbers dwindled, and no new heroes returned from death to replenish their ranks; this golden age needed no champions. Over the course of centuries, the Phoenixes became legends, stories told to inspire courage in children. And then that golden age came to a sudden and terrible end.

The Dread began three years ago with the rise of the Bone legions in the south. Since then it has spread across the known world, a waking nightmare that takes hundreds of horrible forms. Ghosts howl in the night. Skinchangers and werewolves stalk the wilds. Soldiers return from the grave to slaughter the living. Entire cities have fallen to a Chant that turns all who hear it into mindless killers. We don't know why this is happening. We don't know how to stop it. We don't even know if the many horrors of the Dread are in some way united, or if the balance of nature itself is breaking down. All that we know with certainty is that the Empire is at war and we are losing. At least a third of the Empire has been lost to the Dread, and each day brings new horrors. In this dark time we have one hope: the Phoenixes are returning. We are rebuilding Dawn Command. We are still few in number, but we can overcome challenges no mortal can face. It is in our power to uncover the source and nature of the Dread and – we hope – to defeat it.

You are a newborn Phoenix. Whoever you were in your first life, you have overcome the challenges of the Crucible and returned to the Daylit World. You have proven yourself a worthy champion and been given the powers you need to face the Dread and triumph. Go forth. Complete your mission, discover what you can of the enemy, and do not value too highly your own survival. Die well and you will return stronger than before. Just be certain that you make each death – and each life – count.

YOUR FIRST LIFE IS YOUR OWN. THE REST BELONG TO THE EMPIRE.

WHAT'S A PHOENIX?

No one is born a Phoenix. If you're reading this, you've already died at least once. After your first death, your spirit was drawn to the **Crucible** and you were given a chance to earn a second life. The Crucible is a spiritual ordeal, and you may have been there for weeks, years, or even centuries. In that time you mastered both mundane skills and supernatural powers, and finally you were reborn in the Grand Aerie of Dawn Command. In the Crucible you proved you were ready to face the Dread: now you'll have that chance.

We don't fully understand this process. We don't know exactly why you were chosen. We know that each Phoenix is tied to a mystical power known as a **Flame**, and that each Phoenix has a **mentor** in the Crucible – a Phoenix of your School, who was previously attached to your Flame. Beyond this, all we know is that your Flame wouldn't have chosen you and given you this chance if your weren't willing to fight to defend the people of the Empire. Sometimes people ask how Dawn Command can force the Phoenixes to do what they wish. We can't – and we don't have to. Only you know your personal story and why you are willing to serve. We simply know that you wouldn't have been given this chance if you weren't willing to place the safety of innocents ahead of your own.

As a Phoenix you are stronger and faster than you were in mortal life. You don't need to eat, drink or sleep, though you can do any of these things if you wish to. You are immune to most mundane poisons and disease. You possess a pool of **Sparks**, mystical energy that you can use to temporarily boost your attributes or to produce supernatural effects. You can be killed, but you can suffer a tremendous amount of punishment before you fall. If you survive your wounds, you will regain some of your health and Sparks each morning at dawn. And when you die you'll return to the Crucible and face new trials; if you can overcome these you'll be reborn again, stronger than before.

Your **Rank** is the number of times you have died and been reborn. As your Rank increases, your powers grow. However, there are limits to how much power a physical frame can contain. You can only return **seven times**. You have seven chances to make a difference in the world. Don't waste them!

As a Phoenix, you may look exactly as you did in your first life. However, you may find that your appearance has changed. Age, gender, Skin, hair, height, weight: any of these things can change when you're reborn. Because your physical power comes from your Flame, your appearance is largely cosmetic. A Phoenix who's lived through three centuries may look like a child… and that child could have the strength to tear you apart. Your appearance is a reflection of you: how do you see yourself?

As a Phoenix, physical possessions aren't much of a concern. As a Phoenix you have a unique **Uniform** - a basic set of clothes, armor and critical tools of your trade. Some Phoenixes wear armor. If you don't, it may be because you use your speed to avoid attacks or your flesh might be just as tough as armor. You also have a **Talon**, a unique tool or weapon that you earned in the Crucible. Your Talon and your Uniform will return with you when you are reborn, and if they are damaged or lost they will be restored to you at dawn.

YOUR WING AND YOUR SCHOOL

As a Phoenix you are fighting to save our world. If you fail, our civilization will be destroyed. The Dread is everywhere, and there is no fleeing from this battle… and you cannot defeat the Dread on your own. Luckily, you're not alone. You're part of a **Wing**, a unit of up to six Phoenixes. Each member of your Wing has skills and powers you will need to succeed, and you share a supernatural bond that can help you in many ways. Trust your Wingmates. Learn to work together. Your survival and the fate of our world depend on it.

Each member of your Wing comes from a different **School**. Your School determines the powers and training that you possess and the role you play within the Wing. Your School is drawn from your first death: **why** you died and the lessons you learned from it. Each time you die you will learn a lesson from the School associated with your most recent death, but your original School will always define you. The six Schools are listed below.

> **Devoted** died for others. Devoted Phoenixes are healers and mediators with the ability to strengthen their allies and their Wings.
>
> **Durants** died because they weren't tough enough. Military leaders and athletes, Durant Phoenixes specialize in defending their allies; they are the hardest Phoenixes to kill.
>
> **Elementals** died for duty. They can channel destructive forces of fire and storm, and can burn their own life force to power their deadly attacks.
>
> **Forcefuls** died because they weren't fast enough. Unmatched scouts and martial artists, Forceful Phoenixes strike with blinding speed and precision.
>
> **Shrouded** died because of secrets. Sages and spies, the Shrouded excel both at striking from the shadows and uncovering hidden things.
>
> **Bitters** died as failures. These fearsome warriors turn injuries into strength, and are at their best when close to death.

You possess training in certain skills – your **Skill Specialties** – based on your School. These may have been talents you possessed in your first life, but it's likely that many of them are skills that you acquired during your trials in the Crucible and your time with your Mentor. Almost all Durants are masters of military strategy, but it's quite possible you knew nothing of war until you died.

It may be that the Specialties assigned to your School don't fit your vision of yourself. Most Forceful Phoenixes are scouts and are familiar with Nature and wilderness survival. But perhaps you were an orphan who spent your entire life in the Imperial Capitol, and it makes more sense for you to know the streets than the wilds. If you'd like, you can exchange one of the Specialties tied to your School for something new. Discuss this with your Marshal; they will help you select a new Specialty.

WHO ARE YOU?

PHOENIX NAME:
SCHOOL:
RANK:

TRAITS:
LESSONS:

Who were you in your first life? How and why did you die, and how is this reflected by your School?

To become a Phoenix, you must overcome significant spiritual trials. You can't fight your way back from death unless you have something to live for… and everyone knows that life as a Phoenix is one of service to the Empire and constant strife. Why did you come back?

Your Wingmates are from different times and different lands. Nonetheless, You've formed an attachment to…

What is the person, place or thing that is most important to you?

What is your greatest fear?

Your Uniform is the basic clothing, armor and equipment that returns with you every time you are reborn. What's the most distinctive element of your Uniform?

Your Talon is a unique weapon or tool that you earned in the Crucible. It returns with you when you're reborn, and will grow in power along with you. A Talon can be any sort of weapon or object, though it always incorporates the Dawn Command symbol in some way. What is your Talon?

TOOLS OF THE TRADE

As a Phoenix you have a number of different types of cards and counters. These represent your character and your capabilities, and they are the tools you use to accomplish your actions. You have two types of cards: **Action Cards** and **Lessons**. Separate these. Place your Lessons face up in front of you, and shuffle your Actions together to form an Action Deck. Draw five cards to form your starting hand. The counters include Health Levels and Sparks. Separate these into two separate pools.

ACTION CARDS

Action Cards have a suit and a value – Grace 4, Strength 3, etc. They are the basic tools you use to make spreads, reflecting the degree of talent and ability you can bring to bear at any given time. As a Phoenix you have two suits in your deck. If you're Bitter or Durant, you don't have any Intellect; this doesn't necessarily mean that you're stupid, but it means that you're a person who doesn't solve your problems with your Intellect.

TRAITS

Certain Action cards have additional descriptors just below the suit - things like *Superhuman Strength* or *Absolute Conviction*. These are **Traits**. They represent skills or attributes you possess, and they can help you in a few different ways.

- If you can explain how a Trait applies to a spread you are making, you can add it to the spread in spite of suit or card limits. For example, you're making a Defense Spread and you have *Superhuman Reflexes*, or you're trying to shake off fear and you *Never Give Up*. You can add any number of applicable Traits to a spread. Traits are especially important in Skill Spreads; if a Trait is relevant to the action you are trying to perform, your Marshal may increase its value.

- Even when you aren't making a spread, if you have a Trait in your hand that seems to apply to a situation show it to the Marshal. You might get a bonus.

- When an ally is making a spread you can discard one of your traits to add its value to the spread. However, you have to explain how YOU are using that Trait to help your ally. You can't use the Trait *Sneaky* to make your friend more subtle… but can you think of a Sneaky action you could take that would support what your ally is trying to do?

LESSON CARDS

Lesson cards are are kept face up in front of you. These represent skills and supernatural abilities that are available to you at all times. Your Skill Specialties Lesson improves your ability to perform Skill spreads. Combat Styles determine the cards you can play in Attack and Defense spreads. You begin with one Combat Style, but you can learn new ones; however, you can only use one Combat Style at a time. Form a stack of your Combat Style cards, and keep your active style on the top. All other Lessons are Talents. A Talent provides you with an ongoing benefit or ability you can use whenever you wish. Each Talent is unique; review each card to make sure you know what it does.

SPARKS

You possess a reserve of mystical energy represented by your Spark tokens. You can use a Spark in a variety of ways.

- You may burn any number of Sparks to add that value to an Attack or Skill spread you are making. You cannot add Sparks to Defense spreads.

- Certain Lessons or Traits require you to burn Sparks to activate an ability. For example, the Trait *Brilliant Deduction* allows you to burn one Spark to ask the Marshal a question.

Your Sparks are the energy that sustains you and when you run out of Sparks you will immediately die. Use them wisely, but don't be too frugal: remember, the success of your mission is always more important than your survival! You regain a number of Sparks equal to twice your Rank at dawn.

HEALTH LEVELS

These counters represent your physical health. On one side you have a Health Level; when you flip it over it becomes a Wound. If all of your Health Levels become Wounds, you die… though if you still have Sparks left when you run out of Health Levels, you can linger as an attendant spirit and continue to help your Wing. Your Marshal will help you with this process if it occurs! You regain one Health Level at dawn.

For perspective: A single Wound represents a serious injury, and few humans could survive two Wounds. As a Phoenix you can continue to function even when you've taken damage that would kill a normal human.

TAKING ACTIONS

Any time you want to perform a difficult action, you will play one or more Action cards. This is called **making a spread**, and the combined value of the cards in the spread will determine if your action succeeds or fails. There are three different types of spreads. If you are trying to hurt someone, that's an **Attack Spread**; if you are trying to avoid being hurt, that's a **Defense Spread**. Anything else is a Skill spread. All three types of spreads impose limits on the number of cards you can play in the spread and which suits you can use. You can ignore both of these restrictions when you use a Trait in a spread, provided that you can explain how the Trait applies to the action you're taking.

ATTACK SPREADS

When you make an Attack Spread, start by describing the action you want to take. Your Combat Style tells you how many cards you can play and which suits can you use. Play your cards and add up the total, then look at the Challenge you are facing. Subtract the Defense of the target from the value of your Attack spread; the remainder is the damage you inflict. You may remove Health Level tokens from the target with a total combined value equal to or less than the damage you inflict.

DEFENSE SPREADS

When you are attacked, the Marshal will tell you the value of the attack. Your Combat Style tells you how many cards you can play and which suits can you use in your Defense spread. Play your cards and add up the total; if it's is equal to or greater than that value, you avoid the attack completely. Otherwise, you will take damage based on the difference between the two spreads and the power of your enemy.

Don't be too quick to use all your cards for defense! Any card you play in a Defense spread is a card you can't use in an Attack spread on your next turn. You can endure a surprising amount of damage and death makes you stronger. Sometimes it's better for your mission to take a few Wounds and save your cards for your next action.

SKILL SPREADS

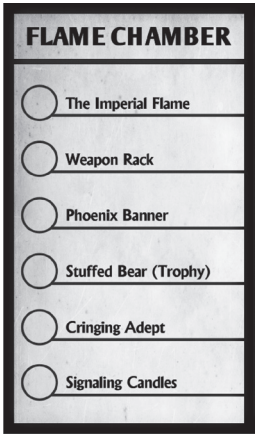
When you make a Skill Spread, start by describing the action you want to take. If you want to get to the other side of a door, are you going to try to force the door open with brute strength? Use your cunning to pick the lock? Charm a guard to let you through? You can play three cards in a Skill spread, and your Marshal will tell you which suits you're allowed to use. Your Skill Specialty Lesson is also important. If one or more of your Skill Specialties apply to the action you want to take, add five to the value of your Spread. The total value of the spread shows how successful you are at your action:

0-4: Always Failure
5-9: Marginal Skill
10-14: Competent
15-19: Exceptional
20-29: Superhuman
30+: Legendary

While a higher number is always better than a lower one, reaching a new tier of success - going from 19 to 20 - gives an exponential benefit. Always look for ways to push things up to the next tier.

COMBAT

Combat is divided into **turns** and **cycles**. Each Phoenix gets one turn per cycle; after each Phoenix has taken a turn, a new cycle begins. Phoenixes aren't bound to act in a particular order; when you are done with your turn, you may pass the Torch to any player who hasn't had a turn yet in this cycle. So… what's the Torch?



THE TORCH

The Torch serves two purposes. It is used to indicate the active player: when you have the Torch, it's your turn to act. In addition, the Torch usually contains a list of Environmental Elements. These are noteworthy things in the current scene. Once during your turn, you may cross off an Environmental Element and explain how you are using that element to help accomplish your current action. When you do this, you immediately draw one card. The Marshal may provide you with an extra benefit if they feel it's appropriate. For example, if one of the Environmental Elements is *Roaring Bonfire* and you describe your attack as "I'm going to charge the enemy and push them into the bonfire" you would draw a card… but the Marshal could also decide to add a Burning condition to your enemy if your attack is successful. You draw your bonus card before committing any cards to the spread, so you can use the new card immediately if it's helpful.

Step One: Choose A Combat Style

The first thing you do on your turn is to select your Combat Style. This determines the number of cards you can play in Attack or Defense spreads and which suits can you use, and often provides an additional benefit. Once you choose your Combat Style you are committed to it until the start of your next turn. On your first mission you may only have a single Combat Style, but you may acquire new techniques over the course of your lives.

Step Two: Make Spreads

Once you've chosen your Combat Style it's time to take actions. What do you want to do? Do you want to attack an opponent? Search for a hidden object? Help an injured citizen? Describe the action you want to take to the Marshal, and they'll help you determine what sort of spread to make to accomplish it. You can continue to take actions until you run out of cards or things you want to do, whichever comes first.

Step Three: Discard And Draw

After you've taken all the actions you wish to take, you have the option to discard one card from your hand. Once you've done this (or chosen not to), you draw back up to your Hand Limit, which is five cards unless a Lesson affects it. You can have more than five cards in your hand, but you won't draw until you drop below five.

Step Four: Pass The Torch

Give the Torch card to a player who hasn't taken a turn in this cycle. The Marshal may pause the cycle at this point to have a Challenge take an action. After any Challenges are resolved, play passes to the Phoenix with the Torch.

TURN ORDER

1. **Choose a Combat Style.**

2. **Make Spreads**. You may continue until you run out of cards or until you have no further actions to take.

3. **Discard and Draw.** Discard 1 card and draw until you have five cards in hand.

4. **Pass the Torch.** Pass the Torch to a player who has not taken a turn in this cycle. A cycle is made up of one turn for each Phoenix in the Wing.

SKILL SPREAD TIERS OF SUCCESS

0-4: Always Failure

5-9: Marginal Skill

10-14: Competent

15-19: Exceptional

20-29: Superhuman

30+: Legendary

WAYS TO IMPROVE A SPREAD

Sparks. You can improve an Attack spread or Skill spread by burning Sparks; each Spark adds +1 to the Spread.

Specialties. You receive a +5 bonus to a Skill spread (and ONLY a Skill Spread) if one or more of your Specialties apply to the action you're attempting to perform.

Traits. You can add a Trait to any spread regardless of suit or card limits if you can explain how the Trait applies to the situation. In a Skill spread, the GM may increase the value of an especially appropriate Trait to 5.

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Phoenix Dawn Command – Card/Tokens Scans

I only scanned 1 copy of each card, and most cards only have one copy, with the following exceptions:

Cards	Number Included
Plain Grace #2 - #5 Cards	8
Plain Strength #2 - #5 Cards	4
Plain Intellect #2 - #5 Cards	4
Affliction Cards	6
Create-Your-Own Cards	3

I only scanned 1 copy of each token, but the number of each is as follows:

Tokens		Number Included
	[Front/Back]	34
	[Number Tokens]	About 3-4 of each number (Various numbers are printed on each side, no pattern to the printing)
	Spark [5-Piece]	10
	Spark [1-Piece]	40

[Condition Tokens]

12 Bleeding
10 Burning
6 Vulnerable
6 Exposed
5 Stunned
4 Enraged
4 Hidden
4 Immobilized

Tokens are printed with various symbols of each on opposite sides of each other.

BITTER

SKILL SPECIALTIES

Strength & Shadow

ATHLETICS
FEAR
SHADOWS
DEATH

If you use one or more of your Specialities in a SKILL spread, add 5 to the total. You may use Strength cards in any Skill spread involving your Specialties.

Bitter

Core

COMBAT STYLE

Reaper's Fury

ATTACK: STRENGTH/GRACE
(2 cards)
DEFENSE: GRACE
(2 cards)
SPECIAL: Any time you suffer a Wound, draw one card.

Bitter

Core

TALENT

Bitter Strength

When you make a spread you can use any one card as a Strength card, regardless of its actual suit.
When you make an Attack spread, add your current Wounds to the total.

Bitter

Core

TALENT

Bitter Bond

Draw one card any time one of your wingmates suffers one or more Wounds from an injury. In addition, you always know how many Health Levels your wingmates have and sense when one of them is wounded.

Bitter

Rank 1

TALENT

Endless Rage

When you choose your Combat Style at the start of a turn you may choose to become Enraged or remove an existing Enraged condition.

Bitter

Rank 1

BITTER

As a Bitter Phoenix you died in failure, and your keyword is Vengeance. You harness your anger and pain and turn it into power. You are a fearsome warrior, and your injuries make you stronger. You are at your best when you are close to death. This means that you are more effective when you take risks, and you will often be the first member of your wing to die during a mission. Embrace this: it's better for you to hit hard and go out in a blaze of glory than to cling to life.

Your skill specialties are Athletics, Death, Fear and Shadows. You can use your understanding of Fear both to intimidate others or to resist unnatural terror; likewise your Shadow expertise helps you hide in the shadows and spot enemies in the darkness.

Your primary suit is Strength. Any time that you make a spread, you may use any one card as a Strength card regardless of its actual suit.

COMBAT STYLE

Hunted Predator

ATTACK: STRENGTH
(2 cards)

DEFENSE: GRACE
(2 cards)

SPECIAL: Add your current number of Wounds to your Defense spread.

Bitter

Rank 2

TALENT

Savage Might

When you have more Wounds than remaining Health Levels, all of your attacks inflict Brutal damage.

Bitter

Rank 2

TALENT

Lingering Fear

When you make a Skill spread associated with Fear, add 5 to the total. When you make a successful Attack and wound your target you may burn 2 Sparks to make your victim Exposed.

Bitter

Rank 3

TALENT

Tenacious Blood

You are immune to the Bleeding Condition. If you only have 1 Health Level remaining at the start of your turn, you regain 1 Health Level.

Bitter

Rank 3

TALENT

Bloodbinding

At the start of combat you can burn 1 Spark to forge a bond to a visible enemy. Until the end of the scene, whenever you are injured the marked foe suffers 2 points of Brutal damage for each Wound that you take.

Bitter

Rank 4

TALENT

Vigor Mortis

You have one additional Health Level. When you die, set aside your other Lessons and remove all Traits from your deck, hand, and discard pile and draw up to your draw limit. Then flip this card over.

Bitter

Rank 4

COMBAT STYLE

Vigor Mortis

ATTACK: STRENGTH (4 cards)

DEFENSE: None

SPECIAL: When you're injured, burn 1 Spark for each Wound you suffer. Treat every Action card in your deck as if it was a Strength card of the same value. Burn 1 Spark every time you take a turn, or every time you make a Spread when you're not in combat. You are destroyed at dawn or when you run out of Sparks.

Bitter

Rank 4

TALENT

Vampiric Thirst

When you draw an affliction, choose another member of your wing to suffer 1 Wound; then commit 1 Spark to Vampiric Thirst. Whenever you count how many Wounds you have, add a bonus equal to the number of Sparks on Vampiric Thirst. Recover the Sparks at dawn or when you die.

Bitter

Rank 5

TALENT

Bloody Blade

When you burn Sparks to improve an Attack Spread, increase the value of the spread by +2 for each Spark (instead of the usual +1).

Bitter

Rank 6

TALENT

Final Vengeance

When you die you inflict brutal damage on your killer, equal to 30 + twice your remaining Sparks. If there's excess damage or you weren't killed by a specific entity, you may allocate the remainder to any creature or creatures that has wounded you within the last hour.

Bitter

Rank 7

1 STRENGTH

Reckless

When you are targeted by a melee attack, you may discard this card to launch an immediate attack against your opponent and then draw back to your hand limit. If your enemy survives they can complete their attack, and you cannot defend.

1

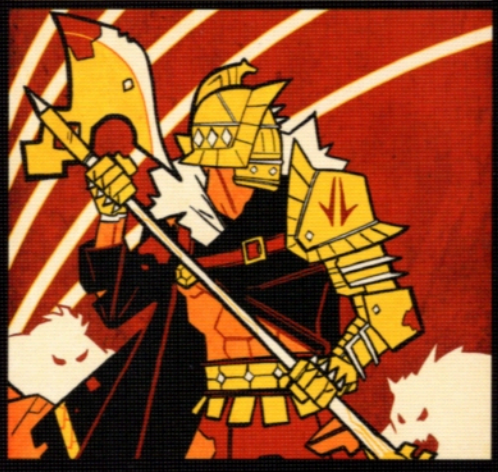
1 STRENGTH

Ruthless

When you use this card in a spread, draw one card. This card has a value of 5 when you use it in an Attack spread, and you may take 1 Wound to add an additional 5 to the Attack spread.

1

1 STRENGTH



Power From Pain

When you use this card in a spread, draw one card. Add your current Wounds to the value of this card.

3

TALENT

Ash Plague

You can unleash a terrible plague that will kill most mortal life within 24 hours; mortals killed in this way cannot return as Phoenixes or undead. The plague affects a region centered on you, with a one mile radius for every 3 Sparks burned when you generate the plague.

Bitter

Rank 7

TALENT

Heart of Shadow

When you make a Skill spread associated with Fear or Shadows, add 5 to the value of the spread. When you suffer a Wound as a result of an enemy attack you become Hidden.

Bitter

Rank 6

COMBAT STYLE

Hand of Mourning

ATTACK: STRENGTH
(2 cards, see below)

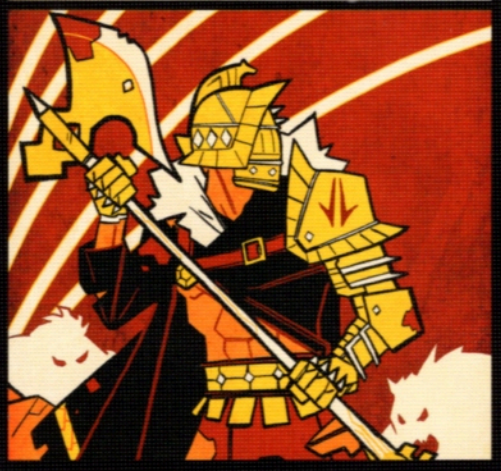
DEFENSE: GRACE
(2 cards)

SPECIAL: Your hand size and the number of cards you can play in Attack spreads is increased by 1 for each of your Wingmates who are dead.

Bitter

Rank 5

1 STRENGTH



Bloodthirsty

This card has a value of 5 when used in an Attack spread. If you wound your target, you regain 1 Health Level. Counts as an Affliction for triggering effects.

3

1 STRENGTH

Feed On Fear

Draw one card when you use this card in a Spread. When you use Feed On Fear in an Attack Spread your target is Exposed and you learn one thing they are afraid of. Choose one member of the wing; they must either burn 1 Spark or reveal a new and deeper fear.

5

1 STRENGTH

Siphon Strength

All of your wingmates must burn 1 Spark when you use Siphon Strength in a Spread; add 3 to its value for each Spark burned. Counts as an Affliction for triggering effects.

5

1 STRENGTH

Vendetta

When you use this card in a spread, you suffer 1 Wound and must burn 1 Spark for each dead member of your wing. The value of this card is equal to the combined number of Wounds of everyone in the wing.

7

1 STRENGTH

Pestilent Strength

When you use this card in an Attack spread, its value is equal to five times the number of Afflictions you've drawn this turn, and the damage is brutal. Counts as an Affliction for triggering effects.

7

THE DEEP
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The Cloudspire
Tarice
Farmost
Mardonford
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Oliven
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DEVOTED

2

SKILL SPECIALTIES

Spiritual Guidance

DIPLOMACY
HEALING
SPIRITS
TRADITION

If you use one or more of your Specialities in a SKILL spread, add 5 to the total. You may use Grace cards in any Skill spread involving your Specialties.

Devoted

Core

COMBAT STYLE

Passing Pain

ATTACK: INTELLECT
(2 cards)

DEFENSE: GRACE
(2 cards)

SPECIAL: On a successful Attack, you may transfer a number of Wounds equal to half your Rank (round up) to your target, at a cost of 1 Spark per Wound. Each Wound inflicts 3 Brutal damage to your target. You can only do this to living targets.

Devoted

Core

TALENT

Shared Strength

When you make a spread you can use any one card as a Grace card, regardless of its actual suit.
When a wingmate makes a spread, you may discard a card from your hand. Add the value of the card or your Rank (whichever is lower) to the spread.
During your turn you may burn 1 Spark to transfer any number of Wounds from an adjacent ally to yourself.

Devoted

Core

COMBAT STYLE

Shining Mirror

ATTACK: GRACE
(3 Cards)
DEFENSE: GRACE
(1 card)
SPECIAL: When you are injured by an attack, the assailant suffers 2 points of Brutal damage for each wound you take.

Devoted

Rank 1

TALENT

Devoted Bond

At the start of each day, you may commit a number of Sparks equal to your Rank plus the number of Phoenixes in your wing to this card. Any Phoenix in your Wing may return 1 of the committed Sparks to you on their turn to regain 2 Sparks or draw two cards.

In addition, any member of your Wing can send the Wing a short telepathic message; this forces you to burn 1 Spark.

Devoted

Rank 1

DEVOTED

As a Devoted Phoenix you died for others, and your keyword is Sacrifice. You have the ability to strengthen your allies and take their injuries on yourself... though you can also pass your wounds to your enemies. You are most effective when you work as a team player, adding your strength to the attacks others make. Watch when your allies make spreads and look for moments when your power can make a difference.

Your skill specialties are Diplomacy, Healing, Spirits and Tradition. While most injuries Phoenixes sustain cannot be healed with mundane medicine, your knowledge of Healing can help you study or treat the injuries of normal humans. You're well-versed in the traditions of many cultures, and you're a skilled diplomat and mediator. Finally, you are adept at dealing with spirits, and you can attempt exorcisms or interact with spiritual entities in other ways.

Your primary suit is Grace. Any time that you make a spread, you may use one card as a Grace card regardless of its actual suit.

TALENT

Blessing of Vigor

When you make a Skill spread associated with Healing, add 5 to the total. During your turn you may burn 1 Spark to allow an ally to draw cards until they reach their draw limit.

Devoted

Rank 2

TALENT

Painbearer

You may commit 1 Spark to Painbearer for every Wound you take from an ally using Lessons. You gain a bonus to Attack spreads equal to the number of Sparks on Painbearer. Return the Sparks to your pool at the end of the scene.

Devoted

Rank 2

TALENT

Twist of Fate

You may burn 1 Spark to take a single Condition from an ally. When you make a successful Attack, you may burn 1 Spark to transfer a Condition to your victim.

Devoted

Rank 3

TALENT

Woundbinding

You may burn 1 Spark on your turn to mark an ally with a protective ward. Until the end of the scene, whenever a warded ally takes Wounds you may burn 1 Spark per Wound to take the Wound instead of your ally.

Devoted

Rank 3

TALENT

Dawn's Touch

When you make a Skill Spread associated with Diplomacy, add 5 to the total. When you use Shared Strength (the Devoted Core Talent) to enhance an ally's spread, place the card you use under this Lesson instead of discarding it. On your next turn, return all cards under this Lesson to your hand.

Devoted

Rank 4

COMBAT STYLE

Hand of The Wing

ATTACK: GRACE
(2 cards)

DEFENSE: GRACE
(2 cards)

SPECIAL: Whenever you make an Attack spread, any number of your wingmates can burn 2 Sparks and discard a card. Add the combined value of the discarded cards to your spread.

Devoted

Rank 4

THE DEEP
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Harrow
Talus
The Cloudspire
Tarice
Formal
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TALENT

Symbol of Sanctuary

You may burn 2 Sparks and place this Lesson under your School card. It remains beneath your School card until you make an attack, move from your current position, or until the end of the scene. While it is beneath your School card, enemies cannot attack you.

Devoted

Rank 5

TALENT

Gift of the Phoenix

You can burn 5 Sparks to restore 1 Health Level to an adjacent ally. Your touch can restore life to a dead mortal, at a cost of 1 Spark and 1 Health Level for each minute the mortal has been dead.

Devoted

Rank 6

TALENT

Font of Life

When you make a Skill spread associated with Healing, you add 5 to the value of the spread. All members of your wing regain twice the usual amount of Health Levels and Sparks each dawn. You increase the overall health and fertility of animals and plants in the surrounding region.

Devoted

Rank 7

1 GRACE

Heart of the Wing

When you use this card in a spread, draw one card. Each of your wingmates may burn 1 Spark to add 3 to the value of your spread.

1

1 GRACE

Savior

When you use this card in a spread, draw one card. You may discard Savior at any time to add 5 to the value of a wingmate's spread.

1

1 GRACE

Moment of Compassion

When you use this card in a spread, draw one card. When you are attacked, you may burn 2 Sparks and discard Moment of Compassion from your hand to evade the attack.

3

TALENT

Ultimate Sacrifice

During your turn, you may transfer all wounds and afflictions from the other members of your wing to yourself, even if this exceeds your current Health Levels. This also removes any Bleeding or Stunned conditions from the wing. Once this is resolved you immediately die. Add 10 Sparks to your Spark pool as an Attendant Spirit, even if this exceeds your normal limit. You may Attend all of your living Wingmates.

Devoted

Rank 7

TALENT

Light of Inspiration

The hand limit of each member of your wing (yourself included) is increased by one.

Devoted

Rank 6

TALENT

Cleansing Flame

When you make an Action spread involving Healing, add 5 to the value. During your turn you may burn 1 Spark to take an Affliction from an adjacent Ally's deck and add it to your own. You may burn 1 Spark to remove any number of Afflictions from your discard pile before you shuffle your discard pile into your deck.

Devoted

Rank 5

1 GRACE

Sunspear

When you use this card in an Attack spread, set it out as a temporary Talent. Each time you make an Attack Spread you may burn 1 Spark to add an additional Grace card from your hand to the spread. You may only do this once per spread.

3

1 GRACE

Exorcist

When you use this card in a spread, draw one card. You may burn 3 Sparks and set Exorcist out as a temporary Talent; for the remainder of the scene you can use Passing Pain to transfer Wounds to undead enemies as well as living ones.

5

1 GRACE

Guiding Spirit

This card has a value of 5 when used in a Skill Spread. You may discard Guiding Spirit at any time to add 5 to the value of a wingmate's spread.

5

1 GRACE

Dawn's Blessing

When you use this card in a spread, draw one card. You may discard Dawn's Blessing at any time and burn 3 Sparks to add 10 to the value of an Ally's spread.

7

1 GRACE

Guiding Light

During your turn you may set this card out as a temporary Talent. Each time you make a successful Attack spread you may commit 1 Spark to it. Your wingmates gain a bonus to Attack and Skill spreads equal to the Sparks on this card. Burn these Sparks at the end of the scene.

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DURANT

3

COMBAT STYLE

Durant Steel

ATTACK: STRENGTH
(2 cards)
DEFENSE: STRENGTH/GRACE
(2 cards)
SPECIAL: Each time you make a Defense spread, draw one card.

Durant

Core

SKILL SPECIALTIES

Master of War

ATHLETICS
ENDURANCE
LEADERSHIP
WAR

If you use one or more of your Specialities in a SKILL spread, add 5 to the total. You may use Strength cards in any Skill spread involving your Specialties.

Durant

Core

TALENT

Unyielding Might

When you make a spread you can use any one card as a Strength card, regardless of its actual suit.
As you are injured, you can burn 2 Sparks to negate 1 Wound. You can only use this ability once per attack.

Durant

Core

TALENT

Paragon

Your Draw Limit is increased by one when you are at full Health.

Durant

Rank 1

TALENT

Durant Bond

Once during your turn, you may burn 1 Spark to allow a wingmate to draw one card. When one of your wingmates dies, you may take their Core Talent and use it until they are reborn.

Durant

Rank 1

DURANT

As a Durant Phoenix you died because you weren't tough enough. Your keyword is Survival; the Crucible has strengthened you and given you the ability to shake off wounds that would cripple normal humans. You are the rock that forms the foundation of your Wing, and it is your job to stand between the innocent and danger.

Your specialties are Athletics, Endurance, Leadership and War. You may not have been a soldier in your first life, but during your time in the Crucible you have studied every aspect of warfare - strategy, military history, and more. You are a capable leader, skilled at rallying and inspiring troops. You are physically powerful and able to meet any threat head on, but there may be times when your leadership abilities and military knowledge will be more useful - especially if your Wing ends up working with the Imperial Army.

Your primary suit is Strength. Any time that you make a spread, you may use any one card as a Strength card regardless of its actual suit.

TALENT

Vanguard

When you make a Skill spread associated with Leadership, add 5 to the total. When you make a successful attack, the next Attack spread made against your victim in the scene inflicts Brutal damage.

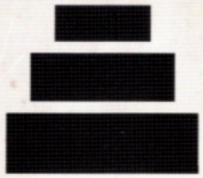
Durant

Rank 2

TALENT

Impenetrable Hide

All Brutal damage inflicted on you is treated as normal damage. During your turn, you may burn 1 Spark to remove a Burning or Bleeding condition affecting you.



Durant

Rank 2

TALENT

Guardian Spirit

Whenever you take damage that would kill you and you have more than 3 uncommitted Sparks, commit all your Sparks to this Lesson; you remain alive with 1 Health Level. Flip this card when you die.

Durant

Rank 3

TALENT

Tactical Genius

When you make a Skill spread associated with War, add 5 to the total. During your turn, you may burn 1 Spark and describe a plan of attack. Until the start of your next turn, anyone who follows that plan may draw one card.

Durant

Rank 3

COMBAT STYLE

Stone Ram

ATTACK: Strength (2 cards)

DEFENSE: Grace (2 cards)

SPECIAL: Each time you defend, you may commit one Spark to Stone Ram. You may flip this card at any time.

Durant

Rank 4

TALENT

Reprimand

If you are attacked by an opponent and do not take Wounds, you may burn 1 Spark to make an immediate counterattack that automatically hits (treat enemy's defense as zero.) You may use Strength or Grace to attack (3 cards).

Durant

Rank 4

TALENT

Guardian Spirit

When you become an Attendant Spirit, recover all the Sparks committed to this Lesson. When your host takes damage you may burn 2 Sparks to reduce the damage by 1 Wound. Flip this card when you are reborn.

Durant

Rank 3

COMBAT STYLE

Stone Ram

ATTACK: Strength (2 cards)

DEFENSE: Grace (2 cards)

SPECIAL: For every Spark committed on Stone Ram, gain a +1 bonus to each Strength card you use in any spread. Flip this card and recover the Sparks at the end of the scene.

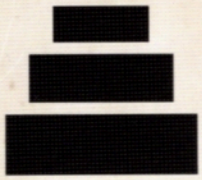
Durant

Rank 4

TALENT

Turn the Tide

When an enemy makes an attack that isn't targeting you, you can burn 2 Sparks to force them to target you instead. You must be adjacent to either the attacker or their intended victim.



Durant

Rank 5

TALENT

Guiding Hand

When an adjacent ally makes an Attack spread, you may discard one Grace card from your hand and add its value to the spread. Then draw one card.

Durant

Rank 6

TALENT

Phoenix Commander

When you make a Skill spread associated with War or Leadership, you receive a +5 bonus to the total. Mortal troops under your command are dramatically more effective. Mortal companions receive a bonus Health Level.

Durant

Rank 7

1 STRENGTH

Skin of Steel

When you use this card in a spread, draw one card. When you use Skin of Steel in a Defense spread, add your current Health Levels to the value of the card.

1

1 STRENGTH

Valiant

When you use this card in an Attack spread, add your current Health Levels to the value of the card. If you burn 1 Spark, the target must attack you on its next action.

1

1 STRENGTH

Shrug It Off

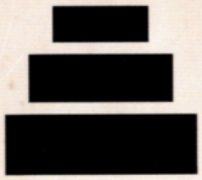
When you use this card in a spread, draw one card. In addition, you can discard one Condition affecting you or remove an Affliction card from your deck.

3

TALENT

Last Stand

Your final Health Level has a value of 10.



Durant

Rank 7

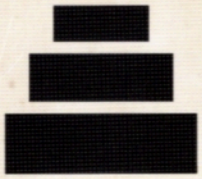
COMBAT STYLE

Pyrean Guard

ATTACK: STRENGTH
(3 cards)

DEFENSE: STRENGTH/GRACE
(2 cards)

SPECIAL: Each time you are attacked, you may commit 1 Spark to Pyrean Guard. For every Spark committed on Pyrean Guard, gain a +2 bonus to Defense spreads. Reclaim these Sparks at the end of your turn.



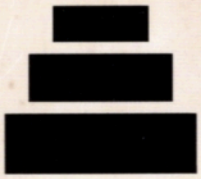
Durant

Rank 6

TALENT

Bulwark of the Dawn

Your Endurance is increased by 1. When you make a Skill Spread associated with Endurance, you receive a 5 bonus to the total. At the start of your turn, you can burn 1 Spark to remove any Exposed Conditions affecting you.



Durant

Rank 5

1 STRENGTH

Phoenix Shield

When you use this card in a Defense spread, you may burn 2 Sparks and gain a temporary Health Level with a value of 4. This remains until it is removed by damage or the end of the scene.

3

1 STRENGTH

Heart of Fire

When you use this card in a spread, its value is equal to your current Health Levels.

5

1 STRENGTH

Surge of Strength

When you use this card in a spread, you may discard one Condition token that is currently affecting you. If you do this, draw two cards.

5

1 STRENGTH

Perfect Guard

During your turn you may burn 2 Sparks and discard your hand. You don't redraw at the end of this turn. You are immune to injury and cannot suffer Wounds until the start of your next turn.

7

1 STRENGTH

Tireless Champion

When you use this card in a spread, draw one card. During your turn you may discard Tireless Champion and burn 5 Sparks to draw a number of cards equal to your current Health Levels.

7

THE DEEP
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Tarico
Mardonford
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ELEMENTAL

TALENT

Fire and Blood

When you make a spread you can use any one card as an Intellect card, regardless of its actual suit.
During your turn, you may burn 1 Health Level to regain 3 Sparks.

Elemental

Core

SKILL SPECIALTIES

Master of the Arcane

FIRE
DESTRUCTION
THE ARCANE
THE EMPIRE

If you use one or more of your Specialities in a SKILL spread, add 5 to the total. You may use Intellect cards in any Skill spread involving your Specialties.

Elemental

Core

COMBAT STYLE

Fire Shaping

ATTACK: INTELLECT
(2 cards)

DEFENSE: GRACE
(2 cards)

SPECIAL: You deal fire damage and may attack at range. You may add additional cards to your Attack spread at the cost of 1 Spark per card.

Elemental

Core

TALENT

Firestarter

When you make a successful Attack, you may burn 1 Spark to add a Burning Condition to your target. During your turn you may burn 1 Spark to remove a Burning Condition from yourself or an adjacent ally, or make an Intellect (Fire) spread to extinguish mundane flames.

Elemental

Rank 1

COMBAT STYLE

Frostbite

ATTACK: INTELLECT/GRACE
(2 cards)

DEFENSE: GRACE
(2 cards)

SPECIAL: Deals cold damage. If you inflict at least 1 Wound with an attack, you regain 1 Spark.

Elemental

Rank 2

ELEMENTAL

As an Elemental Phoenix you died for duty, and you have the ability to spend your own lifeforce to get the power you need. Fire and storm are yours to command, and you can unleash devastating forces on your foes.

Your skill specialties are Fire, Destruction, the Arcane and the Empire. You are an expert at creating and controlling flame and bringing down buildings and fortifications. You are well-versed in magical lore, ash sorcery, and the history and customs of the Empire.

Your primary suit is Intellect. Any time that you make a spread you may use one card as an Intellect card regardless of its actual suit.

TALENT

Shield of Flames

When you are struck by an attack, you may burn 2 Sparks to give the attacker one Burning Condition.

Elemental

Rank 2

TALENT

Bound to the Flame

When you make a Skill spread associated with Fire, add 5 to the total. Burning Conditions you place on your enemies each inflict 2 points of brutal damage at the start of your enemy's turn (as opposed to the usual 1 point).

Elemental

Rank 3

TALENT

Radiant Blood

Whenever you're injured, you regain 2 Sparks for each Wound you suffer. Regain 1 Spark every time you draw an Affliction.

Elemental

Rank 3

TALENT

Well of Power

All members of your wing (including yourself) regain 1 Spark at the end of any combat scene. During your turn, you may give any number of your Sparks to an adjacent wingmate (up to their maximum limit).

Elemental

Rank 4

COMBAT STYLE

Lightning Demon

ATTACK: INTELLECT/GRACE
(no limit)

DEFENSE: GRACE
(no limit)

SPECIAL: Each time you Attack or Defend, burn 1 Spark. Each time you take a Wound, burn 3 Sparks instead of taking a Wound.

Elemental

Rank 4

TALENT

Lingering Power

Your maximum Spark pool is increased by 5. As an attendant spirit, each Spark you burn adds 2 to your host's spreads.

Elemental

Rank 5

TALENT

Explosive Wrath

Once during your turn you may suffer 1 Wound and burn a number of Sparks equal to your Rank. Draw a number of cards equal to your Rank and use them all to create a ranged Attack spread that inflicts Brutal fire damage.

Elemental

Rank 5

TALENT

Rain of Destruction

Whenever you make an Attack spread against a group enemy the value is increased by 5. When you make a Skill spread associated with Destruction, add 5 to the total. You may use Destruction spreads to devastate buildings and fortifications.

Elemental

Rank 6

TALENT

Final Flame

During your turn, you may choose to shuffle your discard pile into your deck and draw your entire deck into your hand. At the end of your turn, you lose all remaining Sparks and Health Levels and die.

Elemental

Rank 7

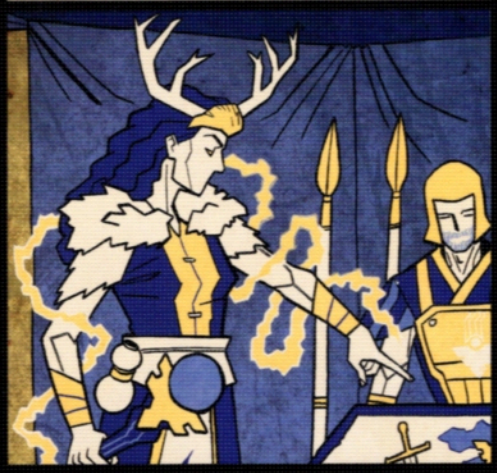
1 INTELLECT

Call Lightning

When you use this card in a spread, draw one card. When you use it in an Attack spread, ignore your target's Defense.

1

1 INTELLECT

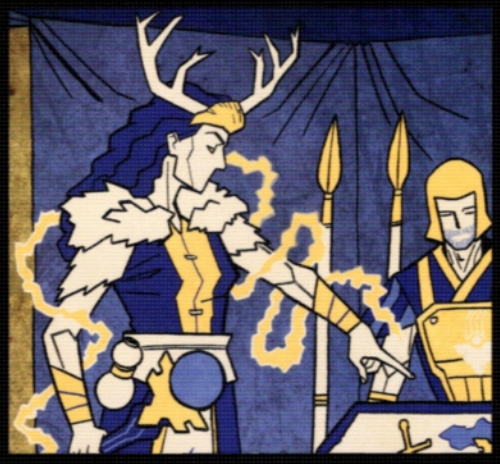


Pyromancer

When you use this card in an Attack spread you may burn 1 Spark to increase its value to 4 (or 8 if you are attacking a group enemy).

1

1 INTELLECT

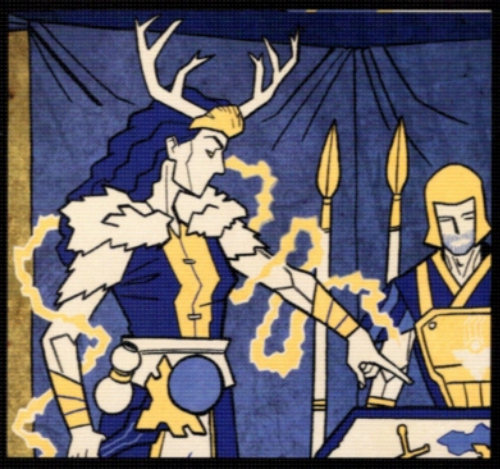


Incinerate

When you use this card in a spread, draw one card. When you use it in an Attack spread, you may burn any number of Sparks up to half your Rank (round up): add 3 to your Attack for each Spark.

3

1 INTELLECT



Consume Heat

When you use this card in a spread, draw one card. When you use it in an Attack spread, you may discard any number of cards from your hand, gaining 1 Spark for each card discarded.

3

TALENT

Keeper of the Flame

You are directly linked to the Imperial Flame. When you make a Skill spread associated with Fire or the Arcane, add 5 to the total. You regain double the usual number of Sparks each morning. You can transport yourself and your wing from one active Aerie to any other active Aerie, at a cost of 1 Spark per person.

Elemental

Rank 7

TALENT

Master of Storms

When you make a successful Attack, you can burn 2 Sparks to Stun your enemy. You are attuned to the weather and may make an Intellect (Arcane) spread to influence local weather conditions.

Elemental

Rank 6

1 INTELLECT

Dire Flame

When you use this card in an Attack spread you may burn 1 Spark to increase its value to 6 (or 12 if you are attacking a Group enemy).

5

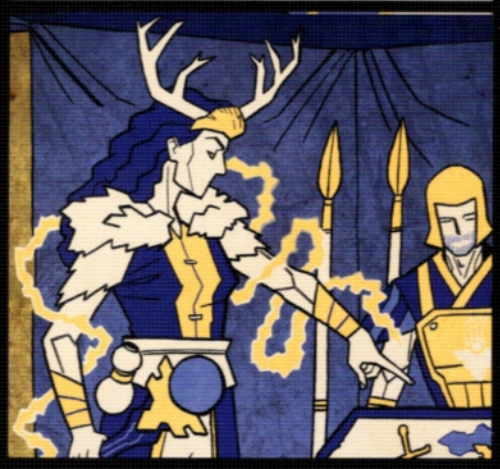
1 INTELLECT

Vengeful Lightning

When you use this card in a spread, draw one card. When you use it in a Defense spread, you may burn any number of Sparks up to your Rank: the attacker take damage equal to twice the number of Sparks burned.

5

1 INTELLECT



Consuming Force

When you use this card in a spread, draw one card. When you use it in an Attack spread, you may burn any number of Sparks up to your Rank: add 3 to your Attack for each Spark.

7

1 INTELLECT

Imperial Flame

When you use this card in an Attack spread you may burn 1 Spark to increase its value to 8 (or 16 if you are attacking a Group enemy).

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FORCEFUL

2

COMBAT STYLE

Flowing Force

ATTACK: STRENGTH/GRACE
(2 cards)

DEFENSE: GRACE
(2 cards)

SPECIAL: When you make a Defense spread against a melee attack, you may also make a counterattack against the attacker, with the same value as your Defense spread.

Forceful

Core

SKILL SPECIALTIES

Master of Motion

ACROBATICS
RESOLVE
SCOUTING
TRAVELER

If you use one or more of your Specialities in a SKILL spread, add 5 to the total. You may use Grace cards in any Skill spread involving your Specialties.

Forceful

Core

TALENT

Uncanny Agility

When you make a spread you can use any one card as a Grace card, regardless of its actual suit.

Draw one card any time you use an Action card with a value of 2 in a spread.

Forceful

Core

TALENT

Elemental Bond

Whenever you regain 1 or more Sparks on your turn, each of your wingmates regains 1 Spark. You always know how many Sparks your wingmates have and you sense it when a wingmate burns a Spark.

Elemental

Rank 1

TALENT

Forceful Bond

When you use an Environmental Element in combat, choose a wingmate in the scene. That wingmate draws a card. You can sense the location of your allies; you always know the direction and approximate distance to your wingmates.

Forceful

Rank 1

FORCEFUL

As a Forceful Phoenix you died because you weren't fast enough or because of an obstacle. Now you're an arrow shot from a bow, relying on deadly speed and precision instead of raw strength. Nothing will stop you from reaching your goal, and you excel at using the environment to your advantage.

Your skill specialties are Acrobatics, Resolve, Scouting, and Traveler. You are swift and precise, capable of amazing feats of balance and acrobatics. Your senses are sharp and you are capable of moving quietly and quickly. You are familiar with a wide range of environments and know how to survive and travel safely in the wild. And your resolve and mental discipline helps you remain focused on your goal.

Your primary suit is Grace. Any time that you make a spread you may use one card as an Grace card regardless of its actual suit.

TALENT

Percussive Strikes

Whenever you make a successful Attack or when you are hit by an Attack, commit a Spark to Percussive Strikes. You may recover any number of Sparks from Percussive Strikes to add 2 to your Attack for each Spark; return the Sparks to your pool. You can't commit a Spark to Percussive Strikes for an attack you enhanced with Percussive Strikes.

Forceful

Rank 1

TALENT

Living Whirlwind

When you make a Skill spread associated with Athletics or Acrobatics, add 5 to your total. When you are Immobilized or Stunned you can burn 1 Spark to remove the Condition.

Forceful

Rank 2

TALENT

Quick Study

When you make a Skill spread associated with Scouting, add 5 to your total. Once during your turn you may draw up to two cards after making a Skill spread. You can only draw as many cards as you used in the Skill spread.

Forceful

Rank 2

COMBAT STYLE

Dancing Crane

ATTACK: STRENGTH/GRACE
(2 cards)

DEFENSE: GRACE
(2 cards)

SPECIAL: When you are making an Attack or Defense spread, Action cards with a value of 2 or less don't count against the number of cards you can play.

Forceful

Rank 3

TALENT

Rolling Stone

Add 2 to the value of the second Attack spread you make in a turn. Add 4 to the value of the third Attack spread and any subsequent Attack spreads you make in a turn.

Forceful

Rank 3

TALENT

Evolving Defense

Whenever you take one or more Wounds from an Attack, you may commit a Spark to Evolving Defense. Add a bonus of 1 to Grace cards you play in Defense spreads for each Spark on Evolving Defense. Recover the Sparks at the end of the scene.

Forceful

Rank 4

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TALENT

Perfect Reflexes

At the start of combat you may take one free turn before the cycle begins. During combat another player can allow you to take their turn, allowing you to act more than once per cycle.

Forceful

Rank 4

TALENT

Arrow's Flight

When you play three or more cards of the same value in an Attack Spread or a Skill Spread associated with Acrobatics or Athletics, you may burn 2 Sparks and double the combined value of those cards.

Forceful

Rank 5

TALENT

Furious Storm

When you make a spread that only contains Action cards with a value of 2, you may burn 2 Sparks to multiply the cards in the spread instead of adding them together. Resolve this before any other effect that affects the value of the spread.

Forceful

Rank 6

TALENT

Final Moment

You may activate this Lesson on your turn. At the end of your turn, burn one Health Level; this damage cannot be healed or prevented. After this, immediately take another turn. Continue this until you die. During this period, all other actions are placed on hold; enemies cannot act until you're done.

Forceful

Rank 7

1 GRACE

Thunder Strike

When you use this card in an Attack spread, you may burn 1 Spark and add +9 to your Attack if it was the last card remaining in your hand.

€ 1

1 GRACE

Ten-Handed Strike

When you use this card in a spread, draw one card. If you have 5 or more cards in your hand, you may burn 4 Sparks and discard your hand to make an Attack spread with a value of 20.

€ 5

TALENT

Perfect Scout

You can make a Scouting spread to gather information about the region within a five mile radius of you. Your senses are supernaturally acute and you can spot details that cannot be noticed by normal mortals.

Forceful

Rank 6

COMBAT STYLE

Harrying Shrike

ATTACK: STRENGTH/GRACE
(2 cards)

DEFENSE: GRACE
(1 card).

SPECIAL: When you make a successful attack, commit a Spark to Harrying Shrike. For each Spark on Harrying Shrike, your limit on Attack and Defense spreads is increased by one card. Recover the Sparks when you attack a new target, choose a new Combat Style, or when your current target is defeated.

Forceful

Rank 5

TALENT

Zephyr Blessing

When you are traveling long distances, your speed is increased by a factor of five. This effect includes up to thirty traveling companions or any vessel or vehicle you use. As long as you remain in motion, your traveling companions can continue without need for sustenance or rest.

Forceful

Rank 7

2 GRACE

Blur Of Motion

When you use this card in a spread, draw one card.

€ 1

2 GRACE

Intense Focus

When you use this card in an Attack or Defense spread, add 1 for each Spark you have currently committed to Lessons.

€ 3

2 GRACE

Perfect Timing

When you use this card in a spread, you may burn 1 Spark to discard a card and draw a card, and you may repeat this as many times as you wish.

€ 3

2 GRACE

Absolute Precision

When you use this card in a spread, you may burn 2 Sparks to ignore the normal limit on the number of cards you can play in that spread.

€ 5

2 GRACE

Focused Spirit

When you use this card in an Attack or Defense spread, you may choose to recover all Sparks you currently have committed. Increase the value of this card by 2 for each Spark recovered in this way.

€ 7

1 GRACE

Speed of the Flame

When you use this card in a spread, draw one card. In addition, you may choose a number: burn that many Sparks and draw that many cards.

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SHROUDED

2

COMBAT STYLE

Cryptic Blade

ATTACK: INTELLECT
(2 cards)

DEFENSE: GRACE
(3 cards)

SPECIAL: After you successfully defend against an attack, you may become Hidden.

Shrouded

Core

TALENT

Hidden Secrets

When you make a spread you can use any one card as an Intellect card, regardless of its actual suit.
Your draw limit is increased by one card.

Shrouded

Core

SKILL SPECIALTIES

Master of Intrigue

DECEPTION
LORE
OBSERVATION
SPYCRAFT

If you use one or more of your Specialities in a SKILL spread, add 5 to the total. You may use Intellect cards in any Skill spread involving your Specialties.

Shrouded

Core

TALENT

Shadow Dancer

Once during your turn you may use an environmental element to become Hidden (instead of drawing a card). You may do this immediately at the start of combat as long as you aren't surprised. Any time you make an attack while you are Hidden, you may add an additional card to your Attack spread.

Shrouded

Rank 1

TALENT

Shrouded Bond

When you are Hidden, you may burn 1 Spark on your turn to appear next to one of your wingmates, regardless of the distance between the two of you. When one of your wingmates dies, you may take their Skill Specialties card and use it until they are reborn.

Shrouded

Rank 1

SHROUDED

As a Shrouded Phoenix you died because of a secret... either in pursuit of knowledge or because a secret was revealed or unknown. You excel at hiding from your enemies and exposing their weaknesses. The knowledge at your disposal is often your most effective weapon.

Your skill specialties are Deception, Lore, Observation and Spycraft. In your time in the Crucible, you have studied a staggering array of subjects; you know obscure languages, arcane secrets, historical details and much more. You are skilled at breaking and entering, shadowing your enemies, spotting hidden threats, lying with uncanny conviction and anything else that can be seen as Deception or Spycraft. It's up to you to decide if you were trained as a spy in the Crucible or if you simply possess the talents... perhaps you learned your skills as a spy or criminal in your first life.

Your primary suit is Intellect. Any time that you make a spread you may use one card as an Intellect card regardless of its actual suit.

TALENT

Borrowed Memories

When you make a Skill spread associated with Lore, add 5 to the total. When you acquire this Lesson, select one basic Intellect or Grace Trait from the unused Traits and add it to your deck. During your turn you may burn 2 Sparks to replace this card (in your hand, discard pile, or deck) with a different basic Trait.

Shrouded

Rank 2

COMBAT STYLE

Shadow Knife

ATTACK: INTELLECT
(3 cards)

DEFENSE: GRACE
(2 cards)

SPECIAL: If you are Hidden when you make an attack, the damage is Brutal.

Shrouded

Rank 2

TALENT

Rune Ink

When you are reborn, select any two unused basic Traits and one unused Rank 1 Trait from any School and place them under this card. You may use one or more of these Traits any time you make a spread, after which they are unavailable until the next Dawn. You may change your selection any time you're reborn. At Rank 5 and beyond you may have two basic Traits and two Rank 1 Traits.

Shrouded

Rank 3

TALENT

Soon Forgotten

When you make a Skill spread associated with stealth or deception, add 5 to the total. You are immune to the Exposed and Vulnerable Conditions.

Shrouded

Rank 3

TALENT

Heightened Awareness

When you make a Skill spread associated with Observation, add 5 to the total. At the start of any combat, draw three cards.

Shrouded

Rank 4

TALENT

Walking in Dusk

You can see perfectly in any level of darkness. While you are Hidden you cannot be hurt by any attack and you can burn 3 Sparks to pass through a door or wall, or to escape any sort of bonds.

Shrouded

Rank 4

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TALENT

Final Destiny

When you die, have one wingmate give you their deck (including their hand and discard pile). Look through it and give them a new hand of six cards; shuffle the remainder of the deck and return it. Repeat this process for each living wingmate. Your remaining Sparks are doubled when you become an Attendant Spirit.

Shrouded

Rank 7

TALENT

Web of Secrets

You may make a Deception check to conceal an event, object or individual, altering memories and eliminating facts. See the Marshal's Guide for more information on the costs and effects of this Talent.

Shrouded

Rank 6

TALENT

Choose Futures

During your turn, you may burn 3 Sparks to discard your hand and redraw the same number of cards, or allow an ally to discard their hand and redraw the same number of cards.

Shrouded

Rank 5

1 INTELLECT

Hidden Motion

When you use this card in a spread, draw one card. If you use it in an Attack spread while you are Hidden, you remain Hidden.

1

1 INTELLECT

Psychometry

You may discard this card and burn 2 Sparks to learn the history & purpose of an object you are touching. When you use this in a successful Attack spread, you may burn 2 Sparks to make the target Vulnerable for the scene.

1

1 INTELLECT

Anticipate

When you use this card in a spread, draw three cards. Add one card to the spread, put one card in your hand, and remove the third card from your deck until the next dawn.

3

COMBAT STYLE

Corrosive Knowledge

Attack: INTELLECT / GRACE
(2 cards)

Defense: GRACE
(2 cards)

Special: Whenever you damage an enemy, commit 1 Spark to the Challenge card. Reduce the value of all of an enemy's Health Levels by the number of Sparks on the Challenge card, to a minimum value of two. Reclaim the Sparks when the enemy is defeated.

Shrouded

Rank 5

TALENT

Sinister Brand

When you make a successful attack, you may burn 2 Sparks to make your target Exposed, Vulnerable or Enraged for the duration of the scene. You may burn 1 Spark to mark a creature with a symbol that cannot be removed; this can be visible, or it can be hidden so only Shrouded Phoenixes can see it.

Shrouded

Rank 6

TALENT

Shroud of the Phoenix

At dawn you may burn 10 Sparks to shroud a five mile radius from your current location. Until the following dawn, that region is concealed from mystical and physical searches. You may make an Observation spread to gain information about activities in the region.

Shrouded

Rank 7

1 INTELLECT

Mind Trick

When you use this card in a skill spread, it has a value of 5. You may discard this card and burn 1 Spark on your turn to make a target Exposed or to make yourself Hidden.

3

1 INTELLECT

Painful Truth

When you use this in an Attack spread, reveal a secret about your enemy. If the GM decides it is true, this card has a value of 6 and your enemy is Stunned.

5

1 INTELLECT

Perfect Deception

When used in a successful Defense, you may choose a new target for your enemy's Attack. This can include the Attacker if it is a group enemy.

5

1 INTELLECT

Always Prepared

You may discard this card at any time. When you do, draw five cards and then discard down to your draw limit. In addition, you may remove a card in your discard pile from your deck until the next dawn.

7

1 INTELLECT

Fading Memory

During your turn, you may set this card out as a temporary Talent. When you do this, you become hidden and all enemies forget you were ever present. You may discard the temporary Talent to add 10 to an attack you make while Hidden.

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1 GRACE

Astonishing Luck

When you use this card in a spread, you may burn 1 Spark to add 4 to the value of the spread.

Fate often bends in your favor.

1 GRACE

Charming

You may burn 1 Spark and discard this card when you are attacked; the attacker must select a new target, if one is available.

Whether it's due to natural charisma or supernatural influence, you have a remarkable talent for redirecting hostility.

1 GRACE

Commander

You may discard this card to add 3 to a wingmate's spread.

Your leadership experience helps you guide your allies both on and off the battlefield.

1 GRACE

Hunter

This card has a value of 5 when it is used in an Attack spread.

Hunters include both those who stalk the beasts of the wild and those who track fugitives and criminals. What were you trained to hunt?

1 GRACE

Inspiring

When you use this card in a spread, you may burn 1 Spark to let each of your wingmates draw one card.

What's so inspiring about your current action? Do you make a stirring speech, or is the action itself a source of hope and encouragement?

1 GRACE

Killer Instincts

Draw one card when you use this card in a spread. If you use it in an Attack spread, you deal Brutal damage until the end of the round.

Were you trained as a soldier or assassin? Or do you just have a natural knack for hitting people where it hurts?

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1 GRACE

Last Stand

Draw one card when you use this card in a spread. You can increase Last Stand's value by 4 for each of your current Health Levels; if you do this, you lose all your remaining Health Levels and die once the action is resolved. Remove this card from your deck when you die.

1 GRACE

Makes It Look Easy

Draw one card when you use this card in a spread. It has a value of 5 when you use it in a Skill spread.

Either you're remarkably skilled, or you put on an excellent show.

1 GRACE

Misspent Youth

When you use this card in a spread, draw two cards; place one of those cards back on top of your deck.

Whether you were a criminal or a dilletante, your misspent youth has taught you a few things. How does it apply to your current situation?

1 GRACE

Noble

You may discard this card to add 3 to a wingmate's spread.

Are you an aristocrat born to lead others, or simply pure of heart? Or both?

1 GRACE

Small & Quick

This card has a value of 5 when it is used in a Defense spread.

Are you an acrobat? A child? Or just remarkably nimble?

1 GRACE

Sneaky

During your turn you may discard this card to become Hidden.

You have a talent for subterfuge and slipping into the shadows.

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1 GRACE

Superhuman Reflexes

Draw one card when you use this card in a spread. When you use this card in an Attack or Defense spread, you may burn 1 Spark to draw an additional card.

When you draw on your Flame you possess inhuman agility.

1 GRACE

Untouchable

This card has a value of 5 when it is used in a Defense spread.

You excel at avoiding attacks. Is this due to martial training, remarkable reflexes or a supernatural ability to anticipate danger?

1 GRACE

Vengeful

After you use this card in a Defense spread, you may burn 2 Sparks to make an attack against the attacker, then draw back to your hand limit.

How does your thirst for vengeance apply to your current situation?

3 GRACE

Disturbing Insights

When you use this card in a successful Attack Spread, the target becomes Vulnerable. Anytime you use it, pick a member of your wing. They must reveal a disturbing secret; if it's less disturbing than any previously revealed secret, remove this card from your deck.

3 GRACE

Favored By Fate

You may remove this card from your deck to increase the value of any spread by 5. Remove this card from your deck when you die.

3 GRACE

Grim Determination

Remove any Exposed, Vulnerable, or Stunned Conditions affecting you when you use this in a spread. You may remove this card from your deck to remove all Afflictions from your deck. Remove this card from your deck when you die.

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3 GRACE

Heroic

You may discard Heroic at any time to add 3 to an ally's spread. You may remove it from your deck to remove all Exposed or Vulnerable conditions affecting the wing. Remove this card from your deck when you die.

3 GRACE

Horrific Vision

When you use this card in an Attack or Defense spread, both you and your opponent are Exposed for the duration of the scene.

3 GRACE

Kandari Blood Curse

When you use this card in a spread, draw two cards and burn 1 Spark. Kandari Blood Curse counts as an Affliction for triggering effects.

3 GRACE

Memories of the Chant

When you use this card in a spread, you can increase its value to 6. If you do this, choose another mortal or Phoenix within earshot to gain an Affliction (The Chant).

2 GRACE

3 GRACE

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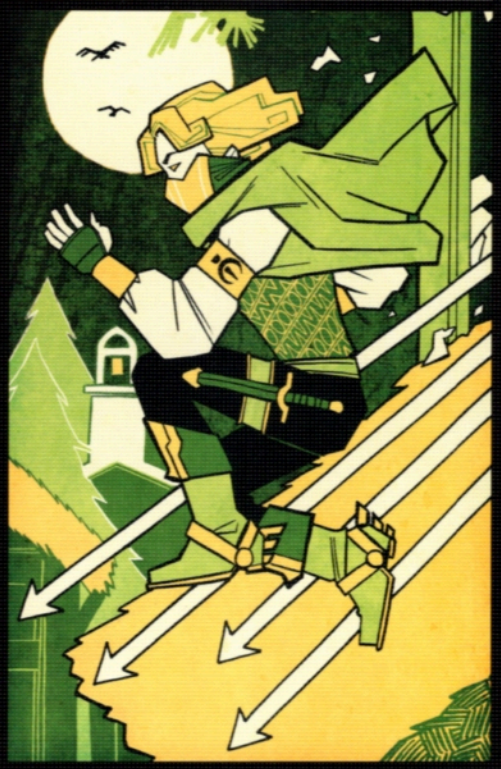
4 GRACE

5 GRACE



1 STRENGTH

Absolute Conviction

You may discard this card to add 3 to the value of a wingmate's spread.

You will not be turned aside from your goals, and the strength of your convictions inspires your allies.

1 STRENGTH

Astonishing Endurance

When you use this card in a Defense spread, you may burn 2 Sparks to reduce the damage you take from the attack by 1 Wound.

Are you unusually durable, or are you simply able to press on after taking wounds that would drop others?

1 STRENGTH

Crude But Effective

This card has a value of 5 when it is used in an Attack spread.

You're at your best when you keep things simple.

1 STRENGTH

Death Wish

When an adjacent ally is attacked, you may discard this card to force the opponent to attack you instead.

Your lack of concern for your own well-being often drives you to reckless behavior.

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1 STRENGTH

Furious

When you use this card in an Attack spread, you may burn 1 Spark to become Enraged for the rest of the scene.

What is the source of your lingering fury? How does it affect you?

1 STRENGTH

Never Gives Up

Draw one card when you use this card in a combat spread, then set out Never Gives Up as a temporary Talent. If you die while it is in front of you, you remain alive until the end of your next turn.

It takes a lot to bring you down.

1 STRENGTH

Seasoned Veteran

When an adjacent ally is attacked, you may discard this card to force the opponent to attack you instead.

You've seen a lot of combat, whether in your first life or in the Crucible. Among other things, your experience helps you defend your allies.

1 STRENGTH

Superhuman Strength

When you use this card in a successful Attack spread, you may burn 1 Spark to stun the target.

When the power of your Flame flows through you, you can perform amazing feats of strength.

1 STRENGTH

Survivor

When you use this card in a Defense spread, you may burn 2 Sparks to reduce the damage you take from the attack by 1 Wound.

You've survived a great many things. How does that experience help you here?

1 STRENGTH

Terrifying

When you use this card in a successful Attack spread, you may burn 1 Spark to stun the target.

What's so terrifying about you? Is it your appearance? Your rage? Or do you have a supernatural ability to induce fear?

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1 STRENGTH

Too Big To Fail

This card has a value of 5 when it is used in an Attack spread.

Sometimes sheer size and momentum is all you need to overcome a foe.

1 STRENGTH

Tough As Nails

Draw one card when you use this card in a spread. During your turn you may burn 1 Spark and discard this card to remove all conditions affecting you.

Is this a physical effect or a mental one? Do you turn to stone for an instant or just focus through the pain?

2 STRENGTH

3 STRENGTH

4 STRENGTH

5 STRENGTH

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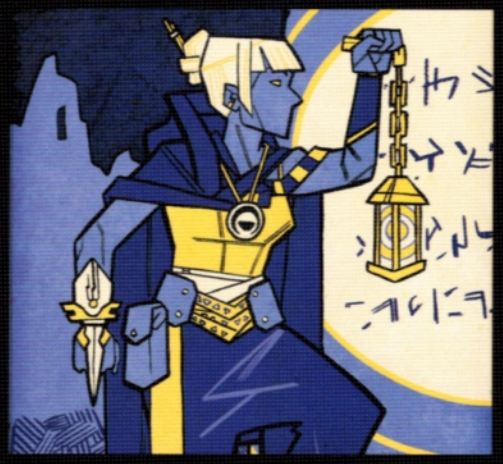
1 INTELLECT

Brilliant Deduction

You burn 1 Spark and discard this card to ask the GM a question about the current situation.

What's the source of your amazing insight? Are you trained as a detective? Do you have an oracular vision?

1 INTELLECT

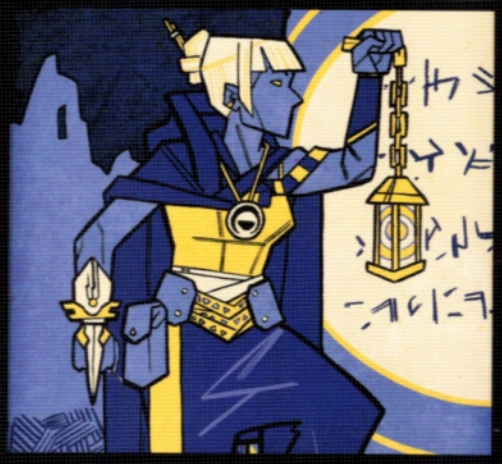


Cursed

Draw one card when you use this card in a spread. In addition, when you use this card in a spread you may burn 1 Health Level to regain 4 Sparks.

Your curse gives you power at the expense of your health. How were you cursed, and how do its effects manifest?

1 INTELLECT

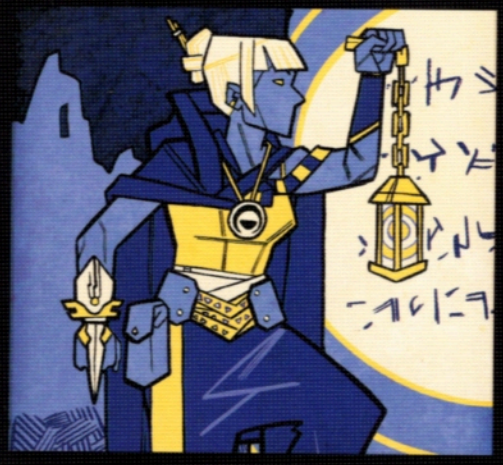


Extensive Training

Draw one card when you use this card. It has a value of 5 when you use it in a Skill spread.

During your time in the Crucible you were trained to handle almost any situation. What sort of training did you receive that will help with your current problem?

1 INTELLECT

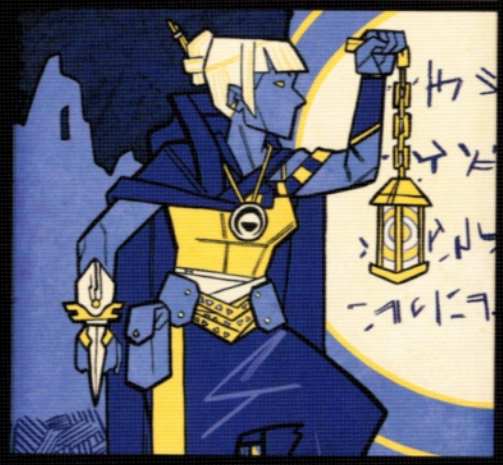


Intuitive

Draw one card when you use this card in a spread. It has a value of 5 when you use it in a Skill spread.

How does your remarkable insight help you solve your current problem?

1 INTELLECT

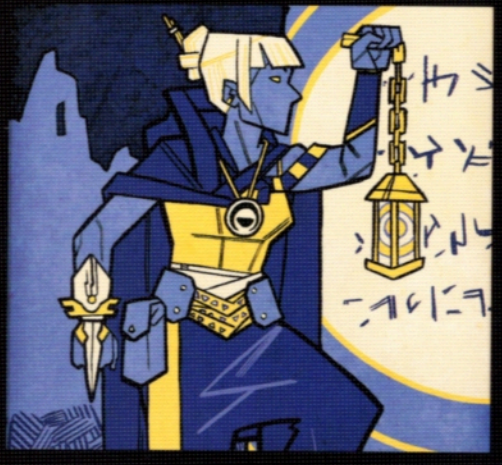


Master Plan

This card has a value of 3 when you use it in a Skill spread. In addition, when you use it in a spread you may burn 1 Spark to draw three cards; you must then discard two cards.

You've got a knack for coming up with a brilliant strategy at just the right moment. What's your current plan?

1 INTELLECT



Mysterious

Draw one card when you use this card in a spread. You may discard this card at any time to remove any Stunned, Exposed or Vulnerable conditions that are affecting you.

You are a person with many secrets. How does one of those secrets apply to the current situation?

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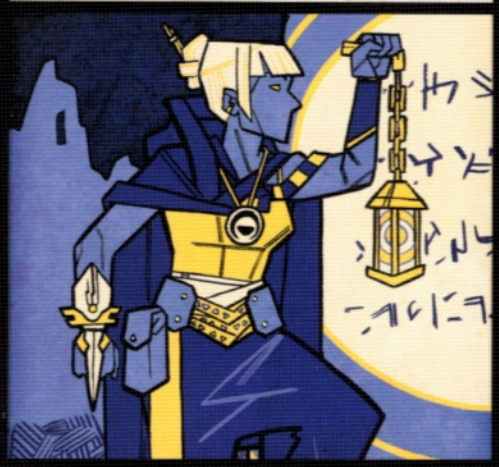
Borach
The Gathering Stones
Myrn
THE RIMWALD
ILONA
THE TEETH
THE FENS

1 INTELLECT

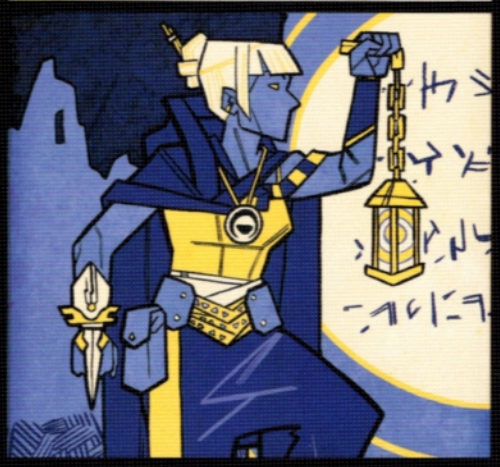


Resourceful

When you use this card in a spread, draw two cards; place one of those cards back on top of your deck.

You excel at finding creative solutions and overcoming limited resources. How can you get the most out of what you have available?

1 INTELLECT

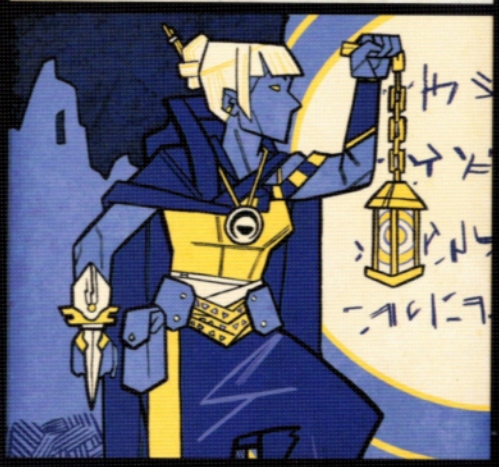


Seen This Before

You may discard this card to add 3 to the value of a wingmate's spread.

Whatever you're facing, you've seen it before. But where? Did you encounter it in your first life? Did you study it in the Crucible?

1 INTELLECT

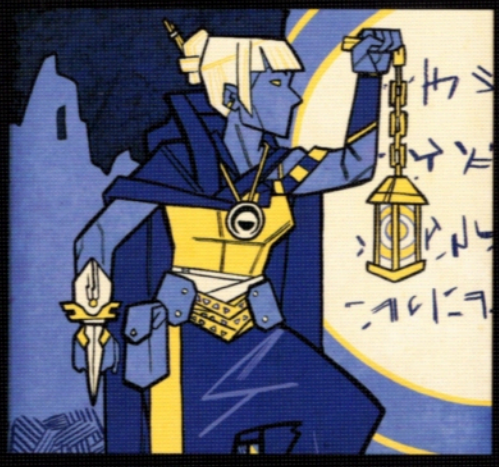


Shaman

When an adjacent ally is injured, you may discard this card to take one of the Wounds yourself.

You are trained in the shamanic traditions of the Grimwald, and know how to show proper respect for the spirits of the natural world.

1 INTELLECT

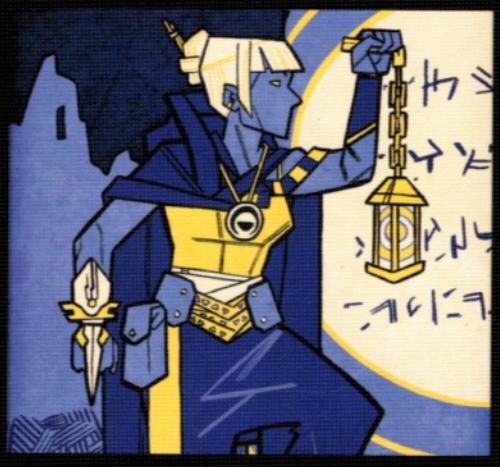


Smartest Person In The Room

This card has a value of 5 when you use it in a Skill spread. If this card is in the discard pile, you may burn 2 Sparks to return it to your hand.

How does your astonishing intellect help you overcome your current dilemma?

1 INTELLECT

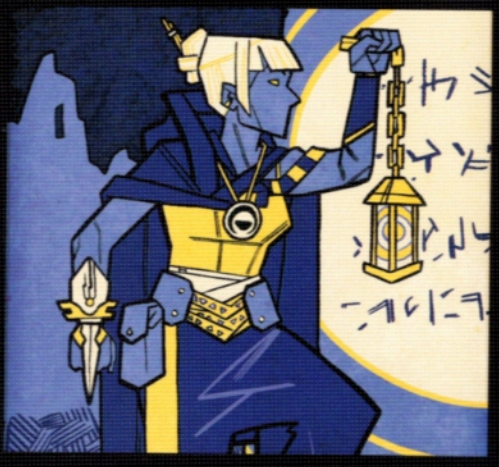


Supernatural Senses

Draw one card when you use this card in a spread. If you use it in an Attack spread, you deal Brutal damage until the end of the round.

How do your keen senses help you identify your opponent's weakness?

1 INTELLECT



Warlock

When you use this card in a spread, draw two cards; place one of those cards back on top of your deck.

You have studied the Fallen Folk and know how to bargain with spirits both great and small... along with the many dangers of making such deals.

THE DEEP
Lostwall
Hafsbridge
Harrow
Talus
The Capitol
Mardonford
Olvan
Borach
The Gathering Stones
Myrn
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ILONA
THE TEETH
THE FENS

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2 INTELLECT

3 INTELLECT

4 INTELLECT

5 INTELLECT

THE DEEP
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THE FENS

TALON

Bastion

You may flip this card when you are struck by an attack. If you do, double your Endurance against that attack.

TALON

Dreamshadow

During your turn, you may flip this card and become Hidden.

TALON

Epitaph

You may make attacks at range. Flip when you make a melee attack.

TALON

Grimclaw

+ 2 Attack

You may take 1 Wound to flip this card.

TALON

Thoughtcoil

Once per turn, you may burn 1 Spark to add 5 when you make a Skill Spread.

You may burn 2 Sparks to flip this card.

TALON

Valoria

+ 2 Attack

You may burn 1 Spark to flip this card.

TALON

Epitaph

+3 Attack

Flip at the end of the scene.

TALON

Dreamshadow

+ 2 Attack

+4 Attack if you are Hidden

Flip at the end of the scene.

TALON

Bastion

+ 2 Defense

Flip at the end of the scene.

TALON

Valoria

+ 2 Defense

You may burn 1 Spark to flip this card.

TALON

Thoughtcoil

+ 2 to Defense

You may make attacks at range. You may burn 2 Sparks to flip this card.

TALON

Grimclaw

+ 4 Attack

Flip at the end of the scene.

PSYCHOPOMP

CRYSTAL SWARM

INNOCENTS

CARRION BIRDS

CHANTER MOB

RISEN DEAD

INNOCENTS

Mortal Group

SPEED varies
DEFENSE 2
HL varies

This card can be used to represent any innocents present in a scene. Any relevant statistics will be provided in the mission.

CRYSTAL SWARM

Group Enemy

SPEED 2
DEFENSE 0 or 6
HL 6 (Special)

The swarm doesn't take standard actions or attacks; it fights its enemies passively by swarming.

SWARMING(Ability): On the Swarm's turn, place two Swarm tokens on each Phoenix. Each token counts as a Health Level with a value of six, and a Phoenix can have a maximum of four swarm tokens at once. At the end of a Phoenix's turn, that Phoenix suffers one Wound for each Swarm token remaining on it.

IMMUNITIES (Ability): The Swarm cannot be stunned and is immune to bleeding. Brutal damage is treated as normal damage.

NEURAL SHOCK (Ability): Keep track of the number of Swarm tokens a Phoenix has destroyed. For every four Swarm tokens a Phoenix destroys (round down), the Phoenix's draw limit is reduced by one. This effect lasts until the end of the scene.

PSYCHOPOMP

Fallen

SPEED Special
DEFENSE Special
HL Special

A Psychopomp interacts with a Phoenix in the Crucible. See the Challenge entry for details.

RISEN DEAD

Undead Group Enemy

SPEED 2
DEFENSE 3
HL 3, 3, 3, 3

SAVAGE ASSAULT (Standard Melee Attack): Attack 6, Damage x1 (4). The corpses can't attack the same Phoenix with two consecutive attacks.

BERSERK (Reaction): Once the Reaver reaches 4 or fewer HLs, the Risen Dead go into a frenzy. Its Speed becomes 1 and the Savage Assault attack becomes Attack 9, Damage x2 (6). Its Defense drops to zero - it will no longer evade attacks.

CHANTER MOB

Group Enemy

SPEED 2
DEFENSE 3
HL 3 (x20)

The Chanter Mob may make one attack each turn. Blood Burst can only be used if one or more Whisperers are present in the scene.

PACK ATTACK (Standard Melee Attack): Attack 7, Damage x2 (4). This attack affects 1 target for every 5 HL the Mob possesses, rounded up. The Attack value increases by 1 each time the Mob attacks.

BLOOD BURST (All or Nothing Melee Attack): Attack 12, Damage 2 wounds and target is Stunned for one turn. Remove 1 HL token from the Chanter Mob after this attack is resolved.

CARRION BIRDS

Undead Group Enemy

SPEED 2
DEFENSE 3
HL 2 (x30)

The Carrion Birds make a single Storm of Talons attack each turn.

STORM OF TALONS (All or Nothing Melee Attack): Attack 12, Damage 2 points of brutal damage. The Carrion Birds can attack all enemies in a scene.

INEVITABLE DEATH (Ability): Any time the Carrion Birds make an attack, all of their opponents immediately suffer one Wound.

BONE LEGION

4

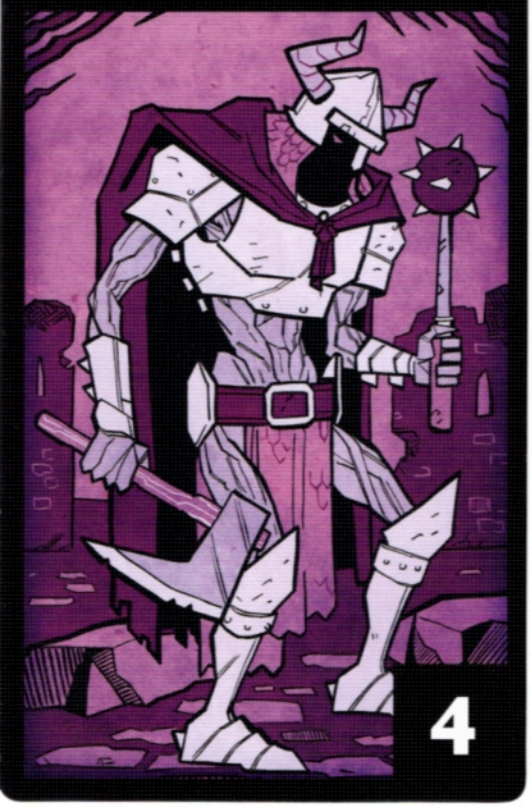
BONE SAPPERS

4

CURSE EWER

4

DREADKNIGHT



4

HOLLOW

4

IMPERIAL SOLDIERS

4

CURSE EWER

Undead

SPEED 2
DEFENSE 6
HL 4 (x10)

A Curse Ewer can make one attack or use one active ability per turn.

CURSE OF DOOM (All-or-Nothing Ranged Attack): Attack 14, Damage 1 Wound and the victim suffers a curse from the Extreme Exposure list (see Challenge entry). The victim may avoid this curse by immediately burning 5 Sparks.

REFILL THE VESSEL (Active Ability): The Ewer regains two Health Levels (HL 4) but suffers a negative conditions for the duration of the scene. Conditions are applied from this list in this order: Exposed, Vulnerable, or Bleeding. It can suffer Bleeding multiple times.

SPRAY OF EXECRATION (Passive Ability): Whenever the Curse Ewer suffers one or more Wounds from a single attack, the attacker must name a curse effect they will suffer or suffer two Bleeding conditions. See the Challenge entry for more information.

BONE SAPPERS

Undead Group Enemy

SPEED 2
DEFENSE 4
HL 4 (x8)

The Sappers can make a single attack and perform Demolitions on their turns.

HURLED BOMB (Standard Ranged Attack): Attack 6, Damage x3 (6) and one point of Fortification damage (if applicable).

DEMOLITIONS (Ability): Once per turn, the Bone Sappers can inflict Fortification damage equal to the number of Health Level tokens on the Sappers. After performing this action, they lose one Health Level.

DEATHLESS (Ability): The Bone Sappers regain two Health Levels (HL 4) at the start of each of their turns.

BONE LEGION

Undead Group Enemy

SPEED 2
DEFENSE 4
HL See Encounter

The Legion makes a single Overwhelm attack each round.

OVERWHELM (Standard Melee or Ranged Attack): Attack 2*, Damage xl (4). Add the number of HL tokens on the Legion to the Attack value. This attack targets all the Phoenixes in the area.

IMPERIAL SOLDIERS

Mortal Group

SPEED 4
DEFENSE 4
HL 2 (x20)

The Soldiers can make one attack during their turn, or use Shield Wall to improve their Defense. As a general rule, each Health Level token represents a single soldier.

LEGION ATTACK (Standard Melee or Ranged Attack): Attack 8, Damage xl (4). The Soldiers may attack one target for every five Health Level tokens the Soldiers possess.

SHIELD WALL (Ability): If the soldiers forego their attack, their Defense is increased to 8.

HOLLOW

Mortal

SPEED 2
DEFENSE 4
HL 4, 4, 4

A Hollow can make a single Feral Strength attack each turn, along with a final attack when it is about to die.

FERAL STRENGTH (Standard Melee Attack): Attack 12, Damage x2 (4)

LAST GASP (Ability): When a Hollow loses its final Health Level, it makes a final counterattack against the attacking Phoenix. This is an immediate reaction that occurs on the Phoenix's turn.

DREADKNIGHT

Fallen

SPEED 2
DEFENSE 4
HL 3, 3, 3, 3, 3

The Dreadknight can make a single attack each round, and alternates between Slashing Blade and Dread Gaze.

SLASHING BLADE (Standard Melee Attack): Attack 9, Damage xl brutal (4)

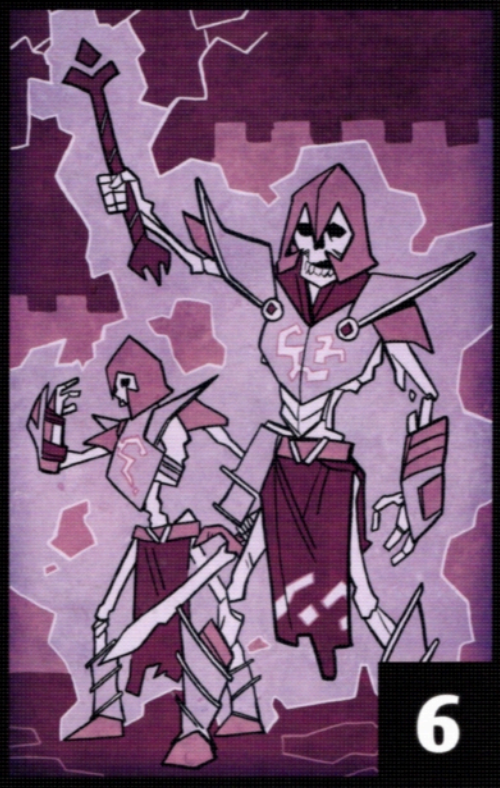
DREAD GAZE (All or Nothing Ranged Attack): Attack 8, Damage 1 Wound and target is Exposed; this Exposed condition remains until the Dreadknight himself is Exposed. The Dreadknight cannot use this power if he is Exposed.

FEAR STORM (All or Nothing Reaction): Attack 6, Damage 1 Wound, affects everyone in the room; the Dreadknight returns to full Health. This triggers automatically when the Dreadknight loses his last Health Level, unless he is Exposed.

REAVER

5

ANCIENT BONES



6

BARROW LORD

6

BEHEMOTH

6

ICHTRYO

6

THE HARVESTER

6

BARROW LORD

Undead

SPEED 2
DEFENSE 6
HL 3 (x12)

Each turn the Barrow Lord can use Hungry Chains and one additional attack.

REDFANG (Standard Melee Attack): Attack 15, x1 (8), target gains a Bleeding token.

GRIMHAMMER (Standard Melee Attack): Attack 12, x2 brutal (9)

BACKHAND BLOW (Standard Melee Attack): Attack 18, x1 (4), Stuns the target and knocks them back.

HUNGRY CHAINS (Special Ranged Attack): Target is immobilized and all spreads are reduced by one card.

ANCIENT BONES

Undead Group Enemy

SPEED 2
DEFENSE 6
HL 4 (x15)

The Ancient Bones make a single attack each turn.

ENERGY BEAM (Standard Ranged Attack): Attack 18, Damage x1 (4). This affects a single target.

ENERGY SHIELD (Ability): Anyone who makes a successful melee attack against the Ancient Bones immediately suffers two points of damage.

DEATHLESS (Ability): The Ancient Bones regain two Health Levels (HL 4) at the start of each of their turns.

REAVER

Undead

SPEED 2
DEFENSE 5
HL 4, 4, 4, 4, 4, 4, 10, 10

Each turn the Reaver uses More Rise and makes a single attack.

JAGGED BLADE (Standard Melee Attack): Attack 9, x1 Damage (6) and the target gains 1 Bleeding token.

BLOODFIRE DARTS (All-or-Nothing Ranged Attack): Attack 10 against up to two Phoenixes. Those hit take no damage but add two Afflictions to their deck: they are affected by Bloodfire Venom (see sidebar).

SHIELD COUNTER (Melee Reaction): ATT 6, x1 Damage (4) and the target is Stunned. The Reaver uses this as a free reaction immediately after an opponent completes a melee attack against it, regardless of whether that attack succeeds or fails. If the Reaver loses both (10) HLs its shield is broken and it can no longer make this attack.

MORE RISE (Action): Add two HL 3 tokens to the Risen Corpses if they are still in the scene, or return Risen Corpses into play with two HL tokens if they have been destroyed.

THE HARVESTER

Fallen

SPEED 2
DEFENSE 6
HL 4, 4, 4, 6, 6, 6

The Harvester can make a single attack each turn and perform Feed Off Fear.

CRUEL SCEPTER (Standard Melee Attack): Attack 10, Damage x1 brutal (4). Anyone struck by this attack is Exposed; if they are already Exposed, they lose 1 Spark.

CONSUME FEARS (Special Ranged Attack): This attack can only be used on a target that is Exposed. It automatically hits, and the target is reduced to 1 HL; if the target only has 1 HL, they are killed. The Harvester regains HL with a total value equal to or less than the damage done by the attack.

FEAR BURST (Reaction): All of the Harvester's enemies are Exposed. If a Phoenix is already Exposed, they lose 1 Spark instead. This is triggered the first time the Harvester loses his fourth Health Level, and any time a Dreadknight is slain.

FEED OFF FEAR (Action): At the start of his action, the Harvester drains 1 Spark from every Exposed Phoenix.

ICHTRYO

Atavi

SPEED 1
DEFENSE 6
HL 4 (x8)

The Ichtryo can make one attack per turn. It will use Bumble until it is actually attacked or until peaceful contact has been established.

PSYCHIC BLAST (All or Nothing Ranged Attack): Attack 18, Damage Special; the victim suffers a number of Wounds equal to the number of Wounds they last inflicted upon the Ichtryo.

BUMBLE (Standard Attack): Attack 4, Damage x1 (2). If the victim doesn't defend at all, the attack is harmless.

REGENERATION (Abillity): At the start of its turn, the Ichtryo regains all Health Levels it has lost. This ability even takes effect if the Ichtryo has lost its last Health Level.

GIFT OF LIFE (Ability): The Ichtryo can heal the injuries of others, and even restore life to those recently slain.

BEHEMOTH

Undead Group Enemy

SPEED 3
DEFENSE 6
HL 15, 20, 25

The Behemoth makes a single attack each turn. See the mission for special rules.

OVERWHELMING FORCE (Special Attack): Attack (equal to the value of the highest HL on the Behemoth), Damage x1 (6). The Behemoth inflicts five points of Fortification damage for each Health Level token on it. Reset its Health Levels to starting value after this attack is resolved.

IMMUNITIES (Ability): The Behemoth is immune to the Stunned, Bleeding and Vulnerable conditions. It treats brutal damage as if it were normal damage.

WHISPERER

6

ATTENDANTS

8

BLADESTORM

8

BONE CHAMPION

8

BONE CHARIOTS

8

SHOGGOTH

8

WHISPERER

Undead

SPEED 2
DEFENSE 6
HL 4, 4, 6, 6, 6, 6

During its turn, a Whisperer can make one Piercing Whisper Attack and use either Telekinetic Grab or Telekinetic Slam. It can only have one target trapped with Telekinetic Grab, but it may make Telekinetic Slams while maintaining Telekinetic Grab.

PIERCING WHISPER (All or Nothing Ranged Attack): Attack 10. If this attack is successful, the target suffers 1 Wound and gains 1 Affliction (The Chant).

TELEKINETIC SLAM (Standard Ranged Attack): ATT 14, x1 Damage (8), remove one appropriate environmental element.

TELEKINETIC GRAB (Special Ranged Attack): Automatic hit. All spreads the victim makes are reduced by one card, and the victim takes 1 Wound at the start of each of the Whisperer's actions. A Whisperer may only have a single creature grabbed at a time.

ATTENDANTS

Fallen Group Enemy

SPEED 2
DEFENSE 8
HL 4, 4, 4, 4, 4, 12

The Attendants can make a single Deadly Pantomime attack per turn, affecting one or two Phoenixes depending on their current Health.

DEADLY PANTOMIME (Standard Melee Attack): Attack 20, Damage x1 (6). Instead of damaging a target, the Attendant inflicts one Bleeding condition for each Wound the target would suffer; if you're out of Bleeding tokens, this inflicts normal damage.

TWIN FORM (Ability): As long as the Attendants have their Health-12 HL Token, they can attack two people per turn with Deadly Pantomime and they are considered a Group Enemy. Removing the HL 12 token represents eliminating one of the Attendants; they are no longer a group and can only attack one target per turn.

BLADESTORM

Fallen

SPEED 1
DEFENSE 8
HL 10, 10, 10

A Bladestorm can make one attack per turn.

EXECUTE (Standard Melee Attack): Attack 12, Damage x2 (10). Using this attack costs the Bladestorm 1 Spark.

AMBUSH (Standard Melee Attack): Attack 18, Damage x1 (10). This attack can only be used when the Bladestorm is in its mortal form. If the target has encountered a Bladestorm before, the Attack value is reduced to 12. The first time it does this in a scene it regains all Health Levels.

SCATTER FORM (Ability): When the Bladestorm is attacked it may burn 1 Spark to double its Defense for one turn.

MIMIC FORM (Ability): See the Challenge entry. A typical mortal form has Defense 6, Speed 3, and can make an Attack 8, Damage x1 (3). A Bladestorm gains 2 Sparks when it kills a mortal and all of a Phoenix's Sparks if it kills a Phoenix.

SHOGGOTH

Atavi

SPEED 2
DEFENSE 8
HL 3 (x40)

A Shoggoth can use Protean Barrage once per turn, making up to four attacks. See the Challenge entry for more information on its abillities.

PROTEAN BARRAGE (Standard Melee Attack): Attack Special, Damage x1 (10). The Shoggoth has an attack pool with a value equal to the number of Health Levels on the Shoggoth.

REGENERATION (Ability): At the start of its turn, the Shoggoth recovers half of its lost Health Levels, rounded down.

CONTAMINATE (Ability): The first time a Phoenix is damaged by a Shoggoth, they are infected with Shoggoth Corruption and place an Affliction in their discard pile. See the Challenge entry for more information.

SQUAMOUS HORROR (Ability): The first time a Phoenix encounters a Shoggoth, the Phoenix is Stunned for the duration of the scene.

BONE CHARIOTS

Undead

SPEED 2
DEFENSE 8
HL 6 (x8)

The Bone Chariots make a single attack during their turn. Every two Health Levels represent a single chariot.

CHARGE (Standard Melee Attack): Attack 12, Damage x2 (6) and the target is Stunned.

DRAGONFLAME (All-or-Nothing Ranged Attack): Attack 12, Damage Inflicts one Burning condition and one point of Fortification damage (if applicable). This attack can target one Phoenix for every 2 HL tokens on the Bone Chariots, rounded up.

DEATHLESS (Ability): The Bone Chariots regain a single Health Level (HL 8) at the start of each of their turns.

BONE CHAMPION

Undead

SPEED 2
DEFENSE 8
HL 6 (x12)

Each turn, the Bone Champion can make a single attack.

HAMMER STROKE (Standard Melee Attack): Attack 18, Damage x1 (5) and the target is Stunned.

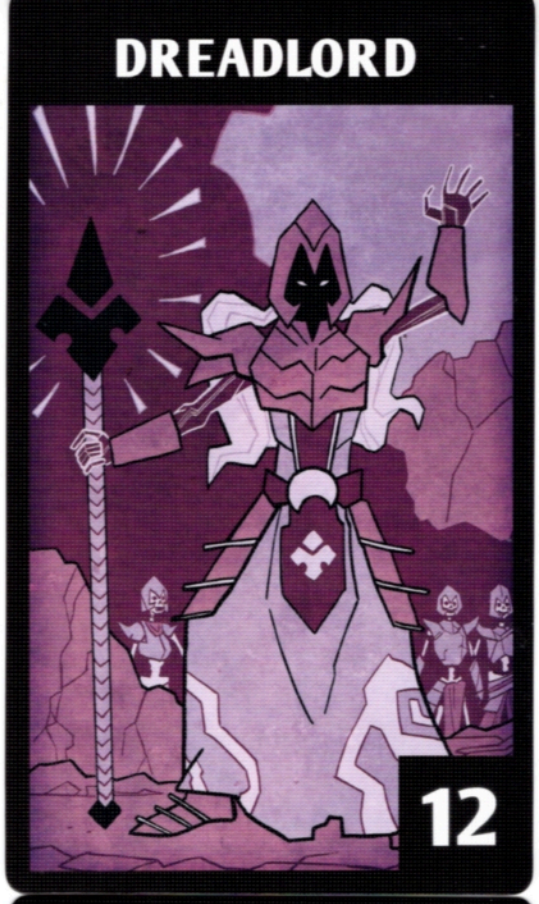
FINISHING BLOW (Standard Melee Attack): Attack 12, Damage x2 (10)

WRATH OF PELAGIUS (Ability): Anyone who makes a successful attack against the Bone Champion receives one Burning token. A Phoenix can counter this effect by immediately burning two Sparks.

IMMUNITIES (Ability): The Bone Champion is immune to the Stunned and Bleeding conditions. He treats brutal damage as normal damage unless he is Vulnerable.

THE PUPPETEER
8

WAR WYRM
10


DREADLORD
12

DURANT PHOENIX
12

OMEN
12

MERCY
16

DREADLORD

Undead Fallen

SPEED 2
DEFENSE 12
HL 6 (x8)

The Dreadlord can make a single attack each round.

TENDRILS OF DARKNESS (Standard Ranged Attack): Attack 18, Damage xl (6). The Dreadlord steals a number of Sparks equal to the damage done by the attack.

BLACK HEART, BLACK GLASS (All-or-nothing Ranged Attack): Attack 12, Damage Special - The target is slain and turned into obsidian. This targets all Phoenixes in the area and kills all mortals in a 1/2 mile radius. Burns 20 Sparks.

SIPHON (Ability): The Dreadlord starts combat with 6 Sparks. At the start of its turn it takes 1 Spark from each Phoenix. Once during its turn it can burn 4 Sparks to regain one Health Level (HL 6).

MANA SHIELD (Ability): The Dreadlord may burn Sparks to reduce the damage of an attack by one point per Spark.

WAR WYRM

Fallen

SPEED 3
DEFENSE 10
HL 10 (x10)

A War Wyrm can make a single attack on its turn. It can use Submerge instead of making an attack.

SWALLOW (Standard Melee Attack): Attack 18, Damage Special- the victim is swallowed; see mission text for details. This attack can only be performed if the Wyrm is Hidden, and only one victim can be swallowed at a time.

THUNDER BLAST (Standard Ranged Attack): Attack 12, Damage x2 (6) and the target is Stunned for one turn. This attack can target two Phoenixes, and inflicts 5 points of Fortification damage (if applicable).

TREMORS (Ability): While the War Wyrm is emitting tremors, a Phoenix must discard a Grace card at the start of their turn; if they cannot, they must discard three cards.

SUBMERGE (Ability): The War Wyrm becomes Hidden and cannot be attacked.

THE PUPPETEER

Fallen

SPEED 2
DEFENSE 8
HL 5, 5, 5

The Puppeteer can make a single Psychic Lash attack during its turn.

PSYCHIC LASH (All-or-Nothing Ranged Attack): Attack 14, Damage 1 Wound and the target is Exposed. If the Phoenix is guarding a mortal, the Puppeteer forms a psychic connection to that mortal.

DEADLY DECEPTION (Ability): When an Exposed Phoenix attacks the Puppeteer, the attack targets another nearby Phoenix instead of the Puppeteer.

BODY SWAPPING (Ability): When the Puppeteer's host is slain, the Puppeteer returns in the body of another mortal with three HL 5 Health Levels. This takes two turns if the Puppeteer has a connection to the mortal, four turns if it doesn't.

MERCY

Phoenix

SPEED 2
DEFENSE 16
HL 3 (x10)

Mercy can make a single attack or use an Active Talent on her turn. See mission text for details on her Cracked Mirror ability, a passive ability that triggers at the start of combat.

WOUNDSHIFT (Standard Melee Attack): Attack 10, Damage x3 brutal (10). Mercy recovers one Health Level for every 3 points of damage inflicted on a target. Alternately, she can pass one Wound and one Condition.

WHISPER OF DOOM (All or Nothing Ranged Attack): Attack 14, Damage Inflicts two Bleeding Conditions; if there's no Bleeding tokens, this inflicts two Wounds.

SHADOWS OF THE PAST (Active Talent): Mercy summons an ally to aid her in battle.

SPIRITUAL AWARENESS (Ongoing Talent): Mercy may attack Hidden targets, and Hidden attackers receive no bonus against her.

OMEN

Phoenix

SPEED 2
DEFENSE 12
HL 4 (x8), 6 (x8)

Omen can make one attack per round. See the Challenge entry for additional information on his abilities.

BLADE OF SECRETS (Standard Melee Attack): Attack 14, Damage xl (6). In addition, the victim is Exposed for the duration of the scene.

BINDING ROD (Standard Melee Attack): Attack 14, Damage x2 (10). This attack can only be used on a victim who's Exposed. if a victim is killed by this attack, they are trapped in the rod and don't become an Attendant Spirit.

CLOAK OF SHADOWS (Ability): If Omen is attacked and doesn't lose a Health Level with a value of 6, he becomes Hidden. When he makes an attack while Hidden, the Attack value is increased by 6. Locating him requires an Intellect Spread (Difficulty 20; Observation, Scouting).

ANCIENT RUNE INK (Ability): See Challenge entry.

DURANT PHOENIX

Phoenix

SPEED 2
DEFENSE 12
HL 4 (x8); 20

The Durant Phoenix can use a single attack or active Talent each turn. If he becomes Exposed or Vulnerable, he takes his next turn to Shake It Off.

GLAIVE SWEEP (Standard Melee Attack): Attack 14, Damage xl (6) and the target is Enraged. This attack can target one or two Phoenixes.

HEROIC THROW (Standard Ranged Attack): Attack 12, Damage x2 (10) and target is Stunned. This Attack uses up an Environmental Element.

SHAKE IT OFF (Active Talent): Remove any Exposed or Vulnerable conditions affecting the Durant Phoenix.

PERFECT GUARD (Ongoing Talent): The Durant Phoenix cannot lose Health Levels due to enemy attacks. A Phoenix must burn a Spark any time they make an Attack spread targeting the Durant Phoenix. Both of these effects are lost while the Durant is Stunned, Exposed, or Vulnerable.

HOUSE GOD

20

AFFLICTION

Suffer the consquences,
then draw one card

HOUSE GOD

Fallen

SPEED 2
DEFENSE 20
HL 3, 3

A House God can make a single attack or use an active ability on its turn. Most House Gods have additional abilities based on their spheres; see the Challenge entry for additional information.

DIVINE STRENGTH (Standard Melee Attack): Attack 12, x2 brutal damage (6)

DIVINE REQUEST (Active Ability): The god makes a demand. A Phoenix can resist this by immediately making an Intellect or Grace spread (Difficulty 15; Resolve; Trump: Absolute Conviction); otherwise they must follow the order. Few mortals can resist this.

2 HEALTH
3 HEALTH
4 HEALTH
5 HEALTH
6 HEALTH
8 HEALTH
10 HEALTH
12 HEALTH
15 HEALTH
20 HEALTH
25 HEALTH
2x5 HEALTH
3x5 HEALTH
4x5 HEALTH
6x5 HEALTH
8x5 HEALTH
10x5 HEALTH

5

As a Phoenix, death is not the end of your story.

You have passed through death and retuned stronger than before, and now you are the last hope of a world besieged by nightmares. To defeat the Dread you will have to unravel ancient mysteries and face terrifying threats. You have seven lives to save the world: make each one count.

Phoenix's card-driven system puts the skills and strengths of the character directly in the hands of the player. Simple and intuitive, the system is accessible both to longtime gamers and those who have never played a roleplaying game before.

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- **62 Condition and Challenge tokens**
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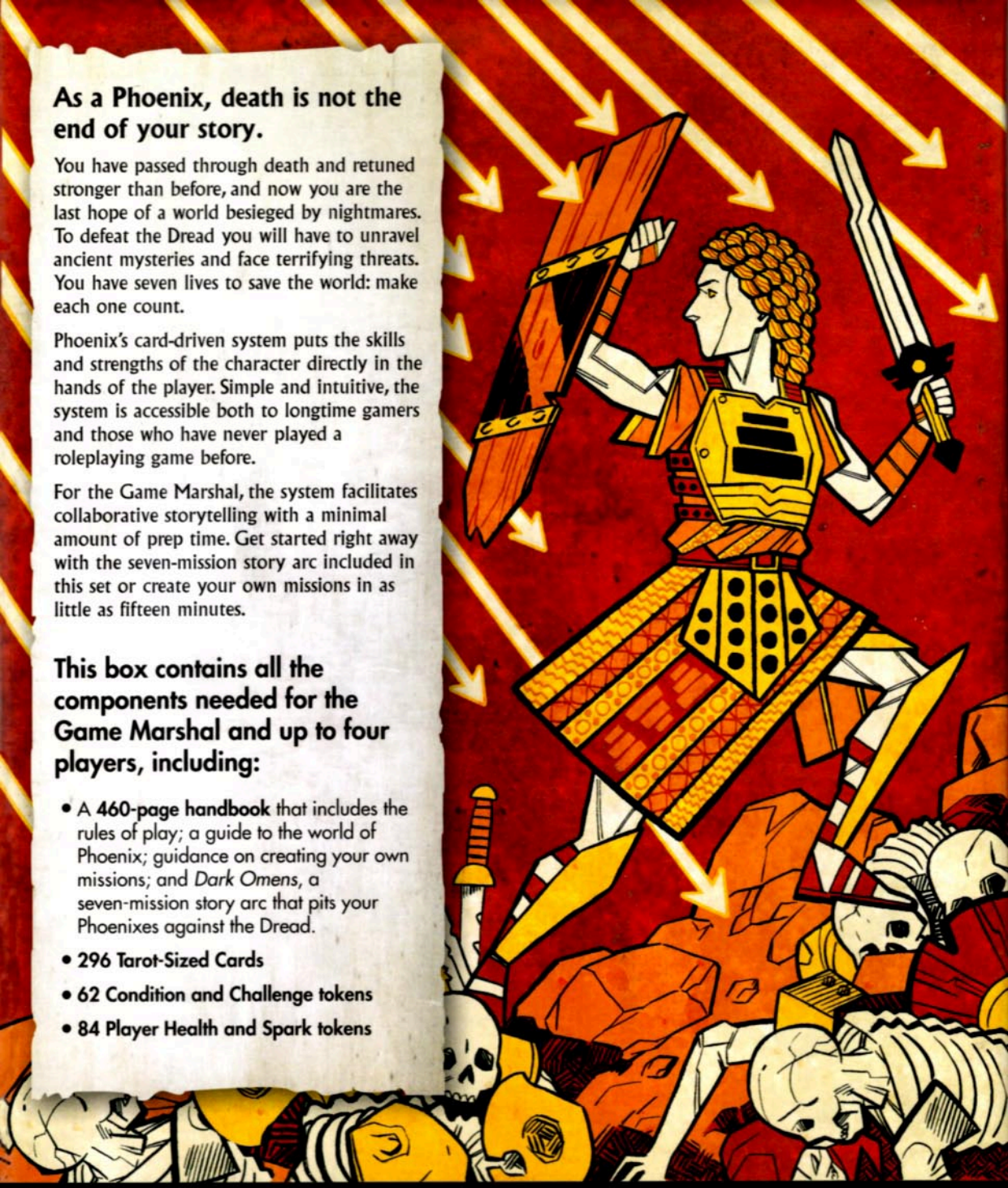

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MADE IN CHINA
Version 1.0

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