

# *Lords of Gossamer & Shadow*

## *Addendum: Shape Shifting*



*by Jason Durall*





Rite Publishing Presents:

## Addendum: Shape Shifting

**Calais** (Author): Jason Durall

**Lucien** (Editor): Perry Grosshans

**Drake** (Cover Artist): Lee Pfenninger

**Door Wardens** (Interior Artists): Lee Pfenninger,  
Matt Bulahao, Jean-Baptiste Hinnebo, Jason Rainville

**Dayle** (Trade Dress): James “Devin Night” Hazelett

**Vaia** (Layout and Publisher): Steven D. Russell

**Special Thanks** to Christopher “Kit” Kindred  
for always being awesome with feedback.

**Based on Lords of Gossamer & Shadow by Jason Durall**

Addendum: Shape Shifting Copyright © 2016 Steven D. Russell All rights reserved. Lords of Gossamer and Shadow Copyright © 2012-2013 Steven D. Russell All rights reserved. Erick Wujcik's Diceless Role-Playing and associated marks and logos are trademarks of Diceless by Design Publishing, LLC, and are used under license. See [http://Rpg.drivethrustuff.com/product\\_info.php?products\\_id=1447](http://Rpg.drivethrustuff.com/product_info.php?products_id=1447) for more information on Erick Wujcik's Diceless Role-Playing. Some rights reserved. The illustration by Jean-Baptiste Hinnebo are licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-No Derivative Works 3.0 License. <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nd/3.0/>



# Addendum - Shape Shifting

The Great Powers—such as Eidolon and Umbra Mastery—dominate the Gossamer worlds, intrinsically linked to universal principles, permeating and shaping all the stuff of reality. The Lesser Powers—such as Invocation, Wrighting, Sorcery, Cantrips, and others—draw strength from their users or from Gossamer reality itself rather than being tied to those greater abstract cosmic principles. For this reason, they are less universal, though are still widespread. Shape Shifting is one of the more common Lesser Powers, used in some form throughout many of the Gossamer worlds.

This release describes the Shape Shifting power for use by *Lords of Gossamer & Shadow* players and gamemasters alike. Shape Shifting can be selected during character creation, introduced later in a campaign, or purchased during character advancement.

## Shape Shifting

Though the powers inherent to Gossamer worlds are usually confined to those worlds, some few powers are universal enough or intrinsic to the user that they may be used throughout the Grand Stair and other Gossamer worlds. Shape Shifting is just such a power, giving its possessors the ability to manipulate and transform their physical bodies in a variety of manners. Those who use it are called *Shape Shifters*.

Most Gossamer worlds have some knowledge of Shape Shifters and Shape Shifting, through folklore and mythology and even history. Many so-called “gods” assume alternate forms for various purposes (disguise, seduction, etc.), and many “monsters” are Shape Shifters, were-creatures who change shape into monstrous forms. Races of Shape Shifters are also relatively common, as well as those who have learned the power through magic or some other augmentation.

Regardless of the source, Shape Shifting works the same for most who possess the power, though on the Gossamer world of origin the Shape Shifter may be subject to additional weaknesses, unable to access the full range of powers, vulnerable to a particular item or condition, and may even suffer additional restrictions on the power use.

This power coexists with the Eidolon and Umbra in a tenuous fashion, as those principles embody purity of form or the slide towards entropy. By contrast, Shape



Shifting confers powers of adaptability, change, and renewal, yet often involves switching from one idealized form to another. These powers can occasionally play havoc on each other, and Shape Shifting while using either the Umbra or Eidolon carries with it a serious measure of risk. For this reason, a Shape Shifter should consider carefully whether they wish to learn Eidolon Mastery, and masters of those powers should think likewise about learning Shape Shifting.

Four tiers of this power are described here: Lesser Shape Shifting, Shape Shifting, Advanced Shape Shifting, and Exalted Shape Shifting. Each level incorporates and builds on the abilities conferred by the prior level.

### Limits to Shape Shifting Forms

The form the character takes must at least have animal sentience and be alive: no rocks, tables, or ice ladders. A character assuming a shape that does not possess the ability to think loses the ability to change back. Depending on the form and the gamemaster's discretion, a character attempting such a form may end up as a freakish hybrid of living being and inanimate object, or

could simply transform and be incapable of changing back. In such cases, the gamemaster should be clear and emphatic, warning the character about the risks of such a transformation and the likely outcome.

The transformed alternate form must be a substantial being: at the Lesser, basic, and Advanced levels of the power, the Shape Shifter cannot assume ethereal or insubstantial forms such as clouds of mist or forms composed of thought, sound, or light. Similarly, the transformation does not have any abilities beyond those that are natural for the creature's form in the Gossamer world the shape originates in, whatever those abilities may be. It does not include magic use or any abilities equaling those from Artifacts or Creatures, such as Double Damage claws or power use beyond any the character may normally possess. It is possible to transform into a creature with extraordinarily harmful claws or abilities approximating Sorcery, for example, but these will be Gossamer copies, potent only on their world of origin or, if they work elsewhere, will be inferior to the "real" qualities or powers.

### Shape Shifting and Supernatural Abilities

As noted above, alternate forms may possess remarkable abilities that are considered supernatural or impossible to the character's normal form. These can be as commonplace as flight, poison, water breathing, night vision, resistance to poison, regeneration, immunity to vacuum, or bony armor. These abilities can also be more extreme, such as flame breath, petrifying gaze, acidic blood, radioactivity, etc. These types of abilities can be tricky for the gamemaster to make a ruling on, and are too varied to list on a case-by-case basis.

A rule of thumb for these abilities when they arise is that if the ability is intrinsic to the anatomy or physical characteristics of the Shape Shifted form, then the ability works on the Gossamer world it is native to, or where it would be suitable. This last bit is the important one. The laws of physics or magic that might allow a dragon to fly and breathe fire in one Gossamer world might keep it earthbound and suffering fierce indigestion on another. Another limiting factor is that these abilities are frequently quite taxing in terms of Endurance and Psyche. Shape Shifting wings and figuring out how to flap them is one thing (a relatively basic exercise in muscular coordination and effort), but Shape Shifting to create a venom sac would be somewhat more difficult. Trying to approximate the internal anatomical changes that allow for x-ray vision, flame breath, or telepathy might be too much for the Shape Shifter to maintain while in the new form.

When in doubt about the relative potency of an ability conferred by Shape Shifting, the gamemaster should always consult the most appropriate of the character's Attributes. Something physical, such as armored hide, regeneration, wings, etc. would likely be based on Strength or Endurance, while a supernatural characteristic might be based off the character's Psyche. If it makes sense that the ability work in the environment of the Gossamer world the Shape Shifter is in (or even the Grand Stair), then the ability can function as desired, though, as always, **its relative power will be limited by that which opposes it.**

Furthermore, the more powerful a creature is (if its abilities are supernatural), the more powerful a sense of personality that form carries. To successfully assume those forms, the Shape Shifter must become deeply immersed into its physiological and mental makeup, putting the Shape Shifter at greater risk of losing their identity (see "Shape Shifting and Self", below).

### Shape Shifting and Items

Clothes or equipment worn by the Shape Shifter are usually shed or destroyed when the transformation occurs, based on the shape and size of the new form. A Shape Shifter wishing to have an outfit that can accommodate the rigors of Shape Shifting is advised to purchase such garments as one or more Artifacts with the Shape-shifting quality (described on pages 51-52 of the core rulebook), or to seek ingenious tailors from a Gossamer world where such garments are possible. However, such items tied to a Gossamer world, such as, for example, a leotard made of unstable molecules, may not retain any of its qualities outside the Gossamer world of its origin.

### Time Requirements for Shape Shifting

Shape Shifting can be relatively quick. Lesser cosmetic changes such as skin, hair, or eye color, lengthening ears, growing claws or fangs, sprouting horns, or toughening skin will take a dozen or so seconds, while more profound musculoskeletal rearrangement and psychological transformation can take several minutes or longer if the new form is not well-known to the Shape Shifter.

It's quickest and easiest to change back to a "favored" form, one that the Shape Shifter regards as their original or most comfortable form. Usually this is the Shape Shifter's natural form, but it could be a single alternate form. This transformation can take less than a minute at most, depending on how dramatic a transformation is required. Shape Shifters who are injured, fatigued, undernourished, diseased, or otherwise at less-than-ideal shape will inevitably take longer to switch forms.



More substantial changes, such as into creatures of power or specific beings, or even flocks or creatures radically different in size, will take longer, ranging from several minutes to even hours, depending on the scale and complexity of the new form to be assumed.

### Endurance Costs and Shape Shifting

Changing one's shape is taxing, akin to rigorous physical activity that exercises every muscle, every fiber in the Shape Shifter's body. Though it is easier to change into familiar shapes than it is to improvise new shapes or to transform specific body parts, the process is enough to exhaust a character with Average Rank in Endurance. Superior Ranked Endurance will allow a few attempts in a day without the Shape Shifter becoming exhausted, and Paragon or higher-Ranked Endurance allows for Shape Shifting without limitation. Shape Shifting while unhealthy, fatigued, or wounded is more taxing than when healthy. Lastly, due to the extreme drain on vitality reserves, most Shape Shifters become ravenous and thirsty after using the power, no matter what their Rank in Endurance.

### Distinguishing Characteristic

Most living beings have one or more distinguishing characteristics, whether it be a distinctive scar, some element of coloration, a distinct pattern of scales or fur, the shape or color of eyes, posture or gait, a particular mannerism, a quality voice, or some other element that stands out and is instantly recognizable by friends, family, and allies. Such characteristics can be intrinsic parts of one's identity, or even aspects a character works at suppressing, or cultivating.

Though they are fluid in so many ways, Shape Shifters are unable to completely disguise every aspect of their appearance, and the player or gamemaster should determine one unique characteristic about the Shape Shifting character's appearance or presence, a distinguishing characteristic that can identify the Shape Shifter. This can be subtle, like a limp or a particular catch-phrase, or a certain tuft of hair that never lies straight or even a strange colored fleck in one eye. This distinguishing mark will appear, in some fashion, in every form the Shape Shifter assumes, no matter how different that form may be from the Shape Shifter's original appearance. The Shape Shifter can attempt to conceal it, and it does not always have to be prevalent, but it should present as a tiny bit of visual flare, even if it



transforms into something radically different. *For example, a stray tuft of hair might become a slightly crooked horn or an antenna in the same place, or a ridge of skin on a hairless cranium.* This is not so much a failing of the Shape Shifting ability so much as it a quirk of the Shape Shifter's identity, sometimes even a blind spot in the Shape Shifter's self-image that manifests across forms.

The distinguishing mark does not always have to be a natural part of the Shape Shifter's appearance either, and could instead represent a recent wound, or a particular preference for a certain color or recent affliction. *For example, a Shape Shifter who has recently lost an ear might find that every shape they assume, the injury (or an equivalent scar) manifests, or a Shape Shifter suffering from some respiratory injury might inadvertently cough in any form, or perform the equivalent action, as appropriate.*

Note that this particular aspect of the power is meant as a means of quick characterization and of dramatic shorthand, not to be a crippling flaw or obvious drawback. It can be ignored should the player and gamemaster choose to do so, or if it is maintained, a Shape Shifter or Advanced Shape Shifter can work to conceal or suppress the distinguishing characteristic entirely. Alternately, a canny Shape Shifter might find it a useful tool to add another layer of deception, presenting a Shape Shifted form with another Shape Shifter's

distinguishing characteristic displayed in an obvious fashion.

## Dangers of Shape Shifting

Though it is an amazingly versatile power, Shape Shifting comes with several notable drawbacks and vulnerabilities that can endanger its users. These dangers are present at all levels of the Shape Shifting power, but Shape Shifters with higher Endurance and Psyche Attributes will be better equipped to deal with them, and they are less of a threat to Advanced Shape Shifters. The Shape Shifter's personal condition while Shape Shifting can also increase the likelihood of one of these becoming a problem: a fatigued, injured Shape Shifter is more liable to fall into one of these traps than a well-rested one, and even an experienced Advanced Shape Shifter might slip up if goaded into a rage.

## Shape Shifting and Loss of Self

Generally, a Shape Shifter retains their core identity when changing form, unless for some reason the player and/or gamemaster decide that the alternate form is too bestial, alien, or dominant for the character's identity to remain intact. This might range from the new shape strongly influencing the Shape Shifter's personality and goals all the way to the new form completely subsuming the character's self entirely. The more powerful the assumed form's personality, the greater the risk to the Shape Shifter. It is for this reason that Psyche is an important secondary Attribute: maintaining the character's own identity—no matter how strange or different the brain is now shaped—is entirely based on Psyche.

Shape Shifting into specific other beings can even result in the assumed persona being so powerful as to overwhelm the character's Psyche and take over, if the desired form has a higher Psyche. This might even go so far as the Shape Shifter losing their real memory in favor

of a memory constructed out of what they think are appropriate memories for the new form, or simply paying no heed to the lack of a memory. In cases where a Shape Shifter does become lost into a new identity, the Shape Shifter does not gain any real memories of the intended being, and is not so much a copy of the original being, but a personality constructed out of the Shape Shifter's imagined or observed version of that identity. *For example, a Shape Shifter attempting to mimic someone as high in Psyche as Vala, may end up believing that they are her, rationalizing away any inconsistencies that might puncture that belief, though Vala herself would be highly suspicious and sensitive if her memory suddenly became patchy and inconsistent.*

## Artifact-based Shape Shifting vs. the Shape Shifting Power

Budget-conscious players may notice that with the 10-point "Confers Power on Wearer/Owner/User" quality (page 53 of the core rulebook) it's possible to purchase an item (artifact or creature) that grants an Alternate Form (a total of 11 points), gives Named & Numbered Alternate Forms (12 points total), or confers limited Shape-Shift (a bargain at 14 points). Compared to the price of buying the power itself, getting an Artifact or Creature to do all the work seems a no-brainer, with points galore to spare. However, this is not always the best option, for three important reasons.

**Not Backed by an Attribute:** Unlike a power, items stand on their own, and are independent items, self-sufficient and drawing power primarily from themselves. Unless they are intrinsic to a power, they are not backed by an Attribute the way a power is, and any powers conferred by an item can be attacked without directly attacking the player character. *For example, a Cantrip can more-than-likely successfully switch off an item-granted Shape Shift, though it might only give a moment's inconvenience to a proper Shape Shifter.* So to give an item the ability to oppose another Attribute for Shape Shifting purposes, the player should spend some points to give it Psyche, Psychic Defense, or other means of psychic presence, a considerably more expensive proposition, almost as expensive as the power itself.

**Vulnerable:** Items can be taken away or interfered with by others, making them less useful as the source of a player character's power. Mythology and folklore across the Gossamer worlds are full of tales of "shape shifters" who lost the item that conferred this power, sometimes becoming powerless and in others that item granting the power to the new possessor. If the item is a creature, then the owner is at the creature's whim as to whether the power will be conferred, and as stated above, creatures are more vulnerable to manipulation or coercion than are player characters.

**Limited:** The Shape Shift power conferred by items is fairly modest, ranging from a single alternate form, a small number of alternate forms, or limited Shape Shift. This repertoire of forms may be useful if the item's owner is dealing with known situations or environments, but once exposed to new challenges, they might not be as applicable. Unlike item-granted shape shifting, the powers offer a full range of abilities and qualities, making item-based Shape Shift an occasionally-useful ability, but nowhere near as universal or adaptable as the powers themselves.



When a Shape Shifter is lost into a new identity, it doesn't just affect the Shape Shifter's ability to control the new form, or to behave as desired. This sublimation also affects outside attempts to contact the Shape Shifter through magical means, such as through Icons. The one making the contact may find that something is strange and unfamiliar with the Shape Shifter, or may even be unable to make the contact. However, though a Shape Shifter may take on a radically-different form, a True Name is unchanged, unless it has been altered through Invocation. Allies may use the Invocation power as the sole means of reaching through the suppressed personality of an identity-lost Shape Shifter, and the True Name may even be used as a potential means of helping restore the Shape Shifter to their former self.

Another limitation imposed by the loss of identity is that of powers. In normal circumstances, the transformed form represents the continued consciousness and memory as the Shape Shifter's basic form, and as such, in the new form the Shape Shifter can use any powers they possess. If the transformed identity is distinct from the Shape Shifter's, and acts independently (a Doctor Jekyll and Mister Hyde situation), the Shape Shifter will not be able to use any of their normal powers while in the alternate form, restricted only to those powers inherent in the new form (but not ones granted by powers the Shape Shifter does not normally possess). These may be supernatural qualities that mimic powers such as Sorcery, etc., but are approximations of those powers and not backed by the universal forces that fuel those powers.

### Loss of Shape Shifting Ability

A Shape Shifter who suffers intense trauma may temporarily lose the power to shape shift. This could be due to direct and intense exposure to one of the great powers such as the Eidolon or the Umbra (which would enforce their cosmic ideology upon the Shape Shifter's form), being overloaded with magical energy, or from a near-fatal physical injury that brings the Shape Shifter to the brink of death. This loss of ability could also come as the result of an intense psychological trauma, invocation of the Shape Shifter's True Name to "stabilize" their personality and corporeal form, or even through some advanced and powerful Icon-based magic to restore or maintain the Shape Shifter into their basic form (a reversal of Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray*).

It could also be that some other restriction has been placed on the Shape Shifter, ranging from genetic alteration, brainwashing or loss of memory and identity, a chemical serum to neutralize the power, an enchantment, or even something as basic as enchanted bonds that will prevent the Shape Shifter from changing. Depending on the origin of these losses (whether

Gossamer world effects or "real", based on one of the powers or imparted by items), the method and time of recovery varies, with Psyche and Endurance taken into consideration. If taken from the Gossamer world where the power was neutralized, a Shape Shifter might recover instantly, or it might be a matter of days for the Shape Shifter to completely be back to normal.

In cases where the ability loss is more pronounced and not tied to the conditions on a particular Gossamer world, the gamemaster should determine what aspect of the power has been temporarily disabled: whether it is the knowledge and skill of Shape Shifting, the specific physical ability to transform, or both. Once this is known, the recovery should be based on this knowledge: if it is the psychological aspects of the power that are lost, the recovery should be based on the character's Psyche, and if the physical ability is suppressed for some reason, the time for recovery is based on Endurance. For Endurance, an Average Ranked character might take a year or more of recovery, with Superior taking a month, and Paragon Ranking recovering in a week. Higher Ranks will take even less time. In the case of Psyche-based recovery, the times provided for Endurance are also representative of the amount of retraining and psychological conditioning required to re-attain the mastery of form and shape required to utilize the power. Should the loss be based on both skill and actual physical ability, the time to recover should be based on both Psyche and Endurance, either added together or done in parallel, based on what course of rehabilitation (if any) is pursued.

### Power Rejection

Another potential risk of the Shape Shifting power is that overuse or extreme usage of the power may, at the gamemaster's discretion, tax the Shape Shifter's natural bodily defenses past the point of safety, causing the body's rejection of the power itself. This can also be the result of interactions between other powers the Shape Shifter may possess, with Eidolon Mastery or Umbra Mastery being the most likely candidates to cause problems for Shape Shifting. In situations like these, where some element of the Shape Shifter's being is rejecting the very ability to Shape Shift, the character may undergo a dramatic transformation or unintended consequence of the power, either inadvertently or when it is used. This could range from the Shape Shifter attempting to change form and suddenly being "overwritten" by the Eidolon's design, finding the new shape fixed and inflexible, or a transformation resulting in an Umbra-based corruption, with cancerous tumors boiling out from every muscle, fiber, and even cell, causing flesh to slough off or even disintegrate. Other types of rejection are also possible, with sorcery potentially supercharging the Shape Shifter's cells with

Gossamer world energy that cannot be controlled, potentially causing the Shape Shifter to mimic elements or energy states it is in contact with, while the True Name of the Shape Shifter could enforce a type of stasis where nothing can change, even new memories failing to form. This type of power loss should be extremely rare, and recovery would be based on the conditions by which it occurred, with the Shape Shifter's Endurance and Psyche Attributes as the guides to how quickly the Shape Shifter will recover and, eventually, be able to use the power again.

## Lesser Shape Shifting

### [15 Points]

The first tier of Shape Shifting allows the Shape Shifter to take on a single alternate form. This version of the power is the most common throughout the Gossamer worlds, giving birth to legends of all manner of were-creatures and skin-changers.

*Favored Attributes for Lesser Shape Shifting.* Endurance is the favored Attribute for Lesser Shape Shifting, as transforming requires considerable physical effort (no matter how effortless it may appear). Psyche is also important, enabling the Shape Shifter to maintain a sense of self while in the alternate form. Shape Shifters with low- or unranked Psyche Attributes frequently lose control when they change, becoming bestial or unthinking, or having their personalities change dramatically to that of the new form. High Ranks in Psyche allow the Shape Shifter to retain personality, intelligence, and keep goals consistent between forms.

### Lesser Shape Shifting Abilities

The following abilities are available to lesser Shape Shifters. However, some Shape Shifting traditions do not use this ability to the fullest, often with the Shape Shifters themselves unaware that there are further plateaus of the power. In these cases, the Shape Shifter will never progress beyond a single alternate form, no matter how experienced they become.

### Alternate Form

With Lesser Shape Shifting, the character is limited to a single alternate form, determined when the power is purchased. As described in "Distinguishing Characteristic" (above), the alternate form will have some visual element in common with the Shape Shifter, a distinguishing feature or characteristic that remains common in both forms. This can be disguised away, but

will revert whenever the Shape Shifter's concentration wavers, if the Shape Shifter is aware of the distinguishing characteristic at all.

Usually, this alternate form is roughly the character's bodily mass, but this is not a requirement. If desired, the alternate form can be up to three times the character's normal size, or it can be as small as a fifth of the character's size. For example, a fairly burly humanoid character could Shape Shift into a good-sized bear, and a more petite character could transform into something the size of a large house cat. The excess mass is shed or gained as cells multiply, the more in either direction the more taxing on Endurance the transformation is.

It takes roughly a minute for a Shape Shifter to transform from one shape to another; less for forms that are closer to the original shape, and the higher the character's Endurance, the quicker. The Shape Shifter will remain in the alternate form for as long as desired or until going to sleep, at which point the Shape Shifter's normal form will reassert itself. In death, the Shape Shifter reverts to their original form.

In some cases, a Lesser Shape Shifter may have conditions attached to the transformation, such as an astrological phase, an emotional condition, or some other compulsion. The alternate form may even be lost when those particular conditions are no longer met, or another condition comes to pass. These conditions are either psychological or are unique to the Gossamer world the character gained the power in: on other Gossamer worlds or upon the Grand Stair the power can be used as desired (though the character may not realize this initially). *For example, when on the Gossamer world of their origin, a man cursed to be a werewolf may only be able to transform during certain phases of the moon, or a mild-mannered scientist may only transform when enraged, though once exposed to the world of the Grand Stair, they may be able to assume their alternate forms at will, perhaps even in a more desirable and controlled fashion.*

### Partial Transformation

With practice and concentration, a character with Lesser Shape Shifting can transform partway between the normal form and the alternate form in some minor fashion, such as assuming a single limb, eyes, teeth, or growing scales or fur to match the other form. This takes considerable effort and cannot be maintained indefinitely, requiring the Shape Shifter's utmost concentration. Any parts of the body will gain any special properties the transformed body part may possess, such as claws, night vision, winged flight, etc., within the range of the Shape Shifter's normal abilities and limitations in that alternate form.



## Shape Shifting [35 Points]

If your character already possesses Lesser Shape Shifting, the cost for Shape Shifting is 20 points.

This version of the power allows the Shape Shifter to assume a variety of bodily types and transformational abilities, though it is still hindered by some unique drawbacks.

*Favored Attributes for Shape Shifting.* Endurance is the favored Attribute for Shape Shifting, considering that most of the powers concern manipulating one's physical form. Psyche is nearly as important, both for the precise concentration required and to maintain the core sense of self even when assuming radically different psychologies inherent to the forms being assumed.

### Limitations of Shape Shifting

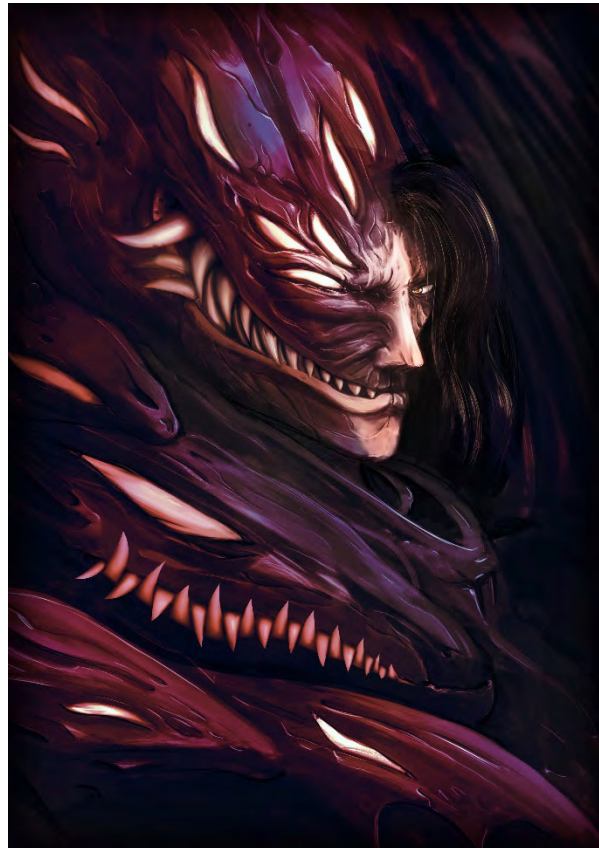
A Shape Shifter has the limitations described in Lesser Shape Shifting, including: a distinguishing characteristic; the necessity to maintain a corporeal being (no clouds of mist or swarms of bees); the same range of body mass variance; and finally, the threat of loss of self. Additionally, the Shape Shifter is not entirely free to assume any new form at will, as they must be learned, as described below.

### Learning New Shapes

A Lesser Shape Shifter is limited to a single alternate form, but at this level of the power the Shape Shifter can develop a repertoire of different shapes, a veritable wardrobe suited for a variety of situations. Generally, a Shape Shifter needs a good image or description of the intended shape: the more exact and detailed, the better. With a few days of practice and experimentation, the Shape Shifter can assume the new form almost as quickly as a more familiar form. If this power is purchased during the character creation process, the character can be assumed to have a half-dozen or so shapes they are

familiar with and can assume quickly. If this ability is gained as an improvement of the Lesser Shape Shifting power, the Shape Shifter's repertoire of forms must be learned while in the course of play, or developed between sessions if time allows.

The number of forms a Shape Shifter can assume in this fashion should be limited by Psyche: the higher the Psyche, the more forms can be assumed. A good rule of thumb might be to double this amount per level of the character's Psyche starting at around six shapes at Average Rank. At Superior Rank, the Shape Shifter would know a dozen, and at Paragon Rank perhaps two dozen.



Additional Ranks would improve the maximum number accordingly, so that the Shape Shifter with the highest-Ranked Psyche would potentially have hundreds of potential shapes memorized and ready to use.

### Shape Shifting Abilities

In addition to the abilities possessed by Lesser Shape Shifting, the following abilities are available to all Shape Shifters, regardless of whether these abilities are utilized.

### Alternate Forms

Most Shape Shifters maintain a repertoire of alternate forms they're comfortable with. These take less time to shift into, are generally more comfortable, and are often the first ones the Shape Shifter will attempt to assume.

- **Basic Form.** Every Shape Shifter has a basic form, the body they were born inhabiting, representative of race or species. If a Shape Shifter is inadvertently rendered unconscious or subjected to massive systemic shock, the Shape Shifter returns to this basic form. This is the easiest form for the Shape Shifter to return to when in another form, and is usually the most comfortable. Any magical means of

revealing a Shape Shifter's true form will reveal this basic form. The Shape Shifter does not need to draw on any reserve of Endurance or Psyche to remain in this basic form, and can stay here indefinitely. If the Shape Shifter dies, this is the form they will return to *post mortem*.

- **Animal Form.** Assuming animal forms is a popular starting point for Shape Shifters because of ease of access, proximity, or even a spiritual affinity. For many Shape Shifters it is easy to study animals and learn fine points of their appearance and behavior, mimicking these perfectly. An animal form transformation is almost as easy to take on as the Shape Shifter's basic form, especially if the Shape Shifter feels a spiritual affinity for the animal, whether as a totemic relation or as casual as a preference. Claws, scales, feathers, tough hide, carapace, fins, hooves, tails, even wings are all easy to assume, and a character with at least Paragon Rank in Strength will be able to fly.

## Impromptu Shape Shifting

If desired, a Shape Shifter can perform immediate feats of limited Shape Shifting, such as mirroring the face of someone the Shape Shifter is face-to-face with, or even altering body shape while grappling a foe. This type of rapid changing is highly exhausting and requires considerable force of will, draining Endurance and Psyche in proportion to the severity of the change being attempted. Subtle changes, such as extending limbs, etc. are relatively minor, while manifesting new qualities such as slippery skin, glowing eyes, etc. can be more exhausting and are difficult to do while distracted.

## Disguise

Shape Shifters can use this power to make minor cosmetic changes to conceal their true identity. These methods include altering height, build, coloration, facial features, hair length, voice, and any other appropriate features. Skin patterning or textures are within the realm of this ability, but specific elements like tattoos or specific scars are sometimes difficult to master, and the relative success is based off the Shape Shifter's Psyche. This ability cannot be used reliably to replicate another specific being or even a radically different species: it is more a case of the Shape Shifter attempting to look less like oneself. The further from the Shape Shifter's natural form the disguise is, the more difficult it is to maintain.

## Partial Shape Shifting.

A Shape Shifter is able to change parts of appearance or physical form without transforming the entire body, such as shifting facial features, lengthening ears, growing claws or fangs, cosmetic changes (recoloring skin,

hair/fur, eye, hide, scales, etc.), lengthening limbs, growing horns, etc. Flesh is quick to manipulate, while bone takes longer and is more taxing. This can be done quickly and is easier the higher the Shape Shifter's Endurance Attribute. These characteristics will remain as long as desired, or until the Shape Shifter has lost consciousness or suffered trauma sufficient enough to cause complete loss of control.

## Quickened Healing.

By concentrating on an injured body part, a Shape Shifter can close open wounds, repair bruised tissue, alleviate contusions, mend broken bones, etc., restoring the body to its unwounded, healthy state. The more complex or severe the injury, the longer it takes: quickly closing a light wound can be done during a brief lull in the midst of combat, but healing a pierced lung or regenerating damaged nerves or broken bones can take minutes or even hours. Similarly, a Shape Shifter can use the power to return to health when sickened, poisoned, diseased, irradiated, etc., though these changes are more subtle and require an amount of time related to the severity of the condition. A hangover, for example, would be relatively quick to deal with, while something as prevalent and serious such as radiation poisoning could take hours or even days to be rid of.

The loss of a significant portion of one's anatomy, such as an eye or limb, cannot be permanently replaced with Shape Shifting, and will revert to the injured or missing state when the Shape Shifter's concentration lapses. The Endurance Attribute governs "true" regeneration, and any forms the Shape Shifter takes in the meantime will have the same missing element or impediment. If the missing body part does not heal, it may become a permanent characteristic, as described in "Distinguishing Features", prior.

## Bodily Control

The Shape Shifter can use precise control over normal bodily processes and organs to modify them to suit a desired function. Body temperature can be raised or lowered outside normal tolerances, muscles can be made more elastic or hardened, vision improved, heart rate lowered to a near-stop or heightened to flood the body with adrenalin. The nervous system can be suppressed to desensitize the body against pain, allowing the Shape Shifter to act despite agony from wounds. Breathing can be slowed, digestion sped, the contents of the stomach "quarantined" to prevent poison from entering the body, circulation inhibited or shut off to stave off bleeding, and any number of other small internal changes that might not be immediately visible to others. Additionally, the Shape Shifter's metabolism can be quickened to hasten the healing process, though short bursts are of less use



than longer healing efforts. The Shape Shifter can do these quickly, at a rate based on Endurance. An Average-Ranked Endurance would take a minute or so, Superior or Paragon much less, and high-Ranked Endurance can make these changes almost instantaneous.

## Instinctual Shape Shifting

Not all Shape Shifting requires guided transformation. Shape Shifters are able to let their bodies transform instinctually in response to external stimuli, stresses, or threats. This process must be unconscious and without any deliberate interference from the Shape Shifter, and depending on how rapid or extreme the Shape Shifting is, the Shape Shifter may even lose consciousness or have limited awareness of what their body is actually doing. To use this ability, the player must announce that the Shape Shifter is going into instinctual Shape Shifting, and the gamemaster will dictate what effects this has.

Following are a variety of ways a Shape Shifter's body may transform entirely by instinct:

- A mortally wounded Shape Shifter will go into near-catatonia, shutting down major functions to devote all energy to recovery and healing. The heart rate slows to less than a beat per minute, breathing becomes near-imperceptible, and brain activity will appear to have flat-lined. This also serves as a form of "playing dead," making the Shape Shifter seem deceased to all but the most careful scrutiny.
- When poisoned, infected, diseased, or irradiated, the Shape Shifter's body will attempt to repel any foreign elements, internal systems reconfiguring and rearranging to defend against and/or evict any intrusive toxins. The Shape Shifter may sweat, vomit, or otherwise excrete the toxins until the body is clear. This form of Shape Shifting is extremely taxing to Endurance, and can be mildly disgusting to behold, if not even dangerous to be around should the contagion be still viable and active.
- A Shape Shifter deprived of oxygen will reduce the body's reliance on oxygen, storing any oxygen already in the body (lungs, blood cells, etc.), and using far less oxygen than normal. This will inevitably send the Shape Shifter into a comatose state to reduce the body's use of oxygen, so a Shape Shifter wishing to remain conscious may need to fight this reflex.

Other abilities are dependent on circumstances, and should be determined by the gamemaster.

An obvious danger of involuntary or instinctual Shape Shifting is that the transformation is out of the Shape Shifter's control, and may not result in a desired state.

The changes, as well, could go beyond the immediate response required, and send the Shape Shifter's form along an unwanted line. For example, in a fight, the Shape Shifter may resort to an armored, clawed form better suited for a scrap, but if wounded severely, the body may resort to bestial behavior, and a low-Psyche Shape Shifter's personality may be utterly subsumed in the new form. Rather than seeking medical attention, the out-of-control bestial Shape Shifter might retreat somewhere to lick its wounds, angrily lashing out at any who try to help it. Only through some outside intervention or when it falls asleep will the Shape Shifter gain control.

## Advanced Shape Shifting

### [65 Points]

If your character already possesses Shape Shifting, the cost for Advanced Shape Shifting is 30 points.

Advanced Shape Shifting is the most versatile of the three levels of the power described thus far, giving the Shape Shifter amazing malleable abilities, a veritable protean form able to assume an incredible variety of shapes, specific beings, and even more unique aspects. This level of the power incorporates the abilities of Lesser Shape Shifting and Shape Shifting, though the weaknesses and drawbacks are much less of a limitation.

*Favored Attributes for Advanced Shape Shifting.* Endurance is the primary attribute for Advanced Shape Shifting, allowing the Advanced Shape Shifter the vitality and resilience required to handle the intense changes to physiology and anatomy. Psyche is almost as important, letting the Advanced Shape Shifter maintain a continual sense of self while in radically different forms.

### Advanced Shape Shifting Abilities

In addition to the abilities conferred by Lesser Shape Shifting and Shape Shifting, a character with Advanced Shape Shifting gains the abilities following, and is not limited by some of the limitations of those prior versions.

### Higher Form

One of the most impressive abilities the Advanced Shape Shifter can manifest is the ability to shift into a so-called "Higher Form", combining the Shape Shifting ability with another of the powers. These hybrid forms are almost akin to avatars, and while in these forms, the Advanced Shape Shifter may use the relevant power almost instinctually, potentially at a much higher range of



ability, having shed the human aspect that limited the power's ability to manifest.

**To transform into a Higher Form truly related to a power, the Advanced Shape Shifter must possess that power, without exception.** Thus, to transform into Umbral Form, an Advanced Shape Shifter must be an Umbra Master. Though it is possible to attempt to assume one of these forms without possessing the power itself, the Advanced Shape Shifter is placed at tremendous risk, almost assuredly losing identity to the power itself, being guided by forces beyond control or even comprehension.

The most common of these forms are:

**Eidolon Form:** All matter, living or otherwise, is organized along some pattern, a characteristic of the influence of the Eidolon. Advanced Shape Shifters who are also Eidolon Masters can evoke its power to create an idealized, perfect form, a Platonic ideal of the character's inner nature. This form is eerie to behold, an artificial, elevated purity of appearance that has lost all of the quirks and distinguishing marks that make up an individual's appearance. Instead, the Eidolon Form is eerily blank, almost an abstract of the character's appearance, stark and minimal. It may be taller than the character, thinner, more streamlined, facial features almost rudimentary. The Eidolon Form may not even appear human, evoking thoughts of angels to those who behold it. While in this form, the Advanced Shape Shifter is nearly impervious to any form of corruption, decay, or any of the more insidious influences of the Umbra. Psychologically, Advanced Shape Shifters in Eidolon Form glimpse reality at an elevated, abstract level in which every concept is in its purest and most uncompromised state. As such, this form is often strict and uncompromising, entertaining only absolutes in thought and intent. The disadvantages of an Eidolon Form are that it is highly conspicuous, and while some will find peace and comfort in the presence of unearthly perfection, others find its presence intimidating or even terrifying.

**Umbral Form:** While the roiling, destabilizing nature of the Umbra is present in throughout all of reality to some degree, it is rare that it manifests strongly in living beings. Inevitably, life is about growth along proscribed patterns, about genetic continuance, cells lining up in a particular fashion as dictated by heredity. As such, an Advanced Shape Shifter who assumes an Umbral Form is causing a genetic riot, rebelling against every governing principle that life operates under. An Umbral Form is a chaotic one, unpredictable and different each time it is assumed. Parts of the Advanced Shape Shifter's body may

seem to lose cohesion, and organs, muscle, and skeletal systems may collapse or even mutate spontaneously. To most beings, this form is horrific, akin to some sort of living death or total entropy. While in this form, the Advanced Shape Shifter's thoughts are heavily influenced by the Umbra, and may shift towards fatalistic at a primal level, possibly so bleak that any normal line of thought becomes impossible. The disadvantages of this form are obvious, but the advantages are many: the Advanced Shape Shifter is highly resistant to injury, as cells are already acclimated to any destructive force, and in this form the Advanced Shape Shifter can destabilize order at a tremendous level simply by being present. Doors fall off their hinges, magical wards will come undone, protective fields and guards are unraveled, and chains warp and fall away. An Advanced Shape Shifter suffering from a disease, infection, toxin, or some other baleful effect will find that the Umbral Form serves as a type of therapy, destroying any lesser invaders. Even a possessing spirit may not be able to survive the shift into Umbral Form.

**Living Icon:** The Advanced Shape Shifter becomes an avatar of themselves, a power-charged representation of their essential self. This outré combination of Wrioting and Shape Shifting allows the Advanced Shape Shifter to focus on their individual Icon in the same fashion they would to contact another individual, aligning their body and mind into congruence with the image depicted. This creates a sympathetic loop in which the Advanced Shape Shifter becomes bolstered by the expression depicted on the Icon, supercharged with energy and becoming, in effect, a living Icon. While in this state, the Advanced Shape Shifter shakes off the effects of any potential curses or mind-altering states (such as amnesia, madness, psychological duress, hypnosis, etc.) and can even use the process to refute any curses that may hang upon the Advanced Shape Shifter, enabling a Psyche vs. Psyche conflict with the one who created the condition. The living Icon can easily block any incoming Icon-based communication, and becomes aware of any one of their Icons that is active and visible, essentially being able to spy through it.

**Additional Powers** have been presented for use with *Lords of Gossamer & Shadow*, such as Empathy, Blessings & Curses, and others. Should the gamemaster and player of an Advanced Shape Shifter wish to introduce forms related to these powers, it is advised that the nature and scope of these manifestations be determined, in collaboration, in the course of play, perhaps as the result of experimentation or desperation.

## Size Change

At the advanced level of Shape Shifting, the Advanced Shape Shifter is no longer bound to the prior limits of size

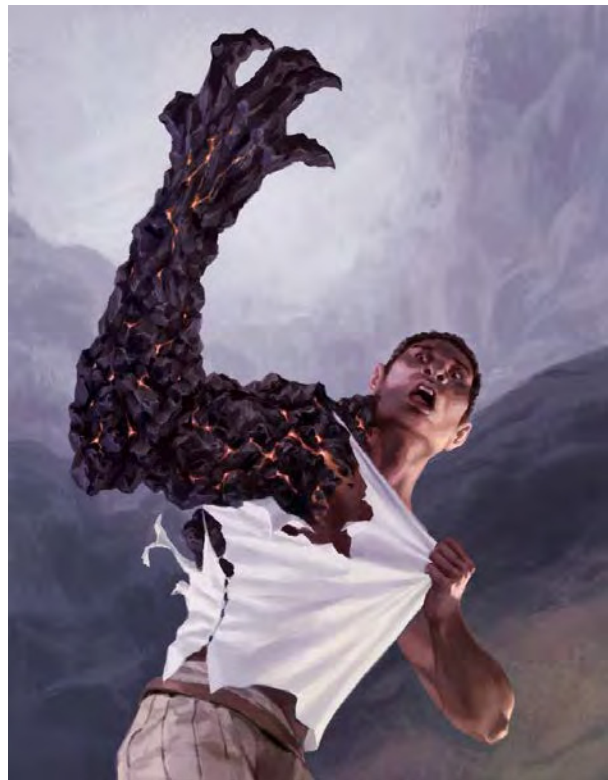
and mass. The Advanced Shape Shifter can transform into something as small as a cat, or as huge as an elephant, though the further from the Advanced Shape Shifter's normal bodily mass the transformation is, the more taxing it becomes, drawing on both Endurance and Psyche. Endurance is taxed as the Advanced Shape Shifter essentially grows new bodily mass (or sheds it) and expands existing corporeal mass (or contracts it), while the process requires an expenditure of Psyche to control the difficult process. Some Advanced Shape Shifters attempt to offset this drain by absorbing or purging the desired amount of mass to reach the ideal size (for example, eating copiously or purging unwanted body mass). The Internal Transformation ability (described above) can come in handy with this, letting the Advanced Shape Shifter form digestive organs capable of turning random bits of matter into equivalent bodily mass in a hurry. The speed of the change is also dependent on how radically different in scale it is from the Advanced Shape Shifter's normal size, with greater differences taking much longer to achieve and return from.

### Aura Shape Shifting

Most living beings possess auras, energetic manifestations of their intrinsic life-force, whether bioelectric, radiation, or spiritual energy bodies, or some combination of these elements. As described in the core rulebook on page 18, characters with high Ranks in Psyche can perceive these auras, and some magical beings can perceive them through normal or extra-sensory abilities. An Advanced Shape Shifter can present an altered psychic presence, shifting the body's natural aura to become unrecognizable. The Advanced Shape Shifter can choose to make that aura resemble that of another living being such as a plant or animal, a supernatural being, or may even appear as another specific entity known to the Advanced Shape Shifter. It is also possible to "dim" one's natural aura to appear less powerful (presenting oneself as having a lower Psyche), though it is difficult to convincingly fake a higher Rank in Psyche. Seeing through the ruse is best accomplished through a high-Ranked Psyche, a well-timed cantrip or spell, or perhaps through the use of Invocation or the Advanced Shape Shifter's own Icon.

### Internal Reorganization

The Advanced Shape Shifter can reorganize internal organs such as heart, lungs, intestines, and even the brain to move them to unexpected and better-defended locations, sheathe them in layers of internal muscle and bone, or even switch places. This can also be extended to



duplicating these organs so they are redundant, such as growing a hindbrain at the base of the spine, a second heart to better regulate blood flow, or additional liver and kidneys to better purify the blood. In some cases, the Advanced Shape Shifter may even utilize these organs in altogether new fashions, to accommodate loss of limbs or organs. An enterprising Advanced Shape Shifter might also use this ability to open an additional eye in the forehead, a fanged mouth on the palm of the hand, or a gaping maw leading directly into the stomach.

Another less common use of this ability is to accommodate items within the Advanced Shape Shifter's body, creating a safe space that is otherwise invisible to visible means of detection. Thus, an Advanced Shape Shifter may conceal a weapon or valuable item such as an Icon or small Artifact within their person, sheathing it beneath flesh until it is needed. Unless some means of telepathic control exists to operate the item, it cannot be used while so concealed. Icons, for example, usually must be visible to be utilized fully, and thus an Icon hidden beneath the flesh cannot be used to contact the person depicted.

### Creatures of Blood

An Advanced Shape Shifter can create creatures of "blood", releasing a small quantity of blood and shaping

it through the still-living bond, the fluid forming into a desired shape. This shape can be a spider, a small bird, a fly, or something else, its size limited only by how much the Advanced Shape Shifter is willing to bestow to it. The larger it is, the harder and more substantial, giving it independence and bestowing upon it a semblance of form and function. This creature becomes a unique living being, capable of living apart from the Advanced Shape Shifter for a period of time based on the Endurance of its "parent", with Average or Superior Ranked creatures lasting hours or days, and Paragon or Higher-Ranked creatures surviving independently for weeks, months, or even years. The creature can be sent as a messenger, or even used as a vector for disease, magic, or some other condition the Advanced Shape Shifter wishes to bestow. It will have the basic physical capabilities of a creature of its type, though exotic abilities such as venom are only an extension of the Advanced Shape Shifter's body and may not work as desired.

The Advanced Shape Shifter is not limited to blood for this ability, though it is the most readily available substance. Tears, sweat, or bile can be so transformed and used, and a small voodoo-style doll might be created out of hair, skin, or even cuticles.

### **Bodily Autonomy**

In addition to being able to create minor creatures from its own blood, an Advanced Shape Shifter can sever or otherwise detach a limb or other body part and allow it to act independently, surviving apart from the main body for a period of time. Due to the extreme concentration this requires, the capabilities of such detached organs are limited to those the bodily part normally possesses, and the autonomous portion of the body cannot generally use powers or even manifest Attributes to the fullest degree.

With this ability, an Advanced Shape Shifter can detach a hand and send it crawling, spider-wise, away. With a little bit of concentration, the Advanced Shape Shifter can also pluck an eye and leave it hidden in a crevasse somewhere, attuning the nerves to store visual information rather than pass it along, to be later absorbed when the eye is reattached. However, the Advanced Shape Shifter cannot decide later to have the hand independently grow wings and fly, or to give the eye spider legs to walk upon, or cause such a detached part to sprout a scorpion tail to sting foes. If these features are desired, they must be created to be a part of the organ or body part before it is detached. Similarly, a detached body part can be enchanted or otherwise invested with magic properties, or even turned into an Artifact or Creature (whichever is more appropriate). Some of these items litter the Gossamer worlds, powerful relics that were once body parts belonging to gods, saints, or arch-wizards.

The body part can remain viable and alive for a considerable amount of time, based on the Advanced Shape Shifter's Endurance, with a high-Rank making the body part virtually immortal, perhaps even outliving the Advanced Shape Shifter! While a body part is so detached, the Advanced Shape Shifter cannot permanently regenerate the part that has been lost: such replacement is temporary and highly-taxing, and will revert whenever the Advanced Shape Shifter's concentration lapses.

Another popular use for this ability is for the Advanced Shape Shifter to store vital organs in safe places, such as canopic jars, magically-warded casks, or even in something akin to a phylactery. In these cases, the Advanced Shape Shifter is risking the destruction of this detached organ. While it is separate, the Advanced Shape Shifter does not regrow the missing organ, and instead uses other organs or sheer life-vitality to remain active and functional. This separation can go on for a period of time equivalent to the Advanced Shape Shifter's Endurance: with Average Ranked Endurances only allowing a few minutes of separation, Superior Ranked lasting for several hours, and Paragon for days. An Advanced Shape Shifter with a higher-Ranked Endurance can survive for weeks or even (in extraordinary cases) months apart from the organs. If the Advanced Shape Shifter wishes to maintain this separation, it will be periodically necessary to return the organ to within the body before the separation can be continued.

When reunited, the autonomous body portion can be reattached or rejoined instantaneously, restoring the Advanced Shape Shifter's body to wholeness. If the body part was modified before separation (wings, legs, stingers, etc.) then these remain and can be re-absorbed into the Advanced Shape Shifter's body, or left intact. If for some reason another being attempts to attach the detached organ or body part to their own anatomy, the gamemaster should determine what happens, whether it results in rejection, assimilation, strange needs, or the new body part attempting to take over the new host entirely, perhaps requiring an Endurance vs. Endurance (or Psyche) battle!

If an independent bodily organ is destroyed, the Advanced Shape Shifter suffers the shock of the injury as if it were directly upon them. This can be potentially fatal, or at the very least, highly disadvantageous and painful, forcing the Advanced Shape Shifter to adjust to the loss and to regenerate to replace the missing organ.

Another potential danger of this ability is that the autonomous body part lacks many of the defenses its



original body possessed, and may be influenced by outside forces or potentially turned against its owner. *For example, a severed hand influenced by a malevolent spirit may become “bad” and attack its former host, indulging in eye-gouges, potential traps, or even operating firearms.*

## Exalted Shape Shifting

### [85 Points]

The final and most powerful tier of Shape Shifting allows the Exalted Shape Shifter an enormous range of abilities, an utter plasticity of form guided only by will and imagination. This level of the power is extraordinarily rare, and may be reserved for beings akin to gods.

*Favored Attributes for Exalted Shape Shifting.* As with the less-powerful levels of the power, Psyche and Endurance are dominant, but the other two Attributes become more valuable here, as the new forms become more extraordinary and challenging to support solely through the power itself.

### Exalted Shape Shifting Abilities

As prior, the Exalted Shape Shifter has all of the abilities conferred with the lesser versions of the power. The abilities specific to Exalted Shape Shifting are often idiosyncratic, with an Exalted Shape Shifter specializing in one or more, but the entire range is still possible.

### Flock Transformation

An Exalted Shape Shifter can transform from one being into a “flock” of smaller, identical beings. This “flock” can range from a swarm of insects, a pack of rats, a mass of worms, an unkindness of ravens, a knot of serpents, etc. (incidentally presenting the gamemaster with a rich opportunity to introduce exotic collective nouns). The elements of the flock move together and share consciousness, and must stay within close range of one another. Straying too far apart while so distributed can be incredibly taxing for the Exalted Shape Shifter, and it requires a high Psyche to maintain control over all of the individual beings within the flock.

Killing one part of the flock is like harming the body of a single entity: the pain is shared throughout the entire flock, but unlike a single being, the flock will remain alive so long as one portion of it is intact. Outright destroying a portion of an Exalted Shape Shifter while in flock form can cause permanent damage, and only an Exalted Shifter with a high Endurance can easily shrug off such

damage. Even in these cases, an Exalted Shape Shifter that has been injured seriously, or lost portions of the flock, will bear horrific injuries whenever transforming back into basic form, though this may be alleviated by the Regeneration ability (described below).

The Gorgon (from pages 146-147 of the core rulebook) is described as a group of creatures that shares a single mind. It may be that the Gorgon represents the ultimate, unfortunate fate of an Exalted Shape Shifter that lost control while transformed into a flock. Gossamer Lords encountering a Gorgon may recoil in surprise when it transforms into a single being in death.

### Regeneration

As discussed above, an Exalted Shape Shifter is capable of incredible feats of regeneration, restoring damaged or missing sections of anatomy, great and small. When so injured, the Exalted Shape Shifter can either focus efforts on this rapid healing, stimulating regrowth of tissue, bones, nerves, organs, etc. or can allow the body’s natural reactions to handle it automatically. Guided regeneration is incredibly quicker, but far more exhausting, draining the body’s reserves of energy and nutrients to build the complex structure that is a living body. For automatic regeneration, the Exalted Shape Shifter’s body simply begins regrowing the lost or damaged part on its own, spurring the body’s metabolism to a greater rate. An Exalted Shape Shifter will become ravenously hungry, thirsty, and need incredible amounts of sleep.

In the case of near-mortal trauma, an Exalted Shape Shifter may even go into a healing trance, hibernating for days or even weeks while the body returns to its intact shape. The amount of time this takes is in converse to the Endurance Rank, with high-Ranked characters going into such trances for days, Paragon taking weeks, Superior a matter of months, and Average Ranked characters potentially requiring longer while regenerating lost organs. The size and nature of the injury should also be taken into account for these times, at the gamemaster’s discretion.

### Elemental Chameleon

Any Shape Shifter can change their skin, coloration, or anatomy to appear to be made of something other than flesh, but the Exalted Shape Shifter can extend awareness through the body at the cellular level and set them to a state or sympathy that lets the cells duplicate any solid substance the body comes into contact with. Thus an Exalted Shape Shifter using this ability would be able to change portions of their body to mimic the qualities of wood, steel, glass, stone, shell, advanced polymers, or any other relatively stable substance. The material to be assumed must be solid and substantial, and the Exalted

Shape Shifter must be in contact with the desired substance for a few seconds or longer, based on its relative complexity and density. The above-mentioned substances or their equivalents are all suitable, while chemical reactions or physical phenomena (light, shadow, fire, etc.) are not, due to the lack of any anatomical or structural integrity when transforming.

Similarly, while it is possible to assume the form of fluids or gasses for a short time, for example, these forms are highly vulnerable to some forms of attack, and could dissipate or dissolve entirely, essentially ending the Exalted Shape Shifter's existence!

When using this ability, some or all of the Exalted Shape Shifter's body is transformed into the material, mimicking it in a fashion that allows it to retain its living quality, becoming living wood, living steel, living glass, etc., with internal structures also comprised of this material, functioning as if normal. While in one of these forms, some or all of the Exalted Shape Shifter's body will appear to be made of the substance, with all of the strengths and weaknesses of the material. Though the Exalted Shape Shifter's chameleon copy of the material is in fact essentially equal to the copied substance, it does not have any magical properties and may be inferior to Artifacts or Creatures. While injured in this state, the Exalted Shape Shifter cannot regenerate and must return to their basic form to heal. Clothing or worn items do not transform to accommodate the new material, though Artifacts created to change along with the Exalted Shape Shifter will do so.

Psyche is also important in this transformation. If the Exalted Shape Shifter's whole body changes, the brain may become potentially aligned in affinity with the new bodily substance, potentially altering the personality in favor of the new substance. This elemental copying is incredibly taxing on the Exalted Shape Shifter and this state can only be retained for an amount of time equal to the relative Endurance Attribute, with Average allowing only seconds, Superior at half a minute at best, Paragon a handful of minutes, and the highest-Ranks letting the state last up to an hour, at the most.

### Exalted Size Change

An Exalted Shape Shifter is able to assume forms in excess of the limitations described for Advanced Shape Shifting, and can shrink to the size of a fly, or grow to titanic sizes, such as that of a dragon or elephant. As with that level of the power, the Exalted Shape Shifter must shed or gain the excess mass through outside methods and extreme concentration, though the process can be learned and trained to be done relatively quickly, in a span of seconds if uninterrupted or given enough



motivation. The quicker the change, the more taxing it is. While in this form the Exalted Shape Shifter might create additional muscle mass to simulate Ranks in Strength, or change internal organs and body tissue to gain the benefits of a greater-Ranked Endurance, but Warfare remains unchanged and cannot be duplicated through any alteration of form or scale.

### Permanent Transformation

A last and incredible ability conferred by Exalted Shape Shifting is permanent transformation. Much slower than all of the normal modes of Shape Shifting, this allows the Exalted Shape Shifter to make permanent and guided changes to their coloration, facial features, hair color and texture, height, weight, anatomy, and even gender, essentially changing the Exalted Shape Shifter's basic form to a new one. It can be even more profound, letting the Exalted Shape Shifter transform into a different species entirely. Initially, this change is limited to the relative size of the Exalted Shape Shifter, and as it progresses, additional body weight is shed or gained through natural and enhanced processes. The new form does not come with any additional new abilities other than those that would be natural to the new form or species, and these abilities are limited in efficacy to the Gossamer world they are intrinsic to.

Depending on the difference between the desired appearance and the Exalted Shape Shifter's innate form,



the process takes could take days, weeks, or even months, with Psyche and Endurance considered equally: Psyche for the deliberate alteration of the personal self-image to the desired one, and Endurance to actually change the body to suit the inner transformation. This ability may be interrupted by significant trauma or intervention of a countering power (Eidolon, Umbra, Invocation, Wrighting, etc.), but it can also be quickened by the Exalted Shape Shifter if they are willing to continually transform into the desired shape “temporarily”, using that outward appearance as a template for the body to eventually stabilize into.

## Shape Shifting and the Other Powers

Because Shape Shifting is a late entry to the canonical roster of powers in *Lords of Gossamer & Shadow*, the gamemaster may desire guidance as to how it relates to the other powers. It is impossible to consider a case-by-case basis covering each and every ability provided by each power and how it interacts with Shape Shifting, but provided below are some high-level guidelines.

**Warden of the Grand Stair:** The Grand Stair recognizes a Shape Shifter, no matter whatever form they take, and if that Shape Shifter is also a walker of its expanses and steps, then they will pass unhindered. A Shape Shifter who is also attuned to the Grand Stair and wishes to walk anonymously on a particular Gossamer world can attune to a Door by touching it, allowing the body to transform into the likeness of a generic resident of that Gossamer world. The Shape Shifter can then pass through into that world anonymously, appearing as one of its denizens in the vicinity of the Door. This is, of course, limited by the Shape Shifter’s ability, as too-dramatic transformations may be too difficult. This ability only lasts in the Grand Stair for a few moments, and if the Shape Shifter steps away from the Door, the transformed shape fades almost instantaneously. This ability does not turn the Shape Shifter into a specific being, merely a representative type, and has no effect on clothing, gear, or other accoutrements. It is also an

elective ability, and the Shape Shifter can choose to enter a Gossamer world without changing.

**Eidolon Mastery:** The rigid discipline of the Eidolon is almost antithetical to the focus of the Shape Shifting ability, and as a result, the powers may be at odds. A character with both of these powers will be pulled in opposite directions, between rigid order and between

fluid adaptability. For any but Advanced Shape Shifters, using Eidolon and Shape Shifting at the same time might prove difficult, with the Eidolon enforcing a single archetypal idealized form upon the Shape Shifter’s body rather than allowing for flexible transformation. In a more positive fashion, the Eidolon might be used to rid the Shape Shifter of any negative conditions incurred by out-of-control Shape Shifting, allowing a quick (or even immediate) return to the pristine “basic” form.

**Umbra Mastery:** The opposition between Shape Shifting and Eidolon Mastery is an obvious one and easy to grasp, but the tension between Umbra Mastery and the same power is more subtle, and at times the powers can work in tandem. The Umbra Mastery abilities of Personal Transformation (as described on pages 31-32 of the core rulebook) offer some of the same benefits as Shape Shifting, and a character with both of these powers may select which of them is more desirable to achieve a specific goal. Ultimately, however, the primary focus of the Shape Shifting power is about regeneration and renewal, adaptation and transformation to new and more suitable states, while the Umbra evokes a continual slide downward and into entropy. If Shape Shifting were the manifestation of a divine principle or grander universal force, this would prove complicating, but to a character with both Umbra Mastery and Shape Shifting, it’s just a case of different-but-similar tools in the arsenal.

**Wrighting:** Icons can see through most disguises, and using an Icon against Shape Shifting is no different. If an Icon is made of a Shape Shifter’s alternate form, the user of the Icon will still be able to reach the intended target, though the Icon’s user will initially see the Shape Shifter in their true form, rather than in the form they are depicted as. However, a Wright can potentially create “trick” Icons, where an Icon appears to be one character but is actually the Shape Shifter mimicking that character. This way, when the Icon is used, the Shape Shifter will be contacted rather than the subject depicted on the Icon. Another ruse is to create “incognito” Icons of a Shape Shifter, where the image depicted does not match the Shape Shifter’s normal appearance. This illusion only lasts until contact is made, when the Shape Shifter’s true identity is revealed to the Icon user. In either case, a Shape Shifter who is also a Wright can sense when one of these deceptive Icons is being used to reach them, and may alter their appearance to suit the incoming contact.

**Invocation:** No matter how different a Shape Shifter appears, the True Name is unchanged, and an Invoker may even be able to utilize the ability to force the Shape Shifter to appear in their basic form if a Psychic conflict is successful. A Shape Shifter with the Invocation power can potentially focus on their own True Name and use it



as a beacon, a means of shrugging off a too-powerful personality that has imposed itself over the Shape Shifter (perhaps through transforming into a far more powerful presence), or for ridding the Shape Shifter's body of negative and undesirable consequences of Shape Shifting, much in the same way the Eidolon can be used. An Advanced Shape Shifter who is also an Invoker may be able to change their True Name temporarily, or for longer if considerable effort is expended.

following suggestions are made. The gamemaster should adjust points to accommodate these new powers, as desired.

**Ayasha:** Shape Shifting

**Bastiano:** Shape Shifting

**Dayle:** Lesser Shape Shifting, her alternate form a silver cat-like amphibian.

**Mowbray:** Advanced Shape Shifting

## Canonical Characters with Shape Shifting

If the gamemaster wishes to incorporate this power into those characters presented in the core rulebook, the

