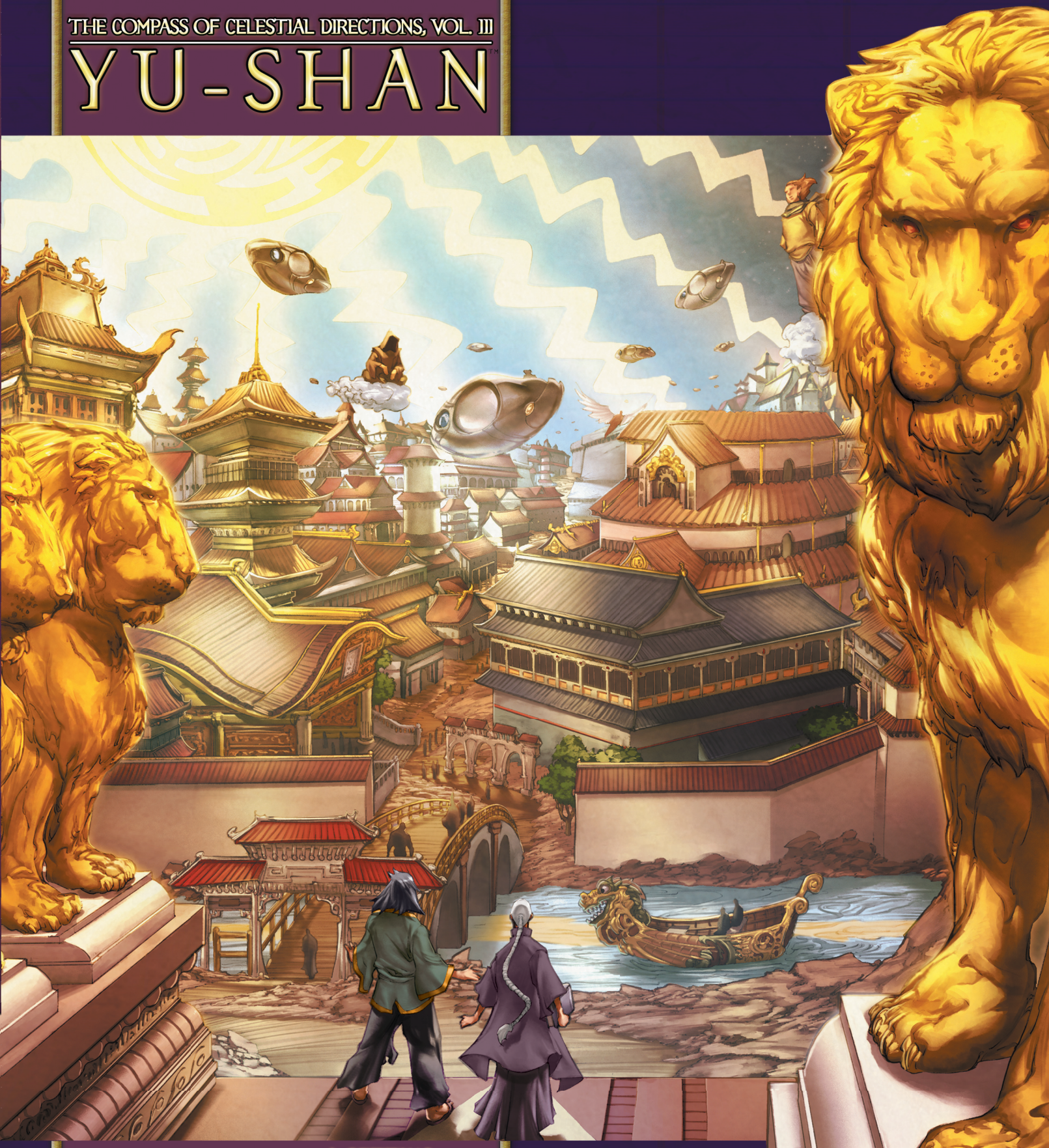
THE COMPASS OF CELESTIAL DIRECTIONS, VOL. III

YU-SHAN



A SETTING BOOK FOR

EXALTED SECOND EDITION

Morgan Hillan (order #910970)

The third of five books dedicated to the supernatural locales of the **Exalted** setting, this supplement focuses on the Celestial City of Yu-Shan, home of the gods. Built by the Primordials as a refuge in which they might enjoy the Games of Divinity at their leisure while their subordinates tended to Creation, Yu-Shan was taken by the gods as the spoils of the Primordial War. Home to a massive Celestial Bureaucracy rife with corruption, the continent-sized city has been the sole province of the Sidereal Exalted since the Usurpation. Will the return of the Solar Exalted upset the status quo of the Celestial City, for good or ill, or will the Chosen of the Maidens succeed in maintaining their monopoly on the resources of Heaven?

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YU-SHAN™

By Alan Alexander, Eric Brennan, Genevieve Cogman and Stephen Lea Sheppard

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YU-SHAN™

Table of Contents

Introduction	4
Chapter One: A History of Yu-Shan	8
Chapter Two: Life in the Celestial City	23
Chapter Three: The Celestial Government	36
Chapter Four: The Celestial City	75
Chapter Five: The Roll of Celestial Gods	118

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INTRODUCTION

Glorious beyond measure, Yu-Shan houses the gods in eternal splendor, just as it did the Primordials before them. Home to the Incarnae and the many other Celestial deities, the Five Bureaus of the Celestial Hierarchy and, of course, the Games of Divinity, Yu-Shan stands today as the ultimate expression of how a metropolis should appear, just as it has since before the dawn of recorded history.

But time and circumstance have not been kind to Heaven and its spirits. Though magnificent the Celestial City may still be, it rots from the inside, and the indolence and self-obsession of its inhabitants may yet lead to Creation's downfall. Have the Incarnae lost themselves totally to their addiction, or are they entrapped? Will the returning Lawgivers return Heaven to greatness, or will they judge it beyond saving?

How to Use This Book

The Compass of Celestial Directions, Vol. III—Yu-Shan presents the Heaven of Creation as a fully playable setting for Exalted campaigns. Appropriate especially to Sidereal games, this book is equally applicable for games featuring the Solars. As the Age of Sorrows progresses, any Celestial Exalt who accomplishes goals of note will come under the scrutiny of the Celestial City.

Chapter One: A History of Yu-Shan looks at that which has transpired in the city of the gods from prehistory's end up until the present, including the God Wars between Terrestrial and Celestial Bureaucracies that followed in the wake of Balor's Crusade.

Chapter Two: Life in the Celestial City covers the lives of the Celestial gods, from basic issues such as timekeeping, economics and travel to the season-to-season

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lives of Yu-Shan's social classes, as well as the factions and societies that shape Heaven's political landscape from behind the scenes. It closes with a look at the Carnival of Meetings, where once each year during Calibration, the gods invite mortals to sample Heaven's wonders.

Chapter Three: The Celestial Government delves into Heaven's five bureaus, their roles, functioning, and internal politics, their strengths and weaknesses, and how they might manipulate the Exalted of Creation or be manipulated in turn. It also covers Heaven's laws and law enforcement.

Chapter Four: The Celestial City explores the geography of Yu-Shan, the finest city ever known, the headquarters of the Five Celestial Bureaus, and other notable sites of interest. It then explores the 61 Yu-Shan gateways found across Creation and who uses them. Finally, it presents the Archipelago of the Exiles, an island chain in the uttermost West of Creation where spirit exiles from Heaven bide their time and wait for their chances to return to the City of Splendors.

Chapter Five: The Roll of Celestial Gods presents five templates of varying power with which to represent the gods of Heaven, followed by a multitude of Celestial personages, their agendas, desires, fears and that which may entice them to take action in Creation once again.

The Other Gods

Many spirits mentioned throughout this volume are fully detailed elsewhere in the **Exalted** line. Here is a comprehensive list of all gods and elementals throughout the various **Exalted** books at the time of this volume's publication. Gods with Celestial positions (either due to the nature of their domain or by political appointment) are listed in italics. Readers can refer to this list when referencing a named god not included in this book.

Exalted

Gods: Dog of the Unbroken Earth (p. 296); Gri-Fei, God of the Imperial City (p. 298); Sikunare, Storm Mother (p. 299)

Elementals: Fakharu, Lesser Elemental Dragon of Water, Censor of the West (p. 302); Huraka (p. 303); Nymph (p. 305); Wood Spider (p. 306)

The Compass of Terrestrial Directions, Vol. I— The Scavenger Lands

Gods: Five Days Darkness (p. 151); Hiparkes, Stallion-Lord of the Marukan Plains (p. 147); Shalrina, Daimyo of Faces (p. 149); Shield of a Different Day (p. 143); Spinner of Glorious Tales (p. 139); Tien Yu, Goddess of Lookshy and the Seventh Legion (p. 146); Tu Yu, City Father of Deheleshen (p. 144); Weaver of Dreams of Victory (p. 141)

The Compass of Terrestrial Directions, Vol. II—The West

Gods: Bashixun, Lord of the Surf (p. 129); Child of Siakal (p. 131); *The Five Celestial Admirals* (p. 139); *The Ocean Father, Daimyo of the Seas* (p. 133); *Plentimon of the Dice, Celestial Minister of Gambling* (p. 136); *Siakal, the Western Goddess of Battle, Slaughter and Sharks* (p. 138)

The Compass of Celestial Directions, Vol. I— The Blessed Isle

Gods: Ameru, God of Meru (p. 149); The Ancient of Stone Journeys, God of the Great Coast Road and Travel on the Blessed Isle (p. 154); Field God (p. 155); *Flashing Peak, Goddess of the Imperial Mountain* (p. 151); *Jagalza, Satrap of the Realm* (p. 152); Salt God (p. 156); *Tachi-Kun, Central God of War and Exalted Warfare* (p. 153)

The Books of Sorcery, Vol. II—The White Treatise

Gods: *The Hidden Judges of the Secret Flame* (p. 72)

The Books of Sorcery, Vol. IV—The Roll of Glorious Divinity I

Gods: Baiji (p. 28); Bird of Vanileth (p. 47); Bloody Hand (p. 29); *Burning Feather, Lady of Intoxicants* (p. 49); Caravan God (p. 31); City God (p. 32); The Court of Seasons (p. 22); Disease God (p. 34); Dream Fly (p. 35); Dryad (p. 36); Forest Walker (p. 38); *Grala, Mistress of the Endless Hunt* (p. 50); Grandmother Bright, Goddess of Chiaroscuro (p. 52); Hound of the Endless Hunt (p. 48); *Kireeki, Huntress of the Waves* (p. 54); Least God (p. 39); Leech God (p. 69); Life Tree (p. 40); Lion Dog (p. 45); *Madam Marthesine of the Lost* (p. 55); The Mammoth Avatar (p. 56); *Rabszolga, God of Slaves* (p. 58); Mask (p. 41); Road God (p. 42); Scarab Guardian (p. 46); Sessen Douji, the Mountain Boy (p. 60); Soul Thief (p. 70); The Seven Fangs, Gods of Ascending Wood (p. 61); Siren (p. 43); Translucent Alabaster, the Porcelain Lady (p. 62); Vanileth, Shogun of Artificial Flight (p. 63); *Verumipra, Ambassador to the Cursed City and Warden of the Exiles* (p. 66); Zhuzhiao, High Princep of the Deep Trenches (p. 67)

Elementals: Amabosar (p. 115); Artisan (p. 134); Black Tar Vortex (p. 87); Brine Cur (p. 124); Carmine Lily (p. 135) Chief Storms-As-He-Walks (p. 99); Cloud Person (p. 93); Doldrum (p. 94); Fire Butterfly (p. 115); Flame Duck (p. 116); Garda Bird (p. 117); Gemlord (p. 103); Golden Fire Keeper (p. 87); Heketa (p. 125); Ifrit (p. 119); Jealous Saffron Rage, the Underground Fire, Lesser Elemental Dragon of Fire (p. 113); Jokun (p. 106); Joyous Youth Juritsu, Lesser Elemental Dragon of Wood (p. 131); King of the Wood (p. 136); Kri (p. 107); The Kukla, Greater Elemental Dragon of Earth

Morgan Hillan (order #910970)

(p. 102); Llama-Yu (p. 120); Mercury Ant (p. 108); Need Fire (p. 121); Ogime, the Frog Queen, Lesser Elemental Dragon of Water (p. 123); The Quicksilver Queen, Lesser Elemental Dragon of Earth (p. 100); Sandpiper (p. 87); Sandpit Fire (p. 87); Serpent-And-Egg (p. 110); Seventh Amethyst, Minister for Unforseen Events on the Island of Broken Masks (p. 111); Sobeksis (p. 126); Stick Person (p. 137); Storm Serpent (p. 96); Three-Clawed Sage (p. 87); Thunderbird (p. 97); Undertow (p. 127); Urchin King (p. 87); Vodonik (p. 128); Water Child (p. 130); The Wind Masters, Lesser Elemental Dragons of Air (p. 90)

Lexicon

Herein are specialized terms used by the denizens of Heaven and by the savants who speak of them.

Celestial Bureaucracy, the: The structure of the divine hierarchy of Creation and Yu-Shan. Compare to *the Celestial Order*.

Celestial Bureaus, the: The Bureaus of Destiny, Heaven, Humanity, Nature and Seasons are the five Celestial Bureaus, and together they manage and oversee all things in Yu-Shan and Creation… or once did. Now they're largely bereft of the Incarnae's guidance and rife with corruption and cronyism. Nonetheless, in the eyes of all gods save the Incarnae, the five bureaus are the reason Heaven exists at all, and every legitimate Celestial spirit claims membership within at least one.

Celestial Order, the: The structure of the divine hierarchy in Creation and Yu-Shan; also, that hierarchy's ideal state. Used most often by those who don't wish to imply the divine hierarchy is now disordered. Compare to *the Celestial Bureaucracy*.

Creation-Ruling Mandate, the: See *the Mandate of Heaven*.

Games of Divinity, the: The game played by the Incarnae within the Jade Pleasure Dome. So unparalleled is the exquisite pleasure and joy derived from playing the Games that a mere glance at one of the playing pieces is sufficient to incinerate a mortal's body and annihilate his soul. To beings of greater spiritual potency, the Games are merely phenomenally addictive. Contrary to the beliefs of many mortal savants, the Games of Divinity have nothing to do with manipulating events in Creation.

Mandate of Heaven, the: The proclamation made by the Unconquered Sun at the end of the Primordial War, which states the rulership of Creation falls to the Exalted. Also called *the Creation-Ruling Mandate*.

Terrestrial sphere, the: The *Terrestrial gods*' sphere of responsibility. As Yu-Shan is either part of Creation or not part of Creation depending on who one asks, the Celestial gods often say "the Terrestrial sphere" when they wish to refer specifically to Creation and not Yu-Shan.

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CHAPTER ONE
A HISTORY OF YU-SHAN

The foundation of Yu-Shan, like so much else about the Primordials, remains shrouded in mystery. The most comprehensive reports pertaining to the origins of the Primordials, Creation and Yu-Shan are, unfortunately, contained within forbidden and apocryphal texts most commonly associated with the rites of various Yozi cults. Most notable among these is the blasphemous Record of First Days, mere possession of which is a Severity 5 offense in Yu-Shan as much due to its controversial claims as to the fact that it perverts the minds of its readers and turns them against the Incarnae.

Outside such dubious sources, information on the birth of Creation is sparse. In the beginning, there was naught but roiling chaos, from which the Primordials shaped themselves into existence. Two of these ancient beings, Gaia and Cytherea, birthed Creation. The Primordials then created the Incarnae and gods to manage the world and the various sentient races to worship them, and they fashioned a pleasure-city for themselves which somehow existed outside Creation while simultaneously being part of it. The Primordials christened their hidden city Yu-Shan and retired there to play the Games of Divinity, leaving the maintenance of Creation to the gods—save for those occasions when one or more Primordials would descend to Creation in search of amusement.

The state of affairs continued until the Incarnae and two renegade Primordials rose up against the creators of all things and cast them out of Yu-Shan. These conspirators choose humans as their weapons. The early humans were the weakest of all Creation's sentient races, far inferior to the Dragon Kings in enlightenment and to most of Creation's life forms in survival skills. This was intentional. Humans were created for the sole purpose of worshiping the Primordials and providing the Ambrosia which was their meat and drink. The Primordials wanted

Morgan Hillan (order #910970)

human beings to pray often and fervently, and a being in constant fear of death was most likely to do so. In this, however, the Primordials miscalculated—individual humans were so weak and impotent that the Primordials never bothered to geas them into submission as they did with the gods and Creation's other sentient races. The Primordials never believed that such simple creatures could possibly become a threat.

The armies of the Exalted had the advantages of surprise, numerical superiority, better tactical training, powerful Charms equaling those of Primordial souls of the Third Circle, weapons provided by Autochthon's Jadeborn servants, and the ability to think and plan on a time scale unconsidered by their enemies, who had existed for millions of years. Even the Dragon Kings fought for the Exalted—by this point, the ancient saurians held the Unconquered Sun in higher regard than they did their own creators.

The Exalted's most important asset, however, was fear. Born in the chaos of the Deep Wyld, the Primordials thought themselves incapable of death. The Exalted disabused them of that notion, slaying a significant number of the Primordials and consigning them to the Underworld. Even more Primordials suffered the death of their defining souls, leading to their own recreation as new and lesser beings. Terrified of being permanently unmade, the surviving Primordials finally surrendered and swore on their names and their natures that they would remain for all time in a prison forged of their own bodies.

The First Age

Victorious over their former masters, the Incarnae set themselves to forging a new socio-political structure for the gods. No longer would they serve as slaves to the Primordials, but the work they had once performed still remained vital to Creation's stability. Much of the physical destruction resulting from the Primordial War was caused by the Primordials' destruction of the five original elementals. The five elements became completely unbalanced for a time, resulting in tidal waves and hurricanes, firestorms, earthquakes and volcanic eruptions. Even the element of wood became a threat, as deadly and poisonous vegetation and fungus spread out of the East. Finally, the Five Elemental Dragons, at the behest of Gaia herself, summoned all of Creation's gods to the slopes of Meru and organized them into regional court structures so that they could maintain Creation in the Primordials' absence. The Incarnae, recognizing a good idea when they saw it, refined the court system into the twin bureaucracy structure that exists (more or less) to the present day.

The Formation of the Celestial Bureaucracy

In establishing their new regime, the Incarnae first elevated to ministerial positions those gods who were the most powerful, most experienced and, above all, most loyal to the Unconquered Sun and his vision for the future of Creation. These exceptional deities would reside in fabled Yu-Shan where they would plan out the future events of Creation. The rest would remain behind in Creation to form the Terrestrial Bureaucracy, enacting the mandates of Heaven and keeping their superiors apprized of events in Creation.

Some critics suggest that loyalty to the Incarnae played a much larger role in the allocation of divine resources than it should have, but in the hectic early days of the First Age, too much was at stake to rely on a strict meritocracy—too many gods had been Primordial loyalists during the War to give them power of the levers of Creation. One of the Unconquered Sun's first acts was the establishment of the Intra-Bureau Truth and Reconciliation Committee to which he assigned the task of reviewing the war record of every single god in Creation to determine their fitness for service under the new regime. Those with the highest ratings (especially in terms of loyalty to the Incarnae and the Solar Exalted) formed the backbone of Yu-Shan's government, while those who were ambivalent during the War or who had somehow earned the wrath of one or more Incarnae were more likely to remain behind in the less prestigious Terrestrial Bureaucracy.

Those who actively opposed the Unconquered Sun and the Exalted also had a role to play in the new order—as construction material. The war had taken a heavy toll on the resources of the Sidereal Exalted, and more starmetal was desperately needed. Those who escaped execution quickly fled underground where they sought worship amongst the banished and forgotten Darkbroods. Throughout the First Age, these "forbidden gods" and their servitors made intermittent attacks against the surface world, but by the time of the Usurpation, the consensus in Yu-Shan was that all of them had been destroyed. Regrettably, no one in Yu-Shan thought to ask the Jadeborn.

Once questions of loyalty and competence were answered, the Unconquered Sun led his followers and courtiers through the new gates of Yu-Shan into their new kingdom. There he revised the Five Bureaus of the Celestial Bureaucracy into something very close to their present structure. The Bureau of Destiny was moved wholesale from Meru to Yu-Shan. Previously,

Morgan Hillan (order #910970)

the Maidens and their ministers operated the Loom of Fate remotely, relying on the movement of the stars across the heavens to monitor its functioning. Now, the Bureau of Destiny could observe the functioning of the Loom itself, arranging the strands of destiny and fate to the benefit of the new order. The Maidens assigned no Terrestrial gods to the Bureau of Destiny, opting instead to rely totally on their Exalted servants as field agents.

The Incarnae also relocated the Bureaus of Humanity, Nature and Seasons to Yu-Shan, but only the most competent and loyal gods were permitted to work in Heaven, overseeing those deities of the Terrestrial Bureaucracy who performed the actual fieldwork of the bureaus with which they were associated. Some critics have pointed to this division of labor, and the rather ham-fisted way it was introduced, as the beginning of dissension between the Celestial and Terrestrial gods.

Finally, the Unconquered Sun reorganized the former Bureau of Divinities into the Bureau of Heaven and created within it two subdivisions: the Departments of Abstract Matters and Celestial Concerns. The latter department was assigned the task of actively maintaining peace and decorum in Heaven, as well as promoting efficiency and professionalism in the gods of Yu-Shan and Creation alike through the power of the audit. The first Shogun of Celestial Concerns was Anisa-Shoshan, the Maharani of Constellations.

The placement of the Department of Abstract Matters within the Bureau of Heaven was more complicated. The gods assigned to the Department of Abstract Matters included a great many deities whose portfolios would have been associated with the Bureau of Humanity during the Primordial era. The leaders of that bureau protested this invasion by the Bureau of Heaven into their domain, although not so loudly that their loyalty became suspect. As the new department took shape, however, the wisdom of the Unconquered Sun's decision became apparent. The destructive Primordial War and the subsequent chaos of its aftermath destroyed much of Creation. The last vindictive strike of She Who Lives In Her Name, by itself, was believed to have destroyed ninety percent of Creation as it existed during prehistory, although her attack destroyed the very memories of those things as well, so the full measure of her wrath was impossible to calculate.

Morgan Hillan (order #910970)

As a result, there were countless gods whose areas of authority were devastated if not completely erased. The Unconquered Sun's solution was simple: make work. The unemployed gods would be reassigned to serve as deities representing abstract concepts, at least until such time as the borders of Creation were expanded and they could be transferred to some other, more appropriate station. The Unconquered Sun appointed Lytek, the God of Exaltation and a deity whose loyalty to the Unconquered Sun's vision was beyond reproach, to become the head of the Department of Abstract Matters.

Celestial Bureaucracy vs. Celestial Court

Mortal savants are often baffled by divine organizational structures, some of which seem meant to be deliberately confusing to outsiders. The Celestial Court is the single spirit court of Heaven, presided over by the Unconquered Sun and the other Incarnae. It is subdivided into five bureaus, each of which has its component divisions, departments and other subsidiary entities. The Terrestrial Bureaucracy consists of all the gods and elementals who operate in Creation. The Terrestrial Bureaucracy consists of the numerous local spirit courts that enact the plans of the various bureaus in specific geographic areas. In other words, the Celestial Court consists of bureaus and the Terrestrial Bureaucracy consists of courts.

Further complicating things, the Celestial Bureaucracy includes both the Celestial Court and the Terrestrial Bureaucracy, as all Terrestrial gods technically work for one (or more) of the five Heavenly bureaus, although they rarely receive the status, let alone pay, commensurate with a Celestial position. The official term for the Celestial Bureaucracy is actually the Celestial Order, although only the most conservative gods still cling to that name. In the modern era, most of Yu-Shan's deities find laughable any reference to divine society as "ordered."

Settling In

About five months after his triumphant entry into Yu-Shan, the Unconquered Sun personally appeared before the court of the Solar Queen Merela in ancient Rathess and granted unto her the Crown of Thunders and the Creation-Ruling Mandate. The Crown was his personal gift to Merela, who he considered the most powerful and skilled of the Solar generals who had survived the Primordial War. Accordingly, he judged Merela to be the Solar who was most fit to rule in the War's aftermath, and the Crown was a sign of his favor. The Creation-Ruling Mandate, however, symbolized his will that all the Exalted, under the leadership of all Solars, should share in both the obligations and the rewards of being the Princes of the Earth. Thus, Queen Merela was duty-bound to respect the will of all her fellow Exalted in acting as sovereign. The history of the First Age suggests that the Queen was less than studious in observing that part of the Mandate—the Unconquered Sun never took any steps to prevent internecine fighting amongst his Exalted, and the first intra-Solar war would begin in less than a century.

Originally, the Unconquered Sun took a strong interest in the day-to-day functioning of the Bureau of Heaven, regularly tweaking its organizational structure to improve its efficiency. Had he continued to do so, it is possible that later disasters might have been averted, but the Unconquered Sun was also a player in the Games of Divinity, which over time increasingly monopolized his attention. Eventually, the chief Incarna delegated most of his authority over the day-to-day running of Yu-Shan to the Bureau of Heaven so that he could direct his full attention to the Games. Luna did likewise with her prior responsibility over the Bureau of Nature, and while the Five Maidens still involved themselves with the day-to-day responsibilities of the Bureau of Destiny, they increasingly conducted planning meetings with subordinates in the Jade Pleasure Dome's waiting rooms.

However, while the Incarnae quickly became as obsessed with the Games as the Primordials seemed to have been, the greatest of gods were not quite so selfish with them. The Unconquered Sun soon opened the galleries and viewing balconies of the Jade Pleasure Dome to hundreds of gods who stood in his good graces, i.e., who were conspicuously loyal to his agenda. He also made it a habit of allowing especially favored subordinates to play out his turns, thereby rewarding exceptional service with the most sublime gift to be had in Yu-Shan or Creation. The other Incarnae followed suit.

To the surprise of no one in Yu-Shan, the Unconquered Sun established as a law of Heaven that no Exalted would ever view the Games of Divinity, let alone play them. God-Blooded of excellent refinement and enlightenment were permitted to witness the games by sharing the memories of their divine parents, but even they were forbidden attendance.

Many mortals inhabited Yu-Shan during this era. Much of Yu-Shan's earlier architecture was not to

Morgan Hillan (order #910970)

the liking of the Incarnae, twisted as it was to the aesthetics of its Primordial builders. The Maiden of Serenity went forth into Creation and sought out humanity's 100 finest mortal artisans and 10,000 most dedicated laborers. Transported to Yu-Shan, these mortals were blessed with Essence, remade into gods and set to work building fabulous new structures to house the Celestial deities. Materials were in abundant supply—in the aftermath of the incredibly destructive Primordial War, the whole of humanity sang the praises of the Unconquered Sun and the other victorious gods on a daily basis, and Yu-Shan was awash in Ambrosia and Quintessence ready to be processed into the four magical materials. (In those days, soulsteel was a minor curiosity, incorporated into a few Autochthon-forged artifacts, and would not be acknowledged as on par with orichalcum, moonsilver, starmetal, and jade until much later in the First Age.)

This period of construction was referred to as the Glorious Heavenly Rebirth. In its aftermath, the greatest of the artisan gods were rewarded with important posts in Yu-Shan, where they were put in charge of inspiring others. Not all such promotions were merit-based—Yaogin, the Bearer of the Lapis Ewer, became a courtier to Venus, and she later somewhat arbitrarily appointed him as head of the entire Division of Serenity, much to the chagrin of many rival candidates who were (at the time) far better qualified.

The previously mortal laborers, their bodies hardened by the labor of construction and their minds sharpened by the gift of Essence, were also rewarded. Each of them was transformed by the Unconquered Sun himself into a powerful lion of pure orichalcum to serve as one of Heaven's constabulary. In their earliest days, these celestial lions were little more than tour guides for visitors to Yu-Shan and occasional bodyguards for Celestial gods who ventured into Creation. Some time would pass before the need to deputize celestial lions in the name of the Unconquered Sun to investigate crime and even violence among the gods of Yu-Shan became apparent.

The Ascension of the Dragons

The First Age was, understandably, a quiet time for Yu-Shan. In those days, Heaven functioned as it should, overseen by the Solar Exalted according to the wishes of the Unconquered Sun. The most significant event to affect the gods of Yu-Shan prior to the Usurpation was the elevation of the lesser elemental dragons. Since the dawn of the First Age, the gods had considered elementals to be ill-bred cousins at best and a servant class at worst. As time passed, however, some elementals began to develop their untapped potential, and as these beings grew in power, they assumed draconic form. This development pleased the Five Elemental Dragons, especially Sextes Jylis, who made it plain that he did not approve of elementals who bore his form being treated as common servants. He went on to declare that all of these "lesser elemental dragons," as he dubbed them, would henceforth hold the status of adopted children of the Five Elemental Dragons and, consequently, grandchildren of Gaia herself.

Anisa-Shoshan quietly consulted the Unconquered Sun with this development, but the Incarna, engrossed with countering a particularly challenging move on the part of Mars, left the matter to Anisa-Shoshan's discretion. Anxious to avoid angering Gaia, the Shogun of Celestial Concerns declared that henceforth, any elemental who had attained dragon stature would be welcomed into Yu-Shan as an equal to the gods, complete with a prominent position in the Celestial Court. Lesser elemental dragons soon held high-profile positions across Yu-Shan, often to the chagrin of deities with more seniority who were bumped aside. Anisa-Shoshan's ruling was formally announced on 23 Resplendent Fire, a day which is still celebrated by the Immaculate Order as "Ascension Day."

There was a limit to just how much latitude even an adopted child of the Five Elemental Dragons could receive. Centuries later, while on a sojourn in Creation, the eldest, most powerful, and most respected of the lesser elemental dragons of earth, the Kukla, refined his essence to the point that he spontaneously attained an even more powerful form, becoming the first greater elemental dragon. Expanding to over four miles long, the Kukla's mind seemed burned away by the transformation, leaving only devastating elemental rage. The ruin left in the Kukla's wake posed significant problems to the Solar Deliberative, and Anisa-Shoshan contacted the most venerable Zenith caste priests and persuaded them to pray to the Unconquered Sun for a ruling on the status of future greater elemental dragons.

This time, the Unconquered Sun was moved to act, and he decreed that all greater elemental dragons would henceforth be bound until called forth. The Five Elemental Dragons were understandably upset, as they had hoped to find a way to restore the Kukla's mind, but Gaia acquiesced to the Unconquered Sun's commandment.

The decision to bind the greater elemental dragons would have future implications for the entire Celestial Bureaucracy. All lesser elemental dragons

Morgan Hillan (order #910970)

now understand that the reward for developing their own enlightenment and power past what the gods deem acceptable is apparent insanity and eternal imprisonment. The indolence and capriciousness that would infect most of the lesser elemental dragons has its origin here: Once an elemental has risen to become a lesser elemental dragon, if she is wise, she will eschew further spiritual evolution.

The Usurpation

At some point during the fourth millennium of the First Age, a decision made by the Hierophant of the Solar Deliberative so angered the Unconquered Sun that the Incarna turned his face from the Solar Exalted and from Creation. He delegated all of his remaining administrative authority over Yu-Shan society to Anisa-Shoshan, and thereafter resolutely ignored every prayer offered to him, instead focusing all his attention on the Games of Divinity.

About a century later, the gods of Yu-Shan were abuzz with the news that all 100 of the Sidereal Exalts had been summoned to Yu-Shan (a highly unusual event). The Sidereals sealed themselves within the Lotus Dome to study the Loom of Fate en masse, forbidding any of the gods of the Bureau of Destiny to observe their work. For the next half-century, the Sidereals prepared in secret, subtly removing the most obvious opposition to their plans. Most notably, they "persuaded" the heads of both the Division of Journeys and the Division of Battles (both Solar loyalists) to step down from their positions in favor of deities far more amenable to Bronze Faction goals.

Divine Retaliation

The Sidereals didn't stop with assassinating the Solar Exalted. They also took steps to prevent the Solars from reincarnating. To do so, the Bronze Faction brazenly assaulted Lytek, God of Exaltation, in his offices, holding him prisoner while they collected the Exaltations of the dead Solars that had returned for processing before sealing them into the Jade Prison. Whatever Yu-Shan's collective feelings about the Usurpation, such an attack on the very person of one of Heaven's most important and prominent deities was unforgivable, and the Sidereals knew it. Unable to avoid an inquiry for their actions, the Bronze Faction members concentrated instead on evading punishment. Part of the Bronze Faction's plans for post-Usurpation Creation called for them to allow the Dragon-Blooded to seize control with the Sidereals ruling behind the scenes. To facilitate this part of the plan, the Bronze Faction initiated a series of powerful astrological

Morgan Hillan (order #910970)

effects involving the constellation of the Mask with the goal of erasing as much evidence as possible of their existence in Creation, as well as all signs of their illegal acts in Yu-Shan.

That part of the plan worked too well, and the result was the near destruction of the entire constellation and the imposition of the Arcane Fate that dogs the Sidereals to the present day. The Breaking of the Mask not only caused virtually all of Creation to forget that the Sidereals ever existed, it also supernaturally occluded all evidence of any criminal acts performed in furtherance of the conspiracy. The practical effect of this occlusion is that, while virtually every god in Yu-Shan knows about the Sidereals' role in the Usurpation, no one can prove it in the context of an audit or other inquiry.

Extra-legal actions, however, were another story. The first major act of retaliation against the Sidereals came from the Bureau of Nature. That bureau had once been under the direct control of Luna herself, and several of its ranking deities were still very protective of the Lunar Exalted. Defying edicts from the Sidereals that the bureau stay out of its affairs, a number of nature gods clandestinely communicated with the leaders of the Silver Pact, providing them with extensive reports on how the Sidereals had brought the Usurpation about and how they were using the Loom of Fate to track the Stewards and betray them to Dragon-Blooded assassination squads. Most importantly, the nature gods revealed how the Loom had great difficulty tracking people or events within the Wyld. In response, the Silver Pact collectively fled into the Deep Wyld where even the most reckless Wyld Hunts could not follow and where they were invisible to the Loom's gaze.

Dissidents in other bureaus were similarly hostile to the Sidereals and their Dragon-Blooded lackeys. In the Bureau of Seasons, truculent weather gods harried the Shogunate with crippling droughts and out-of-season monsoons before settling into a more benign practice of simply ignoring Dragon-Blooded prayers completely and providing weather according to the cycles drawn up by the Solars centuries earlier. The Bureau of Heaven tried to stay above the fray until the Sidereals desecrated the holy city of Ondar Shambal because its local Dragon-Blooded refused to betray their beloved Solar queen. When the sacred walls were damaged, Ambrosia deliveries dropped by almost nine percent overnight, and in response, every single Sidereal involved in "the Ondar Shambal Affair" was audited to within an inch of his life. Such conduct persisted throughout the Shogunate era, as powerful gods who had supported the Solars during their reign sought to undermine the Sidereals and the Dragon-Blooded.

Virtually the only thing that prevented outright war was skillful political maneuvering by Chejop Kejak and the other leaders of the Bronze Faction. It took the better part of four hundred years, but the Bronze Faction managed to maneuver the worst of their political enemies out of office, all the while pitting the Celestial and Terrestrial deities against on another and bribing the more amenable gods into their service. Given another few centuries, Kejak might have healed the breach diplomatically. Unfortunately, the Contagion never gave him the chance.

The Great Contagion

Initially, the Bronze Faction was convinced that the Contagion was a product of its divine enemies. Not long after the Usurpation, Uvanavu, the God of Health and a staunch supporter of the Solar Exalted, angrily threatened to unleash pestilence on the Dragon-Blooded in retaliation. When the plague first spread, Kejak immediately assumed that the threat had been made good, and he concentrated more on arranging an audit against Uvanavu than focusing on the actual problem. Uvanavu was just as certain that the plague was part of one of Kejak's machinations intended to undermine his own position. By the time each of them realized that the other was blameless, the epidemic had become a pandemic.

Within weeks, the scope of the devastation became clear. The communicability and morbidity rates of the Contagion were at 90 percent or better. Worse, it could cross from species to species with ease. Birds and vermin transmitted the Contagion across vast areas, and even fish were susceptible. Less than two months after the initial outbreak, Ozumi the Brown, God of White-Tailed Wolverines, personally delivered his final report on that creature to the Bureau of Nature, detailing how an entire subspecies had become extinct within just six weeks. Ozumi was lucky—the Celestial Bureaucracy still did not realize the true scope of the disaster, and they simply transferred Ozumi to the Infections Diseases Department of the Bureau of Nature, where more manpower was desperately required. Soon, the trickle of gods whose portfolios had been annihilated became a flood, and for the first time in its history, the Bureau of Heaven began tracking divine unemployment statistics.

By the third month of Contagion, Creation was a parched and near-lifeless wasteland, the affliction even killing off those biological agents that normally aid in the process of decay. All the world seemed on

Morgan Hillan (order #910970)

the verge of death, and mortal society had ground to a total halt. The gods of the Celestial Court were in disarray. Aware that celestial wine could cure the Contagion, many deities in the Bureau of Humanity and the Division of Serenity argued that Yu-Shan's supplies of the heavenly concoction should be made available to mortals to ensure the survival of the species. Anisa-Shoshan rejected those arguments, going so far as to assign celestial lions to guard the peaches of immortality and to closely regulate distribution of celestial wine. Those gods whose portfolios were inextricably linked to Creation's living creatures saw the move as pure selfishness on the part of callous deities unwilling to sacrifice their own pleasure to help save Creation—though some whispered the Maharani of Constellations had more malevolent motives.

Some gods ignored the Bureau of Heaven's mandate, whether out of selflessness or greed. A group of nine deities from the Bureau of Humanity conspired to steal a shipment of celestial wine with the goal of auctioning it off to the highest bidding city god. They miscalculated badly by offering their prize to Tu Yu, the God of Deheleshen. Ever loyal to the Celestial Court, Tu Yu reported the incident to the censors, despite the knowledge that the celestial wine might save the people of his city. Judgment was swift, and most of the conspiracy's members were sentenced to five centuries of imprisonment. The three ringleaders suffered a worse fate—they currently comprise the starmetal components of Opprobrium of Heaven, a noble warstrider now part of the panoply of the Sidereal Eastern Chair, Ayesha Ura.

Other gods laid similar plots, some more successful than others, as various gods sought to protect the mortals under their protection or, at the very least, their own God-Blooded offspring. A few gods immunized important mortal leaders and then went on to become the patron deities of the communities such leaders headed, while others immunized breeding pairs in the hope that offspring would inherit the immunity. In the end, Heaven held too little celestial wine to make a great difference in the number of mortals who survived the Contagion, but some few warriors, generals, and leaders who would have died from the disease survived on draughts of wine and went on to make a difference in the conflict that followed in the pandemic's wake.

Chaos and Collapse

By the sixth month of the Contagion, Yu-Shan was in utter panic. Nearly entire Directions had been wiped out, and the city gods presided over naught but corpses that refused to rot. For the first time in millennia, Vanileth, the Shogun of Artificial Flight, reported that not a single flying vessel of any kind was aloft anywhere in Creation. Most of the other gods associated with magitech made similar reports as Shogunate civilization ground to a halt. The numbers of unemployed gods swelled, and the Bureau of Heaven allocated several territories within Yu-Shan as "emergency refugee camps." Most of the refugees would never leave the areas that would later be referred to as Heaven's slums.

Approximately eight months after the outbreak, alarms rang throughout the halls of the Bureaus of Destiny, Humanity and Nature, announcing a cascade failure within the Loom of Fate. Thirty-thousand square miles of Creation winked out of existence within just the first few minutes, assimilated back into the Wyld from which it had been conjured. Thousands of gods assigned to those territories were able to escape and report the news: the Fair Folk had invaded. The survivors reported great tsunamis of Wyld energy sweeping across the land and consuming it, with towering Fair Folk lords astride behemoths riding in their wake and untold millions of cataphractoi and hobgoblins following behind. In eventual response, Anisa-Shoshan ordered that the Yu-Shan portals be closed to Terrestrial gods. Yu-Shan already had far more refugee gods than it could hold, and those still in Creation were on their own. Only a few Celestial gods stayed behind in Creation to help fight the Fair Folk forces, and most soon reincarnated in Yu-Shan following their deaths at the swords of the Wyld's armies.

Aftermath

The crisis finally ended after the future Scarlet Empress seized control of the Sword of Creation. Only then could the gods even begin to assess the damage, and it was severe. Ninety percent of all life in Creation had been extinguished, and Creation's territory had been reduced by forty percent. In the West, an entire archipelago, the remnants of a continent the size of the Blessed Isle, was gone, lost irretrievably to the Wyld along with its millions of inhabitants. Hundreds of millions of Terrestrial deities had been exterminated by the Fair Folk. Of the once mighty Dragon-Blooded race, who numbered close to a million before the Contagion, less than ten thousand were left. The disease had felled seven hundred thousand Terrestrial Exalted, and for every thirty Dragon-Blooded survivors of the plague, twenty-nine had laid down their lives holding the Fair Folk back. For the first time since the beginning of the Primordial War, fewer Dragon-Blooded lived than had first been created by Gaia's children.

Morgan Hillan (order #910970)

And still overcome with anger and shame at the behavior of his Chosen, the Unconquered Sun did nothing. The other Incarnae did little more.

To be sure, aspects of the Incarnae played their appointed roles during the crisis. Both the sun and the moon continued their daily treks across the sky. Luna continued to speak to her children, whether at the moment of their Exaltations or during their spirit quests in the Wyld. The Maidens continued to supervise the Bureau of Destiny, although rarely in person. The bureau Shoguns insisted to their subordinates that they regularly communicated with the Unconquered Sun and the other Incarnae about how best to deal with the crisis. But at no point did the Incarnae ever miss a single turn at the Games of Divinity. Some gods say the Incarnae didn't even notice when most of the observers left the Jade Pleasure Dome for their offices in response to emergency alarms.

The Contagion, the Balorian Crusade, and the Incarnae's response left most of Yu-Shan in a state of shock and malaise. Although the Unconquered Sun remains the undisputed ruler of Yu-Shan to the present day, the Contagion convinced many of the gods that he had little or no interest in either their affairs or the needs of Creation. The final casualty of the Great Contagion may well have been the unquestioning belief of the gods that the Unconquered Sun would rule justly, rewarding the righteous and punishing the guilty. Freed from fear of direct oversight by Heaven's ruler, the gods of Yu-Shan increasingly turned on each other, with those who wanted power at any cost preying on those who still believed in the old paradigm. Fashioned by the Incarnae to reward performance and loyalty, Yu-Shan's bureaucratic structures soon became overcome by reckless ambition, duplicity and political backstabbing. True, many gods still clung to the standards of excellence established by the Unconquered Sun at the dawn of his reign, but in Heaven, as in most bureaucracies, one who works for the good of all is often no match for one who works only for his advancement. And so, in the era of the Scarlet Dynasty's founding, most of the Celestial gods ignored Creation, focusing instead on creating some form of internal stability.

The most prominent casualty of this heavenly infighting was Anisa-Shoshan, de facto head of the Bureau of Heaven. In R.Y. 17, Ryzala, Lady of Bureaucracy and Paperwork, quietly assumed control of the Division of Infernal Affairs, a subdivision of the Bureau of Heaven that investigated reports of Yozi corruption within the Celestial Bureaucracy. Ryzala gained this relatively unimportant position in Yu-Shan (as there had not been any serious hint of Yozi activity in Heaven for centuries) through the patronage of Chejop Kejak. Two years later, she publicly accused Anisa-Shoshan and several other high-ranking deities in the Bureaus of Heaven, Humanity and Nature of trafficking with infernal forces, offering as proof forbidden Yozi texts found during a search of the Shogun's offices (amongst them, a copy of the Record of First Days). By a suspicious coincidence, most of the accused deities were also known for having repeatedly thwarted the Sidereals' agenda for Creation during the Shogunate. By the time the inquisition had ended, Anisa-Shoshan was dead, and Ryzala was the new Shogun of the Department of Celestial Concerns.

Following Ryzala's ascension to the head of her department (and continuing on to this day), many of the top personnel from the Bureaus of Nature and Humanity (especially the latter) were forcibly transferred to the Bureau of Heaven. Such transfers were not uncommon during the First Age, but now they would represent an overt effort to devour the Bureau of Humanity whole and consolidate it under Ryzala's authority. Ryzala and Kejak also took the opportunity to remove the last vestiges of Lytek's authority. The God of Exaltation's position had declined ever since the Usurpation, and with her alliance of convenience with the Bronze Faction, Ryzala was finally able to force him from the office of Shogun of Abstract Matters in favor of someone more amenable to her own goals—the dilettante Taru-Han, perhaps the only prominent deity in the Bureau of Heaven who doesn't covet Ryzala's job.

The Gates Reopened

In what the mortals and Dragon-Blooded now call Realm Year 27, Yu-Shan finally reached a rough equilibrium, with the Bureaus of Heaven and Destiny at the top, Nature and Humanity at the bottom, and the Bureau of Seasons stolidly plugging along as it always had. Having established a measure of internal stability, the Celestial deities finally turned their attention back to Creation and reopened the Yu-Shan gates, which had been sealed since the Contagion, expecting their poor cousins in the Terrestrial Bureaucracy to be overjoyed at their return.

From the perspective of most Terrestrial gods, Yu-Shan had abandoned them. While Heaven isolated itself, the situation amongst the Terrestrial Courts had been further aggravated by conflicts between native deities and refugee gods from areas destroyed by the Fair Folk, conflicts that devastated the First Age's functional spirit court structure. In the absence of

Morgan Hillan (order #910970)

Celestial oversight, the entire hierarchy of Terrestrial gods had broken down and been replaced by a more informal structure in which the strongest gods demanded loyalty from the lesser, offering protection for those who agreed and promising retribution against any who didn't. The censors were overworked; without Celestial support, effectively overseeing such chaos was impossible.

In fact, one of the censors had disappeared altogether. Swan Dragon, the Censor of the South, had apparently been captured by the Fair Folk during the invasion. The only thing that had kept the gods of the South from running amok in his absence had been the Court of Orderly Flame, an alliance of southern fire courts loyal to Swan Dragon's memory and dedicated to preserving divine law in his absence. The Bureau of Heaven appointed the abrasive and arrogant Wong Bongerok to replace Swan Dragon, and he almost immediately antagonized the Orderly Flame and demanded its dissolution. However, even deities who disagreed with the Flame's policies preferred its order to that of a popinjay from Yu-Shan who had never faced the Fair Folk in battle. The Court of Orderly Flame endures to the present day, and Wong Bongerok's best efforts have only poisoned its reputation in Heaven, a move that does nothing but ensure the Southern Terrestrial Courts feel little loyalty to Yu-Shan.

The conflicts between Wong Bongerok and the Court of Orderly Flame epitomize the chasm that separated the Celestial Court and the Terrestrial Bureaucracy. The gods of Yu-Shan could not imagine why their Terrestrial kin would not welcome their oversight, while the gods of Creation could not imagine why their Celestial kin thought that such oversight would be welcomed. Across Creation, Terrestrial deities defied Yu-Shan's commandments, organizing local courts for mutual protection or else hiding behind bribes made to censors and high-ranking Celestial gods. Most egregiously, a trio of unidentified deities calling themselves the Syndics seized control of the city of Whitewall (known in the First Age as Ondar Shambal) and ruled it openly in complete defiance of Heavenly law. When the Immaculate Order and the Realm threatened to move against it, the Syndics informed Chejop Kejak of their true identities as Uvanavu, Yo-Ping and Luranume, respectively Yu-Shan's preeminent gods of health, peace and luck. The three gods bluntly threatened to reallocate those blessings away from the Realm completely and toward its regional enemies if the Realm challenged their authority over Whitewall in any way.

Kejak reported this blackmail attempt to Benadamaru, but unfortunately for him, the Syndics had already bought off the Northern censor. Benadamaru explained to Kejak that he would be happy to bring charges if the Sidereal desired. However, the Syndics' defense would almost certainly be that they were merely seeking to restore the holy city of Ondar Shambal, which had been desecrated by the Dragon-Blooded at the command of the Bronze Faction, to its former Essence-channeling capacity, something that virtually every Celestial god favored. Grudgingly, Kejak helped to supernaturally conceal the identities of Uvanavu, Yo-Ping and Luranume behind the alter egos of the Syndics, using refined versions of the same techniques that had earlier broken the Mask.

God Wars

The conflict between the Terrestrial and Celestial gods was punctuated by violent battle. Divine historians refer to these conflicts as the God Wars, although they were not so much wars as ill-conceived counter-insurgency efforts. The more reactionary of Yu-Shan's deities (with support from Ryzala) insisted that any and all Terrestrial courts that refused to submit to Heaven's authority be destroyed utterly. Actually achieving that goal soon proved to be more difficult than the hardliners realized. The Bureau of Nature flatly refused to sanction the use of the Aerial Legion against Terrestrial nature gods. Not only would such an action doom any attempt to establish a close working relationship between the Bureau and its Terrestrial counterparts, but Shogun-Regent Ghataru was reluctant to use the Aerial Legion for anything in light of its disastrous deployment a quarter-century earlier.

Deprived of the Aerial Legion, Ryzala instead decided to use the celestial lions as shock troops. For a period of several months, hundreds of celestial lions stormed through every Yu-Shan gate near a rebellious Terrestrial enclave. Under the command of militant gods from the Bureau of Destiny, lions established garrisons in Chiaroscuro, Paragon, Abalone, Azure and Tchoto-killi. While initially successful at clearing truculent gods out of those cities, the invading forces were ill prepared to handle a lengthy insurgency. Furthermore, while the gods of Yu-Shan could easily occupy areas near Yu-Shan gates, they lacked the capacity to develop extensive supply lines. Many of the Terrestrial courts withdrew from the initial attacks and, relying on guerilla tactics, drew the invaders out past their supply lines before launching counterattacks.

Morgan Hillan (order #910970)

The turning point came when fighting in Chiaroscuro severely disrupted the dragon lines of the area, triggering a major earthquake that devastated the city. Grandmother Bright, city god of Chiaroscuro and former Celestial goddess of vengeance, called in a few remaining Celestial favors to remove vital Heavenly backing from Ryzala's counter-insurgency forces.

The final major battle took place in the surviving First Age city of Tchoto-killi in the far Northwest. An attack force under the command of Nasri, Daimyo of Rainstorms, attacked a manse there illegally occupied by the Wind Master Blue Skulking Bear. The two warring factions accidentally destroyed the manse, and the resulting Essence discharge vaporized much of the still-populated city. Although some of the hardliners insisted on a course of continued aggression, cooler heads finally prevailed in Yu-Shan, and the Celestial Court turned to diplomacy in dealing with its rebellious Terrestrial kin.

After much diplomatic wrangling, the Sidereals and the Bureau of Heaven accepted a degree of realpolitik in their dealings with the Terrestrial gods, while the leaders of the various Terrestrial courts accepted that some cooperation with Yu-Shan was essential to Creation's functionality. Accordingly, so long as a Terrestrial god accepted in principal Yu-Shan's authority over her and continued to send in reports on whatever phenomenon was within her portfolio, the legality of her actions in Creation would largely be left to the discretion of the local censor. The Bureau of Heaven also reassigned the existing censors to ensure that the three who were most rigorous in their support of divine law were assigned to the Blessed Isle, while the Threshold fell under the jurisdiction of those censors with more "fluid" notions of appropriate conduct. The practical effect of all this was that rogue gods on the Blessed Isle were quickly brought to heel, while the gods of the Threshold could do as they wished so long as they made the right bribes to the right deities and didn't do anything utterly outrageous (or at least, nothing utterly outrageous near a Yu-Shan gate). By the time Great Forks established itself as a god-ruled city in which deities served openly in almost every level of the government, only the most reactionary of Yu-Shan's gods even bothered to complain.

The Night of Weeping Scribes

Although the end of the God Wars terminated large-scale hostilities between the Terrestrial and Celestial gods, it was not the last incursion by Celestial forces into Creation. Ever since the post-Contagion reorganization of the Celestial Order, the Bureau

Morgan Hillan (order #910970)

of Heaven had regularly sought to weaken the Bureaus of Nature and Humanity and assimilate their portfolios into its own collection, usually with great success. Ryzala was less successful in doing so with the Bureau of Seasons, but she persistently tried to have the Aerial Legion placed under her authority, despite blunt warnings from Nasri that the Bureau of Seasons would respond militarily if forced. In R.Y. 413, Ryzala called Nasri's bluff and launched a formal initiative to have the storm serpent removed from office and replaced with someone more to her liking. Three hours later, Ryzala was informed by nervous assistants that a squadron of storm serpents was circling the Hall of Celestial Stability. Ryzala scoffed at the suggestion that Nasri might order the Aerial Legion to attack the very offices of the Bureau of Heaven. And she was right—the serpents were only there to distract attention from the real attack.

That night, dozens of freak tornados struck all across Creation. Although the storms were powerful, they were mercifully brief, and the casualties were limited... very limited. Across Creation, the tornados damaged only accountancy schools, scriveners' offices, and tax assessors. In one night, over 300 of Creation's most skilled mortal bureaucrats were dead, many of them with prayers to Ryzala, the Lady of Bureaucracy and Paperwork, on their last breaths. Shocked to realize that Nasri was prepared to target Ryzala's mortal followers, to the point of stamping out literacy if need be, Ryzala backed down, too shaken to even call for an audit of Nasri's highly illegal intrusion into Creation.

Present-Day Concerns

Although the Bureaus of Heaven and Destiny clearly dominate heavenly politics (thanks mainly to the loose alliance between Ryzala and Chejop Kejak), their hold over Yu-Shan is beginning to slip. Various secret societies move through Yu-Shan, weaving their plots, as the censors stand oblivious to the machinations of the Architects and the Shining Glass Club or the potential anarchy of the Vindicators, let alone the subversive menace of the Listeners of Silence. The effect of the Scarlet Empress' disappearance did not impact Yu-Shan as profoundly as Creation, but neither did it pass unnoticed. Despite the Bronze Faction's best efforts, most of Yu-Shan still has a palpable disdain for the idea of Dragon-Blooded rule over Creation, and the possibility of violent Realm civil war erupting in the wake of the Empress' disappearance seems so obvious in hindsight that many gods are amazed that Kejak was not better prepared for it.

Following on the heels of the Empress' departure, the forces of the Mask of Winters sacked the city of Thorns. Details of the fall of Thorns were delivered by several of the city's surviving deities. Reports that the Mask of Winters had deployed the ancient behemoth Slayer of Nations were disturbing enough, but the escapees had even more frightening revelations. Those gods and Sidereals who had been tasked with spying on the activities of the Underworld had been aware of the existence of Deathlords for centuries, but their information had always been sparse. Thus, the consensus of Yu-Shan's intelligence agencies was that the Deathlords were merely ghosts of exceptional age and power. According to the first deity to see a Deathlord and survive, the Mask of Winters was no mere ghost, for he deployed powers that resembled dark reflections of Solar Charms, as well as necromantic spells equal in power to Adamant Circle Sorcery. Worst of all was the description of the Mask's livery—his soldiers wore armor decorated with a twisted mockery of the standard once associated with First Age Solar Larquen Quen.

Aside from the catastrophic loss of life when the city fell into a shadowland, the Fall of Thorns was also an enormous public relations disaster for the Bureau of Destiny, which had failed in any way to predict an enormous invading force marching straight out of the Underworld to conquer a major city. Heaven's intelligence agencies began looking at the Deathlords more closely and quickly realized that there were more of them than previously thought, all of whom appeared to be the ghosts of First Age Solars augmented by power drawn straight from the Neverborn. The discovery immediately galvanized Lytek into action for the first time since his demotion, and he began agitating across Yu-Shan for a full-scale inquiry into the Usurpation of the sort that the Sidereals had successfully evaded in its immediate aftermath. He even went so far as to suggest that if Solars had fallen to Neverborn corruption due to the trauma of their betrayal and death during the Usurpation, then the Bronze Faction might be guilty of treasonable offenses. While Ryzala squelched Lytek's renewed claims for an inquiry into the Bronze Faction and the Usurpation, she was unable to stop what happened next.

The Solars Return

On 7 Ascending Water, 764, Lytek sent the following message directly to Chejop Kejak, with copies delivered to every divisional head in Yu-Shan: "It is my very great pleasure to inform you that the Solar Exalted have returned."

Morgan Hillan (order #910970)

That message set off a firestorm in Yu-Shan that has not abated since. When Kejak sent emissaries to Lytek's offices to find out exactly what he meant by this terse yet remarkable statement, they first had to get past the eight celestial lions and two lesser elemental dragons who had been reassigned to guard both the Right Hand of Power's offices and his person. Making it abundantly clear that protocol would never again trump security where Exaltation was concerned, the guardians refused to allow the emissaries to enter Lytek's office until they consented to a thorough and invasive search of their persons. Only then were they allowed inside, where Lytek was only too happy to inform them that the majority of the Solar Essences had begun reincarnating earlier that year. Lytek also said: "Of course, I would have told Kejak sooner, but, in accordance with my duties, I wanted to first make certain that all of the Exaltations were polished up and properly reinserted into Creation."

Timeline of Yu-Shan

Note: B.C. refers to "before Contagion."
All B.C. dates are approximate.
R.Y. refers to the year under the Scarlet Empire.

Prehistory	Creation and Yu-Shan forged by the Primordials, who also made Incarnae and gods to maintain Creation.
circa 4500 B.C.	The Primordial War ends. The Unconquered Sun leads the gods into Yu-Shan and begins playing the Games of Divinity.
circa 3900 B.C.	Ascension Day. Lesser elemental dragons are elevated to the status of gods.
circa 2800 B.C.	The Kukla ascends to become the first greater elemental dragon and is bound by the Unconquered Sun.
circa 500 B.C.	The Unconquered Sun turns his face from the Solar Exalted.
circa 400 B.C.	The Usurpation.
circa 300 B.C.	The Ondar Shambal Affair.
R.Y. 19	Anisa-Shoshan executed for consorting with the Yozis. Ryzala becomes Shogun of Celestial Concerns.
R.Y. 27	The Yu-Shan Gates are reopened.
R.Y. 71	The Syndics seize control of Whitewall.
R.Y. 78-84	The God Wars, and the destruction of Chiaroscuro and Tchoto-Killi.
R.Y. 112	The Blind Mountain Society unofficially forms.
R.Y. 158	The Shining Glass Club begins accepting "customers."
R.Y. 202	The Architects of the Empty Vault forms.
R.Y. 413	The Night of Weeping Scribes.
R.Y. 525	The Vindicators of the Game forms.
R.Y. 764	The Scarlet Empress disappears. Lytek reports that the Solars have returned.
R.Y. 768	Present day.

Morgan Hillan (order #910970)

Kejak's rage upon hearing this report only worsened when he investigated the assignment of Lytek's new security detail. The powerful guards protecting the Right Hand of Power were each assigned by different deities, ranging from the three Syndics to Ahlat to Wun Ja, the Director of Humanity. Even deities who were not particularly opposed to the Bronze Faction or the Dragon-Blooded still remembered how rudely Lytek was manhandled during the Usurpation, and the blunt show of force served to show that it would not be tolerated again.

Today, conflicts in Yu-Shan that have simmered for centuries are reaching their boiling point. The Celestial Court as a whole takes no position on the return of the Solars or the possibility of restoring the Creation-Ruling Mandate, but regardless, hundreds of deities across Yu-Shan view the return of the Lawgivers as an unprecedented opportunity to settle old scores. While Lytek himself eschews politics in favor of tending to his beloved Exaltations, dozens of high-ranking deities who have been stifled for centuries by Ryzala's autocratic nature now scheme to elevate Lytek to her position whether he wants it or not. The regional war gods openly speculate that, with the Solars reborn, it is time for the Golden Lord to return to Yu-Shan and take back control of the Division of Battles from Bronze Faction sympathizer Hu Dai Lang. Gods within the Bureau of Seasons take bets on which Solar will be the first to command the Aerial Legion.

Most distressingly for the Bronze Faction, the leaders of the Faction are dominated by the eldest Sidereals, many of whom are nearing the end of their appointed life spans. Two years ago, the Sidereal Chairman of the Convention of Air died of natural causes at the age of 4,438. Unable to replace him with an ally in the face of opposition from the Syndics, Chejop Kejak has used all of his influence just to keep the powerful position out of the Gold Faction's hands. Kejak himself is old even by the standards of the Five-Score Fellowship, and his death is likely to come within the next few decades. He has no obvious successor within the Bronze Faction, and none of his peers within that faction are likely to possess nearly as much influence within the Bureau of Destiny or Heaven as a whole as Kejak has held. After his death, it seems increasingly likely that his Gold Faction rival Ayesha Ura will assume much of his authority unless Ryzala and other pro-Bronze Faction deities involve themselves directly into Sidereal politics to an unheard of degree.

Now, the gods of Yu-Shan must grapple with the uncertainty that has troubled humanity since its birth. For the first time since the Low First Age's end, these ancient luminaries must move into the future with no idea of what it will bring. Change is coming for Yu-Shan, but whether it's change for the better or worse, no man or god can say.

Morgan Hillan (order #910970)

Morgan Hillan (order #910970)

CHAPTER TWO
LIFE IN THE CELESTIAL CITY

Commonalities

Divinities high and low make their homes in the Celestial City, and though the city holds for each social stratum many different experiences, some elements of life in Heaven are universal.

Time and Its Measurement

When the Unconquered Sun takes the lead in the Games of Divinity, the Sky Dome shines with the image of his namesake, which illuminates Heaven as if by the light of noon. When Luna takes the lead, the moon shines down by her fickle whim from anywhere upon the Sky Dome and in any phase, but always sheds light as if by a full moon on an early starless evening. When the Unconquered Sun and Luna tie, their images shine together, and Heaven is lit as if by Creation's early twilight. When one of the Maidens is in the lead, the Sky Dome is lit only with the image of Creation's night sky—the star of the Maiden in the lead brightest and Heaven as dark as on a moonless night.

Though the Unconquered Sun and Luna trade off positions in the lead with some regularity and the Maidens lead more rarely, days and nights in Heaven have no fixed length. In Creation, each cycle lasts 25 hours, but in Heaven, the light of the sun may persist for short minutes or (rarely) long weeks. Gods do not require sleep and have no circadian rhythms, but mortals and younger Exalts in the Celestial City find the ever-changing heavenly vault to be disorienting and often even maddening, especially when the Games of Divinity become particularly exciting and the sky shifts from noon day to midnight and back again every few minutes. Mortals and Exalts typically have difficulty sleeping in Yu-Shan for the first week or so they're there.

Morgan Hillan (order #910970)

Exalted soon adjust and have no further difficulties, but for mortals, the problem persists and may result in long-term mental problems due to sleep deprivation. However, many gods (usually those who make great use of their own God-Blooded offspring) possess a specialized version of the Touch of Divinity Charm that can render a mortal permanently immune to this disorientation.

The divinities of the Celestial Court measure time in days, months, seasons and years as the natives of Creation do, but they don't measure days by the passage of light and dark. Instead, they measure days according to the passage of the Golden Barque across the Sky Dome. During the day, the Barque moves westward, from the Quay of Dawn to the Quay of Twilight. At night, it soars back again. The Barque is massive, nearly as big as the heavenly sphere atop the Sky Dome that stands as the symbol of the Unconquered Sun's authority. The Golden Barque is also quite reflective, and regardless of which Incarna leads the games, the Barque continues to give off a steady glow that allows the gods to track its movements.

Visitors and the Passage of Time

The disorienting cycle of days and nights, the leisurely pace at which the members of the Celestial Court live their lives and the abundance of luxuries compared to life in Creation together often conspire to rob visitors to Heaven of their sense of time. Tales tell of mortals who visit Heaven and find that a Celestial day is a Terrestrial year, an exaggeration popularized by Creation's mortal folklore (and by gods who find it useful to accentuate Heaven's unearthly qualities when describing the Celestial City to mortal worshipers)—but it exaggerates a real phenomenon. Many visitors to Heaven can lose themselves in Yu-Shan for what feels like mere weeks and then return to Creation to find months have passed.

The Sidereal Exalted eventually grow used to Heaven, but many find themselves so overworked that they, too, lose track of the passage of time, absent Creation's fixed cycle of days.

Because gods are immortal and any elemental in any Celestial position of note is ageless, and because life in Heaven has little urgency, Yu-Shan's divinities often speak of months in the same terms mortals would speak of days and hours as mortals speak of minutes. The gods of the Celestial Court see the pace of life in Creation as unfashionably urgent and rushed, especially the lives of those Terrestrial gods who grow caught up in mortal affairs. The oldest gods of Heaven recall millions of (largely tedious and unenlightening) years of servitude under the rule of the Primordials, and the mere thousands of years since the Primordial War still feel to them like a brief and well-deserved vacation following a lifetime of menial exertion.

Economy

Mortal prayer fuels the Celestial economy. In Heaven, prayer takes two forms, both physical: Quintessence, which is the form taken by all non-specific prayers mortals direct toward Heaven, and Ambrosia, which is the form taken by all prayers mortals direct toward specific Celestial deities. Quintessence is the more common, while Ambrosia is the more valuable.

A shining liquid, Quintessence appears within jade basins in the centers of Heaven's jade prayer plazas. Because nearly every mortal in Creation utters some minor prayer to Heaven at some point during each day, Quintessence is plentiful—but not totally unlimited. All spirits employed in Heaven have a right to a ration of Quintessence, and almost all use it, but only the lowest of Celestial divinities actually admit any need for it. Important Celestial personages invariably send servants to collect Quintessence for their households. Collecting one's own Quintessence is a sign of low status, and certain spirits of fallen stature have been known to eke out an existence without Quintessence rather than collect any ration themselves.

In most of the Celestial City, each jade basin is overseen by a regulator, employed by the Bureau of Heaven, who ensures each spirit takes no more than its allotted ration. These gods report to the celestial lions any thief they spot. Within Heaven's slums and ruined areas, the jade basins still fill with Quintessence but are most often controlled by local gang leaders, who claim much of it for themselves or ration it out to underlings. The Bureau of Heaven cannot redirect the flow of Quintessence away from a given prayer basin, but the basins fill equally, and an emptied basin refills no more quickly than a full one. The slums of Heaven are not a significant drain on the city's Quintessence resources.

In its native state, Ambrosia appears as a sweet-smelling (and delicious, if tasted) amorphous block of shifting colors. The concentrated substance of directed prayer, it comes into existence only near those gods known to Creation's mortal races, and only when some

Morgan Hillan (order #910970)

mortal or other prays to a Celestial god. It manifests on a solid surface within a few feet of the god to whom it is dedicated.

Even Celestial gods with no cults receive a limited quantity of Ambrosia, if they are employed by the Hierarchy. All gods who earn Ambrosia through prayer must tithe 10 percent of their earnings to the Unconquered Sun, but the chief of the Incarnae keeps very little. Drinking only celestial wine and eating only the peaches of immortality, wearing an imperishable panoply and attending no soirees or gatherings, the highest of gods has little need for either Quintessence or Ambrosia himself. Most of his tribute he redistributes, personally funding the salaries of all Celestial officials. All of Yu-Shan is in his employ. The Bureau of Heaven cuts the raw Ambrosia it distributes as salary into coins, wraps it in thin gold foil, and stamps it with the image of the Unconquered Sun. This coinage is Heaven's chief currency.

In their raw state, Quintessence and Ambrosia that are removed from Heaven instantly evaporate into nothing. They form only in Heaven, and though they can theoretically be worked in Heaven or in any god's private sanctum, it is impossible to transport them from Heaven to the sanctum of a Terrestrial god in their natural form. Terrestrial spirits lack any access to either material, although while in Heaven Terrestrial gods are afforded a ration of Quintessence and collect Ambrosia from prayers directed to them as Celestial spirits do. The Celestial authorities restrict Terrestrial spirits' access to Heaven in part because Terrestrial divinities would otherwise make constant excuses to visit Heaven on trivial business merely to collect Ambrosia and Quintessence. Exalted who possess cults also receive Ambrosia while in Yu-Shan, although there is little they can do with it save give it to one of the gods, whether as a gift or a bribe. Sidereal Exalts are forbidden to maintain cults.

Using Quintessence and Ambrosia

Any god can work Quintessence or Ambrosia using the Craft ability, though beings without the Creation of Perfection Charm (see **The Books of Sorcery, Vol. IV—The Roll of Glorious Divinity I**, p. 153) suffer a -3 penalty to relevant Craft rolls and take twice as long to perform the work. Theoretically, any Essence user can work the materials (even mortal thaumaturges), but as a practical matter, the smith must possess the Craft (Quintessence) Ability, which is understandably rare among Creation's mortals and Exalts. Almost every neighborhood in

Morgan Hillan (order #910970)

Heaven has craft spirits who live comfortably working Quintessence and Ambrosia for their communities, and many spirits achieve fame through excellence at craft skills. Gods with manors and staffs usually employ private crafters but still go to famed artists for major works. Gods dedicated to the craft of Quintessence and Ambrosia belong to the Bureau of Heaven but receive only the standard Quintessence ration as salary. Most of their wealth comes from their clients' payments.

Of the two materials, Quintessence is the less useful. Quintessence can be made only into short-lived, ephemeral material, such as food finer than all but the richest of Creation's fare, delicate clothing that lasts only several months or formal wear suitable only for a single soiree. Anyone with regular access to Quintessence may live a life of material luxury that would be the envy of all but the richest mortals in Creation.

Gods can transform Ambrosia into any mundane substance imaginable, plus jade. Only Ambrosia dedicated to the Unconquered Sun can be forged into orichalcum, and likewise for prayers to the other Incarnae into their favored magical materials. Craft gods create only small amounts of these materials, which is heavily regulated by the gods of the magical materials. Jade is easily the most common magical material in Heaven.

For the elite, Ambrosia forms the backbone of Yu-Shan's true economy. Though materials spun of Quintessence equal the greatest available in Creation, anything made from Ambrosia far surpasses mere mortal limitations. The gods of Yu-Shan require huge amounts of Ambrosia for their parties and fetes, to create their panoplies and to decorate their homes.

Divine Salary

The Manual of Exalted Power—The Sidereals presents the Salary Background, which the denizens of Heaven use in place of Resources. For full details on Salary, please see that book, but here's a simplified form: Salary represents access to Quintessence and Ambrosia. It's worth roughly Resources +1 in Heaven and Resources +2 in Creation. Salary 4 is worth Resources 5 in both Heaven and Creation.

All gods in Heaven have Salary equal to their Cult Background; additionally, gods with employment in the Bureaus begin with a Salary equal to Cult +1.

Transportation

Celestial citizens and visitors to Yu-Shan alike generally move about the city in one of three ways: the canals, the clouds and the aerial rickshaws. Some Celestial residents also find other methods, such as flying steeds, and many spirits are capable of flight themselves, but the three aforementioned modes of transportation account for the vast majority of Yu-Shan's mobility.

Travel By Canal

The Quicksilver Canal Network is by far the most common mode of transport for the citizens of Heaven. The canals stretch across Yu-Shan, from the gates at the adamant wall to the quicksilver well in the heart of the city. The layout of the canal system consists of spokes radiating out from the center of Yu-Shan to the adamant wall. Connecting the spokes are traversing canals laid out in concentric rings that intersect the spokes every 100 miles or so. Each canal is 30 yards wide, a channel of liquid metal consisting of a 12-yard-wide central lane flanked by two nine-yard-wide lanes. The two outer lanes of each canal shine silver, while the central lane is brilliant gold. No place within Yu-Shan is more than 50 miles from a canal, and throughout most of Yu-Shan, the canals are much more densely laid even than that.

The most common transports found in the canals are the ubiquitous dragon boats. A relatively small vessel, each dragon boat is large enough to accommodate six human-sized beings, including the pilot. A traveler can hire a dragon boat (Resources ••) at nearly any dock in Yu-Shan. The dragon boats are very intuitive, and the traveler only needs Sail 1 in order to pilot such a vessel. Hiring a pilot raises the cost of a dragon boat to Resources •••.

Most dragon boats are restricted to the silver lanes. Although considered the "slow lane," each silver lane is extremely fast by mortal standards, allowing movement at about 100 miles per hour. A dragon boat that travels continuously can make the journey from the Jade Pleasure Dome to any of the outer Yu-Shan gates within about 20 hours, and traveling from one outer gateway to any other takes between one to five days. Travelers using the canals for official business typically use the gold lane, which is vastly quicker than the outer lanes. A dragon boat in the gold lane travels at a rate of approximately 100 miles per minute and can traverse the length of Yu-Shan in about half an hour.

However, travelers who enter the gold lane without a Celestial writ carrying an official seal flout Yu-Shan's laws at their peril. Whenever an unauthorized vessel

Morgan Hillan (order #910970)

enters the gold lane, one of the canal gods will quickly immobilize it and place the travelers under arrest. A Sidereal or an Eclipse Caste Solar who has some experience with heavenly society can attempt to bluff her way out of custody by persuading the canal god that her use of the gold lane is authorized by the laws of Heaven. Doing so requires a successful (Manipulation + Bureaucracy) roll against the canal god's applicable MDV. Less persuasive characters may find it easier to bribe their way onto the gold lane by offering the canal god the equivalent of Resources •••• (or alternatively, a powerful talisman or one-dot artifact) and making a successful (Manipulation + Larceny) roll against the god's MDV. Many other sorts of craft make use of the canals, most notably private yachts and pleasure barges—the dragon boats are merely the most common and the most readily available. Barges of substantial size using the lanes of silver travel at half the speed of dragon boats, but all craft that make use of the golden lanes move at the same speed. Very few gods take pleasure barges into the golden lanes, however, because the purpose of a pleasure barge is twofold: to be seen, and to enjoy a luxurious cruise. Craft that make use of the golden lanes travel too fast to be seen clearly from shore, and few can take part in all the pleasures of a luxury cruise when a journey lasts for mere minutes.

Travel by Cloud

Almost anyone can call down a cloud from Heaven's sky. Celestial deities with Essence 6 or higher, air elementals and gods with the spirit Charms Affinity Air Control or Weather Control may do so automatically, with no roll or expenditure of Essence or Willpower. Sidereals with the Song of Spirit Persuasion Charm may likewise call down clouds at no cost, regardless of Essence. Anyone (including mortals) who doesn't fit those criteria may call down a cloud with a successful prayer roll. (See **Exalted**, p. 132 for the mechanics of prayer rolls.) Officially, there are no restrictions on traveling via cloud. Unofficially, since there are a finite number of clouds in the skies over Yu-Shan, calling on one for frivolous purposes is a minor social faux pas, and lesser gods or Sidereals who make a habit of doing so may find themselves the subject of audits called by angry gods offended at their lack of humility.

A cloud can fly at a top speed of 300 miles per hour and can reach any point on the surface of Yu-Shan. Each cloud is a few feet thick and a few yards across, and a summoned cloud can carry the god or

Morgan Hillan (order #910970)

Exalt who summoned it plus a number of passengers equal to the summoner's permanent Essence. The clouds are perfectly silent and neither produce breezes that might disturb those nearby nor permit any winds to disarrange those who travel on them. It is nearly impossible to fall off a cloud no matter how fast it travels.

Once summoned, a cloud arrives quickly, flying straight down to the summoner's position. Once the summoner commands, the cloud silently rises at least 500 yards into the air and then speeds toward its destination. However, the clouds are highly responsive to the will of their summoners and can be made to perform such feats as flying down to catch characters who have jumped or fallen from high windows or balconies. Gossips in Yu-Shan still love to repeat the tale of a lusty Eclipse Caste from the First Age who made it a habit of using clouds in that manner to escape dramatically from the palaces of angry gods he had just cuckolded.

Travel by Other Means

While travel by canal or by cloud are easily the most prevalent modes of transportation in Yu-Shan, there are a dazzling number of artifact flying vehicles to be found here. Although such vehicles are rarely as fast as the canals or even the clouds, flying vessels do have a certain cachet. More importantly, they are neither as closely regulated nor watched as the canals and the clouds, and such vessels allow a traveler greater flexibility and anonymity ... provided he doesn't do something foolish like crash-dive into a private residence.

By far the most common (albeit the most pedestrian) flying ship in Yu-Shan is the aerial rickshaw. Although some are more decorative than others, all aerial rickshaws are based on fundamentally the same design: a 14-foot-long, 6-foot-wide jade oval with a depression in the front where the driver sits and a windowed-door on each side to allow passengers to access the rickshaw's interior. That interior isn't very big—an aerial rickshaw can accommodate two passengers comfortably or up to five very uncomfortably. The pilot of an aerial rickshaw can be any god of air, fire or flight, or any Air- or Fire-aspected Dragon-Blood. A driver must commit 5 motes of Essence to attune to the vehicle, and Dragon-Blooded pilots must also spend an additional 3 motes per hour of flight. Any Essence user can pilot the rickshaw without committing any motes by inserting a Celestial, Air or Fire hearthstone of at least level 2 into a socket next to the pilot's seat. The pilot must have Sail 2 or better to safely operate the rickshaw.

Aerial rickshaws are immune to bashing damage and have a soak of 10L, a Hardness of 8L and Ux20/Mx10/Cx4/Ix2/D health levels. The passengers are completely protected by this soak, while the driver has 75% cover (all attacks targeting the driver are at +3 difficulty). On the downside, however, an aerial rickshaw has no offensive or defensive weaponry, and piloting the ship requires both hands, so the pilot cannot return fire. Worse, the rickshaw is designed so that the doors cannot be opened while the ship is in flight (a safety measure designed to keep passengers from falling to their deaths), and the rickshaw's adamant windows do not open, so passengers cannot attack from inside the ship either.

Aerial rickshaws are fairly slow by Heaven's standards, with a top speed of 50 miles per hour. They are capable of functioning in Creation as well as Heaven, and a rickshaw is small enough to fit through a Yu-Shan gate. Accordingly, lesser gods who must work in Creation often take aerial rickshaws with them, and there is no restriction on private ownership of one of these vessels. An aerial rickshaw requires an hour of minor repairs after every 100 hours of continuous use. The character performing these repairs must possess both Occult 2 and Lore 2, and the repairs cost Resources ••.

In addition to the aerial rickshaws, there are a significant number of small flight-based artifacts to be found in Yu-Shan, most dating from the First Age or even earlier. Warbirds and wings of the raptor (see **The Books of Sorcery, Vol. I—Wonders of the Lost Age**, pp. 41 and 54, respectively) are quite common here, and a few ancient deities possess ancient flying ships created by Autochthon before his departure from Yu-Shan. Yaogin, the Bearer of the Lapis Ewer (see p. 156), for example, is known to have an amber broach fashioned by the Great Maker. When Yaogin so desires, he touches the broach and his body silently disintegrates into a swarm of colorful butterflies that dissipate and then reappear in the twinkling of an eye wherever in Yu-Shan the god wishes.

There are also a number of Charms common to the Celestial gods that facilitate rapid transportation. Most notably, Landscape Travel allows most Celestial gods to fly, albeit usually no more than twice the god's normal movement rate. More powerful deities, however, possess Charms that can increase their movement rates and, accordingly, their flight speeds. The Shapechange Charm can also permit a god to fly by transforming himself into a winged form or even into a cloud or a soft breeze.

Morgan Hillan (order #910970)

Hurry Home and Portal

The descriptions of the Hurry Home and Portal Charms in The Books of Sorcery, Vol. IV—The Roll of Glorious Divinity I say gods who know those Charms may use them to move anywhere within their domains and sanctums. That same book also says that Celestial gods without specific sanctums within Yu-Shan treat the whole of the Celestial City as their sanctum. Regrettably, these Charms don't allow gods to move about Heaven freely. Celestial divinities treat Heaven as their sanctum only for the purposes of immortality, and must travel as other gods do.

How Not to Do It

There are some limitations on what constitute acceptable modes of transportation within the Celestial City. Most importantly, a god (or especially an Exalt) who seeks rapid transit through Yu-Shan should avoid any method of transportation that disarranges or perturbs a higher Essence deity in any way. The laws of Yu-Shan are often vague, and sometimes deliberately so, as the potent deities who make and prosecute such laws wish for themselves the discretion to punish those who get in their way or who even simply annoy them. For all its wonders, Heaven is often a hidebound and conventional place, and no matter how desperately a Solar Exalt needs to traverse Yu-Shan as quickly as possible, her excuses will not protect her from the ire of an ancient god whose tea ceremony was disrupted by her Stormwind Rider spell.

Generally, spells such as Stormwind Rider, Flight of Separation and nearly every other spell below the Adamant Circle that permits rapid movement are illegal in Heaven, as are even Solar level spells that are not utterly discrete in their functioning. It is highly illegal to summon elementals to Yu-Shan for transportation purposes or to bring a demon into Yu-Shan for any purpose without authorization from the Bureau of Heaven. Movement Charms are illegal if they create any sort of disturbance or even significant amounts of noise. Some flying artifacts are permissible due to special dispensations made to Vanileth when his power was at its peak, but only if the user of the artifact flies high enough so as not to disturb any of the gods. The Yu-Shan gates are too small to permit the passage of any flying vessel bigger than a warbird unless the Bureau of Heaven grants special permission to temporarily alter the dimensions of a gate. The Bureau has not done so since before the Usurpation.

Secret Societies

Throughout the Second Age, rumors of the Incarnae's apathy and addiction made their way through Yu-Shan, and the various gods reacted to those tales each in her own way. Most simply shrugged and continued doing their jobs, although perhaps far more willing to take Ambrosia under the table in exchange for performing said job in a manner more advantageous to some more powerful god. Some deities, however, took more deliberate steps in response, quietly forming hidden allegiances in support of secretive goals. Of course, for gods, especially high-ranking gods, simply being in a "secret society" is not per se illegal. It's what dirty laundry that society keeps hidden that runs the risk of auditing or worse.

The best known (and perhaps least respected) of these groups is the Blind Mountain Society, ironically an insulting name that the society's members have adopted in defiance of their enemies. The Blind Mountain Society is named for its founder, Flashing Peak, the God of the Imperial Mountain and Shogun of the Hierarchy of Type within the Bureau of Nature. Her enemies call her the Blind Mountain for her refusal to acknowledge the changes that the Contagion had wrought in Yu-Shan. Traditionalist to the point of reactionary, the Blind Mountain Society consists of old and powerful deities who long for Yu-Shan as it was meant to be—the shining metropolis ruled by the benevolent (and attentive) light of the Sun and bent to the will of the Sun's Exalted children. Bitter about the Usurpation to the present day, the Blind Mountain Society blames the Contagion and the Fair Folk War on the Sidereals' betrayal of the Mandate of Heaven. For the Society's first 700 years, its members, unable to restore the Solar Deliberative, contented themselves with reminiscing about better days, plotting the occasional stab at Bronze Faction interests, and performing their duties honestly and according to time-tested procedures. The return of the Solars finally presents the Society with the chance to put its values to the test, but so far, its members hesitate, perhaps out of fear that the reborn Solars are not yet the heroes of legend that they once were and that restoring the Mandate of Heaven to such neophytes might make Creation's situation even worse.

The Vindicators of the Game are also loyalists, but are far bolder in their agenda, as the stakes they play for are so high that the members are prepared to break any rule. The Vindicators are all gods who have followed the Unconquered Sun faithfully since before the Primordial War. They know what he and the other Incarnae once were, and they know what the Incarnae have become. And they believe they know what is responsible—the

Morgan Hillan (order #910970)

damnable, Yozi-touched Games of Divinity. The Vindicators are convinced that something in the Games themselves has sapped the will of the Incarnae and rendered them incapable of action. Perhaps it was a trap left behind by the malignant Primordials. Perhaps the Incarnae were simply not capable of safely using the Games that were fashioned for the pleasure of higher beings. Whatever the reason, the Sun who could not be conquered has instead been lulled into complacency, and the Vindicators mean to do something about it, even if it means somehow destroying the Jade Pleasure Dome itself. Unfortunately, even public discussion of the Vindicators' views might carry the death penalty—not only do they cast doubt on the spiritual perfection of the Incarnae, but they threaten the Games themselves. The Incarnae are not the only deities addicted to the Games, as playing even a single turn is a transformative experience to most gods. Accordingly, the Vindicators keep their goals very secret.

The Architects of the Empty Vault form the polar opposite of the Blind Mountain Society, in that its members are quite happy with the new status quo and eager to profit from it. Something of an open secret in Yu-Shan, albeit one whose illicit activities are too subtle to attract the censors, the Architects are a group of younger, less powerful, but far more ambitious deities who have observed the Unconquered Sun's quiescence and have decided that his time and that of his divine followers has passed. A secretive fraternal order, the Architects trade favors among themselves like candy among school children. The group's only goal is the advancement of its individual members, and when one member advances, it becomes his duty to return the favor to those who helped him. Initially, such favors consisted simply of information, Ambrosia and other minor benefits. As the gods of Yu-Shan focused more and more on their own self-interest, however, the Architects became increasingly aggressive in advancement. In R.Y. 243, the Architects successfully staged their first assassination to clear the path for a member's promotion. Over the next five centuries, they would bring about the deaths of more than a dozen deities, most prominently the predecessor (and also father) of Blue Crest Merchant, the current God of Naval Trade. The Architects are currently weighing the possibility of assassinating Ruvia, the head of the Division of Journeys within the Bureau of Destiny and Blue Crest Merchant's immediate superior.

Morgan Hillan (order #910970)

Like the Architects of the Empty Vault, the Shining Glass Club is not so much a secret society as a criminal enterprise. While the Architects deal in favors and nepotism, however, the Club deals in something even more desirable. The members of the Shining Glass Club are all gods who have had the experience of actually playing a turn at the Games of Divinity. While the Incarnae only invite their closest allies to play the Games more than once, there are so many gods in Yu-Shan that it would take centuries for every god to have a turn, even if the Incarnae actively tried to share the experience with everyone. And so, the Shining Glass Club saw that there was a demand that needed to be filled. The Club members have downloaded their collective memories with the Games into specially prepared dream opals, intensifying the experience so that it is nearly as addictive as touching the actual game pieces themselves. Club members can now provide the most exhilarating experience Yu-Shan has to offer, and in their magnanimity, the first taste is always free. For those who want to experience it again, there is always a price, whether in Ambrosia or favors. The Shining Glass Club chooses its victims well, always looking for the gods who are most eager to experience the Games and who are most likely to become completely enthralled.

But for all their mendacity and corruption, the Architects of the Empty Vault and the Shining Glass Club are as pure as the driven snow compared to Heaven's most secretive and destructive secret order: the Listeners of Silence. Indeed, the group is so mysterious that most of its members don't realize that they belong to it. The Listeners are all gods who at some point have been co-opted by the Neverborn. Either a god fell into the hands of a Primordial before the War's end and was fundamentally altered by its power, or she was captured and secretly transported to the Mouth of Oblivion and forced to hear its obscene whispers. There are only a few members so far, and none of them realize what sort of things they do during those brief but increasingly frequent blackout periods. But more and more, their impact is being felt, across Yu-Shan and Creation both.

The Carnival of Meeting

Heaven holds many festivals, to celebrate countless historic occasions, but no fete in Yu-Shan is as grand or as important as the Carnival of Meeting.

Held every year on the third day of Calibration, the Carnival of Meeting represents virtually the only time the gods of Yu-Shan interact with mortals on an individual basis instead of through a deity/worshiper relationship (or worse, through a master/servant relationship). According to the eldest gods, the idea for the first Carnival of Meeting was proposed by an ancient Zenith who held the ear of the Unconquered Sun in the earliest days of the First Age. Concerned that their relocation from the Blessed Isle to Yu-Shan might cause the gods to grow distant from their mortal worshipers, the Zenith proposed an annual convocation during which the most powerful of the gods would have the opportunity to interact face-to-face with Creation's most gifted and intelligent mortals, the best the human race had to offer. Seeing wisdom in this suggestion, the Unconquered Sun charged his Exalted with identifying which mortals should be invited to this convocation. He further commanded that the convocation be held during Calibration so that it would have the added bonus of distracting Solar sorcerers during the only time in which they could attempt to summon Third Circle demons.

Throughout the early First Age, the annual convocation was a somewhat sedate affair. The Exalted chose mortal attendees based on merit, with a strong bias in favor of intellectual achievement, and the early convocations were more like the meetings of philosophical salons than the bawdier atmosphere of the modern Carnival. As the Great Curse took hold, however, the Solars increasingly choose attendees based on less noble characteristics, inviting mortals renowned for their beauty, their martial prowess or, in many cases, what favors or bribes they could make to the sponsoring Solars. Some gods would later conclude that the Unconquered Sun's decision to turn his back on this Exalted sprang from some incident which took place during the convocation, since it was the one time that the Incarna could directly observe his errant children en masse. In any case, by that time, decadence had already crept into the once austere occasion, and the name "Carnival of Meeting," originally used in irony, had become the semi-official name of the convocation.

By the time of the Usurpation, the Carnival of Meeting had become less about demonstrating to the gods the best that humanity had to offer and more about winning the jaded gods' favor by showing them new and interesting experiences. Less than a century prior, a particularly corrupt Twilight had scandalized the gods of Yu-Shan by inviting the first lunatic to the Carnival to show off his particularly intriguing and amusing collection of derangements. Since then, such invitees have become distressingly common, with those gods tasked with formulating the guest list going to ever greater lengths to find mortals who are "interesting" enough to justify their presence in Yu-Shan.

Initially, the Solar Deliberative oversaw the preparations for the Carnival with the assistance of the Court of Seasons. The Carnival of Meeting,

Morgan Hillan (order #910970)

like all annual holidays and events, fell under the purview of the seasonal gods, but the Bureau of Seasons, unlike the Court of Seasons, had actual work to do and successfully fobbed off what its leaders considered tedious social planning on their Terrestrial counterparts.

The Carnival that had been scheduled to take place during the Calibration of the Usurpation was abruptly cancelled when the Solar Exalted were massacred by their own servants. At the same time, almost all of the mortal attendees scheduled to appear at that year's Carnival had the misfortune of being near their Solar patrons when the Usurpation began, and most of them were quickly killed in the crossfire. Over the course of the following year, the Court of Seasons, aware of how much of its limited status was tied up in the Carnival, petitioned the Incarnae to allow the annual affair to continue, now under the Court's direct supervision. Permission was granted by the Bureau of Heaven, as the Unconquered Sun either delegated the decision to Anisa-Shoshan or else was too preoccupied by the Games of Divinity to respond at all. That did not stop the Court of Seasons from asserting that it was organizing the Carnival pursuant to the Unconquered Sun's commands, and the canny leaders of the Court used their apparent authority to gain favors from powerful deities in setting up the event. The first post-Usurpation Carnival was a great success, made more so by the fact that it was now wholly a god-driven affair and by the fact that, after the chaos of the Usurpation, the gods were grateful for the chance to relax and enjoy themselves. The only thing to mar that year's Carnival was the fact that the Sidereal Exalted were, conspicuously, the only Exalted of any kind in attendance. The Solars were dead, the Lunars were in exile, and the Dragon-Blooded were simply considered unworthy to be allowed into Yu-Shan.

Since then, the Court of Seasons has fully transformed the Carnival of Meeting into its modern form, eliminating every vestige of the original goal of showcasing Creation's most inspiring mortals. Today, a mortal who attends the Carnival of Meeting gets there by one of two means: invitation or dumb luck. A mortal invited to the Carnival is there because one or more gods have taken an interest in him. Perhaps the mortal is renowned as Creation's most beautiful courtesan. Perhaps he is Creation's strongest man or greatest swordsman. Perhaps she is a schizophrenic compulsive liar, and the outrageous stories she tells are amusing to gods who have understanding of mental illness.

The Dragon-Blooded and Yu-Shan

As the Bronze Faction can attest, most gods seem to have a visceral contempt for the Dragon-Blooded. A few gods, mainly gods intimately connected to the Scarlet Empire such as Gri-Fel, are staunch supporters of the Bronze Faction and the Immaculate Order, but for the most part, this loyalty is self-serving—Gri-Fel, the God of the Imperial City, cannot meaningfully oppose the Immaculate Order without undermining the source of all his power. In contrast to Gri-Fel, Jagalza, the Satrap of the Realm, supports the Bronze Faction only reluctantly due to the requirements of her office, and she does little to hide her disdain for Dragon-Blooded.

Most of the Bronze Faction members think that this disdain is simply a holdover from the Usurpation, as well as the rather indelicate manner in which the Immaculate Order asserts the dominance of the Dragon-Blooded over the Terrestrial gods. They are mistaken, for the antipathy runs much deeper than that.

The truth of the matter lies in the Creation-Ruling Mandate handed down by the Unconquered Sun to his Exalted children, establishing the inherent right of the Solar Exalted to rule in his name. Although the Mandate was the Unconquered Sun's to hand down, the Mandate also had the support of the other Incarnae, and as a result, the right to rule became inherent in the Celestial Exalted, and this right was woven into the very fabric of Creation. Consequently, it was woven into the very fabric of the gods, as well.

As a result, all gods, even those who supported the Usurpation whether for altruistic or selfish reasons, instinctively know that the Usurpation defied the natural order, which demands that the Celestial Exalted rule Creation. Dragon-Blooded may have ruled Creation during the Shogunate, and they may yet rule all Creation again. But for all their power and wealth and influence, no Dragon-Blood will ever hold the respect that a god will instinctively have for the lowliest street urchin. It is possible, however unlikely, that the dirty street urchin might someday receive Celestial Exaltation. By their very natures, no Dragon-Blood ever will.

Morgan Hillan (order #910970)

Those who arrive through luck, whether good or ill, come via one of many special portals placed throughout Creation on the Carnival's eve. Centuries ago, a dilatory member of the Court of Seasons procrastinated too long in finalizing her guest list, so she rounded it out by selecting mortals completely at random. Much to her surprise, her guests were a hit, as many of the gods were amused at mortals who were utterly banal and completely baffled at their own presence in Yu-Shan. Ever since, the Court has made it a practice of leaving temporary portals to the Carnival in random places so that unwary mortals might simply wander through them into the heart of Yu-Shan where the befuddled humans are treated like guests of honor and shown all the delights of Heaven before being returned to their humdrum mortal existences.

While most mortal guests, whether invited or accidental, cannot help but pick up on the subtle condescension of their divine hosts, there are very rich rewards for those whom the gods find sufficiently entertaining. Mortals who acquit themselves well, through wit, beauty or whatever means, are frequently rewarded with wealth, artifacts or with some less tangible benefit gained through divine blessings. More than a few of the attendees also find their way into the beds of Celestial deities, especially those who desire God-Blooded offspring but lack the time to pursue mating opportunities in Creation. Unfortunately, the greatest prize awarded by the gods during the Carnival is also the most dubious. Mortals who have performed exceptionally well, to the point of capturing the favorable attention of the most powerful gods, are "rewarded" with the most sublime gift Yu-Shan has to offer—the opportunity to experience, via a dreamstone, the memory of playing the Games of Divinity. The lucky ones who receive this gift are merely driven mad by the experience. Most are left as brain-dead drooling imbeciles.

The Carnival of Meeting is held in the vast plaza that surrounds the Jade Pleasure Dome. The Dome remains guarded throughout the Carnival, and no guests are permitted inside. The Dome's usual defenses remain as potent as ever, and penetrating it is completely impossible for anyone other than a high-Essence Exalt (and virtually impossible even for them). The plaza is ringed with obsidian pillars marked with glowing blue runes. These pillars mark the boundary of the Carnival and magically prevent any guests from leaving the plaza and wandering into the rest of Yu-Shan. The wards are equally effective on the most powerful Celestial Exalt as they are on the lowliest mortal peasant. However, a guest can penetrate the wards and pass into Yu-Shan if willingly accompanied by a god. No kind of force or coercion can compel a god to help someone pass through the wards, however.

Morgan Hillan (order #910970)

Within the confines of the Carnival grounds, peace is magically enforced by the power of the Incarnae themselves. The Carnival has devolved into a rowdy festival, and lower-Essence gods and even mortals are permitted to mock and insult their peers and superiors without any threat of reprisal. Indeed, there is much social stigma attached to even appearing offended at an insult received during the Carnival, even insults that could get the speaker audited to death in any other context. Violence is impossible here, save in the various rings set up for physical combat and martial competition, and even there, neither mortals nor gods can be killed no matter how seriously injured. When the Golden Barque of Heaven returns to the Quay of Morning and dawn rises over Creation, all guests find that any wounds they have suffered are magically healed before they are returned to Creation.

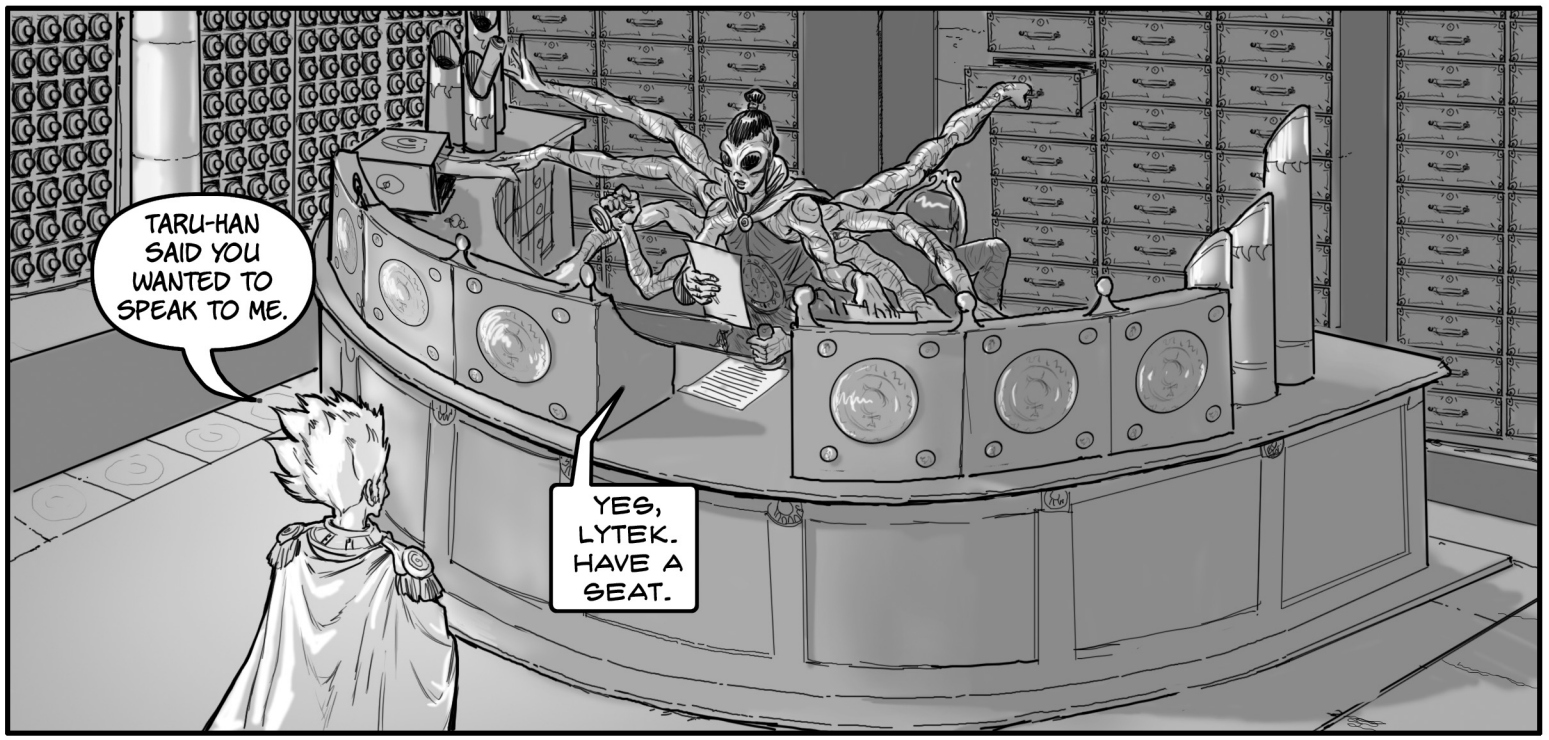
The Carnival's peace does not extend beyond the wards, however. A mortal or Exalt who accompanies a god through the wards out into Yu-Shan can be assaulted, enslaved, killed or even soulforged if her patron so desires (or if she and her godly patron run afoul of some divine adversary). Mortals who become separated from such patrons also risk arrest and imprisonment at the hands of the celestial lions. On the other hand, Exalted who gain the friendship, or at least assistance, of even a minor god can gain a remarkable opportunity to explore Heaven, and with the patronage of a powerful god, a Solar or Lunar can go where she will... at least until the Bronze Faction finds her.

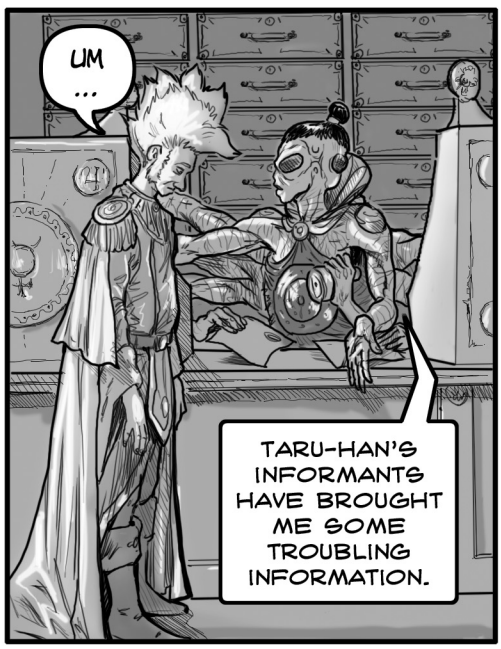
At sunrise, all guests within the Carnival grounds are instantly transported back to wherever they were before coming to Yu-Shan. Guests who have left the grounds are not transported back home and must find their own exits from Heaven. Also, while departing guests may freely take with them any gifts they receive while at the Carnival, anyone carrying stolen goods remains behind as well. Sometimes, mortals who have spurned the offer of some god to remain in Yu-Shan as a lover, servant or entertainer are surprised to be left behind after the Carnival and then shocked to discover that some valuable piece of contraband has been secreted on their person. Such a mortal might be allowed to leave later and perhaps even take the valuable item with him if the Carnival guardian who discovers the contraband believes his story. If the guardian does not believe him (or has been bribed not to believe him), the mortal might be sentenced to a few months, years or even decades in the service of the god from whom the contraband had been stolen, which, naturally, is usually the same god the poor mortal had previously spurned.

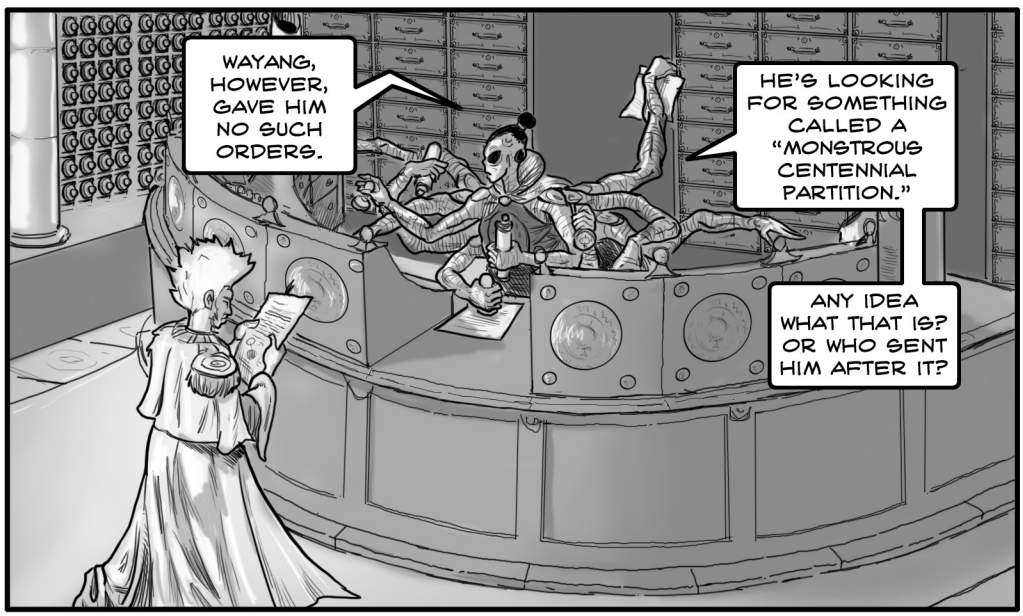
The Carnival of Meeting is nearly the sole source of prestige and power for the Court of Seasons. Remarkably so, considering just how little the gods of that Court have to do with the Carnival's success. While the planning is done by the Court, the implementation is performed by other gods. The Court members call upon major gods of Yu-Shan to help in the Carnival's preparation, and those gods in turn put their servants at the Court's disposal. Few gods, however, realize just how many favors the Court calls in every year to get help for the Carnival, not to mention just how much of the work is done pro bono by anonymous junior clerks. As a result, a significant percentage of Yu-Shan's gods think that the Court is much more efficient and competent than it actually is, especially in comparison with the Bureau of Seasons.

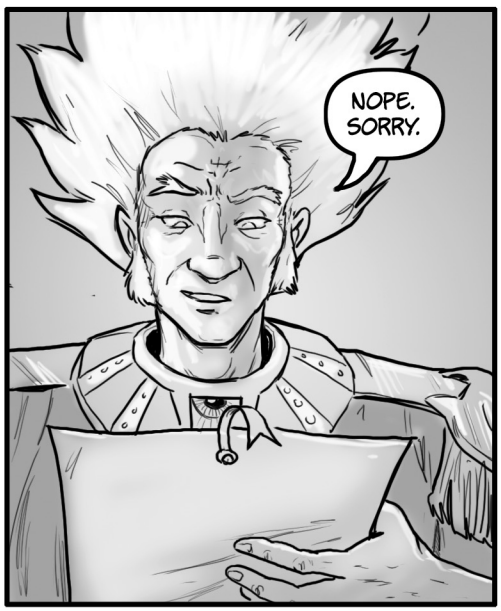
Indeed, several influential gods in the Bureau of Heaven actually believe that if the current leadership of the Bureau of Seasons could be removed, the leaders of the Court of Seasons would make the ideal replacements—new leaders who would be both more competent and more amenable to the Bureau of Heaven. In point of fact, it would be an utter catastrophe for Yu-Shan and Creation alike, as the leaders of the Court of Seasons are completely incapable of overseeing a project as big as maintaining Creation's weather patterns. Thus far, plans to give the Court authority within the Bureau of Seasons have gone nowhere, mainly because Nasri would exterminate the Court of Seasons before allowing them to ever achieve Celestial status. For their own part, the Court of Seasons currently has no interest in a position in the Celestial hierarchy, as its members reap far greater benefits in Creation by regulating the calendar that determines when all the other gods will receive worship. Then again, if the Court did take over the Bureau of Seasons somehow, it would not be the first time that incompetents rose to positions of authority over their betters. Increasingly, that seems to be how Yu-Shan works.

Morgan Hillan (order #910970)









Morgan Hillan (order #910970)

CHAPTER THREE
THE CELESTIAL GOVERNMENT

The bureaucracy of Yu-Shan is the prime source and origin of all bureaucracies. It utterly dwarfs the largest and most complex governments of Creation; while those of the First Age may have matched its scope and far exceeded its efficiency, it has no peer for complexity and intricate malfeasance. While it was once a smoothly functioning apparatus that relayed prayers and reports while passing down divine commands, it is now a needlessly complex system of laws and audits, with the five Bureaus engaged in a constant power struggle with each other rather than endeavoring to work for the common good of Creation. The gods of Yu-Shan have made Celestial law into the end, rather than the means, and those who run afoul of this immense structure can be in dire trouble if they do not understand how the system works.

The Celestial Bureaus

The entire Heavenly bureaucracy is riddled with corruption and self-interest, and much of it is poorly supervised and largely symbolic. The majority of the employees in the Bureaus spend their time recording tedious minutiae in records and reports that no one will ever look at, plotting against their rivals, and attempting to avoid audits. While once the reports would have been useful and helped to coordinate the functioning of Creation with the guidance of Heaven, they have now become make-work. Information from across Creation is filed away, reported by deities who do not realize its importance, and unread by superiors who can no longer be bothered to carry out their duties. Moreover, much of this information is highly unreliable, shaped by observers with their own agendas and influence and provided to superiors with no interest in verifying accuracy.

Morgan Hillan (order #910970)

Three of Heaven's bureaus are largely irrelevant outside Yu-Shan. While specific individuals in the bureaus wield much power, and while all of the bureaus are theoretically authorized to call upon armies of mighty and dangerous spirits to fight their battles and slay their enemies, they are paralyzed by a combination of tradition, a lack of firm direction, and a desire to hoard resources. However, almost all the Celestial gods consider Yu-Shan's Bureaus to be vitally important and place great value on position within them.

Those deities who do not belong to a bureau—only the unemployed among Celestial gods, but many of the Terrestrial gods and elementals—have little opportunity to play the system to their personal advantage. Unless they are so important that they cannot be ignored, or have resources or abilities that can be found nowhere else in Creation, they will be marginalized from the only society that truly counts in Yu-Shan. Outside the Games of Divinity, the bureaus are the game board upon which the Celestial gods interact, make their moves, and cheat behind their long silken sleeves. Behind the scenes play is not only expected, it has become an automatic part of any success. Simply abiding by the laws and doing one's daily job is no longer sufficient for advancement or power. A deity must make allies and engage in intrigue, politics, and hidden bargains, or she will constantly be passed over for those who do.

The Commission on Abstract Matters and Celestial Concerns (The Bureau of Heaven)

The Bureau of Heaven is the most powerful, the most diverse, and in many ways the most corrupt of the Celestial Bureaus. Previously the Bureau of Divinities until the fall of the Primordials, it was renamed by the victorious Incarnae. It is divided into two largely separate departments—the Department of Abstract Matters, and the Department of Celestial Concerns. The Department of Abstract Matters consists of gods of abstractions, such as memory and loss, while the Department of Celestial Concerns is responsible for the governance of Heaven.

The Bureau was split soon after the fall of the Primordials, during the turmoil and reorganization of Heaven. With the sudden growth of the bureaucracy, those gods who were involved with the newly established government of Heaven needed new staff, new offices, new mansions and new fields of influence and were frankly more interested in the government of Heaven than in the abstractions of mortals. They were finally able to establish the systems and regulations—and power structures—that many of them had long dreamed of. On the other hand, those deities involved in abstractions were primarily concerned with mortals, and so long as they didn't lose the Bureau's influence or protection, they were glad to be able to expand their influence in Creation. This division of interest weakens the Bureau, since its two halves are concerned with different areas—Yu-Shan and its inhabitants, and Creation with its mortals. However, it also cuts down on diplomatic infighting and quarrels over resources, since the two departments do not necessarily intersect or infringe on each other's areas of interest.

The Bureau of Heaven was originally situated in the Hall of Celestial Stability, one of the oldest buildings in Yu-Shan; an ornate building of moderate size with orichalcum pillars and jade roofing, surrounded by immaculate lawns. While its headquarters remain there, and the most important members have offices there, the Bureau itself has expanded in all directions, into both the complex immediately surrounding the Hall and into offices scattered across Yu-Shan. The architects have given the Bureau's buildings an air of stately graciousness, dreaming glories beyond considerations of time or consequence. Their interiors, however, are networks of spacious halls full of busy sub-ministers, complicated passageways, private offices and entire floors reserved for particular deities or for censors and their staff. While most censors and celestial lions have offices elsewhere in Yu-Shan as well, it is a legal requirement for all members of the Bureau of Heaven to maintain a desk within the Hall of Celestial Stability or its sub-buildings and to file reports from there.

While many members of the Bureau of Heaven view the job as a sinecure and do as little work as they can personally get away with, their attitude toward outsiders is that the stability of Heaven itself depends on their hard work. Even the most junior deities in this Bureau carry themselves with a mixture of arrogance and patronizing condescension toward both visitors or and lower-ranking deities from other Bureaus. However corrupt they may personally be, gods of the Bureau of Heaven act as though it's their responsibility alone to keep Yu-Shan running. Even the gods of the Department of Abstract Matters often feel a higher duty to Yu-Shan than to Creation.

Any deity working in the Bureau of Heaven is expected by his superiors to be publicly beyond re-

Morgan Hillan (order #910970)

proach, not least because of the constant undeclared hostility with the other Bureaus. Personal hobbies should be of the refined and elegant sort, dress should be irreproachable, and any dubious lovers or friends should be kept well behind the scenes. Interaction with members of other Bureaus is expected to be polite, but with an understanding that the Bureau of Heaven is the most senior and most important of the Bureaus. The Bureau of Heaven does not refer to the days when this was not the case; their official position is that they have always been first among equals, or senior toward juniors. Senior lion dogs and censors can get away with a degree of eccentricity, but junior deities need to toe the line and behave impeccably—or have powerful friends—if they want to rise in position and influence.

The greatest strength that the Bureau of Heaven wields against its rivals is the ability to call audits almost at will. None can prove that those who offend a member of the Bureau of Heaven find themselves, within a few years, the subject of investigation by a censor or lion dog, and not every member of the Bureau claims such authority. Nevertheless, gossip is full of tales of unlucky gods who attracted the censors' attention through a misplaced word or breach of etiquette, and the gods of the other Bureaus step lightly around the gods of the Bureau of Heaven. All of Yu-Shan is fully aware that the Bureau of Heaven is the body responsible for processing complaints—even complaints against itself.

Bureau Structure

The Department of Abstract Matters has a simple and haphazard structure. Shortly after the end of the First Age, the heads of this Bureau recruited (or stole) more than two-thirds of the major gods who now belong to this department from the Bureau of Humanity—but found that their own administration was incapable of handling the influx of new employees. They responded by budding off Divisions in all directions, where each Division governed a major abstraction, and all concepts related to that abstraction came under that Division's guidance. This resulted in the same sort of internecine warfare as existed on a larger scale between the Department of Abstract Matters and the Bureau of Humanity, with Divisional heads putting forward claims of authority over minor abstractions.

While some abstractions such as warfare or dreams are broken down into small units determined by the particular nature of the abstraction and the

Morgan Hillan (order #910970)

desires of the gods in charge of it, most individual abstractions are governed by a single deity who controls a host of effectively equal understandings of the concept. For instance, the Division of Warfare consists of the war queen E-Naluna (who is answerable to both Ryzala and the Maiden of Battles), the five regional war gods, and various minor battle deities. On the other hand, the Division of Lost Things governs the abstraction of things that have been lost (ranging from knowledge to items to places), and is controlled by a single deity, Madame Marthesine, who is served by her hoarders (see **The Books of Sorcery, Vol. IV—The Roll of Glorious Divinity I,** p. 55.)

As a result, the Department is a heaving mass of internal factions, with minor deities constantly being reassigned to new Divisions. Gods of medium or high power, such as Burning Feather (see **The Books of Sorcery, Vol. IV—The Roll of Glorious Divinity I**, p. 49), can expect a reasonable degree of stability and have the influence and power to negotiate any transfers on their own, besides commanding a staff of junior gods. Petty deities, however, who cover a very small geographical area or a tiny concept can only hope to find a patron who will gain mutual benefit from the petty deity's growth in power. Though even then, the patron deity will be looking out for his own interests first and may stall his protégé's expansion if he fears that the protégé will be an eventual threat to him. Senior Bureau members form committees to discuss what abstract concepts are theoretically subordinate to or included in other concepts, stacking these bodies with members chosen to support their own agendas, resulting in yet more politics and paperwork.

The main ideological division in the Department is between those who consider that human abstractions are most important and those who believe that universal abstractions are more valuable. The first group has a high proportion of those deities who moved from the Bureau of Humanity, and includes such figures as Burning Feather, the Lady of Intoxicants, and Shereth-Daxineth, God of Taxes. The second group includes Taru-Han herself, as she governs all acts of dying, but also Senzato, Daimyo of Terrors, and Vermilath, Daimyo of Hunger. These and other deities have abstracts as their domains that are also common to animals and non-human entities and gain power from those entities as well.

The Department of Celestial Concerns is responsible for the governance of Heaven. The Unconquered Sun is technically the head of the entire Department (and the Bureau of Heaven besides), but he hasn't intervened since shortly after the end of the Primordial War, when he and the other Incarnae began playing the Games of Divinity. The various functionaries of the department keep Heaven running, audit members of the five bureaus who are suspected of malfeasance, and maintain (albeit often rather badly) the rule of law in Heaven.

The bottom level of the Department of Celestial Concerns consists of tens of thousands of sub-ministers who are in charge of filling out all the bureau's paperwork correctly and delivering prayers to the correct destinations. Their desks stretch for miles through the long airy halls, with a constant flutter of servants carrying papers and forms to their destinations.

Above the sub-ministers are the lion dog investigators (see **The Books of Sorcery, Vol. IV—Roll of Glorious Divinity I,** p. 45) and the celestial lions (see p. 129 of this book), who act as the senior field agents of this bureau. Although censors occasionally review these decisions, the celestial lions are in charge of conducting the audits of their fellow agents. However, the celestial lions are intensely loyal to each other and rarely audit their fellows. Added to this, many celestial lions are convinced that Heaven is irredeemably corrupt and now dispense "justice" based either on greed or on personal codes of ethics. Informally and behind their backs, gossipers of Yu-Shan refer to a celestial lion who is known to take bribes based on personal interest as "virtuously disinterested," while one who works from its own code of ethics is "eccentric." A hardliner celestial lion who still operates on the classic lines is considered "old-fashioned."

The celestial lions spend most of their time dealing with minor offenses ranging from petty theft to disturbing the peace. These offenses are usually resolved by the guilty party correcting a problem or paying a fine. The celestial lions collect all of these fees, which form the majority of their remuneration.

Above the celestial lions are the censors. These beings are plenipotentiary officials who act as judges and investigators of offenses by important deities. They generally wait for charges to be brought against individuals, but they can also pursue their own lines of inquiry and have a staff of assistants sufficient to do so. They do not need to draft deputies (see p. 71) as celestial lions often do, but they may requisition assistance in the case of a particularly difficult investigation or to obtain a particularly gifted investigator. There are 125 censors in the Bureau of Heaven and an additional seven in Creation; one censor is assigned

Morgan Hillan (order #910970)

Censors and the Immaculate Order

While close cooperation between the Immaculate Order and the censors might seem efficient, the Bronze Faction in fact restricts communications between them. The censors could give the Immaculate Order information about Heaven and the Sidereals that the Bronze Faction would rather the Immaculates not have, while the Immaculate Order could be far too convenient a tool for the censors. Sidereals working inside the Immaculate Order have ensured that only senior Immaculate monks know about the censors or have any opportunity to speak with them, much less work with them.

Censors out on the Threshold occasionally work with Immaculate Order missionaries, stressing their position as monitors of godly behavior and enforcers of divine law. Such partnerships are usually dissolved once the Immaculate monk comes to appreciate the censor's laxness or personal greed, but a few such monks have fallen from the Order's standards to become personal servants of the censor.

to each Threshold direction, and three are assigned to the Blessed Isle. Those in the Threshold barely merit the title, being personally lazy and corrupt, and are largely ignored by Yu-Shan. Those on the Blessed Isle are the virtual appointees of the Bronze Faction and help to enforce its rule on the gods of the Blessed Isle.

Besides the sub-ministers, lion dogs, and censors, there is also a bureaucratic structure of deities within the Department which serves to coordinate its separate sections and keep Ryzala aware of what's going on. This organization, the Authority of Self-Examination, is too overt to be a true group of spies or secret service but serves as a counterbalance to the censors and the celestial lions and their work. All ongoing audits and investigations are theoretically reported up to Ryzala, so that at any given time she has a clear picture of what is going on in Yu-Shan, whether there are any forming conspiracies or widespread patterns of corruption or crime, and if any of this needs to be passed up to the Unconquered Sun. In practice, many censors and lion dogs are dilatory in passing on their reports, and deities in the bureaucracy falsify reports or slow down or accelerate news and updates in accordance with their own agendas.

A number of deities work in the Department of Celestial Concerns who, at first glance, would seem more appropriately placed in the Bureau of Humanity or the Department of Abstract Matters. These gods of administration, bureaucracy, and paperwork consider themselves most appropriately positioned in the middle of Heaven's nexus for their domains. While Ryzala runs the Bureau, this is unlikely to change.

Location

The buildings of the Bureau of Heaven lie in a set of concentric circles, and the deities who work there are constantly attempting to expand their territory. At the center lie the Dwellings of the Stern Maintainers of Divine Order, arrayed around the Hall of Celestial Stability. The Hall of Celestial Stability is a huge and awe-inspiring structure combining stern opulence with ascetic taste in large quantities of rare and exotic materials.

The Shogun of the Department has her offices there, occupying the entire top floor, together with her direct inferiors and the censors. The lion dogs and other gods of the Department of Celestial Concerns have their offices and workplaces in the Dwellings of the Stern Maintainers of Divine Order. Some of the more corrupt censors and lion dogs allow their personal tastes to show through in expensive decor and luxurious amenities, while others maintain their offices in perfect order and neatness, keeping their personal indulgences to their private lives. Each one has his or her own office and suite of rooms, or even an entire floor, and a new censor simply takes over his predecessor's office space (Whether or not he retains his predecessor's staff is up to him). Celestial lions have offices and as large a suite of rooms as they can diplomatically claim; those on regular patrol in particular districts also have an office there as well. Lesser investigators are stationed in the higher floors or in the basements. While all censors and lion dogs have private repositories for evidence from current investigations, the basement also holds secure vaults.

Further out lie the Houses of Conceptual Guidance, owned by the Department of Abstract Matters. This circle of buildings is constantly swelling and expanding into the surrounding territory as new deities are added to the Department or as the ones currently there increase their domains. While these buildings house offices and workplaces, they are designed and decorated in the style of the deity in question, making them easy to distinguish. Taru-Han has her tower at the north of this group of buildings and does not permit any member of her Department to raise their office above hers.

Morgan Hillan (order #910970)

Deities of the Bureau

The Shogun of the Department of Celestial Concerns: Ryzala, Lady of Bureaucracy and Paperwork. Next to the Incarnae, she is the most powerful god in Yu-Shan, in part because she receives prayers from both gods and mortals. In addition to overseeing the gods of paper, ink, scribery, organization, and taxes, she is the unofficial director of the Bureau of Heaven.

Technically Ryzala and Taru-Han (the Shogun of the Department of Abstract Matters) are of equal rank, and both of them are subject to the Unconquered Sun. In practice, the Unconquered Sun almost never takes an interest in the Bureau's affairs as long as nothing is actively brought to his attention. Ryzala maneuvered the appointment of Taru-Han, who is not herself interested in advancing her position, merely in keeping it. Ryzala is the most powerful god in Yu-Shan, enjoys power, and more to the point, enjoys using her power: she aids her allies and discomfits her enemies. However, she is aware that she cannot displace the Celestial Incarnae and is satisfied with her present position. She is also aware that to go beyond her scope of competence would result in poor performance and eventual disgrace.

Ryzala worries that she would lose her position if the Celestial Bureaucracy were ever to be significantly upset or threatened. She distrusts innovation and will only consider major changes in policy when faced with serious threats. While she is a long-term ally of the Bronze Faction of Sidereals in the interests of general stability and the smooth functioning of Creation, she is currently undecided on the matter of the newly reborn Solar Exalted. Her secret concern is that they might cause the Unconquered Sun to once more involve himself in the Bureau and in Heaven as a whole, thus weakening her position or making her irrelevant. She is likely to remain undecided until some major event forces her to make a decision, but she would prefer an outcome that makes the Solar Exalted once more part of Heaven's functioning, rather than a disruptive influence.

The Ambassador to Malfeas

The god Verumipra (see **The Books of Sorcery, Vol. IV—The Roll of Glorious Divinity I**, pp. 66-67) is Yu-Shan's Ambassador to the Cursed City and Warden of the Exiles. He has held the post for two and a half centuries without being turned, going insane, or having been murdered and replaced with a doppelganger. Although it's not recorded in any official ledger, he is reputed to have turned several demons of various circles into spies for Heaven, arranged the assassinations of important Malfean personages, and to carry messages directly from the Incarnae to the Yozis and back. He falls under the jurisdiction of the Bureau of Heaven—partly because the Bureau wants to control the power inherent in his post, and partly because no other Bureau wanted to be associated with such a post.

Diverting The Soul Collectors

While Taru-Han's soul collectors are petty gods and not naturally a part of the Underworld, their tasks and their focus on death have made them interesting to necromancers. The Deathlords have fashioned several spells intended to catch soul collectors, to prevent them from removing souls, or to harvest souls that they are herding. Such spells have been used infrequently so far, so as not to alert Taru-Han to the possibility, but they do exist.

The Shogun of the Department of Abstract Matters: Taru-Han, Lady of Souls. Taru-Han is the god of souls and of the act of dying and the current head of the Department of Abstract Matters. Taru-Han does not select who is going to die. She is the god of the act of dying, not the god of death—deciding who dies is under the control of the Maiden of Endings in the Bureau of Destiny. Instead, Taru-Han sends her servants, the soul collectors (see p. 132-133), to remove the souls of the dying. The soul collectors herd the souls to Taru-Han's heavenly tower much as sheepdogs herd their flocks.

Taru-Han both directs the operations of the soul collectors and oversees the departure of the souls to their appropriate destination. Although it is not her responsibility to decide how long anyone stays in the Underworld or who reincarnates directly, she keeps a few souls for her private collection. This collection is highly illegal, and by keeping it Taru-Han commits a Severity 4 offense. During the Great Contagion, Ryzala appointed her to take control of the Department of Abstract Matters. At first, Taru-Han found that her new responsibilities detracted from her hobby; however, she soon realized that her position rendered her almost completely immune from audits and other forms of supervision. This spurred her on to collect a growing number of

Morgan Hillan (order #910970)

souls rather than simply keep the most precious ones for a day or two. She has kept a few of her favorite souls imprisoned for more than 500 years and is convinced that her collection will be discovered if she ever loses her office.

As a result, Taru-Han provides the other deities in the Department with little oversight but is constantly on guard for any deities who seem to be challenging her position. Her soul collectors spy on potential threats, and she has bribed censors and celestial lions to trump up charges against particularly dangerous rivals. She is currently watching Lytek very closely and plans to call an audit on him if he attempts to displace her.

Daimyo of the Division of Exaltation: Lytek, the Right Hand of Power. Lytek is the deity responsible for selecting candidates for Celestial Exaltation. Although Terrestrial Exaltation is an inborn quality not under his jurisdiction, he is also responsible for choosing the moment to trigger Exaltation in young Dragon-Blooded. When a Celestial Exalt dies, her Exaltation flies back to the beautifully carved cabinet in Lytek's office. Lytek is also responsible for pruning Exaltations of their previous memories, making them ready for their next life. He considers this to be a high form of art and is proud of some of his better works. While his position is not strictly necessary, since the process of Exaltation is itself automatic, his supervision minimizes accidents and disruptions. The Abyssal Monstrances outrage him on both a cosmological and a personal level, but they also frighten him, for Taru-Han could point to their very existence as evidence of his incompetence during an audit.

Lytek is Taru-Han's chief rival for the head of the Department of Abstract Matters. He was the head of the Department during the First Age, but the Usurpation cost him much of his power. In his weakened state, Ryzala forced him to step down as head of the Department. He remains bitter about this loss but has never lost hope that he will eventually regain his old office. However, he lacks both the raw power and the political backing necessary to retake control of this department. The return of the Solars has bolstered his power, and he has begun to consider ways by which he can regain his previous high estate.

Currently, Lytek is crafting an alliance with the Gold Faction Sidereals since he shares their interest in the Solar Exalted. He is working with members of the Gold Faction to find a way to transform Abyssal Exalted back into Solar Exalted, and he has let it be known among the censors that he will pay well for any information about the Deathlords and their servants. Though he may cooperate with them in public, Lytek is absolutely set against the Bronze Faction, as he knows they were directly behind the disappearance of the Solars and his own fall from power.

E-Naluna, the Queen of War, controls the **Division of War**. She is directly served by six regional war gods occupying five positions—each position supervises a Regional Court of War that settles disputes among spirits in the region and adjudicates spiritual matters in mortal wars.

Ahlat, the Southern God of War and Cattle, controls the nation of Harborhead and balances his two domains to ensure the importance of both. Siakal, the Western Goddess of Battle, Slaughter, and Sharks, is a patroness of slaughter and berserkers. Sunipa, the Eastern Goddess of War, took her position following the removal of the previous Eastern Goddess of War after the Usurpation, the wolf goddess Darunla, who had supported the Solars. The position of Northern God of War is held by the twins Voharun and Nasamara. Voharun takes the form of a giant crow to oversee battles

The Office of Intelligent Design

Shenji was appointed by Ryzala to investigate and document the inherent properties of Creation. He endeavors to record thaumaturgical rituals, so that Heaven may understand the Primordial architecture of Creation and detect changes wrought by the Wyld or the Underworld. During the First Age, the Solars recognized Shenji as the god of thaumaturgy. His great work, The Procedures of Creation, is the massive collection of scrolls held by the Office of Intelligent Design that documents every thaumaturgical Procedure ever performed in Creation. The Procedures of Creation may only be studied in the Office of Intelligent Design, and gaining permission requires the supplicant to prove she has legitimate business for the Celestial Bureaucracy. Shenji and his subordinates have a surprisingly open relationship with the Bureau of Nature, which so often provides the raw materials for thaumaturgy—the Bureau of Nature hopes that by encouraging thaumaturgy's development amongst Creation's mortals, they can spread knowledge of the Hierarchy of Function.

Morgan Hillan (order #910970)

and has nurtured a feud with Tachi-Kun since the Usurpation, when the two of them disagreed over the tactics used by the Sidereals: Voharun thought the tactics acceptable, while Tachi-Kun argued that they failed to show true bravery or prowess. Nasamara takes the form of a hawk and flies before battles, announcing them so that all warriors may meet them with proper courage, and his forces guard the borders of the North against other war gods. He and Voharun feud over who is the older and thus more suited to be Northern God of War. Tachi-Kun is the Central God of War and God of Exalted Warfare, and he regards today's wars as low, primitive squabbles far from the glory and power of the First Age's conflicts.

The Division of War is matched by the **Division of Peace**. Yo-Ping, Celestial Minister of Harmony, oversees the five regional peace gods; he is a god of negotiation, diplomacy, political stability, and harmony. He is also one of the Syndics of Whitewall, though few in Heaven know of this. He is served by Jewel of Prosperity, Goddess of Southern Peace; Calm Serenity, God of Western Peace and Calm Waters; Volurapin, Northern God of Peace and Master of Whales; Thelmarin, Eastern Goddess of Peace and Twilight; and Dalam-Rendal, Central God of Peace and Order.

Other notable deities in the Department of Abstract Matters include Shenji, God of Thaumaturgy and Sub-Director of the Office of Intelligent Design; Ever-Scintillating Glory, the Daimyo of Sacred Materials, and below her the gods of the five magical materials, including the five Jade Goddesses, who supervise the placement of jade in Creation; Burning Feather, Goddess of Intoxicants; and Shining Flower, the Bloody Goddess, Mistress of Hearts and Knives, who led the Dragon Kings to sacrifice hearts to the Unconquered Sun.

Relations With Other Bureaus

The Bureau of Heaven's opinion of other Bureaus varies between appreciation and tolerance, with a certain watchful distrust toward the Bureau of Humanity. Ryzala and her Bureau view the Bureau of Destiny as both one of the most important Celestial tools for maintaining stability and as their biggest rival. Employees of the Bureau of Heaven appreciate the Sidereals for their hard work, their efficiency, and their tendency to agree with the Bureau of Heaven in cases of public dispute, but if Ryzala could prove that the Sidereals were behind the Usurpation, the Bureau of Heaven would besiege the Bureau of Destiny with enough audits to cripple them and bring them entirely under her power. Until that day, the Bureau of Heaven bides its time and endures the current state of affairs.

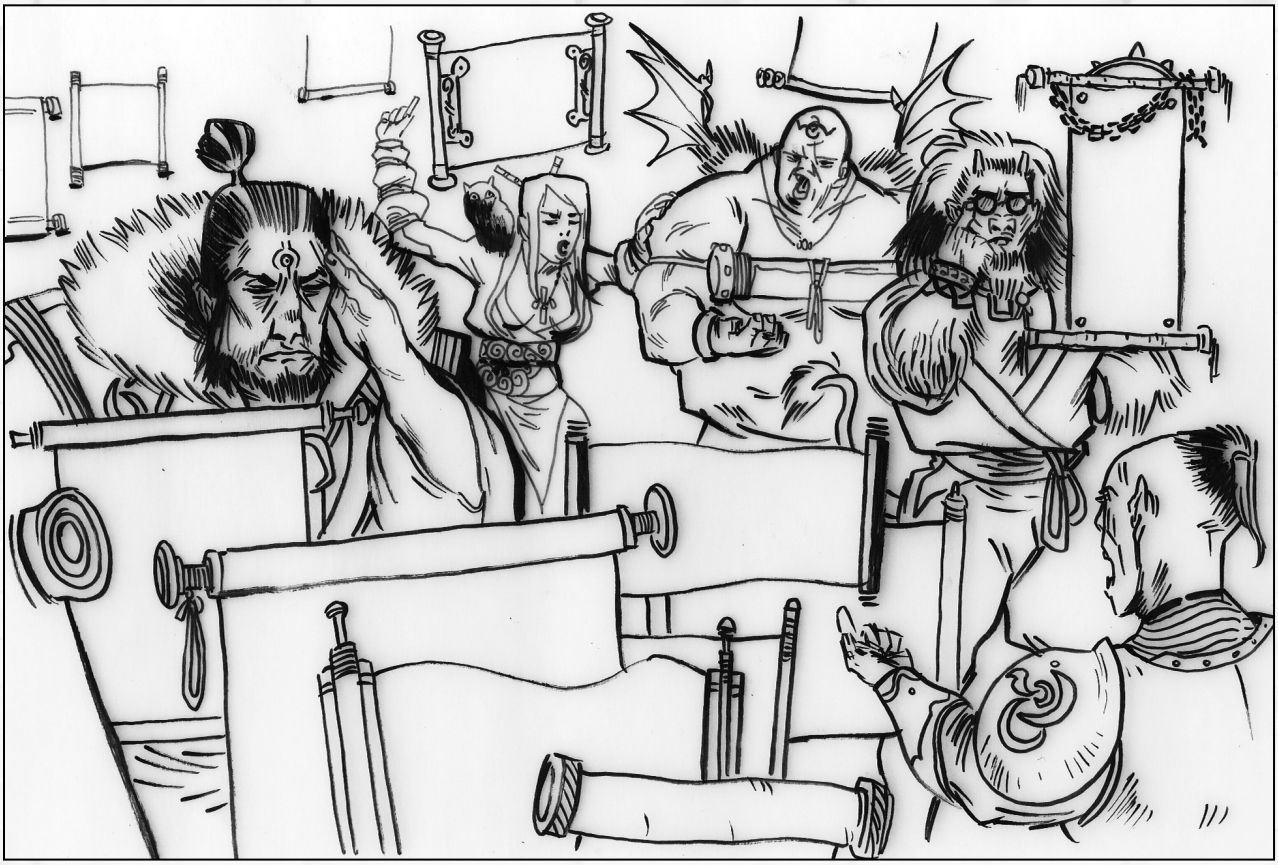
Employees of the Bureau of Heaven view the Bureaus of Seasons and Nature as poor relatives, obliged to deal with the daily troubles of Creation and not being concerned with Yu-Shan itself. They view the fact that the Bureau of Seasons controls Yu-Shan's military as a negotiable point; as long as they can pressure the Bureau of Seasons via audits and politics, they feel that they are the ones in control. As for the Bureau of Nature, its duties give it little overlap with the Bureau of Heaven, and the Bureau of Heaven is glad to ignore it most of the time.

Relations with the Bureau of Humanity verge on outright war from the Bureau of Humanity's viewpoint but merely a frosty condescension from the Bureau of Heaven. This is driven by the number of deities who have relocated from there to the Department of Abstract Matters and the fact that the Bureau of Humanity alerts censors to deities who have abused their duties toward mortals. Deities from the Bureau of Heaven treat those from the Bureau of Humanity as juniors and subordinates whose sole purpose is to report to the censors, and they regard the Bureau of Humanity as a whole as nothing more than a source of potential new employees for the Department of Abstract Matters. The two Bureaus constantly send each other memoranda and look for excuses to report the other for audits. The Bureau of Humanity is not entirely defenseless against the predations of the Bureau of Heaven, however. Through the city gods, the Bureau of Humanity has great influence in Creation over which Celestial gods receive worship, and a significant number of gods in the Bureau of Heaven deflect audits from allies in the Bureau of Humanity in order to keep their own cults away from the censors' attention and to maintain the city gods' favor.

The Celestial Monitors of the Seasons and Weather (The Bureau of Seasons)

The divinities of the Bureau of Seasons fill two roles: They oversee Creation's weather, and they act as Heaven's formal military. They are conservative, rigid, and careful; while they allow a degree of fluctuation and response to mortal prayers, for the most part they ensure that the seasons and weather patterns follow the protocols set forth by the Solar Deliberative during the First Age. Attempts to use

Morgan Hillan (order #910970)



the weather as a weapon or to respond to requests from mortals or Terrestrial Exalted have drastically backfired, and in response the deities of this Bureau are careful to a fault, not wanting to risk further disturbances. They are the most meticulous of the Bureaus when it comes to keeping a close eye on their responsibilities and maintaining their function, but this close focus on the minutiae of their tasks can blind them to the larger implications of their actions. For the moment, they resolutely avoid thinking about the possible results of the Solars' return and concentrate on the day-to-day business of their Bureau.

The Bureau of Seasons is responsible for the actual mechanics of the weather and the seasons. During the First Age, this was regarded as a basic and unglamorous job because the gods and elementals in the Bureau of Seasons were under the direct control of the Solar Deliberative. The Celestial Exalted of the Solar Deliberative maintained complete control over the weather and extended or shortened seasons to keep the economy of the Old Realm running smoothly. The Celestial Exalted also employed this Bureau as a secondary defense force, using it to help drive back Fair Folk incursions. In the latter days of the Deliberative, when the influence of the Great Curse was increasing on the Solar Exalted, they even used the Bureau as a weapon against each other, sending deniable or concealed orders to turn squadrons of huraka and thunderbirds on each other's manses and pet projects.

As a result, the Bureau consisted largely of elementals who never needed to exercise any initiative and who had no voice in deciding the Bureau's policies. Any elemental or deity in the Bureau who displayed personal responsibility or drive or any inclination to organize the other members of the Bureau was promptly demoted or audited. When the Solar Exalted were murdered, these gods and elementals were ill-prepared to suddenly take control of the Bureau. The lesser elemental dragon Ghataru, Shogun-Regent of the Seasons and Weather, had technically supervised the Bureau for centuries, but his work had largely consisted of passing on orders from the Solar Exalted rather than directly planning matters himself.

For the first few centuries after the Bureau assumed control, the weather and seasons were highly erratic. The Bureau's new leaders totally ignored the Dragon-Blooded and their prayers and petitions, arranging the weather as seemed best to them; while the Bureau of Destiny passed on strongly worded

Morgan Hillan (order #910970)

Past Storms

The elementals and gods found guilty of improper use of weather in Creation included Sazar-Arishte, Peganothe, and Zeran-Dubuth. Sazar-Arishte, the General Who Raises The Curtain Of Lightning, was a storm serpent and the second-in-command of Nasri, Daimyo of Rainstorms. Peganothe, Master Commander of the First Rains of Autumn, was a thunderbird known for his power and temper, highly ranked in the Aerial Legion. Zeran-Dubuth, Daimyo of the Season of Wood and Daimyo of Clouds, was a lesser elemental dragon of air. The three of them were condemned and sentenced to be forged into starmetal.

With the assistance of Chejop Kejak, who saw potential in their willingness to defend Creation, these three elementals were able to evade punishment. A sympathetic censor helped fake the execution, and the three elementals took refuge in far corners of Creation; Sazar-Arishte in the south, and Peganothe and Zeran-Dubuth in the East. All three elementals were popular and influential in their time. Were they to return to Heaven, despite the unsavory nature of their crimes and their presumed punishment, they could gain a great deal of popular support by appealing to the aggressive faction of the Bureau of Nature.

advice, this was generally ignored as well. However, the Bureau still had little experience in controlling the weather on a large scale; while single elementals or small task forces could perfectly well manage storms or good weather, the wide coordination of climate across the whole of Creation was far beyond their experience, and constant minor adjustments kept matters unsettled. Their worst disaster occurred during the Great Contagion when several of the most militant directors attempted to use the weather as a weapon against the hordes of invading Fair Folk. These were all beings who specialized in aggressive weather—storms, tornadoes, and the like—rather than those who were responsible for tasks such as the rotation of the seasons or the adjustments of rainfall. Because they had little knowledge of long-term weather planning or the strategy of coordinating climate patterns, the weather went briefly out of control. Many in this Bureau remember the widespread fire rains, lightning blizzards and thorn tornadoes with great shame. This martial weather was responsible for much death and destruction in Creation, and the responsible directors were audited and punished.

In the aftermath of this catastrophe, Ghataru the Shogun-Regent of the Bureau retreated into firmly conservative behavior, and his subordinates became increasingly rigid and unwilling to risk anything. Today, the Shogun-Regent keeps to the normative patterns of seasons and weather established millennia ago by the Solar Exalted who first designed the modern climate. For the first few decades after the Contagion, the seasonal daimyos kept strictly to this pattern, and the weather was perfectly consistent from one year to the next. However, this rigorous consistency in weather both reduced mortal initiative and (more importantly) caused a 10 percent decrease in mortal prayers. After that, Ghataru and

Praying for Weather

Few mortals realize the complexity of the links between a simple prayer for rain on one hand and a thunderstorm on the other. The prayer ascends to Heaven, where a sub-minister files it with the Bureau of Seasons. It may be endorsed by sub-clerks of the bureau, bearing in mind the climate of the area and any accompanying sacrifices. The prayer is cross-indexed with the current climatic patterns, the patterns for the last ten years and the documented wishes of any deities who have an interest in the area or local events such as upcoming battles, then deposited with the Department of the current Season. Special notifications such as the signature of a Celestial Exalted or a major god get the prayer processed much faster. If it's just a case of a minor rainfall or good weather for a festival, then a junior commander's permission is sufficient, but weather that could effect the destiny of an entire region must be signed off by the Daimyo in question and often requires a cross-check with the Bureau of Destiny.

Once the prayer has been formally approved, the precise amount of rain or length of sunshine and the amount of wind is decided, and the requisitions are copied and distributed to all the relevant deities, local gods and elementals, and so on, together with their hours of duty and a note on how important this specific piece of weather is. Junior deities in the Bureau are often roused from their beds to fulfill urgent requests or to arrange specific weather during the night, particularly when it comes to the Blessed Isle and the high-level prayers which arrive regarding its weather.

Morgan Hillan (order #910970)

his daimyos kept to the general pattern of weather and seasons created during the Solar Deliberative but included a degree of variability in phenomena such as temperatures and rainfall based upon the Celestial Incarnae's changing patterns of advantage in the Games of Divinity. They also began to allow a degree of alteration based on mortal prayers, and, later, Immaculate Order petitions.

Although most of the elementals in the Bureau are unskilled at long-term planning, their military might is formidable. Much of the Bureau is composed of thunderbirds, huraka, storm serpents, and other elementals or elementally inclined martial deities; not only is the weather that they can command a weapon, but they themselves are warriors. Because the Unconquered Sun is ruler of the skies, these elementals form the central legion of his army. In peacetime, they work at controlling the seasons and the weather. However, should Yu-Shan or Creation be threatened, the Bureau of Seasons can mobilize this army in a matter of days.

A few mortal scholars and Outcaste Dragon-Blooded sorcerers have learned of First Age war weather. Such individuals frequently attempt to use both thaumaturgy and Terrestrial Circle Sorcery to compel the gods and elementals in this Bureau to their will. The leaders of the Bureau of Seasons remember the folly of the last attempt to use martial weather all too well, and requests for large and drastic alternative weather are automatically refused; attempts to compel it are often handled by a personal visit to the sorcerer in question.

So far, there have been few cases of Celestial Exalted requesting violent weather for their own purposes, and these have been hastily complied with and then covered up in the records, with rapid editing of other local weather to camouflage the issue. It is nearly impossible for members of this Bureau to refuse a request from one of the Solar Exalted; the weight of history and tradition hangs on their shoulders. Other members of the Bureau understand this and are prepared to make allowances and hide the evidence, assuming that the damage isn't too extreme.

There is much debate among the members of this Bureau as to how to react when one of the Solar Exalted demands the right to control the weather or use it for warfare, rather than just making a personal request. Some senior officials, including the Shogun-Regent himself, would like nothing more than to put down their mantle of leadership and serve the Solar Exalted once again. Others see the newly reborn Solar Exalted as having no more sense or experience than the leaders of the Bureau did when they first took over the job. They are not against the idea of Solar rule in principle, but they are vigorously against handing over control of the Bureau to the specific newly reborn Solars currently causing havoc in Creation. These directors worry that allowing even a single Solar to control the weather is a sure path to climatic disaster.

The image of Solars commanding the Aerial Legion is even more controversial. Although the Solar Exalted were once permitted by the Unconquered Sun to command the armies of Heaven, no Exalt has done so since the fall of the Solar Deliberative. Worse still, several Sidereal Exalted from the Bronze Faction have made polite queries about the availability of the Aerial Legion to combat "insane" Solar Exalted, while members of the Gold Faction have extended careful enquiries about the Aerial Legion's aid in helping to restore the Solar Deliberative. Nobody has yet reported anything to the censors, because nobody wants to give the Bureau of Heaven a chance to interfere, but the undercurrents are unmistakable.

Currently, the Shogun-Regent Ghataru is unwilling to agree to any requests for the use of the Aerial Legion without the authorization of the Unconquered Sun himself. For good or ill, the Unconquered Sun has not voiced his views on the issue nor replied to any petitions, and as pressure from all sides continues to intensify, the Shogun-Regent struggles to remain neutral.

In Yu-Shan, few beings outside the Bureau of Seasons take the Bureau as a whole seriously. Most gods see it as the least useful and necessary of the five Bureaus; they are interested in specific parts of the Bureau of Seasons, such as the Aerial Legion for military force or certain weather deities to boost their own influence and worship, but disdain the Bureau as a whole. Ambitious members of the other Bureaus often try to find ways to subsume this Bureau into their own. The more obvious of these attempts end dramatically—the directors of the Bureau of Seasons have no qualms about using the Aerial Legion to defend their position.

The Bureau of Seasons' devotion to their duty has done them no favors. Because they have continued to work in an organized, efficient, and conservative fashion, most gods outside the Bureau now believe that controlling the seasons and the weather is a simple task which could easily be improved upon by more imaginative and noble leaders. Deities outside the Bureau have largely forgotten the destruction caused by misapplication of martial

Morgan Hillan (order #910970)

The Court of Seasons

The Bureau of Seasons has a close alliance with the Court of Seasons (see **The Books of Sorcery, Vol. IV—The Roll of Glorious Divinity I**, p. 22). However, this alliance is now largely symbolic. During the First Age, the Court of Seasons' sole responsibility was organizing the Creation-wide festivals that accompanied the beginning and ending of every month and the far more elaborate celebrations that went on whenever a season ended. When the First Age ended, so did these festivals; however, the Court of Seasons managed to parlay their popularity and connections into a far larger area of influence than their powers or domains justified.

These days, many inhabitants of Creation consider the Court the true powers behind the turning seasons and are unaware of the Bureau's work in maintaining the actual cycles of climate. Previously, while mortals directed prayers to the Court, the month gods were figureheads, passing on the petitions and most of the Essence to the Bureau of Seasons rather than trying to answer them in person. Since the Contagion, the gods of the Court have kept far more of the Essence for themselves and have gone so far as to issue orders for weather to lesser elementals.

The Court of Seasons is wildly popular in Heaven, despite their lack of direct political power and Essence. They organize the Carnival of Meeting (see p. 32-35) and elaborate festivals on the vast plaza surrounding the Jade Pleasure Dome—though, in reality, much of the actual work is done by junior deities from the Bureau of Seasons or other gods looking to gain influence and fame. They are social climbers, outside the bureau's hierarchy, and it would be a disaster for Yu-Shan if they held real authority.

In contrast to the way they treat the Bureau of Seasons, most of the Celestial divinities treat the members of the Court of Seasons as impoverished but regal nobility. Most gods are convinced that the Court of Seasons should be in charge of the Bureau of Seasons, despite the fact that the members of the Court of Seasons show no aptitude for this sort of position.

weather and view it as merely collateral damage justified by the possible results against their enemies, or they cannot imagine causing it themselves and believe it evidence that weather is too complex for elementals to oversee and that the Bureau of Seasons should be overseen by gods.

Bureau Structure

The current bureaucratic structure is a haphazard patchwork of overlapping offices that the directors hurriedly created in the aftermath of the murder of the Solars. The Shogun-General Ghataru is in overall command, and the five daimyos are each in charge of both a single season and a single important type of weather: blizzards, sandstorms, rainstorms, clouds, and sunlight. All employees of this Bureau above the menials hold two offices, both as a sub-intendant of a particular month, week, or day and as a deity of some particular weather phenomenon, such as a duke of light showers or a baroness of dust devils. This form of organization is both confusing and highly inefficient, especially when two senior officers order a single lower-ranking deity to perform two opposing tasks. However, the leaders of this bureau are unwilling to change a system that works for one that might possibly lead to a return to chaos and the unplanned use of martial weather.

A number of the deities have overlapping domains (such as the Daimyo of Sandstorms, and the Southern Arbiter of Storms) or varying degrees of rank depending on the situation. In time of war, for instance, Nasri the Daimyo of the Season of Air can command the five Wind Masters, but in time of peace she must work with them to ensure the proper winds blow during her storms despite her technically superior rank. Situations like this cause infighting in the Bureau and result in bitter memoranda and inadequate support for weather phenomena in the field.

Location

Much of the Bureau of Season's headquarters is off the ground. The main point of access to their offices are the Cloud-Parting Towers, rearing from the ground of Yu-Shan to the skies above, built of alabaster and jade. Those lower-grade deities who prefer a human shape have their offices in these towers, with the most junior ones at the bottom. Gentle winds carry visitors to the tops of the towers, which are always concealed in clouds. However, the towers are a crucial fraction lower than the Jade Pleasure Dome, in obedience to the laws of Yu-Shan; clouds simply drift lower in order to nestle around the tops of the towers.

In the clouds above the towers are the Platforms of Drifting Excellence, forged of platinum and silk; some are wide enough to support a lesser elemental dragon and his entire retinue, while others are small enough to hold a single deity and his desk and files. The platforms are linked with bridges spun out of rainbows, and chained by jade stairways to the top of the towers.

Morgan Hillan (order #910970)

Above all this floats the great fortress Sky-Spanning Awe, the headquarters of the Aerial Legion. When the Legion is called into battle, the fortress flies with them; it is armed with its own weapons but also provides a place for wounded members of the Legion to rest and for the commanders to consult on tactics. It is mostly empty when not in direct use, though Nasri the General of the Aerial Legion has her offices here. Sky-Spanning Awe can break apart into multiple smaller pieces when necessary, each of which can fly independently, though they cannot attack in this state. This is used when Sky-Spanning Awe enters Creation, with the separate pieces streaming through the appropriate Gate and reuniting on the other side.

Deities of the Bureau

The Shogun-Regent of the Seasons and Weather: Ghataru, lesser elemental dragon of air. Ghataru still considers himself to be a loyal servant of Heaven who is keeping the Bureau running until the Solar Exalted can again take control of it. However, while he has little personal ambition, he has a very narrow and rigid view of this Bureau and of what sort of individual should run it. He is certainly not going to yield his office to the first Solar Exalt who asks for it. Many of the Bronze Faction assume, probably correctly, that at this point only a Solar Exalt who spent at least a century working under Ghataru as his apprentice has any chance of gaining control of this Bureau. Ghataru is stodgy, highly conservative, and inclined to order the senior warriors of the Aerial Legion to slay anyone who threatens the stability of this Bureau or who in any way impedes its smooth functioning. He discounts the political threat posed by the Court of Seasons, since he knows they are incapable of organizing the weather and believes no deity in Yu-Shan would be foolish enough to seriously consider putting them in charge of the Bureau.

The General of the Aerial Legion: Nasri, Daimyo of Rainstorms and Daimyo of the Season of Air. Nasri is a huge and unusually powerful ageless storm serpent who oversees the Aerial Legion. In peacetime, her only duties are to make certain that the Aerial Legion correctly generates and controls hurricanes and other huge storms. However, when Ghataru or any of the Celestial Incarnae order it, Nasri rallies the Aerial Legion and leads an attack on the enemies of the gods. Since she cannot simultaneously manage storms and battles, the first sign that the Aerial Legion is assembling is that all large storms cease across Creation. Until the battle ends, the only storms in Creation are the martial weather created by the Bureau of Seasons.

Nasri also commands the five regional storm deities, the **Arbiters of Storms**. The Arbiter of Northern Storms is Naresh, a lesser elemental dragon of water, who oversees the dispatching, timing and intensity of storms in the frozen seas of the North. Naresh is devoted to his work and has not become indolent or soft, expecting strict obedience and no mistakes from his tools and employees. His passion is music, and it is the one obsession that can distract him from his duty or temporarily bribe his favor. Fathrin, the Arbiter of Southern Storms, is a huraka of great age and discretion whose long experience has given him a wisdom which many huraka lack; he is highly capable at his job but cannot lie or deceive and is incapable of playing the political games of Yu-Shan. Memimar, the Arbiter of Eastern Storms, is a lesser elemental dragon of wood who paints his calligraphy across the great forests and the Scavenger Lands in sweeps of wind and rain and fallen trees and is saddened by the lack of spontaneous appreciation for his work. He has a petty dislike for Lookshy because he seldom manages to generate truly great storms there. Alarast is the Arbiter of Western Storms, a storm serpent who is in a constant state of irritation due to the laxness of the censor Fakharu, the intrusions on her domain by the Wyld, and the presence of the Lintha. She does her duty, generating ocean-spanning typhoons and monsoons, and is looking for a way to justify an Aerial Legion strike on the Lintha and their Yozi-tainted island and fleet. Mareth-Annon is the Arbiter of the Storms of the Blessed Isle, a lesser elemental dragon of air who spends much of his time in blissful idleness while allowing the weather to remain calm and pleasant. He is the most regularly sacrificed to of all the Arbiters of Storms and adopts a superior air toward the others, supporting the Bronze Faction.

Daimyo of the Season of Earth and Daimyo of Sunshine: Sano-Medaro, a lesser elemental dragon of earth. Sano-Medaro is an affable deity so long as he is not provoked. He has grown accustomed to being popular, with the harvests of the Season of Earth and the sunbeams who serve him being welcome wherever they go, and he frequently attracts extra worship when people assume that he is directly connected to the Unconquered Sun. This has made him unused to having his whims thwarted or encountering hostility or disobedience. When he grows furious, he often turns loose the Five Lords of Mist whom he commands, leaving communities to rot under fogs and mists until he is appeased enough to send rays of sunlight to burn the dank clouds away.

Morgan Hillan (order #910970)

The Aerial Legion

These traits represent one fang (five combatants) of each of the Aerial Legion's most iconic troop varieties. To represent larger units, increase Magnitude. All these units are capable of flight. The Aerial Legion can also field units of more exotic beings if circumstances demand, particularly garda bird heroes and vast numbers of need fires. In emergencies, the Aerial Legion can requisition units of lion dogs, scarab guardians, or celestial lions from the Bureau of Heaven, but Nasri is loathe to call upon Ryzala's resources and place herself in the latter's debt—the last time she made such a request was during the Great Contagion.

Huraka are described in **Exalted,** pages 303 and 304. For descriptions of individual storm serpents and thunderbirds, see **The Books of Sorcery, Vol. IV—The Roll of Glorious Divinity I**, pages 96 and 97. The traits of an average lesser elemental dragon are on pages 130-131 of this book.

Traits	Huraka	Thunderbirds	Storm Serpents	Lesser Elemental Dragons
Magnitude:*	1	2	2	2
Drill:	5	5	5	5
Close Combat Attack/Damage:	5/4	6/7	7/8	5/4
Ranged Attack/Damage:**	2/3	5/4	6/9	5/2
Endurance:	8	9	17	15
Might:	3	3	4	5
Armor/Hardness:***	2/—	3/—	5/8	7/10
Morale:	3	4	5	3

*As they possess more health levels than mortal extras, these units have greater Magnitude scores than their numbers might suggest. A huraka is worth two mortal extras, a thunderbird is worth three, a storm serpent is worth four, and a lesser elemental dragon is worth ten.

**These traits are for the huraka's dragon's suspire (range 10), the thunderbird's thunderclaps (range 100), the storm serpent's lightning streaks (range 10), and the dragon's suspire of the lesser elemental dragons (range 10).

***None of these units suffer mobility penalties.

Formation: The normal formation trait for each of these units is Skirmish, in flight. Each of them deploys differently, as follows.

Huraka: These move at three yards per tick, flight at normal movement rate. They are available in great numbers (50,000) and form the bulk of the Aerial Legion's infantry.

Thunderbirds: These move at 4 yards per tick and fly at normal movement rate in man form and twice normal movement rate in raptor form. They function as long-range support to huraka fighting at close range but are occasionally deployed as heavy infantry when fire support is not needed or when the huraka's numbers are depleted and infantry is required. Their close combat damage is for their war clubs, which are only usable in human form, but their thunderclaps are usable in both man and raptor form. Thunderbirds on the move or deployed as fire support will stay in raptor form, while thunderbirds deployed as heavy infantry take the forms of men. 10,000 thunderbirds are available.

Storm Serpents: These move at 7 yards per tick and fly at three times normal movement rate but cannot land (thus, their effective movement rate is always 21). They serve as juggernauts and heads of formations but are available in comparatively few numbers (100) and are deployed most carefully because most storm serpents dissipate when the storms that spawn them end, and Nasri has difficulty finding new ageless storm serpents to recruit.

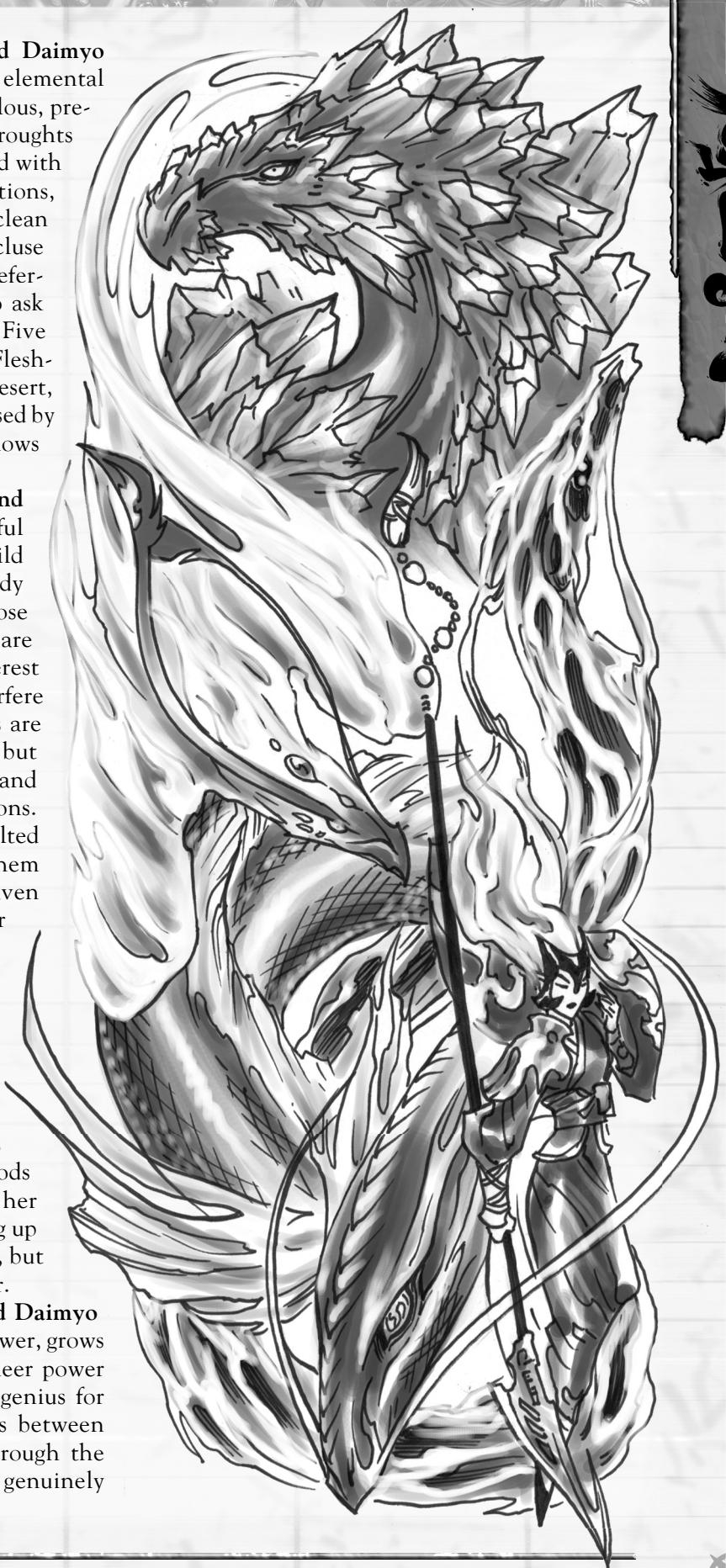
Lesser Elemental Dragons: These move at 5 yards per tick and fly at twice normal movement rate. They are only very rarely fielded as mass combat units—mass combat traits for lesser elemental dragons are provided for situations of apocalyptic desperation only.

Morgan Hillan (order #910970)

Daimyo of the Season of Fire and Daimyo of Sandstorms: Klen-Metarma, a lesser elemental dragon of fire. Klen-Metarma is a meticulous, precise, efficient sadist. His sandstorms and droughts are always carefully targeted and executed with a tidy elegance that earns him commendations, and he considers nothing so beautiful as a clean windswept desert. He is something of a recluse in Yu-Shan, attending few parties and preferring to let other deities come to him to ask for favors. Klen-Metarma commands the Five Droughts, the Three Siroccos, and the Flesh-Stripping Howler of the Far Southern Desert, among many other elementals. He is pleased by aesthetic gifts but dislikes opulence and shows of naked flesh.

Daimyo of the Season of Water and Daimyo of Blizzards: Zutaka, a powerful and ancient thunderbird. Zutaka is mild and difficult to annoy but is always ready to give her opinion on any subject. Those who come to her for advice get it but are also likely to have her permanent interest afterward; she is a meddler, liable to interfere from behind the scenes. Her intentions are usually charitable and vaguely maternal, but she has a very low opinion of the human and Exalted ability to make sensible decisions. She believes the newly returned Solar Exalted just need careful guidance to help ease them back into their proper positions in Heaven and distrusts the Bronze Faction and their plans. Zutaka appreciates proper respect and has a constant flow of flatterers and petitioners passing through her office. She commands the Three Floods and the Nine Snows and does not hesitate to flood out or freeze a town if the people there need a lesson about proper behavior toward their deities. This has won her many allies among the city gods of the Bureau of Humanity, who request her assistance and then assist her in covering up these crimes against the Celestial Order, but she cannot conceal her behavior forever.

Daimyo of the Season of Wood and Daimyo of Clouds: Jetazuro, a god of moderate power, grows daily in influence. Jetazuro lacks the sheer power of the older elementals, but she has a genius for planning and for modeling interactions between different weather patterns. She rose through the ranks as a protégé of Ghataru's and is genuinely



Morgan Hillan (order #910970)

loyal to him in return for his patronage, even if she personally inclines toward supporting the Bronze Faction. Her amiable nature and willingness to help the other Daimyos in their work has won her friends throughout the Bureau. She replaced Zeran-Dubuth as Daimyo of Wood after his arrest for unauthorized use of martial weather and has ambitions to some day become Shogun-General of the Bureau. While she wouldn't deliberately overthrow Ghataru, in the event of a power struggle she might put herself forward as a compromise candidate.

The Council of Winds, the elemental court of the **Wind Masters**, claims authority over every air elemental in Creation. The Council of Winds is also the elemental court with the strongest remaining ties to Yu-Shan. The Wind Masters need the support of Heaven, for only this cooperation provides for them the leniency they require to pursue their endless military crusades against the elementals of water. For the past thousand years, the elementals of air have waged pogrom after pogrom against the Terrestrial water elementals, decimating the ranks of the latter and ensuring the air elementals have control over the courts of both the North and the West. The five Wind Masters are Blue Skulking Bear, Master of the North Wind, who dreams of freezing the world; Green Frowning Bear, Master of the East Wind, a vain keeper of trophies; Black Grinning Bear, Master of the West Wind, who seeks to utterly crush Creation's water elementals; Red Stalking Bear, Master of the South Wind, who seeks a cause that he can give himself to; and White Venerable Bear, Master of the Omphalos and ruler of the cloud-riding Tower Aneme, who seeks to have his brothers set aside their differences. (see **The Books of Sorcery, Vol. IV—The Roll of Glorious Divinity I**, p. 90.)

Relations with Other Bureaus

As far as the directors of the Bureau of Seasons are concerned, the other Bureaus could improve their situations dramatically by simply following tradition and carrying on under the guidelines that the Solar Exalted left behind. They view the corruption of the censors, the power hunger of the Bureau of Heaven, the turmoil and influence grabbing of the Bureau of Humanity, and the disruptions of the Bureau of Nature with the same disapproval. A number of the more aggressive members of the Bureau of Seasons are simply waiting for the disasters that are sure to come to pass and making plans for increasing their own influence in the aftermath.

The Bureau of Seasons and the Bureau of Destiny get on quite well, since the Bureau of Seasons views the Bureau of Destiny as doing an efficient and reliable job. Frequent communications between the two Bureaus ensure that weather patterns won't hinder the destinies woven on the Loom of Fate. However, many individual members of the Bureau of Seasons carry very severe grudges against the Sidereals. All senior and most junior members of the Bureau remember that the Sidereals wiped out the Solar Exalted, thus throwing the Bureau of Seasons into a confusion that still affects their work. The Sidereals' frequent approaches and suggestions regarding the Aerial Legion (both Bronze and Gold factions) only make the matter worse. Some members of the Bureau of Seasons have even wondered what would happen if the Bureau of Destiny were to be entirely run by deities and the Sidereals were to be removed from Heaven. Such individuals (Zutaka, Daimyo of the Season of Water in particular) are interested in building relations with the Solar Exalted.

The Divine Witnesses of Human Works and Deeds (The Bureau of Humanity)

The Bureau of Humanity supervises the gods of human things and places; it contains the gods of nations and cities and roads (the Department of Human Habitations) and also the gods of concepts and ideas developed or used by humanity (the Department of Universal Human Affairs). It is much reduced from the First Age, when its city gods were patrons of great First Age cities and when Solar genius and human effort created thousands of new concepts and ideas. However, the Bureau of Humanity still exercises much influence in Creation through the city gods and the Hundred Gods Heresy, and it uses that influence to gain allies in the other Bureaus and to stall audits against itself.

Since the end of the First Age, the Bureau of Heaven has expanded and stripped away many concepts previously governed by the Bureau of Humanity, such as intoxicants and taxes. In the aftermath of the Contagion, the gods of the Bureau of Humanity grew significantly weaker and far more vulnerable to the machinations of the Bureau of Heaven. As the latter's Department of Abstract Matters grew more powerful, the stronger gods of the Bureau of Humanity were tempted to cast their lot with the rising star rather than the sinking one and move to the Bureau of Heaven, and the Bureau of Humanity grew weaker still.

The gods in this Bureau worked exceedingly closely with the previous Solar Deliberative. New

Morgan Hillan (order #910970)

City Gods

The term "city god" covers both those deities who are the specific patrons of a city or other area of human habitation (the city fathers and city mothers, who exclusively belong to the Bureau of Humanity) and those deities who have some other domain but are also worshiped by a particular area as a general patron (and who may belong to other bureaus—their numbers include the Syndics of Whitewall and the three gods of Great Forks). A small village that trades in the coca leaves it grows may worship Burning Feather, Lady of Intoxicants, as the patron of their village, even though she is not one of the Bureau of Humanity's city gods. The Bureau of Humanity tries to reassign deities of the second type to the Department of Human Habitations where possible and where the deity is not of a high enough rank to object or valuable enough to warrant another bureau's protection.

cities, technologies, and fields of scholarship all required gods, and the Solars involved themselves closely in the selection of those gods. Today the members of the Bureau of Humanity generally support the idea of aiding the newly returned Solar Exalted. These deities regard an alliance with the Solars as the best way for them to regain much of their lost power.

The Bureau of Humanity is the most openly heretical of the five Bureaus. It includes the gods of roads, villages, cities, and nations. Many hundreds of these gods have abandoned their original duties and now rule over the mortals who live within their domains. Although the head of the Bureau of Humanity claims to disapprove of this practice, it is an open secret that the Bureau never actually punishes these rogue deities.

Most of the heads of this Bureau believe that gods can rule mortals far better than mortals can rule themselves, and several consider themselves rightful replacements for the Solar Exalted. The gods of the Bureau currently debate whether to align themselves with the Solars and the Gold Faction Sidereals as equals or whether it might be better to return—temporarily, at least—to their old subservient role. Unsurprisingly, all but a few reactionaries favor the various city gods continuing to rule their homes and the Bureau of Humanity working with the Solar Exalted as equals.

One of the Bureau of Humanity's primary duties used to be policing the behavior of gods who interacted with mortals. Evidence of impropriety would be handled by the Bureau of Humanity in minor cases or passed to the celestial lions and censors in major cases. In those days, the Bureau of Humanity and the Department of Celestial Concerns cooperated closely; the growing tensions between the Department of Abstract Matters and the Bureau of Humanity were ignored as far as possible. As the Department of Abstract Matters continued to grow at the Bureau of Humanity's expense, this collaboration became harder to maintain, as the Bureau of Humanity had to use the city gods' influence more often and more illegally in order to maintain its power base. Cooperation broke down and communication became nothing more than polite memoranda and meaningless forms and reports. Today, this policing is little more than an excuse to obtain bribes and apply pressure.

In addition to allowing various city fathers and mothers to become the immortal overlords of human cities, the Bureau of Humanity permits rebel gods such as ronin lion dogs and rogue celestial lions to take control of mortal habitations. Not only does this behavior violate the Creation-Ruling Mandate, but these god-kings also displace the current deities of these cities and towns. The Bureau of Humanity does not do this to its own loyal city fathers and similar patron deities but is glad to displace deities loyal to the Bureau of Heaven and the Department of Abstract Matters.

Corruption in High Places

One of the more corrupt censors of the Bureau of Heaven, Aligept, has come to a tidy arrangement with the Bureau of Humanity. He has recorded a number of corrupt lion dogs as being on his personal staff, and when they seize power over a town or city in Creation, he frames the local deities for various forms of malfeasance and misconduct, auditing them with all the due process. Once they are convicted, he has it put in the records that the relevant lion dog is keeping the area under surveillance while ensuring a return to proper divine-human interaction. Of course, the lion dog has merely become the area's new despot. As a result, Aligept has a network of loyal supporters in Creation and some very powerful contacts in the Bureau of Humanity.

Morgan Hillan (order #910970)

Instead of alerting the censors to punish these offending deities, the investigators of the Bureau of Humanity generally approach the new ruler of a city and offer to turn a blind eye to its various crimes in return for the construction and maintenance of shrines dedicated to appropriate gods chosen by the leaders of the Bureau of Humanity. To prevent further problems, the leaders of the Bureau then either forcibly reshape the previous city god and assign it to a lesser duty or use bribes and threats to coerce it into finding a new line of work. Amoth City-Smiter eats overly recalcitrant gods. Deities from the Bureau of Heaven may be offered a chance to change Bureau and join the Bureau of Humanity, especially if they have information or influence on other members of the Bureau of Heaven.

Bureau Structure

The Bureau of Humanity has an exceedingly simple organizational structure. Each elemental region is ruled by a satrap. Under these satraps are the gods of the various city-states or nations, and under them are the gods of all the individual fields, cities, roads, towns, and villages. These deities compose the Department of Human Habitations.

In the First Age, there was a parallel half of the Bureau devoted to large-scale human concerns such as agriculture, hunting, medicine, intoxicants, and so on. Unfortunately, most of these gods were convinced over the centuries to join the Department of Abstract Matters in the Bureau of Heaven. Today, this division, the Department of Universal Human Affairs, contains only minor gods and a few very powerful ones, such as Plentimon of the Dice, who are happy with the near-total lack of supervision in this Bureau. In general, the few gods of human concerns that remain in this Bureau have no interest in joining the Bureau of Heaven, preferring freedom to greater political power. The Bureau of Humanity has essentially become the Bureau in charge of various locations used by humanity, and the Department of Human Habitations is ninety percent of it.

The Department of Universal Human Affairs was organized under a Director into multiple Boards, with each Board covering an area or concept and controlling the deities included in that area. Boards included the Board of Ill-Health (including both diseases and healing), the Board of the Seas (including all forms of waterborne transport, swimming, fishing, and so on), the Board of Pleasure (intoxicants, sexual activity, banquets, anything pleasant), the Board of Conquest (governing concepts of war, which has now entirely moved over to the Bureau of Heaven), and others.

The Immaculate Order and the Bureau of Humanity

The Bureau of Humanity is divided in opinion about the Immaculate Order. Those city fathers, national patrons, and road gods who govern areas under Realm influence can be assured of regular, reliable veneration from the monks, even if they have to share it with other deities and even if it's on the monks' terms and not the gods'. Those outside the Realm's sphere of influence can rule undisturbed or at least exercise much greater influence and gain far more worship—but, at the same time, they have a higher risk of being usurped by other deities or having their city fall. Deities like Gri-Fel, God of the Imperial City, have done very well thanks to the Realm and the Immaculate Order and are strong proponents of the Immaculate Philosophy, pointing out that this stability will help the Bureau of Humanity in the long term. Deities who already rule their own cities tend to be less welcoming to Immaculate monks.

While individual members of the Bureau of Humanity may approve of the Immaculate Order, the leaders of the Bureau do not. If the Immaculates control the worship in a particular city, then that city father or city mother can't direct that worship toward specific deities, and the Bureau of Humanity can't use it as a bargaining tool. This is a point of conflict between Celestial gods in the Bureau of Humanity and Terrestrial gods that serve the Bureau of Humanity but aren't involved in its politics.

Currently, the Bureau of Humanity is attempting a political coup. Led by Wun Ja, members of the Department of Human Habitations are approaching the highest-ranking of the censors and celestial lions, pointing out how closely matched the Bureau of Humanity's work and the censors' audits are and how effective both were during the First Age when relations were more cordial. Surely, they reason, it would be logical for the entire block of censors, celestial lions, lion dogs, and all their affiliated staff to move to the Bureau of Humanity, where they could work with unparalleled autonomy, free of Ryzala's supervision. Ryzala would still control the bureaucracy of the Department of Celestial Concerns, just not the censors and celestial lions and their subordinates; this would effectively gut the Department, leaving

Morgan Hillan (order #910970)

her with an empty shell. Such a decision would cause huge disturbances in Yu-Shan, utterly destroying the current balance of power between Bureaus. However, the fact that none of the censors Wun Ja has approached have discussed this with Ryzala suggests they're at least considering it—or want Wun Ja to believe they are.

Location

The main buildings of the Bureau of Humanity look something like a giant four-legged jade spider. The Department of Human Habitations owns the Offices of the Five Directions, domes carved from jade, obsidian and ivory. Four of them are laid out in a cross at ground level, in the four directions, while the Central Office (representing the Blessed Isle) is held off the ground on alabaster pillars, linked to the other buildings by great jade bridges wide enough for several mammoths marching in step. All offices are decorated in the local style of the direction, nation-state, city-state, or town that the deity in question supervises, though expensive materials such as jade, gold, and platinum are often substituted for the driftwood or other humble substances that might be used in Creation.

Underneath the Central Office is the Hall of Sincere Aspirations, the home of the Department of Universal Human Affairs. These days it is sadly empty, with echoing corridors and dusty offices. Some deities who still work there have taken the opportunity to expand their work space and rooms and host a whole assembly of minions, while others keep to their own offices and ignore the empty spaces on all sides. A few offices belonging to deities who have left for the Bureau of Heaven are kept locked and empty in hopes that their original owners will return, but others have been stripped down to the fireplaces and doorknobs, leaving behind barren rooms devoid of even stools and privacy screens.

Other buildings owned by the Bureau of Humanity include the Hall of Gracious Superintendence, the Hall of Virtuous Patrons of Paths and Ways, and the Hall of Uplifting Vigor.

The Hall of Gracious Superintendence is a central point for city fathers and mothers: under the Solars, this was an area where those who shared this line of work could discuss ways and means of gently managing their human population and fostering their cities toward cooperation and mutual improvement. These days the city fathers and mothers are most often hostile toward each other, just as their cities are, but they are all united in mutual terror of Amoth City-Smiter.

The Hall of Virtuous Patrons of Paths and Ways is a central point for road gods and is one of the busiest parts of the Bureau of Humanity. Many road gods cross through multiple nations or cities and have a more cosmopolitan attitude than city fathers or nation gods. Their information network is among the best in Heaven. Many of them strongly favor the Guild, which sacrifices to them regularly. They disapprove of Amoth City-Smiter, since his work destroys roads and trade routes as well as cities.

The Hall of Uplifting Vigor is for patrons of nations and tribes and other forms of group identity among humans. The deities here view masks, road gods, and city fathers as their natural subordinates, and often consider Terrestrial Exalted as pawns to use in struggles against each other (Some extend this attitude to Celestial Exalted, with varying success). These deities frequently use this Hall to invite allies for private discussions. All gods of the Bureau of Humanity have offices in both their relevant Office of Direction and in one of the other Halls, where appropriate.

Deities of the Bureau

The Director of Humanity: Wun Ja, God of the Shining Metropolis. Wun Ja was one of the greatest of the gods in the First Age; her domain was the concept of the perfect city, a marvelous wonder which the Solar Exalted frequently achieved. She began to fall in power after the Usurpation and lost much of what remained when the greatest cities collapsed during the Contagion. This loss of power was one of the primary reasons why the Bureau of Heaven was able to steal so many gods from under the Bureau of Humanity's jurisdiction. Wun Ja is terrified her Bureau will continue to shrink and is willing to break any law of Heaven to prevent this from happening. She is the primary proponent of the Bureau's plan to work with the Sidereal Gold Faction and any Solar Exalted who can be convinced to cooperate equally with the Bureau. She is also **Director of the Department of Human Habitations** and is reluctant to give up the position to anyone who might attempt to replace her as Director of the Bureau.

As relations between the Realm and the Threshold continue to deteriorate since the disappearance of the Scarlet Empress, Wun Ja is working to convince more gods to take control of cities. Her current major project is to convince Grandmother Bright of Chiaroscuro (see **The Books of Sorcery, Vol. IV—The Roll of Glorious Divinity I**, p. 52) to openly take control of the city and rebuild it to

Morgan Hillan (order #910970)

its ancient glory. Grandmother Bright (a member of the Bureau of Humanity herself and a former member of the Department of Universal Human Affairs when she was still Bright Sanguine Saber, Goddess of Vengeance) has resisted so far, but she might be convinced if Wun Ja could provide Celestial Exalts and other powerful allies to help. Wun Ja is also actively looking for Solar Exalted willing to take control of large cities—but only if they agree to avoid destroying other large cities and are willing to ensure worship of her and of other major deities from the Bureau of Humanity in the cities they control. Since cities in the Realm aren't providing her with any influence over mortal prayer, she is eager to help with any plans to conquer the Realm, assuming those plans align with her agenda.

The Satrap of the Realm: Jagalza. Jagalza is both Wun Ja's staunchest ally and her lover. She has close ties to the Bronze Faction, not because she hates the Solar Exalted but because she is terrified of the threat that any new power poses to the stability of the Realm. Jagalza dislikes the Realm's current policies forbidding the worship of various gods and regularly attempts to manipulate or blackmail Bronze Faction functionaries into changing this policy, but she views the Realm's continued existence as her prime concern. Despite her links to the Bronze Faction, she has also begun tentatively negotiating with members of the Gold Faction, in case the Realm's greatest safety should lie with a Solar takeover and re-establishment of the Deliberative. She is utterly amoral and except for her love for Wun Ja, cares for nothing except the Realm, viewing it ideally as a state ruled by the gods, but she is willing to prop up the Dragon-Blooded regime for the moment. The more disruption that Solar Exalted may cause, the more deadly her machinations against them will become.

The God of the Imperial City: Gri-Fel (see **Exalted**, p. 298). Gri-Fel is deeply loyal to the Realm and to Wun Ja but hates Jagalza and is jealous of the attention that Wun Ja pays her. He is a genuinely devout follower of the Immaculate faith and is convinced that the Bronze Faction and the Dragon-Blooded are the proper rulers of the Realm. Since his growth from petty village deity to major god has coincided with the Realm's growth, and he himself is a comparatively young deity, he has little knowledge of the Solar Deliberative, the Usurpation, or what matters were actually like in the days before the Scarlet Dynasty. Although they share many of the same basic goals, Gri-Fel and Jagalza are bitter rivals and regularly attempt to disgrace each other. Amoth City-Smiter keeps careful watch on this rivalry and is always eager to incite it, hoping to provoke open strife between the two gods and thus topple the Realm. Wun Ja is also aware of the rivalry and keeps it simmering so that neither of the two can threaten her own position.

The God of Meru: Ameru. Ameru was once the most powerful god in the Realm and one of the most powerful gods in Creation. He was the deity of the First Age capital of Meru. However, during the Usurpation, much of the city was destroyed, and uncontrolled sorceries were released into the portions of it carved into Mount Meru. The destruction of the city stripped away most of Ameru's power, and the magical corruption of its mountain catacombs blasted its mind. Ameru has the mind of an infant and sits in a well-appointed office where he babbles nonsense to a single scribe. He is a living lesson to the entire Bureau of Humanity as to how far a city god can fall.

The Satrap of the East: Ventressi-Merdo. Ventressi-Merdo is in an awkward position; he is technically in command of the deities of some of the most powerful cities in Creation, such as Nexus and Lookshy, but in practice he runs the risk of them ignoring orders that they don't want to obey. Such disobedience would be tactfully veiled as "your message went astray" or "your courier arrived too late, my lord," but both sides would be aware of the action—and of the precedent it would set. Ventressi-Merdo therefore rules the Bureau of Humanity's Eastern gods with a tolerance verging on laxness, cultivating their assistance rather than requiring it. He has more than once helped Tien Yu block Sidereal investigations into Lookshy (a few Seers are still trying to find their way around the Maiden of Battles' seal on the city's destiny), and she owes him several favors in response.

Other deities under the supervision of the Satrap of the East include Leeayta, the God of Rathess, the Lizard Queen, a Dragon King goddess of territorial conquest; Tien Yu, the God of Lookshy; and Tu Yu, the God of Deheleshen.

The God of Nexus: Gen. To the mortals of Nexus, Gen is the Minister of the Ways of the Council of Entities. No one outside the Council knows that he is also the deity of the ancient city of Hollow, now known as Nexus. He was gravely wounded during the Contagion and the trouble surrounding the end of the First Age, and this wound has never completely healed because of the severe

Morgan Hillan (order #910970)

damage done to his city. Currently Gen is not capable of running the city on his own, nor is he entirely sane. Gen is vaguely loyal to Wun Ja but cares little for matters beyond Nexus. Several gods, including Wun Ja, want to replace Gen with a more effective and sane city god; they are only prevented by the fact that no single faction wishes its rivals to place a powerful and loyal deity in charge of Nexus. Should Gen's identity as Minister of the Ways be revealed, the auditors of the Bureau of Heaven would be swift to bring charges; this would be a serious loss to the Bureau of Humanity, as the Bureau of Heaven would be sure to exploit the matter to their own gain and the Bureau of Humanity's loss.

The Satrap of the South: Biriketh, Lady of the Generous Waters. Due to the difficulties of building settlements in the desert, Biriketh is more concerned with those gods who govern cities in harsh terrain than those who patronize areas in the more fertile southeast and southwest. She has excellent relationships with the Bureau of Seasons and frequently bribes the gods there to arrange extra rainstorms or prevent undue sandstorms. Ahlat's patronage of Harborhead gnaws at her; not only is the Southern War God usurping an area of work that belongs to a national deity, but Ahlat's desertion to the Bureau of Heaven rankles personally. The fall of Harborhead and a decrease in Ahlat's power would please her. She quietly supports the Court of the Orderly Flame, viewing them as a stabilizing influence.

Other deities under the supervision of the Satrap of the South include the Golden Lord and the Pale Mistress of An-Teng and Grandmother Bright, the god of Chiaroscuro.

The Satrap of the West: Zokaron-Temesh. Zokaron-Temesh governs the deities of the nations and cities of the West. He bitterly regrets the Usurpation and the shattering of so many great cities there and the loss of mighty islands and archipelagoes to the expanding Wyld during the Contagion and the Fair Folk attacks. He has gone from being an equal among the Satraps to being the least powerful of them. He supervises a large number of petty deities, gods of a single island and the like, but must live with the fact that most of the worship in the West goes to the Ocean Father or his offspring and related deities and other gods of the Bureau of Seasons. Zokaron-Temesh is seriously considering defecting to the Bureau of Heaven, under whatever bureaucratic reasoning can support his desertion, in the hopes of gaining more regular worship and prayers. He is aware of the Bureau of Heaven's interest in the Five Celestial Admirals and is watching to see what happens.

The Satrap of the North: Tarendar. Tarendar finds himself faced with the growing threat of the North's barbarian tribes; whether guided by the Bull of the North, or by Lunars assisted by Amoth City-Smiter, or simply on their own, they are destroying the cities and nations of the North and providing nothing in return. Their worship for the animal avatars and abstract concepts like the Gods of Winter and Dream that the Haslanti favor does little to support him personally, Whitewall's Syndics don't answer to him, and he cannot find Gethamane's patron deities. He is considering an alliance with the Bull of the North. If the Bull were to promote worship of Tarendar himself, or at least some national deity for his growing empire, it would do a great deal to support the Bureau of Humanity in the North. Tarendar is also making advances to the Gold Faction, hoping that their Solar protégées can inspire worship of city gods or even found new cities and nations.

Director of the Department of Universal Human Affairs: Agralzo, God of Discovery. Agralzo was the god whose domain encompassed concepts of discovery, creation, invention, and making new things. He was a creation of Autochthon and a strong ally of the Solar Deliberative and was assassinated during the havoc of the Usurpation by a group of Sidereals who feared the assistance that he would give to the Twilight Caste Solars. While he recovered, the sudden fall in creativity and invention as a whole crippled his power, and a group of censors promptly took the opportunity to audit him for interference in Creation. The Bureau of Humanity made a great outcry at this, and in response his sentence was commuted from destruction to imprisonment for several thousand years. He now occupies a Cage of Eternal Torment deep beneath the Bureau of Heaven. His absence weakens his Department; should he return, besides the motivations of revenge and rebuilding the Bureau of Humanity, he would be interested in working with the new Solars to rediscover the past and to create new wonders.

The Sub-Director of Bribery and Finance: Amoth City-Smiter, God of Tumbled Ruins. Amoth was a minor deity in the Department of Universal Human Affairs until the end of the First Age, when the vast increase in ruined cities and towns greatly boosted his power. He wants Wun Ja's job as Director of the Bureau but also shares her desire to prevent the Bureau of Heaven from stealing even more of their power.

Morgan Hillan (order #910970)

His long-term strategy involves making alliances with specific Lunar Exalted, where he gives them useful information on possible targets in return for their promise that they will reduce the towns and cities that they invade to smoking ruins. In time, and with his strength increasing from war, he hopes to force a peaceful transition of authority between himself and Wun Ja once he is clearly the most powerful deity in the Bureau.

Amoth has ties with several of the senior No Moon Caste Lunars in the Silver Pact. Although there is no great friendship between them, Amoth finds the alliance beneficial. He sends out minor spirits to spy on various settlements and then has messengers carry this information to the Lunars. Using this information, the Lunars are able to fight more effectively on both a practical and a theological level, as Amoth's information also includes data on all deities who serve as patrons to the city in question and suggested ways to neutralize or mollify them. The only condition that Amoth puts on providing this information is that the city in question must be utterly destroyed, and all the residents must be adopted into the barbarian tribe, enslaved or killed.

Amoth has also made temporary alliances with Fair Folk nobles, whom he finds useful in his attempts to destroy various cities. If evidence of this were to come to light, Amoth would most likely end up buried under a mountain for the next five hundred years. His efforts have also resulted in a growing cult to him among some Wyld barbarian tribes. Although this cult is providing him with much-needed worship, it has also attracted the interest of the celestial lion Fleeting Maelstrom.

Maelstrom is looking into the possibility that Amoth may have violated Celestial edicts concerning noninterference with Creation. While there is no Celestial law against being worshiped for destructive actions, Fleeting Maelstrom is concerned that there may be some link between Amoth on the one hand and Wyld incursions into Creation on the other. Since most gods take infractions that might destabilize the borders of Creation very seriously indeed, Amoth is currently seeking allies in Yu-Shan to help prevent Fleeting Maelstrom from discovering the truth. His bargains with the Lunars are dubious enough, but if his pacts with the Fair Folk were to be discovered, nothing could save him, and he knows it.

The **Five Celestial Admirals** are the gods of sailing and shipcrafting. They are Rudhira the Storm Rider, greatest of the five ship gods, in the West; Nasellus, in the Blessed Isle, an ally of House Peleps; Baris, in the East, who travels on rivers in a bamboo skiff; Birnana, who speeds across the sands in a vessel of fire, in the South; and Pruina, in the North, who plots to have the airships of the Haslanti added to her dominion. All five of them previously served under Pai Yi the Sail Maiden, who was slain during Balor's Crusade; Agralzo has been in no position to appoint her successor, Amoth lacks the rank, and the five Admirals constantly intrigue against each other for it whenever they're not trying to find someone qualified to appoint one of them. Rudhira also seeks control of the Bureau of Destiny's Golden Barque, believing that it will give her the edge she needs to take control of the other Admirals as well as falling under her personal domain.

The absence of the Sail Maiden has left this group of deities vulnerable to takeovers by other Bureaus. The Bureau of Heaven is currently enticing these five deities to join the Department of Abstract Matters under the Division of Waterborne Artifacts, while the Bureau of Destiny claims an interest in the matter through the Division of Journeys. The Five Celestial Admirals haven't yet come to an agreement as to whether they will do better by staying with the Bureau of Humanity or moving to the Bureau of Heaven. Rudhira and Pruina favor their current position and independence while the other three would prefer joining the Bureau of Heaven and its expanding power.

Amoth City-Smiter and the Thousand Streams River

Amoth City-Smiter doesn't realize how little he knows about the true Lunar plans, the Thousand Streams River, and all the ongoing Lunar projects to build working civilizations. The Lunars with whom he has communicated are all working with barbarian tribes or building growing empires and are willing to go along with his schemes and destroy cities that stand in their path. He doesn't know how many other Lunars are patrons of nascent tribes and nations that are building cities. His allies among the Lunar are those who genuinely want to end the urban lifestyle among the human race and bring back the days of tribalism; they are unrepentant patrons of savages and builders of pyramids of skulls. So far other Lunars have avoided Amoth out of courtesy to their fellow Lunar Exalted, but should conflict arise within the Silver Pact between the supporters of new civilizations and the supporters of civilization's abandonment, the god will find himself with as many Lunar enemies as allies.

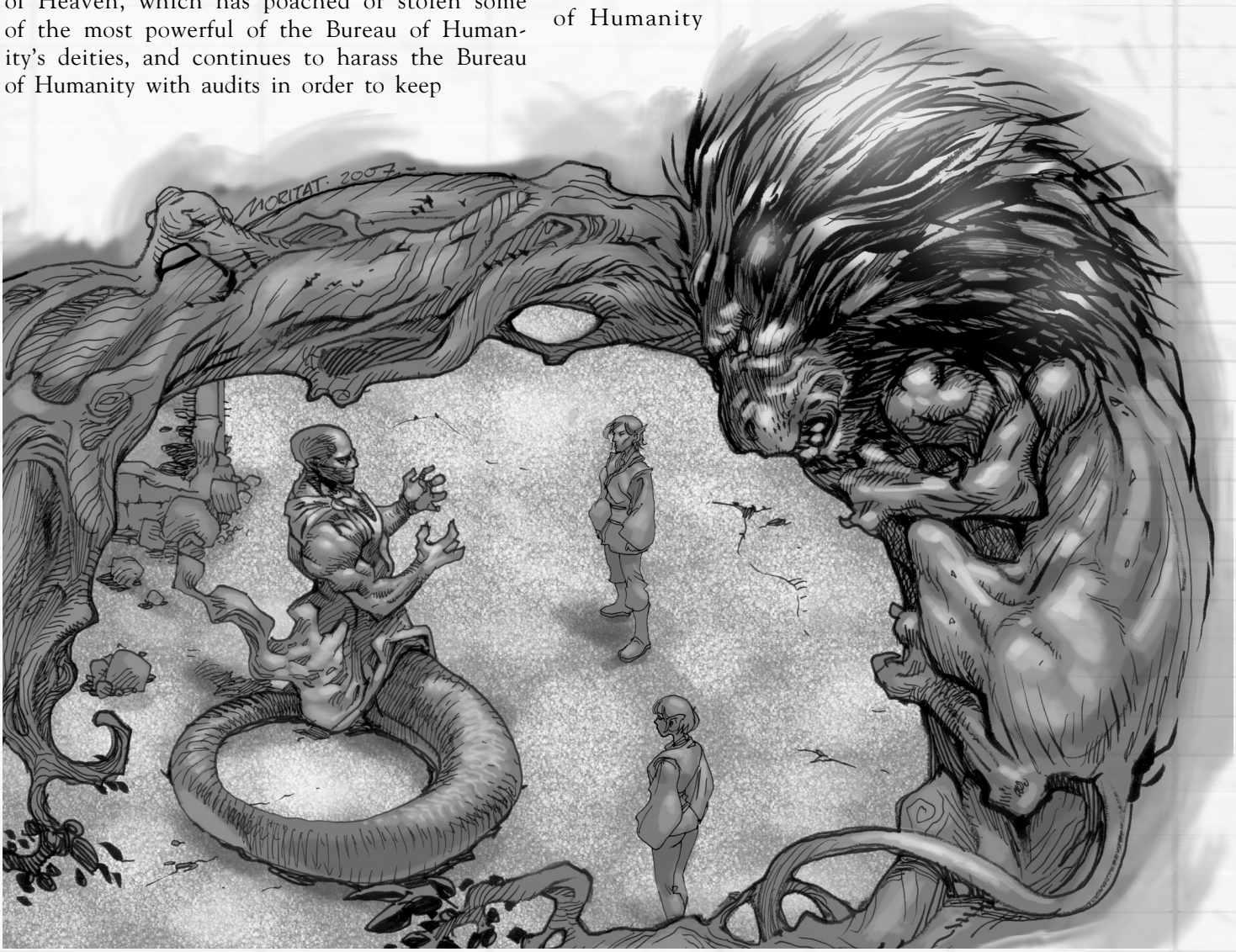
Morgan Hillan (order #910970)

Other deities of the Department of Universal Human Affairs include Rabszolga, God of Slaves (and of the concept of slavery; see **The Books of Sorcery, Vol. IV—The Roll of Glorious Divinity I**, p. 58); Ystara, goddess of the trade of luxury goods; Plentimon of the Dice, Minister of Gambling (**The Compass of Terrestrial Directions, Vol. II—The West,** p. 136); Vanileth, Shogun of Artificial Flight, and his Satrap Relza who dwells in Rathess; the Board of Ill-Health and its five Commissioners, of whom Black Eye Cyst is the Southern Commissioner; Grala, Mistress of the Endless Hunt (who has repeatedly refused invitations to join E-Naluna and Yo-Ping in transferring to the Bureau of Heaven) and her five regional hunting gods; Krinmy, the Mother of all Harbors; and Prostar the Duke of Wagons.

Relations With Other Bureaus

The Bureau of Humanity loathes the Bureau of Heaven, which has poached or stolen some of the most powerful of the Bureau of Humanity's deities, and continues to harass the Bureau of Humanity with audits in order to keep them incapable of retaliating. While the Bureau of Humanity has managed to maintain a reasonable if not equal position of power through bribery of other deities and funneling of worship, long-term simmering resentment has become deep and bitter hatred. If the Bureau of Humanity could enlist the Solars on their side, one of the very first things that they would suggest would be a thorough inquisition of the entire Bureau of Heaven, from censors to clerks, with the Department of Abstract Matters being gutted and sown with salt in the process, and the consequences to the rest of Heaven be damned.

In contrast, members of the Bureau of Humanity frequently look down on the Bureaus of Seasons and Nature, viewing them as concerned with the mere underpinnings of Creation, as opposed to humanity—which expands, thrives, and most importantly, can sacrifice to the gods. However, some members of the Bureau of Humanity



Morgan Hillan (order #910970)

have begun to disregard this historical attitude of disdain and cooperate quietly with the Bureaus of Nature and Seasons in order to improve matters for all three of them. For instance, the Bureau of Seasons can arrange a city's weather; the Bureau of Nature can see to its crops, its herds, and its hunting; and the Bureau of Humanity can make sure that the inhabitants of the city worship the appropriate gods in the first two Bureaus. It can be a very cozy situation, as long as the Bureau of Heaven doesn't audit them all for excessive interference in Creation and as long as the Bureaus of Seasons and Nature are willing to set aside their resentment of the Bureau of Humanity.

The Bureau of Humanity and the Bureau of Destiny are frequently at odds, as the Bureau of Humanity's divine interference can and does complicate the workings of the Loom of Fate. The Bureau of Humanity is also quick to draw the link between the loss of the Solars and their own calamitous fall in power. The division in the Bureau of Humanity between supporters of the Bronze Faction and supporters of the Gold Faction is palpable; the deities of this Bureau can see their power base weakening by the year and are faced with the choice of jumping ship to the Bureau of Heaven or taking drastic and innovative action to rebuild their status and influence. While only the most foolish deities of the Bureau of Humanity would view the Sidereals as tools, others in the Bureau see them as a power bloc that must be factored into any return for them to power. The current attitude toward the Bureau of Destiny is one of frosty politeness coupled with eager advances behind the scenes, whether it comes to supporting the Realm and assuring regular worship or supporting the returned Solars and restructuring Creation and Yu-Shan.

The Superintendency of Nature Grand and Humble (The Bureau of Nature)

This Bureau is responsible for the wilderness, plants, animals, minerals, and all objects not created by humanity. It also includes non-meteorological phenomena such as oceans, rivers, forests, hot springs, and earthquakes. Its internal organization is split into two often conflicting hierarchies, and it has been drastically reduced by events in Creation. While many deities from this Bureau work with the Lunar Exalted to help maintain the boundaries of Creation, they do so surreptitiously; technically it is no crime to work together with the Celestial Exalted, but in practice many censors are willing to make an accusation of interference in Creation on the flimsiest of grounds.

Like the Bureau of Humanity, this bureau used to work closely with the Celestial Exalted. The Fair Folk invasion dealt the Bureau of Nature a serious blow—as the Fair Folk let the Wyld into Creation and broke down the barriers of reality, Creation shrank, and almost 40 percent of the previous world vanished into the Wyld. The gods themselves who were in charge of all the species, biomes and regions that the Wyld destroyed still remained, reduced in power and unemployed. Since most of the destroyed regions were wilderness areas, the now impoverished gods formerly of the Bureau of Nature make up the majority of Yu-Shan's unemployed. Most have departed from Yu-Shan to find some place in Creation, but many hundreds of millions remain, living squalid and pathetic lives in the abandoned portions of the Celestial City.

Unemployment

There is a difference between a god whose domain has been changed or reduced and a god whose domain no longer exists. Ameru, God of Meru, has been reduced to senility and ineffectiveness by severe damage to the city of Meru, but the city itself still exists and will continue to exist in stories and history as long as it is remembered. Ameru survives and still has a post in the Celestial Bureaucracy. However, a deity whose domain no longer exists and is no longer remembered has no place in the Bureaucracy and receives no salary. The Wyld took a bite out of Creation, and a huge part of the Bureau of Nature fell with it.

The remaining members of the Bureau of Nature are determined that Creation shrink no further. As a result, several of the directors of this Bureau have cultivated close contacts with the Lunar Exalted. They are unaware of the Bureau of Humanity's work with the Lunar Exalted, let alone Amoth City-Smiter's links to Wyld barbarians and Fair Folk. Ever since the Lunars established themselves as guardians of the borders of the Wyld, several departments in the Bureau of Nature, including most of the regional committees overseeing land, plants and animals located near the borders of the Wyld, have provided discreet aid to the Silver Pact. When the Lunars battle Fair Folk invaders, they often do so with divine assistance and small armies of beasts under the direction of various gods of nature. This alliance is particularly close in the East.

Morgan Hillan (order #910970)

The Terrestrial Bureaucracy

The Bureau of Nature has a great deal of potential influence over the Terrestrial Bureaucracy, which it rarely exercises. The ecosystems overseen by the deities of the Bureau of Nature help support the deities of the Terrestrial Bureaucracy. If the Bureau of Nature chooses to alter the ecosystem of a desert, then ultimately they can drive out the fire elementals and gods of sand and heat. Similarly, they can improve the natural situation for Terrestrial deities if they so choose.

However, Flashing Peak rigidly keeps the Bureau running on traditional lines. While many deities of the Bureau of Nature would willingly cooperate with the Terrestrial gods and elementals—their situation has become too desperate for inherent snobbery—the rules of their own Bureau prevent them, even more so than the censors of the Bureau of Heaven. The channels through which Yu-Shan and the Terrestrial Bureaucracy may interact are rigid and fixed, and Flashing Peak and her direct chain of command frown on any attempts to circumvent them with quiet bargains of mutual assistance.

Many deities in the Bureau now consider how best to remove Flashing Peak.

The alliance between the Bureau of Nature and the Silver Pact is not in itself against the laws of Yu-Shan. Still, whenever anyone in this Bureau provides significant aid to the Silver Pact, he pays the appropriate bribes to the censors and celestial lions of the Bureau of Heaven. The limits of what a god may and may not do in Creation are vaguely defined and can easily be interpreted to suit the censor in question, and no deity from this Bureau wishes to give the Bureau of Heaven reason to interfere. While most censors would in fact turn a blind eye to the situation, none of them want to start a tradition of gods not paying their bribes. If a deity of the Bureau of Nature were to avoid the usual payments, then the censor would be unlikely to audit her over cooperation with Lunars but would find some other excuse to thoroughly investigate her work and performance, and—whether genuine or fake—would find some evidence to support charges.

Some of the Bureau of Nature have even gone so far as to assist Lunar-sponsored barbarian tribes in operations against civilized nations. Since the barbarian tribes frequently pray to deities of nature, like the animal avatars, this provides the Bureau of Nature with more worship. These operations are carried out by deities of wild, undomesticated animals and plants—gods of wolves and mammoths rather than gods of cattle and grain. These specific gods also sometimes cooperate with Amoth City-Smiter in the Bureau of Humanity.

Most of the time, the celestial lions fail to notice the aid provided by the Bureau of Nature. However, when a field guardian, city father or elemental living in a civilized land complains that the barbarians who overran its shrine were aided by nature spirits, and the Bureau of Humanity backs the complaint, the Bureau of Heaven sometimes intervenes. In such cases, the censors or lions assess high fines. If it looks as if the Bureau of Heaven is going to dig more deeply, then the gods responsible select a scapegoat from among their number and demote or imprison him for a century or two.

Bureau Structure

The structure of the Bureau of Nature is both simple and highly inefficient. There are two parallel hierarchies, the Hierarchy of Type and the Hierarchy of Function. The Hierarchy of Type divides animals, plants and places by appearance. There are gods of birds, mountains, hoofed animals, valleys, red rocks, cats, dogs, trees, snakes, lakes, fungi, flowering plants, grasses, and more. The Hierarchy of Function groups animals, plants and places according to more abstract points of similarity and difference. There are gods of carnivores, high places, burrowers, flying creatures, sedimentary rocks, leaf-eaters, aquatic life, and so on.

Originally, before the fall of the Primordials, there was only a single Hierarchy, the Hierarchy of Function. When Yu-Shan was restructured after the Incarnae took control, the Bureau of Nature was also reorganized so that every member of the Hierarchy of Function also had a position in the Hierarchy of Type. This was to aid mortals to direct their worship appropriately. However, as the First Age progressed, more deities were added to the Hierarchies, and frequently they were only given a post in one or the other Hierarchy, not in both. This caused divisions to develop between the two Hierarchies, as both found themselves competing for the same mortal worship. While neither Hierarchy was willing to invite arbitration from another Bureau or to join forces with another Bureau against their fellow workers, the separate Hierarchies became more formalized, and deities of the Bureau were expected to belong to either one or the other.

Morgan Hillan (order #910970)

The Gods of the Magical Materials

In the First Age, the gods of the magical materials (orichalcum, moonsilver, starmetal, and the five jade goddesses) were all in the Bureau of Nature, under the Hierarchy of Function. (The god of soulsteel was added to the department much later, upon its confirmation as a full magical material late in the First Age and has an unsavory reputation.) Taking advantage of the Bureau's weakness during the Contagion and the Fair Folk invasion, the Bureau of Heaven put forward a convincing argument that these sacred elements and their deities should be within the Bureau of Heaven, and the Bureau of Nature wasn't strong enough to deny them.

In the First Age, the two hierarchies were approximately equal, with Solar knowledge and research supporting the Hierarchy of Function, while general mortal beliefs supported the Hierarchy of Type. However, much knowledge was lost at the end of the First Age, and in the present day most mortals group animals solely by type. The elaborate First Age taxonomies only exist in a few books buried deep in ancient ruins. The gods of the Hierarchy of Function resent their loss of power and have tried many schemes to restore the balance in this Bureau. Unfortunately, the only sure way to restore the prior state of affairs is to change the way that most mortals understand and classify the world.

So far, such changes have proven impossible to implement. One recent effort involved lesser gods in this Hierarchy traveling in Creation and working as scholars and teachers in an effort to teach natural history in a fashion that would aid their cause. Another more subtle attempt involves using thaumaturges and savants. The Hierarchy of Function is far more useful and comprehensible to them than it is to the average man in Creation. Some of the deities of this Hierarchy have secretly approached scholars in Great Forks, thaumaturges in Lookshy, and Dragon-Blooded attending the Heptagram, offering to reveal how they can use the knowledge and taxonomies of this Hierarchy in order to better utilize and substitute ingredients for thaumaturgical and sorcerous workings. The Sidereals of the Bureau of Destiny are not aware of this yet but are likely to find out if the concepts begin to gain hold.

Morgan Hillan (order #910970)

The two Shoguns of the Hierarchies are technically equal in rank, and during the First Age all decisions by the Bureau required the agreement of both Shoguns to implement. This kept the Bureau very stable but also very passive, for while both Shoguns agreed on resisting attempts by other Bureaus to steal influence or power, they rarely agreed on offensive actions against other Bureaus. Below them, each subgroup is governed by its own daimyo, and there are frequent disagreements as to whether a daimyo of a large group which is part of a similarly large group (such as the Daimyo of Singing Birds, under the Daimyo of Birds) is comparable to the daimyo of a small group which has fewer subdivisions, but which is less major (such as the Daimyo of Red Granite, under the Daimyo of Red Rocks).

In the event of a deity's domain falling under several different areas, then she answers to the gods of all those areas. Thus, the God of Vipers answers to the God of Venomous Snakes and the God of Snakes above that, in the Hierarchy of Type, and to the Gods of Poisonous Reptiles in the Hierarchy of Function. The gaps left in the Hierarchy of Function mean that many reports go astray or can be lied about and left unfinished and that junior gods in the Hierarchy of Function frequently go unsupervised.

The Eminences are phylum gods in the Hierarchy of Function. They are cataloguers and scholars rather than deities of direct authority, and their influence flows from the fact that they can define whether or not a new species exists and deserves its own definition and patron deity. The Eminences are extremely conservative, and with reason, as they are constantly besieged by requests to define new types of animal, plant, or mineral in order to increase a particular daimyo's domain and power. They are keenly watched by the censors, who suspect them of attempting to boost the influence of the Bureau of Nature by expanding the Hierarchies of Type and Function. While the Eminences are inferior in rank to the Shoguns of the two Hierarchies, they cannot be ordered by their superiors to include a new species; they must follow standard procedures, and the Bureau of Destiny must countersign all documents with proof that the new species has its own threads on the Loom of Fate.

An innovative group of deities from the Bureau of Nature, led by Burnished Talon, Shogun of the Hierarchy of Function, is attempting to increase the number of species through Charms, sorcery, and controlled exposure to the Wyld. The phylum gods are unwilling to let the group of rebels do so indiscriminately. However, they have allowed them to locate those Wyld-twisted creatures that are able to breed true and encourage their survival and expansion within Creation. The deities appointed to watch over these new species are recruited from those members of the Bureau of Nature whose previous species were wiped out in the Fair Folk attack and who are now unemployed. Such recruits are loyal to the Bureau of Nature in general and to the innovative faction in particular.

In practical terms, the Bureau also includes Directional divisions allowing more efficient management of lower deities. These include the Harmonious Conciliation of Northern Animals, the Serene Assembly of Southern Beasts, the Peaceful Adjudication of Western Animals, the Calm Parliament of Eastern Animals, the Glorious Functionality of the Oceans, and many others. Any deity in the Bureau of Nature reports to several superiors.

Location

The complex that holds the Bureau of Nature is sprawled over a large area, with small buildings interspersed by areas of foliage and delicately cultured pathways. At the center lies the Vault of Stored Knowledge, which contains all the formal definitions of Type and Function together with a great deal of other knowledge and research on all the species of Creation. The Vault also holds a wide variety of information on Wyld mutations in general and specific cases of Wyld mutation in particular. It is frequently visited by individuals from the Hierarchies of both Type and Function seeking a way to increase their domains or claim authority over other deities. It is also often consulted by Sidereal sorcerers, or other savants who have managed to obtain permission to do so. The Eminences have their offices here.

The Serene Hall of Divided Contemplation is in fact a group of connected buildings scattered across the Bureau of Nature's territory in Yu-Shan. It belongs to the Hierarchy of Function, and many of its chambers have now fallen into ruin, with their deities unemployed and their domains destroyed. Other gods avoid the empty offices superstitiously, as though spending too much time there could bring the same fate down on them. The buildings spiderweb across the grounds, connected by passageways, paths, and bridges according to the patterns formed by the Hierarchy of Function. Unless a visitor has clearance to go directly to a particular deity's office, she will have to work her way up through the levels of the hierarchy to get there.

Morgan Hillan (order #910970)

The Pathways of Refined Judgment are a twisting maze of outdoor pathways with desks and offices set in little clearings. The pathways shift and adjust themselves according to the current positioning of the Hierarchy of Type, whose offices these are, and Yu-Shan's perfect climate allows them to work both day and night, constantly going through the traditional motions. Higher-ranking officials in the Hierarchy of Type have trees and foliage carved from jade and precious stones, and the streams that trickle nearby are liquid silver and crystal.

Deities of the Bureau

The Shogun of the Hierarchy of Type: Flashing Peak, God of the Imperial Mountain (see p. 136 of this book, also **The Compass of Celestial Directions, Vol. I—The Blessed Isle**, p. 150). As the deity of the single largest and most visible natural feature in Creation, Flashing Peak is also the most powerful deity in this Bureau and one of the most powerful deities in Yu-Shan. However, she uses her power to keep this Bureau locked in a rigidly fixed form. Unlike many of the Bureau shoguns, she is not afraid of change—instead, she is unwilling to admit its existence. She knows that both Yu-Shan and Creation have changed since the days of the First Realm, but she is unwilling to admit that this makes a significant difference to her Bureau or to Yu-Shan. While she is extremely intelligent, she is willfully blind to the new realities around her.

Flashing Peak is strictly legalistic and applies the laws of Heaven just as they were back in the days of the First Age. She strenuously avoids noticing that obviously corrupt censors and cynical celestial lions perform many of the audits she calls. Because she is so powerful, many in this Bureau emulate her philosophy in the hopes that if enough gods ignore the changes, then both Yu-Shan and Creation will return to their uncorrupted state. Naturally, she has absolutely no truck with agreements with Lunars or other dubious arrangements. Should she learn of Amoth City-Smiter's activities, she would be the first to call for his auditing. She favors the Bronze Faction for their stability and reliability but hopefully awaits the return of the Solars and the proper restoration of order. Should she be approached by Solars within the correct legal channels, she will be glad to help them, provided their goals include returning Heaven to as close to its First Age state as possible.

The Hierarchy of Type also includes the Ocean Father, Lord of the West, Daimyo of the Seas. Despite his Celestial position, with responsibility for all the seas of Creation and the accompanying quarters in Yu-Shan, the Ocean Father spends much of his time in the Great Western Ocean. Deities serving beneath him include Zhuzhiao, High Princep of the Deep Trenches and Arch-Curator of Fuliginous Depths, who belongs to the Hierarchy of Type (and who suffers under exile from Heaven); Bashixun, Lord of the Surf, God of Crustaceans, the Shore, and Shoreline Fishermen; and Kireeki, Huntress of the Waves, God of Non-Shark Oceanic Predators, both of whom belong to the Hierarchy of Function.

The Shogun of the Hierarchy of Function: Burnished Talon, Daimyo of Mammalian Predators. Although most of the gods in the Bureau of Nature are as conservative as Flashing Peak, there is a small contingent of rebels and would-be innovators led by Burnished Talon. In many ways, he and his group act as the public opposition to Flashing Peak; other, more subversive deities in the Bureau work behind the scenes while Burnished Talon draws the public attention. Burnished Talon is extremely practical and knows that it would be a waste of energy to try to unseat Flashing Peak, as she is far more powerful than him at the moment. Instead, he realizes that he needs to expand his power base, either by increasing the Hierarchy of Function or by somehow empowering the whole Bureau and then taking credit for it. Whether Burnished Talon takes a human or mammal form, his claws are always evident, flashing and polished.

Eminence of Mammals: Nan-Chal. Nan-Chal is one of the Eminences, though slightly more innovative than most of them. It is on his initiative that the Eminences have agreed to allow Burnished Talon and his compatriots to locate Wyld-twisted creatures who can breed true within Creation and recognize them as new species. Nan-Chal looks back fondly on the days before the Contagion, and would support any attempts by Solars to restabilize and colonize the Wyld. He is currently seeking support from his fellow Eminences to recruit a group of Solars to do just that and is considering enlisting members of the Bureau of Humanity in the plan; after all, there would be room for humans as well as nature, and both parties would gain.

While Ahlat, Southern God of War and Cattle, has now moved to the Bureau of Heaven together with the other war gods, in his position as cattle god he still technically owes fealty to Flashing Peak, and many of the gods who serve under him in cattle-related duties are still members of the Bureau of Nature, in either the Hierarchy of Type or the Hierarchy of Function. These include minor deities like the Goddess of Calving and Milk and the God of Thoughtful Cud-Chewing.

Morgan Hillan (order #910970)

Other petty gods in the Hierarchy of Function include such deities as Ghukan, God of All Ungulates; Long Tusk, God of Walrus Mating Fights; Wafting Sweetness, Southern Steam-vent Goddess; and Odiferous Talon, Goddess of Southern Carrion.

Natural Disasters

The various Gods of Natural Disasters, such as the Division of Earthquakes, the Division of Tidal Waves, and other non-meteorological phenomena, fall under the Hierarchy of Function. These gods are powerful and wealthy, due to the way that they are frequently propitiated by fearful mortals. However, both Flashing Peak and the censors keep a careful watch on their behavior and will audit them at the first sign of illegal behavior. They are not permitted casual indulgences of temper or power in Creation but require sealed affidavits from several Bureaus to operate, always including the Bureaus of Destiny and Seasons.

The Bureau of Nature claims dominion over the salt gods (see **The Compass of Celestial Directions, Vol. I—The Blessed Isle** pp. 156-157) but has refrained from attempting to politicize them, owing to the interference of the Scarlet Empress and behind her, the Bronze Faction. Burnished Talon and other deities with an interest in the rulership of the Blessed Isle have begun to consider how this influence might be used.

Relations With Other Bureaus

The Bureau of Nature is forced to deal with other Bureaus from a subservient position. It has been drastically reduced, and it doesn't even have the Aerial Legion (as the Bureau of Seasons does) or direct influence on human populations (as the Bureau of Humanity does) to use as a bargaining tool in negotiations. It must haggle for every scrap of influence it can gain, while watching many of its most powerful deities, such as the Ocean Father, choose to spend time in Creation instead or be lured to other Bureaus, as with Ahlat and with the deities of the five magical materials. This promotes a general feeling of resentment. Deities of the Bureau of Nature don't just blame the Contagion and the Fair Folk invasion for stripping their ranks and power, they also blame the other Bureaus for taking advantage of it and for not providing help when they needed it.

While the Bureau of Nature can deal with the Bureaus of Humanity and Seasons to some extent, working together with them to arrange seasonal effects or weather and its effect on nature or human worship from particular areas and the resulting natural results, most interaction with the Bureau of Heaven comes over the desk of a censor or other auditor. This merely increases the Bureau of Nature's animosity.

The Bureau of Destiny mainly interacts with the Bureau of Nature when some sort of natural effect is required to complete a destiny, ranging from a major disaster to a migration of birds. The Division of Endings is the most frequent intervener in these cases, and the Bureau of Nature have grown used (if resentful) to receiving signed requests with only a basic explanation, if that. Most of the Bureau of Nature don't care about the Bronze or Gold Factions, unless they happen to have been personally affected by Solar activity; in that case, the results of that interaction will shape whether they favor the Bronze or the Gold Faction in politics.

The Most Excellent Designers of Destiny and Sidereal Conjunctions (The Bureau of Destiny)

While the other Bureaus of the Celestial Order are concerned with what was and what is, the Bureau of Destiny is concerned with what will be. The Bureau of Destiny is responsible for the continuation of fate and of Creation itself. The Loom of Fate never stops moving, and its servants cannot pause in their tracks.

The Bureau of Destiny is located in a cluster of structures known as the Most Perfect Lotus of Heavenly Designs, with its five divisions spaced around the dome at the center, which contains the Loom of Fate itself. While all the Sidereal Exalted are part of the Bureau of Destiny, a number of deities work there as well, ranging from lowly clerks to Divisional directors such as Nara-O of the Hundred Veils.

The Five Maidens are at the top of the hierarchy overseeing the Bureau of Destiny, though they have little involvement in the day-to-day affairs of the Bureau. Each of the Divisions has its own head, headquarters and staff, both Sidereal and divine. There is also one god working for the Bureau of Destiny who does not report to any of the Maidens: Luranume, the Master of Fivefold Luck, Lord of Auspicious Surprises and one of the Syndics of Whitewall.

The Golden Barque of the Heavens is the Division of Journeys. Its functionaries are concerned with matters of movement, action and travel within Creation,

Morgan Hillan (order #910970)

overseeing matters of distance and communication. The Golden Barque itself is a vast ship of gold that sets sail every day from the Quay of Dawn on the edges of the Perfect Lotus, traversing the Sea of Stars during the day and reaching the Quay of Twilight on the far side of Heaven by evening. There it takes on a new crew and sets out back to its starting point. A passage from the halls of the Loom of Fate leads into the hold of the Golden Barque, permitting those with business on board to arrive and depart easily. The Captain of the Golden Barque is Ruvia, God of Roads, the greatest organizer and administrator of the Bureau of Destiny, with eyes and ears everywhere in Creation. Ayesha Ura, Chosen of the Maiden of Journeys and Head of the Gold Faction, is a member of this Division.

The Cerulean Lute of Harmony is the Division of Serenity: it is the most sublime of Heaven's pleasure-palaces and is concerned with matters of pleasure, health and well being for the inhabitants of Creation. A complex web of favors, barter and exchange drives the affairs of the Division (both bureaucratic and personal) and is intended to provide pleasure and satisfaction for all involved. The Cerulean Lute is sometimes known as "the Pleasure-House of Yu-Shan"—or, less complimentarily, "Heaven's Whorehouse." The human propensity to trade in slaves, sex, drugs, and other such things to satiate carnal appetites and provide a quick dose of happiness can frequently be traced to the Division of Serenity. The head of the Division is Yaogin, Bearer of the Lapis Ewer and God of Beautiful Dreams. His constantly dreamy state often means that he finds it difficult to understand the urgency of matters in Creation, and he permits his underlings a great deal of latitude.

The Crimson Panoply of Victory is the Division of Battles; its vast tents and spires oversee all conflicts, struggles, battles, wars and skirmishes, carefully plotting their outcomes and their effects on Creation. The Panoply is constantly busy with spirits and functionaries studying maps and charts that show the distribution of troops for ongoing conflicts in Creation. Its members are a small force compared to the Aerial Legion, but they are the most skilled warriors in Yu-Shan. When not engaged in other duties, they can often be found sparring and practicing in the courtyards between the great tents and towers. The head of the Division is Hu Dai Liang, Shogun of the Crimson Banner, Lord General of the Division of Battles, and one of the greatest warriors in Heaven. She is a staunch supporter of the Bronze Faction and of the armies of the Realm.

The Forbidding Manse of Ivy is the Division of Secrets; the greatest stores of knowledge in Yu-Shan lie within its ivy-covered walls, a virtual infinity of tomes, scrolls and records. The Division of Secrets doles out its knowledge to the Bureau of Destiny but in its own time and manner. Those who wish to peruse its archives or consult with its savants and researchers must submit to an arcane and complex approval process. The head of the Division is Nara-O of the Hundred Veils, Keeper of Secrets. Like many of its subordinates, Nara-O gathers knowledge but gives little in return and is not in the habit of explaining its orders. Chejop Kejak, Chosen of the Maiden of Secrets and founder and head of the Bronze Faction, is a member of this Division.

The Violet Bier of Sorrows is the Division of Endings. It is a silent and somber place, with shadowed beings going about their tasks in its dark-draped halls and chambers, dimly lit by hanging lanterns or in complete darkness, and meetings always conducted behind closed doors. It oversees the proper endings of all things in Creation: mortal lives, institutions, ideas, nations, and all things under Heaven. Much of the Division's work is concerned with properly marking, recording, and honoring the passing of things when their time is come, and the rest is ensuring that the ending does come when it is time. All things pass in time, and the Division of Endings is feared because of this. Wayang, Black Puppet Mask, God of Silence, is the Minister of Endings. He never speaks, but his gestures and motions are filled with such meaning that he rarely needs to, and he expects his subordinates to carry out their work efficiently and without mercy or remorse.

The five working groups of Sidereal bureaucracy are the Directional Conventions, each of which handles work in a different part of Creation: the Capital Convention, the Convention of Air, the Convention of Fire, the Convention of Water, and the Convention of Wood. Other Sidereal groups include the Convention on Deathlords, which is currently studying Thorns and collating information on Deathlords and Abyssals in general; the Convention on Essence Wielders, which deals with the destinies of gods and Exalts: the Convention on Natural Disaster, which focuses on the triggering of terrible disasters, liaising with the Bureaus of Seasons and Nature: the Convention on Plague, which covers diseases of all types: and the Convention on War, which is a forecasting group for the Crimson Panoply of Victory and also trained for covert deployments in defense of Creation.

More details on the Bureau of Destiny can be found in Chapter Two of **The Manual of Exalted Power—The Sidereals**.

Morgan Hillan (order #910970)

The Immaculate Order and Heaven

The Immaculate Order maintains the Immaculate Calendar, a massive archive of gods both large and small in Yu-Shan and in Creation. This calendar records not only the identity of each god, but the proper rituals to propitiate it. Naturally, given the Immaculate faith, only Immaculate monks are allowed to provide direct worship; however, the more powerful the god is, the more frequently the monks pray.

This has become a quid pro quo mechanism to persuade local gods to go along with the Immaculate faith, whatever Yu-Shan or the god's own superiors may have to say on the subject. If the god complies, then she can be sure of regular worship and guaranteed prayers, even if it is only for a few days a year. While more important gods or deities of conquered cities may consider this no more than petty bribery, lesser gods or village gods often find it to be a significant boost in status and power and agree with barely a second thought. Their rites and days of worship are entered in the local copy of the Immaculate Calendar, and the monks of the temple perform the rites on the proper ritual days and seasonal festivals, leading the general public in non-specific praise and worship, which the monks then direct to the appropriate deities.

Behind the Immaculate Order stands the Bureau of Destiny. The Sidereal Exalted decide which gods appear on the calendar, what names and functions these gods are listed under, and how much veneration they should receive. Through the Immaculate Order, they can manipulate the deities who have declared adherence to the Immaculate faith and bribe them with worship. The Bureau can also use its agents in the Immaculate Order to pass messages or requests to specific gods and elementals, resulting in physical activity in Creation or political pressure in Yu-Shan. This provides the Bureau of Destiny with a source of influence similar (though smaller in scale) to the Bureau of Humanity's control over the city gods. Furthermore, unlike the prayer the city gods direct, prayer directed by the Immaculate Order isn't an offense against the Creation-Ruling Mandate, as the Sidereals doing the directing are Exalted and not gods, and officially act only on the "suggestion" of their "peers" within the Bureau of Destiny. (For more information, see **The Compass of Celestial Directions, Vol. 1—The Blessed Isle**, p. 89.)

Morgan Hillan (order #910970)

Relations with Other Bureaus

The Bureau of Destiny is hampered in its dealings with other Bureaus because the rest of Yu-Shan is deeply disturbed by the Sidereals. The Sidereals are known to have enacted the Usurpation, even if this can't be proven. They use weapons forged from the corpses of gods. They control a web of favors owed to them by other Bureaus, due to their ability to affect the Loom of Fate. They pull the strings of Yu-Shan. They are legally entitled to act in Creation. And nobody trusts them. The Bureau of Heaven frequently audits them not just out of pettiness but because Sidereals are dangerous if unchecked.

As a result of this, the Bureau of Destiny must tread very lightly. Though they can project almost unlimited force, they can't afford to provoke the rest of Heaven into uniting against them. They are aware of this, and they realize that their actions toward the Solars have set a precedent. Their policy is only ever to use the minimal amount of force that they believe is necessary, and given their lack of information about the Wyld and the Underworld, this isn't always enough. They're also overworked; the Five-Score Fellowship, while an attractive title, also indicates one of their biggest problems. There are a hundred Sidereals who have to cover the whole of Creation. The gods of the destiny do what they can, but it's not enough. It can never be enough.

Forces of the Censors

These traits represent one fang (five combatants) of each of the three most common forces available to the Celestial censors. To represent larger units, increase Magnitude. Theoretically the censors could also field units of lesser elemental dragons, but these units would be the censors themselves, and it would require an event on the scale of the invasion of Yu-Shan itself for the censors to mobilize as such.

Traits	Lion Dogs	Scarab Guardians	Celestial Lions
Magnitude*	2	2	2
Drill	5	5	5
Close Combat Attack/Damage	5/3	7/4	6/6
Ranged Attack/Damage	—/—	—/—	—/—
Endurance	11	11	15
Might	3	3	4
Armor/Hardness**	5/8	6/—	10/10
Morale	3	3	4

*As they possess more health levels than mortal extras, these units have greater Magnitude scores than their numbers might suggest. Lion dogs and scarab guardians are each worth three mortal extras, and celestial lions are worth seven.

**None of these units suffer mobility penalties.

Formation: Lion dogs (movement 4 yards per tick) may be figures of awe and terror in Creation, but in Yu-Shan they are deputies and minor functionaries compared to the celestial lions. They are rarely deployed in combat in Yu-Shan, as celestial lions prefer to fight their own battles. They may be called in to help quell large scale riots, or to add numbers to Celestial forces in situations that demand more than a hundred celestial lions in one place. They attack in packs in a loose skirmish formation.

Scarab guardians (movement: 5 yards per tick) are jailors and executioners, not investigators, and are not deployed in the field unless military backup is urgently required or unless their attacks are particularly effective against an opponent.

Celestial lions (movement: 8 yards per tick) are the major peacekeepers, investigators and bureaucrats serving under the censors. They prefer to handle matters themselves rather than delegate the work to other deities. In the field, they are deployed in fangs of five, but in the event of large numbers of such units fighting simultaneously, it may be easier for the Storyteller to run them as large units consisting of multiples of five celestial lions.

Morgan Hillan (order #910970)

The other Bureaus of Heaven also know that Chejop Kejak will die soon. Numerous deities with a long-held grudge or a plan to seize part of the Bureau of Destiny's influence or power are already laying their plans for what to do when it actually happens. While Chejop Kejak isn't the Director of the Bureau, and is in fact the subordinate of Nara-O, he has made himself indispensable to its functioning, and nobody knows what will happen when he is no longer there. The whereabouts of his new Exaltation will be hotly investigated.

Law and Order in Yu-Shan

The censors and celestial lions maintain law and order in Yu-Shan. Censors undertake directed audits and investigations, both in Yu-Shan and in Creation, while the celestial lions patrol Yu-Shan and deal with active disturbances, crimes, riots, and other hindrances to celestial life.

The Bureau of Heaven conducts two forms of audit: general audit and criminal audit. General audits are carried out to assess whether or not an employee of the Celestial Bureaucracy is performing her job properly; while illegalities and criminal charges may be uncovered during a general audit, they are not always assumed at the beginning of the audit. Sidereals are audited at least once a century on a general basis and may also face criminal audits as well. Other deities may face general audits at the whim of the censors, and this is one of the Bureau of Heaven's most important tools to gain cooperation or apply pressure.

Criminal audits are carried out to investigate specific crimes or accusations, though their scope usually broadens to assess the whole of the individual's behavior. Any inhabitant in Yu-Shan may bring charges against any deity, though it is left to the censor's discretion whether or not to investigate. Often the censors pass such cases to the celestial lions, who can look into the matter and determine whether or not it is worth the censor's attention and if there is significant proof to support the charges.

Rights in Yu-Shan

All deities and Celestial Exalts visiting or living in Yu-Shan have specific rights guaranteed to them by the Bureau of Heaven and the Unconquered Sun. Violating these rights is at least a Severity 2 offense, so the celestial lions and other divine beings who enforce the Celestial law show great respect for these rights—publicly, at least.

All "legal residents of Yu-Shan" (resident or visiting deities, Celestial Exalts, or other visitors with suitably powerful patronage) have an automatic right to travel in the public areas of Yu-Shan by all forms of transport not otherwise proscribed and receipt of lawfully obtained Quintessence and Ambrosia. They have the right to remain safe from intrusion in their lawfully owned dwellings; to remain free from unlawful violence, intimidation and injury; and to pursue their Celestially ordained duties in any manner not forbidden by the Celestial Bureaucracy. (Note the frequent use of the term "lawful" or "permitted"; points of law can be drawn very finely indeed where necessary.)

Deities and Celestial Exalts cannot be fined or imprisoned without a trial. Also, residents and divine or Celestial Exalted visitors to Heaven are immune from having either their persons or their residences searched without their permission, unless the searchers have evidence that the subjects committed an offense, and the search is being used to prove this supposition. Anyone who believes that their rights were violated may register a complaint.

Evading Rights In Yu-Shan

Naturally, with Yu-Shan's bureaucracy being as corrupt and complex as it is, individuals have found ways to exploit the system of legal rights to their advantage. One of the most reliable methods is to provoke younger and more excitable investigators into staging a search without sufficient evidence; this both renders the investigators liable for charges themselves and reduces the Severity of any crimes that may be discovered.

A classic ploy on the investigative side is to fake some evidence in order to obtain a search warrant. The counter-ploy to this is for the target to leak faked evidence to the investigators and then expose the fact that they're operating on false evidence (whether or not they realized it themselves) when they come to search his residence, thus exculpating himself and putting the blame firmly on them.

Those individuals who wish to complain that their rights have been infringed may find themselves having to wade through the bureaucracy just to make that complaint. With a suitable degree of string-pulling and bribes, their petitions may be temporarily misplaced, processed to judges who have a personal grudge against them, or delayed just long enough for investigators to find some more evidence, genuine or fake. As with all Yu-Shan, it helps to have a friend on the inside.

Morgan Hillan (order #910970)

If the judge finds the complaint valid, then the god (or other) who violated the subject's rights is guilty of an offense (see p. 72 to determine the severity). If the subject was charged with any offense based upon these violations of rights, then the severity of the breach of rights is subtracted from the severity of the subject's crime.

For Example: If a random search (a Severity 2 crime if done on any divine being with an Essence less than 6) turns up someone smuggling out one of the peaches of immortality (a severity 5 crime), then the smuggler is only guilty of a severity 3 offense.

Mortals, Dragon-Blooded, and other lesser beings have no such rights in Yu-Shan (in fact, they have no rights at all) and must rely upon their allies or patrons for protection. The only exception is during the Carnival of Meeting (see p. 32-35). All visitors to Yu-Shan who remain within the boundaries of the Carnival are accorded full rights. Abyssal Exalted and Fair Folk nobles who visit Yu-Shan are also accorded full rights, as the Bureau of Heaven does not want to precipitate a serious or uncontrolled diplomatic incident.

Celestial Audits

All Celestial employees must periodically account for their actions. Although each of Heaven's five Bureaus is in charge of reviewing the performance of its employees (divine, Exalted, human, or other), the censors of the Bureau of Heaven have the ultimate responsibility for addressing serious problems or complaints made against any Celestial employee. In the First Age, each god received a general audit once every five years, and it was performed with a reasonable degree of justice and rationality (barring cases of particular influence or incompetence). Today, audits are much more sporadic and unevenly distributed. Some denizens of Heaven need only face them once every three or four centuries (Chejop Kejak, for instance, never seems to have any), while others find them cropping up every year on the slightest provocation.

Celestial audits are performed by censors, all of whom are lesser elemental dragons and some of the most important and powerful functionaries in Yu-Shan. Everyone fears the censors. They have the authority to reward and punish, as long as they stay within the strict limits of the law, and they choose how the law is to be interpreted. Some are slack, some are corrupt, and all are selfish, but enough of them still perform their jobs to make them respected and feared. Nobody in Yu-Shan faces an audit with an entirely clear conscience.

In the current day, censors who still bother performing their jobs order the vast majority of Celestial audits because some deity or Exalt has made a specific complaint. Actions performed in Creation generally escape the censors' notice unless some powerful deity or elemental raises the issue; while there are five censors within Creation, one for each direction and one on the Blessed Isle, they are as corrupt and lax as those in Yu-Shan—if not more so. However, the Bureau of Heaven monitors Yu-Shan far more carefully, and even minor slights or errors in diplomacy can cause a Celestial god to make a formal complaint. The censors also sometimes audit Exalts or deities who have not technically violated any rules, simply because some important god has taken a dislike to them.

Although the censors ostensibly handle the entire procedure identically for complaints from all gods, whether major or minor, in practice they ignore complaints from gods with a permanent Essence of 3 or less, unless the number of such complaints is too great to be ignored. However, a single complaint by a deity with permanent Essence of 6 or more about a lower-ranking individual is enough to call an audit on any denizen of Yu-Shan who hasn't spent centuries building a strong power base.

Celestial lions handle matters on a lower level. While on duty, each celestial lion is a law unto itself. Celestial lions have the right to impose punishments on any of the less powerful beings in Yu-Shan without question. With no trial or any other formalities, a celestial lion can impose fines on any creature in Yu-Shan with an Essence of 4 or less and devour or order the imprisonment of any being with an Essence of 2 or less.

However, the celestial lions cannot summarily dispense justice to the more important gods. Instead, they can charge one of these gods with an offense and pass this charge on to the censors, who can judge any offense in Yu-Shan. Naturally, this Department ignores any offenses committed by the Celestial Incarnae; one of the axioms of the Department is that by definition a Celestial Incarna cannot offend against the laws of Heaven. Even the most powerful censors lack the means to enforce such judgment, supposing that it could even be pronounced or investigated in the first place. When one of the Celestial Incarna commits an action which would in a lesser being be considered an offense, the situation is only resolved when another Celestial Incarna intervenes.

The censors assign celestial lions to a district to patrol or guard. Less powerful gods such as lion dogs, scarab guardians and similar beings are assigned to assist each of these deities. Celestial lions can also deputize any resident of Yu-Shan with an Essence of 4 or less and order

Morgan Hillan (order #910970)

this being to assist in an investigation. Various gods and Exalts, including most of the older Sidereals, have been ordered to assist with at least one such investigation. So long as the celestial lion approves, its deputies can legally perform any action that does not disrupt the lives of those gods more high-ranking than itself.

Unusual Deputies

There are many reasons why a celestial lion might choose specific individuals as deputies, ranging from inherent investigative abilities such as particular Charms or spells to political influence to them simply being the nearest available people of lower standing. Duties for such conscripted individuals can range from performing on-the-spot investigation, interviewing, or forensic work; guarding arrested prisoners; hunting down felons; or simply doing the paperwork. Some of the more eccentric celestial lions have even employed Celestial Exalted or Dragon-Blooded as deputies under very unusual circumstances. This has drawn public criticism but as yet no active disciplinary moves, since there is no direct law against it.

The rules for Celestial audits are given in **The Manual of Exalted Powers—The Sidereals** (p. 54-58).

The Stages of an Audit

1) **Charges:** The subject is charged with committing various offenses or investigated for a general audit.
2) **Gathering Evidence:** The censor sends out his celestial lions or other minions to gather evidence. The subject may also gather evidence or present bribes during this period, which usually lasts a month.
3) **The Audit:** The censor and all others involved in the audit must appear in one of the Chambers of Celestial Justice in the Hall of Celestial Stability. If either side fails to appear, this is counted against them in the judgment.
4) **Punishment:** The censor pronounces the verdict, then states any fines or other punishments. Fines must be paid within the month, and the accused is held prisoner until then; punishments occur when the lead next changes in the Games of Divinity.

Morgan Hillan (order #910970)

Severity of Offenses

On a rough scale of importance, the Severity of offenses against divine law is as follows:

Severity 1: Causing serious trouble to an important god with an Essence of 4 or more; breaking an important but minor law such as using the gold portion of a quicksilver canal for personal business; divine hooliganism.

Severity 2: Violating the Heavenly rights of a deity with an Essence of 5 or less; seriously disrupting the course of a celestial lion's investigations; killing a Terrestrial Exalt without justification.

Severity 3: Causing a serious disturbance that harms or upsets more than a dozen important gods; violating the Creation-Ruling Mandate.

Severity 4: Violating the Heavenly rights of, or causing serious trouble to, a god with an Essence of 6 or more; killing a Celestial Exalt of Essence 5 or more; influencing a Celestial censor's opinion through magic of any sort.

Severity 5: Committing an offense against all of Yu-Shan; stealing peaches of immortality; conspiring with Fair Folk, demons, agents of the Deathlords, or other enemies of Creation; killing a Celestial Exalt of Essence 6 or greater; unlawfully ruling a nation or maintaining an army or fleet in Creation.

Clearly, some of the offenses listed above are highly subjective. A charge of causing "serious trouble" can easily be downgraded to "minor inconvenience," depending on the situation and the parties involved and sufficient bribery or strings pulled behind the scenes.

The above offenses against divine law only apply to inhabitants or functionaries of Yu-Shan; this automatically includes all deities and can technically be stretched by an interested censor to include all Exalted, since by the letter of the law all Exalted except the Abyssals are the servants of the Incarnae and are thus functionaries of Yu-Shan. The Bureau of Heaven considers Celestial jurisdiction over the Abyssals to be a thorny legal problem hotly discussed at Yu-Shan garden parties.

While nobody can accuse a Solar of "unlawfully ruling a nation or maintaining an army in Creation" (the key word here is "unlawfully"), slaying another Celestial Exalt of Essence 5 or greater can be ruled as a crime against divine law. A censor is therefore within his legal rights to arrest the criminal and bring them in for trial in Yu-Shan. Ignorance of the law is no excuse.

Only gods can be charged with the specific crime of "Violating the Creation-Ruling Mandate," and only Celestial Exalted can bring this charge. This is the blanket term for meddling in the progress of fate or otherwise transgressing against the stewardship of the Princes of the Earth. Especially severe meddling is a Severity 4 offense, while "Divine Hooliganism," a catch-all charge used against gods who step out of line in Immaculate strongholds on the Blessed Isle, is merely Severity 1.

The charge must be pressed in Creation and is usually filed on the Blessed Isle, as there is only one censor for each Threshold direction. Since all the censors have a backlog of cases sufficient to guarantee the Exalt's case languishes forever in the paperwork, petty cases are seldom reported. This is likewise true for offenses involving the murder of Exalted—the charge must be pressed with a directional censor by a Celestial Exalt, and off the Blessed Isle, only the ingratiating or the intimidating are likely to see any action.

There is also the fact that most newly Exalted Solars and Lunars are unaware that they can bring such charges and that the Sidereal Exalted or the censors themselves are under no obligation to tell them. Unless the newly Exalted have a mentor to inform them of their privileges and rights, or some other source of knowledge, they may well miss the chance to exercise these options.

Summoning Censors and Other Celestial Officials

Although technically elementals, like all senior members of the Celestial Bureaucracy the censors are immune to Charms that directly affect their will. They therefore cannot be summoned by the Summon Elemental spell. However, Sidereal Exalted can use their astrology to request that a censor appear, while spells that involve sending messages can also be used to request a censor's attention. It is also possible to journey to the censor's physical location in Creation and contact her there in person.

The Ministry of Censors

Ideal Flame is the current Director of Censors, High Minister of Justice, Glorious Adjudicator of Truth. He is a lesser elemental dragon of fire who nurtures a deep and hopeless passion for He-

Morgan Hillan (order #910970)

siesh. He is not personally corrupt, but he is more concerned with the stability of Yu-Shan and Creation than with individual cases of justice, and he trusts his minions to do enough work to keep the system running.

The four current censors in the Threshold are Wong Bongerok, Censor of the South; Fakharu, Censor of the West; Benadamaru, Censor of the North; and Adiubande, Censor of the East.

Wong Bongerok is a lesser elemental dragon of fire, known widely as a scandalmonger and meddler, with a wide circle of sycophants obtained through blackmail and intimidation. He takes bribes from Amoth City-Smiter to cover up the work of Amoth and his minions. His greatest problems stem from the Court of the Orderly Flame, the most powerful and prominent fire court in Creation, which he consistently fails to control or influence. The previous censor, Swan Dragon, vanished in the aftermath of a great battle against the Fair Folk during the Contagion but was widely respected by many in both Creation and Yu-Shan—far more than Wong Bongerok.

Fakharu is a lesser elemental dragon of water, powerful and respected in the spirit courts of the West: he was once vigorous and efficient, but he has grown disgusted by the corruption of his peers and superiors and now largely pursues his personal interests and takes bribes (see **Exalted**, p. 302-303).

Benadamaru, Censor of the North, is a lesser elemental dragon of air. The North is currently quite beyond his control; he cannot manage to bring an audit against the Syndics of Whitewall, and he dares not try to prove divine collusion in the Bull of the North's activities. He contents himself with auditing minor cases of divine malfeasance that are brought to his attention while sending reports to Yu-Shan of constant success and progress.

Adiubande, Censor of the East, is a lesser elemental dragon of wood. She is utterly corrupt and will take bribes to overlook anything except direct Fair Folk invasion. Personally she has become quite sympathetic toward gods involving themselves in cities, such as Great Forks, and she may overlook or conceal crimes in return for future favors as well as current payments.

The three censors on the Blessed Isle are Profamo, Danqueret, and Dyballe, all lesser celestial dragons of earth. The other two defer to Profamo, who is several centuries their elder, and all three of them are faithful to the Bronze Faction. The Immaculate Order regularly notifies them about any deities trying to establish their own cults, and they are quick to stamp them out. Dyballe wishes to take Profamo's place, as she rightly views him as lazy and time-serving and has been investigating rumors of Solar activity; she hopes that if she can demonstrate her efficiency at capturing or removing Solars, the Bronze Faction will reward her with promotion.

The Tools of Justice

Two of the most convenient tools used by censors are the Cages of Eternal Torment and the Collars of Dutiful Submission. Many lesser divine criminals are fitted with a Collar of Dutiful Submission and set to serve their sentence by assisting the very censor who arrested them.

Cage of Eternal Torment (Artifact ••••)

This item is most often built as a white jade and adamant cage that is four feet on a side. It is made to be almost indestructible. A cage of eternal torment cannot be harmed by anything except Charms, enchanted weapons made of one of the five magical materials, or sorcery. Neither bashing damage nor Charms and other effects that multiply damage against objects have any effect on these cages. They have an armor of 30L and require 50 health levels of damage to open one enough to allow the occupant to escape.

A prisoner in one of these cages cannot die or suffer permanent harm. She regenerates one health level of bashing damage every five minutes, one level of lethal damage every hour, and one level of aggravated damage every day. So long as the cage is closed and the prisoner is inside, this regeneration continues even if the prisoner is killed and her body burned to fine ash. However, this regeneration is as painful as receiving the damage was in the first place. Merely sitting within an open cage is not enough to invoke its effects; the subject must be a genuine prisoner if it is to keep her alive.

This artifact can keep a subject alive under any circumstances short of the absolute Void but requires that the subject be a prisoner in a confined space. It does not necessarily prevent attacks on its substance from the inside, and some other artifact would be necessary to keep prisoners subdued.

Collar of Dutiful Submission (Artifact •••••)

This jade-and-peachwood torc ensures that its wearer obeys the wishes of whomever put the collar on him. To use the collar, the owner of the artifact spends a mote of Essence to activate it (she recovers this Essence normally). She then places the collar on the subject and orders him to commit 2 motes of Essence to the collar. Since the collar will not lock until

Morgan Hillan (order #910970)

the wearer has committed the Essence, the owner will know if the wearer refuses to comply. Once committed, this Essence cannot be uncommitted until the collar is removed.

Until the collar is removed, if the wearer attempts to directly attack the owner or whenever the owner wishes to punish the wearer for disobedience, the collar slowly tightens, doing one die of unsoakable bashing damage to the wearer every action until the wearer is rendered unconscious or until the owner orders the collar to stop tightening. This damage cannot be healed by any means until the collar stops inflicting additional damage. If used for a sufficiently long period of time, the collar will render the wearer unconscious, but it will stop before it causes any lethal damage to the wearer. If desired, the owner can also order the collar to keep the wearer unconscious indefinitely. The owner can cause the collar to constrict at any time merely by spending a single mote of Essence. Regardless of the distance between the owner and the wearer, the collar will immediately begin to constrict, even if the owner is in Yu-Shan and the wearer is in Creation or the Underworld. The only thing that can prevent activation of the collar is if the wearer is in the Deep Wyld, and should he leave the Deep Wyld, the collar's effects will resume.

The owner can easily remove this collar by simply touching it and spending another mote of Essence. The only other ways to remove the collar are by the direct action of one of the Celestial Incarnae, or by the use of an exceedingly rare spell of Solar Circle Sorcery. No other magic or Charm will affect these collars, and they are completely immune to all forms of attack.

While these collars require the cooperation of the wearer in donning them, and only do one die of bashing damage per action, they are almost totally unremovable and can be triggered throughout Creation.

Morgan Hillan (order #910970)

Morgan Hillan (order #910970)

CHAPTER FOUR
THE CELESTIAL CITY

Yu-Shan is the greatest city in all of the worlds to which mortals and the Exalted have access. Stygia's smoky grandeur is a withered rose in comparison, while the emerald-lit chaos of Malfeas is a cacophonous din whose poisonous beauty seems hollow when held alongside Yu-Shan's gilded boulevards. Even the endlessly diverting pleasure-palaces of the raksha, with their boundaries limited only by their masters' imaginations, seem tacky and affected compared to a metropolis built by the Primordials themselves and shaped by the hands of divinities for long millennia.

Or at least, this is what the gods tell visiting mortals and when necessary, themselves. But when forced to peer closely at their metropolitan home, they cannot help but notice the purulence that afflicts their city. Yu-Shan has become rotten from the inside. The Incarnae's plan for a flawless engine of governance and management over Creation is wracked with self-serving gods and indolent elementals. The system of censors meant to manage internal efficiency is itself weak and pliable. The bureaucracy is heavy with corruption. And this disease has affected the very city itself—whole precincts stand empty except for the deiphagous gods who lurk within their shadows. There are teeming slums separated from palatial manses of the five magical materials by only a street, but the boulevards that divide the divine social classes may as well be insurmountable walls. The palaces of the Incarnae put to shame the greatest architectural works of man and demon but stand empty while their owners obsessively play the Games of Divinity. And the headquarters of the bureaus of Yu-Shan glitter and shine while their corridors hide brutal political machinations and cutthroat attempts at advancement.

Morgan Hillan (order #910970)

Entering Yu-Shan

Visitors to Yu-Shan most frequently arrive by one of the sixty-one gateways that connect what once were major cities and important locales within the First Age borders of Creation to Heaven. Given the upheavals since the High First Age, some of those gateways now lie within the Wyld, others within Shadowlands, and a few more have been swallowed by the landscape, but all are still accessible if one can only locate them.

Of the gateways, sixty of them are rooted in Creation and do not move. One of them, the Calibration gate, shifts, and its movements are predicted only by Charms, sorcery or astrology. Of the sixty rooted gates, twelve of them lead from the Blessed Isle to a circular plaza twenty miles southwest of the Jade Pleasure Dome. The forty-eight other gates are spaced evenly around the walls of Heaven and lead to various destinations in Creation. Every direction in Creation has twelve gates dedicated to it.

In Creation, each gateway is an indestructible arch crafted from four of the five magical materials: orichalcum, moonsilver, jade, and starmetal. It is said that the intelligences of the gods soulforged into forming the lintels of these portals have been bent into service as custodian spirits, but most are now dormant. At the zenith of the High First Age, each gateway would only open for approved visitors and had the power to interrogate those who wanted access to Heaven. If that was ever the truth, no living mortal or Exalt can attest to it. Shortly before the Usurpation, celestial lions were pressed into service as the gate's guardians, and no custodial spirit has been heard from since.

The gates themselves are four meters tall by three meters wide. They are not all similar—some of them are images of gates carved out of the proper materials and crafted into the indestructible wall of a First Age city, while others are sculptures of trees in the four materials, whose branches form the custodial arch. To a god or elemental with the Materialize or Dematerialize Charm, a sorcerer with Open the Spirit Door (see **The Books of Sorcery, Vol. II—The White Treatise**, p. 54,) or any other Charm, artifact, or spell that allows a character to enter a sanctum,

In Times of Trouble

The hallways that lead into Yu-Shan have been impressed into other uses, although only the most politically puissant gods wield enough clout to convince the celestial lions to allow it. The gateway that leads to the city of Nexus is sometimes used as a temporary warehouse for pallets of valuable goods coming from Creation into Yu-Shan until an armed security force can arrive at the Yu-Shan end of the gate to escort it to its destination. This has led to at least one occasion where the Spiral Weather Ragamuffins, a mob of homeless and miscreant gods, attempted to lay siege to the hall until a veritable army of celestial lions and lion dogs appeared to drive them off.

During the early Balorian Crusade, weeks before Anisa-Shoshan ordered the gates sealed, several hallways were put to use as refugee centers for Creation-bound gods and elementals within the Terrestrial Bureaucracy who sought safety in Heaven. The heads of the Bureaus at the time feared infiltration by Fair Folk saboteurs; thus, a significant number of spirits were barred access to Heaven but allowed to reside in the hallways temporarily until either Creation fell or the Fair Folk were repulsed by the Aerial Legion and other divine forces. The Matutinal Riots, still a sore spot between the divine social classes, occurred when a miscommunication between the heads of the Bureaus in a crisis-planning meeting and the celestial lions on site at three different tunnels led to the celestial lions thinking they were under orders to eject the refugees. The refugee gods were pushed back toward the exit to Creation, where Fair Folk laying siege to the cities surrounding the gates awaited. The gods panicked between the armies of the Fey and Charms of the lions. In the press, hundreds of gods were slain by the lions and Fair Folk surrounding them or trampled to death by their fellows. Several lions were injured, and minor riots occurred throughout the poorer districts of Yu-Shan as the Dispossessed believed that some sort of pogrom against their kind was underway and they were to be fed to the Fair Folk to vouchsafe Heaven's safety. Since many of the dead were elementals, the riots strained relations between gods and elementals more than usual as well, and some Terrestrial Courts still invoke the riots when planning some minor mutiny against the divinities of Yu-Shan.

Morgan Hillan (order #910970)

the gateway shimmers and opens into a long, well-lit hallway of opaque adamant. The hallways are always 50 feet in length, 30 feet wide, and guarded by three celestial lions.

At the end of each hallway on the Yu-Shan side, there is a massive adamant gate that opens out from the immensity of the wall of Yu-Shan, which can be opened at the behest of any god of Essence 7 or higher. If such an illustrious personage is not present, two of the three celestial lions guarding the interior of the hallway between Creation and Heaven can speak to the gate and have it open. Alternately, intruders can attempt to defeat the celestial lions and breach the gate, all of which have a soak of 30B/25L, a hardness of 20B/15L, and can only be harmed by attacks boosted with Charms, utilizing sorcery, or involving weaponry crafted from the five magical materials. Sixty levels of post-soak damage must be done to the gate to create a hole large enough to climb through, while twice that much will create a man-sized exit. Six celestial lions guard each gate on the opposite side of the adamant gate, and they will sound alarms for reinforcements as soon as intruders create a breach; all but the most dedicated attackers will find Heaven nearly impossible to invade with anything less than an army.

Other intruders may try to use stealth to work their way into Yu-Shan. While Heaven is potentially self-sufficient, it is by no means wholly isolated from Creation. All but a few of the gateways see various levels of traffic throughout the day as gods go to and from their duties across the Threshold and Blessed Isle. In addition, there is a steady but meager traffic in expensive foodstuffs, exotic animals, domesticated slaves, drugs, and luxury goods through some of the gates, particularly the Nexus gateway. There are millions of gods and many of them have affectations that result in outside materials being brought into Heaven —particularly industrious mortals and Exalts who hope to skirt official scrutiny can attempt to sneak in hidden in a sack of expensive grain, a barrel of rare wine, or amongst a chained band of slaves meant for Heaven's cheaper or more horrifying brothels. Celestial lions will attempt to scrutinize every wagon or pallet that goes through the gate, but they are divine, and so as fallible as mortals occasionally.

Heaven's Image

It is impossible for most mortals and all but the most jaded Exalts to truly grasp the immensity of Yu-Shan, the divine city of Heaven, the ultimate metropolis to which all other cities must inevitably be held to fall short of. Few even have the opportunity to truly grasp the size of the city unless they are allowed to stand upon the decks of the Golden Barque as it wends it way across the skies of Heaven or to take an aerial chariot high above the streets until the whole city lay beneath them. Even rarer are the handful of beings who will be allowed to stand on one of Sky-Spanning Awe's observation platforms, the unfathomable energies of its cannons held in check and humming about them, and realize just how immeasurable a work Yu-Shan is.

Yu-Shan was carved from the void of Elsewhere by the Primordials as they undertook the great work of Creation. As the mighty engine that hummed beneath the Blessed Isle churned out reality from the chaos of the pure Wyld, the Primordials managed the affair from Yu-Shan, which they crafted as a prototype for the housing of the engine of reality itself—at least when it was first designed, Yu-Shan was identical to the Blessed Isle. Every lake, river, hill, valley and plain of the Blessed Isle was mirrored first in Yu-Shan.

However, where the Blessed Isle's center is dominated completely by the incomprehensible scale of the Imperial Mountain, Yu-Shan's central region is flat and marks out the downtown area. Where the center of the Imperial Mountain would lie instead stands the jade-plated majesty of the Jade Pleasure Dome from which the Incarnae play the Games of Divinity. And where the limits of the Blessed Isle would give way to coast and sea, instead there is the massive adamant Wall of Yu-Shan in Heaven, which rises for 30 yards until it gives way to the blue-clad Sky Dome. Impervious to any force and housing the gateways into Creation, the Wall and the Sky Dome mark the edge of Yu-Shan, beyond which there is nothing.

Of course, the wheel of ages has transformed the terrain of both the Blessed Isle and Yu-Shan until their resemblance is still uncanny, but not perfect. The Blessed Isle has no canal system, and whole areas of hillsides have been removed in Yu-Shan to make way for pleasure-gardens, manses, and terraced landscaping. Rivers have been redirected in both places until a river in the Blessed Isle meanders where its twin in Yu-Shan has been dammed to create a lake for some high-level celestial bureaucrat. Flat plains have become forests in Yu-Shan from whose trees the peaches of immortality swing pendulously, and urban cityscapes in Yu-Shan are twinned by peasant villages.

Morgan Hillan (order #910970)

The Divine City

Seen from the heights of the sky, Yu-Shan is the size of a continent, a city stretching from one wall of Heaven to another, its body spiderwebbed by glittering silver and gold filaments that are the massive canals ringing the city and proceeding outward in concentric circles, cleaved by other canals proceeding from each gateway on the edge of Heaven across the center of Yu-Shan and thence outward to another gateway. The city is hazed in gold when lit by the light of the Unconquered Sun and glows white and blue in the reflected light of Luna. Only in the glint of one of the Five Maidens' light does the city throw off the reflected glory of others and shine with its own wonder, and during those moments the boroughs and precincts are tinged with their own colors, some shimmering like jade, others gold, white, and still others glowing with myriad other hues. But not everything is luminous in Heaven. Many areas are dark under the gaze of the Maidens—parks, gardens, the empty precincts that the gods have abandoned to the homeless and unemployed masses of divinities, and protected environments, which are lit only by the sky's meager light and a lantern here or there. These regions are clad in fuliginous shadow at night and rich greens and organic browns during the day.

Still, from the sky the immensity of Yu-Shan often fools the viewer. The thin silver and gold slashes through the land are massive canals bearing the bulk of Heaven's workers to their appointed rounds. This defies comprehension unless one views it as a teeming anthill. And when one does that, they must pause and realize that the thousands upon thousands of teeming black specks roiling across its surface are gods. Like the termite's nest that has been in place for millennia, Yu-Shan is a sprawling mass of homes, mansions, apartment complexes, private towers, fortresses, kiosks, shops, markets, malls, arcades, office buildings, brothels, inns, warehouses, bureaucratic headquarters, hunting preserves, zoos, observatories, arenas, hippodromes, training grounds, military bases, bridges, monuments, tunnels, sewers, footpaths, alleys, roads, highways, boulevards, avenues, and plazas of every size, shape, and purpose imaginable.

The Sky Dome and the Wall of Heaven

The wall surrounding Heaven is made of pure, shimmering adamant, 30 yards high and utterly smooth and featureless. The wall moves past the street level of Yu-Shan for meters until it reaches some termination beneath the city, where it joins a similarly featureless adamant base beneath the canals and sewers. The wall is breached only by the gateways that lead from Yu-Shan to Creation.

The wall seamlessly merges into the blue Sky Dome, which stretches across the whole of Yu-Shan. Occasionally, someone on the ground will note that the perfect hemisphere is dotted with buildings which have been anchored to its surface, but such buildings are rare and the sole province of the more powerful divisions and headquarters of the Celestial Bureaucracy. In addition, the weather of Yu-Shan is usually managed in such a way that such buildings are obscured from the ground by scudding clouds of a brilliant white.

Both the Wall of Yu-Shan and the Dome of the Sky are impervious to all harm, crafted by the Primordials themselves when their power was at its zenith and their mastery of reality unchallenged. The most powerful attack with a First Age weapon capable of laying waste to a city will leave not even a scorch mark, and Charm-fuelled attacks that cannot be gainsaid see their energies redirected to the nearest surface. Likewise, the image of the sun, moon and stars illuminating the roof of Heaven are only empty Essence, so attacks directed at them merely pass through and empty their power against the dome of the sky. Savants amongst the mortals of Creation occasionally ask what lies outside those walls, but the gods know such a question is foolishness in itself—there is nothing outside the wall. Yu-Shan is its own space.

Administrative Geography

Heaven is as much an administrative entity as a geographical one, since it is not bound or limited by the vagaries of natural geography, excluding the limits of the Wall and Sky Dome. In Creation, the border of a principate or republic are often demarcated by a river or a mountain range. The natural limit of an empire amongst mortals is often an impassable desert or a turbulent sea. Not so Yu-Shan—on a macro-geographical level, it has been designed in an orderly way, a continent-sized city divided into a quintet of administrative districts, each of which is divided into smaller sub-units by the canal system.

The Central Metropolitan Zone is divided into pie-sliced administrative regions called precincts, each of which begins and ends at a different canal. Further out, the other kind of administrative area is called a borough, each of which is divided into countless propinquities that go by various bureaucratic descriptors such as neighborhoods, "empty quarters," environmental zones, parks, markets, slums, complexes, and pleasure districts.

Morgan Hillan (order #910970)

The Districts of Heaven

Heaven itself is divided into five districts, each controlled by Gaia or one of the Incarnae, with the exception of the Central Metropolitan Zone, which is ruled jointly. The Central Metropolitan Zone is the heart of Yu-Shan, known by hoi polloi as "downtown," and the location of the Jade Pleasure Dome and the most important buildings of the Celestial Bureaucracy. It consists solely of the precincts at the heart of Yu-Shan, although for administrative fairness, it extends further east and west than it does south and north.

The Unconquered Sun commands, at least on paper, the Fulgent Administrative District to the West, and although it consists of every type of building and neighborhood, it is most famous for its bureaucratic buildings and the Twilight Quay of the Golden Barque. Luna oversees the Lunargent Ecological Protectorate to the East, whose name comes from the number of massive parks, wildlife refuges, and controlled environmental zones present within its boroughs. Jupiter, Mars, Saturn, Mercury and Venus control the Five Spheres Residential District, which was originally designed to house the gods of Heaven but which has now, with the Maidens' permission, come to absorb another large chunk of the Bureaucracy. Finally, Gaia was given the Pangaean Bureaucratic District to the south to control, made up largely of hilly terrain and rivers, often divided by the canals that rush out from the center of Yu-Shan.

Government by the Incarnae theoretically worked how it was supposed to during the dawn of the First Age following the destruction of the Primordials. By modern times, no single Incarna has any interest in overseeing the regions under their control, preferring instead to focus on the Games of Divinity or their own private affairs, so the names of the different districts are all that are left to indicate any kind of oversight by the chief powers of Yu-Shan. Instead, the heads of the various Bureaus and a small, specialized, and incredibly inefficient bureaucratic agency called the Greater Metropolitan Five District Planning Group (referred to as the Planning Group

Gate Key

The Blessed Isle:
1. Meru Gate
2. Unkatsu Gate
3. Arudan Gate
4. Vabahi Gate
5. Bough Gate
6. Auchul Gate
7. Arjuf Gate
8. Hajuba Gate
9. Dhorash Gate
10. Scarlet Gate
11. Giashu Gate
12. Yatosin Gate

The East:
13. Grave Silk Lake Gate
14. Rathess Gate
15. Maruto River Gate
16. Meander Gate
17. Nexus Gate
18. Sijan Gate
19. Silver Clouds Gate
20. Noss Fens Gate
21. Xu-Lak Gate
22. Proving Ground Gate
23. River Blossom Gate
24. Ice Gate

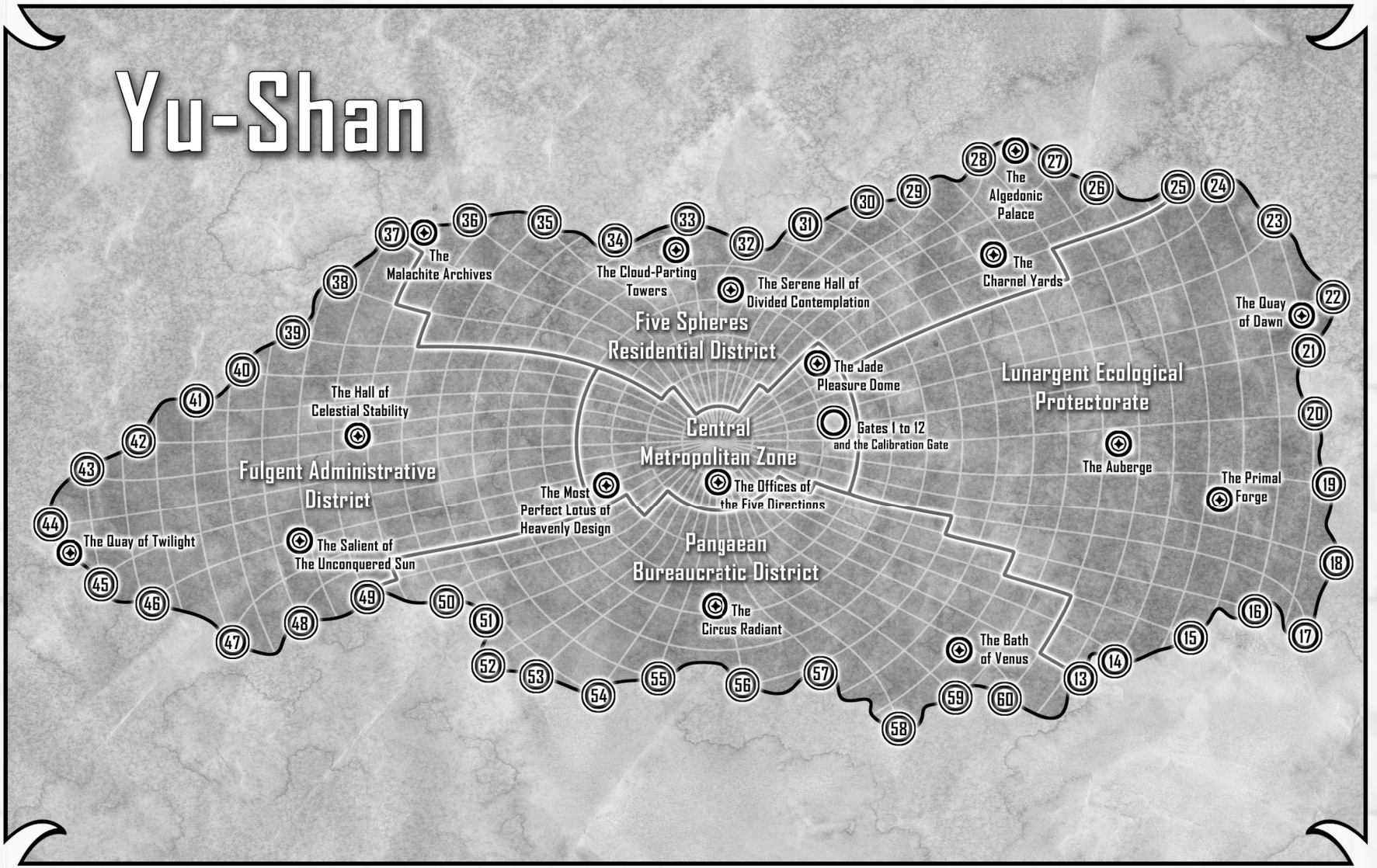
The North:
25. Glacier Gate
26. Crystal Gate
27. Diamond Hearth Gate
28. Shrouded Gate
29. Icehome Gate
30. Steppe Gate
31. Gethamane Gate
32. Fell Gate
33. Shadows Gate
34. Cairn Gate
35. Varajtul Gate
36. Tchoto-killi Gate
37. Pear Gate

The West:
38. Azure Gate
39. Onyx Gate
40. Kerekis Gate
41. Arkadi Gate
42. Sand Gate
43. Seahaven Gate
44. Shining Reef Gate
45. Savage Gate
46. Solitude Gate
47. Ten Stripes Gate
48. Hurricane Gate

The South:
49. Silent Crescent Gate
50. Fire Plains Gate
51. Diamond Gate
52. Last Supplicant Gate
53. Paragon Gate
54. Chiaroscuro Gate
55. Varang Gate
56. Desert Gate
57. Glass Reach Gate
58. Bright Gate
59. Forge Gate
60. Golden Gate

Morgan Hillan (order #910970)

Morgan Hillan (order #910970)



in conversation for brevity's sake) meet once every decade to rezone and shift policing priorities, occasionally shunting the dispossessed and homeless gods from one borough to the next in order to expand some high-ranking deity's compound, or to make room for a new bureaucratic wing for this agency or that. Occasionally, they attempt to gentrify one of the empty quarters, hoping that an influx of divine residents will drive off the cannibal divinities that lurk within those regions.

In between committee get-togethers, the bureaucrats of the Planning Group and its various sub-agencies hold zoning hearings in preparation for the ten year committee meeting, fine low-ranking gods for aesthetically displeasing displays on the property of their manses, and pester the celestial lions for greater police presence in crime-wracked areas.

However, the Committee's power over the more powerful gods is curtailed by the wide dislike most of Yu-Shan has for their actions at the once-a-decade committee meeting, and many potent deities spend the nine years when no meeting is occurring settling scores from the previous committee meeting. At least one particularly abusive bureaucrat was "accidentally" devoured by a celestial lion for pushing too hard on some issue or another at a police hearing, and while the lion was censured afterward and exiled to guarding one of the less important gates into Yu-Shan, the message to the Planning Group's lower ranking underlings was loud and clear: You are only as important as we think you are, and we don't think you're important enough to keep us from harming you.

As such, the bureaucrats are quite adept at leaning on those they think they can get away with pushing, but they quickly withdraw when threatened with real power. In practice, that has meant that the innumerable secret societies that dot Yu-Shan's political landscape are able to exert a great deal of influence over the bureaucrats in the Planning Group, giving them an unofficial say in celestial landscaping and architecture. Once every few years, two secret societies will wage a subtle war over control of one zoning outcome or another, usually in the pursuit of a particularly valuable manse or piece of landscape, and the whole thing will climax in assassinations, internal purges, and the odd illegal soulforging until the next ten year Planning Group meeting arrives, wherein new appointments will be made to replace the dead or missing Planning Group members and the high-ranking gods chairing the event attempt to ferret out what happened while they were tending to their other duties.

Morgan Hillan (order #910970)

Precincts and Boroughs

The smallest administrative districts of Yu-Shan are called precincts and boroughs. Precincts are pie slices in the center of Heaven bounded by canals. They consist of the central four rings of canals, with each "ring" consisting of sixty precincts, divided by the canals going outward from the center of the city to the various gateways on the edge of Yu-Shan.

Boroughs are those areas to the north, east, west and south and consist of larger tracts of territory. While those fortunate enough to live in the central zone often try to pretend that downtown is the heart of urban sophistication, in reality, many of the largest Bureaus of Heaven have headquarters in the other districts, and any truly important god will have access to the golden canal system which allows rapid transportation across all of Yu-Shan. To the truly puissant, distance is a minor detail that inconveniences only the poor.

Both precincts and boroughs are divided into innumerable neighborhoods, slums, parks, wildlands, and gardens for the production of the peaches of immortality and celestial coca leaves. Each neighborhood has both an official appellation and a sobriquet used by residents; thus, Glowing Lotus Terrace is known as the Terrace by those who live there, even if there are thousands of other "terraces" across Yu-Shan. The locals know what they're talking about.

Traveling Across Heaven

Yu-Shan is a massive city thousands of miles across. Many gods are capable of traversing the space of Yu-Shan in an instant, but the most powerful find such displays of power gauche outside of emergencies, and any display of power for travel that causes a disturbance—and disturbances are often in the eyes of the bureaucrats one is dealing with—will result in a citation and an appearance before a magistrate at a local precinct or Bureau administrative hearing.

With the obvious means of travel off-limits in many cases, status stems from how one travels to and fro across Heaven's breadth. The richest and most powerful gods have private vessels at their disposal, either long sailing ships for lazy trips up and down the canals or airships capable of hurtling across the sky in orichalcum splendor.

The middle class must rely on public transportation—dragon-boats rented by the god themselves or taxis piloted by a freelance divinity. On the rare occasion they need to travel quickly, the can expend significant funds to gain access to an aerial rickshaw or even, if several of them pool their money and they can claim the right rank, a cloud.

The poorest gods must rely on passage in a rickshaw by a minor elemental servant or in a carriage hauled by servitor spirits. The dispossessed and homeless must rely on their own feet, although a few attempt to create primitive contrivances and travel through the sewers, a tact taken by only the very tough or extremely foolhardy.

The Canal System

The canal system radiates in two ways from the center of Yu-Shan. Radial canals run from the central point where the system meets, stretching out from the heart of the Central Metropolitan Zone and eventually terminating in the 48 gateways on the edge of the wall. Orbiting canals span out from downtown in progressively larger concentric circles every hundred miles. The places where orbiting canals meet radial canals form the effective administrative boundaries for the precincts and boroughs that make up Yu-Shan. That's not to say the canal system is impassable—innumerable bridges, highways, and tunnels go above and underneath the canals. Natural rivers mirroring watercourses on the Blessed Isle are redirected under or over the quicksilver canal system where they encounter one another.

The Heart of the Canals

Underneath the Quicksilver Reservoir at the center of Yu-Shan's canal system, a great heart beats—an artifact of orichalcum, moonsilver, starmetal and jade, constantly pumping the twin streams of gold and silver quicksilver that carries the boats of Yu-Shan out and drawing those same fluids back in. What is of greater concern now is that the gods assigned to tend to the heart have noticed that it's been skipping a beat here and there and occasionally racing at high speed. So far, they haven't identified any actual damage, but the seeming malfunctions have occurred with greater frequency of late.

In these corrupt times, wealthy layabouts, deadly assassins, and the agents of the bureaucracy have been known to use the canal system to chase their foes. Such pursuits aren't dangerous if they occur in a lane where traffic proceeds in the same direction, although in those cases fights often move from boat to boat if the combatants find themselves gridlocked in traffic. Pursuits in which boats find themselves heading against traffic—which often

Morgan Hillan (order #910970)

requires Charms to make the boats move against the canal's natural flow—result in problems far more often, especially when the celestial lions begin to appear to quell the combat and canal gods show up to sputter impotently.

The most spectacular fights happen when combatants leap across the gold lane in order to land on a boat in the quicksilver lane headed in the other direction, sometimes colliding with a dragon-boat in the central lane moving at thousands of miles per hour. Beings without Perfect Defenses can expect to find themselves instantly pulped if such a collision occurs, and what happens to the ship depends largely on how well and of what materials it has been crafted.

The Skies of Yu-Shan

The skies of Yu-Shan rarely suffer from poor weather and are usually well lit by the sun or the moon but artfully crowded with scudding clouds. The clouds themselves are arranged by a division of the Bureau of Heaven, whose gods must make sure there are vehicles available for use by divinities and Exalted in need of emergency transportation but that such clouds are both aesthetically pleasing and that they do not crowd the view of the Sky Dome over much. Once a century, a god seeking to make a political statement or embarrass a rival will attempt to suborn the cloud system for their own uses. They often attempt to skywrite some crude statement, craft a collection of clouds into a lewd or politically dangerous caricature, or even simply jam up the cloud-based transportation system. The Bureau of Heaven is inevitably deeply embarrassed by this and will go to any lengths to make sure the transgressor is caught and suitably punished.

Wind spirits flit invisibly in the air, monitoring traffic. Although the skies of Yu-Shan are not overly crowded by clouds, aerial rickshaws, and beings using spells, Charms or other methods of transportation, many of the devices travel at such high speed that a collision can happen before anyone realizes it. The wind spirits track the various flyers and monitor their paths for potential collisions. Although the system isn't perfect and won't keep someone from doing deliberate harm while utilizing an aerial transport, it does keep most tragic accidents from occurring.

Gods hell-bent on fighting often choose to do so above cloud-level, if they can arrange it, since the sky is the one place in Yu-Shan not within easy reach of the blue jade pillar alarm system that covers the streets of Heaven. That means that many an assassination attempt occurs while the prospective victim is

Morgan Hillan (order #910970)

airborne, since the attack can continue for some time before clouds bearing celestial lions appear, if they are alerted at all. Often, other gods will fight duels in the sky, since the chance of witnesses overseeing and alerting the authority is more remote, so the opportunity for property damage and an official audit is reduced accordingly.

The Streets of Yu-Shan

The streets of Yu-Shan vary in quality, but all of them are of finest quality compared to even the greatest modern highways of Creation (Surviving First Age roads are another matter). In many places, the streets are crafted from adamant, jade, and other exotic materials originally forged out of Ambrosia. In the more populated areas, where gods often live close to their place of employment, the streets are crowded with foot traffic, rickshaws, carriages, and even more exotic artifacts of the First Age—properly licensed, of course. Most busy streets will see a lion dog patrol once every hour, since the celestial lions are too important for mere traffic patrol.

In specially cultivated environmental zones, parks and other areas, the ground is often rich soil or cobblestones. If it is paved from stone or cobbles, then each stone is perfectly fitted to the one next to it and aesthetically formed to be most pleasing to walkers who happen to glance down. If the road is earthen, then the sides of the road are covered in specially sculpted bushes or the most beautiful flowers, and a breeze is always present to cool the brow and waft the scent of growing things to the pedestrian's immense pleasure.

Where the canals establish the limits of a particular borough or precinct, there are bridges, grand affairs of gold and silver and beautifully wrought and engineered. These bridges allow for easy travel from one administrative area to the next, and outside of times when the celestial lions expect trouble, they are not guarded with any regularity. Especially in the more urban areas, roads continue underneath the quicksilver canals rather than going over them, the tunnels lit by shimmering lanterns and kept warm and dry by the ubiquitous minor servants who keep Yu-Shan running smoothly.

Between the well developed road system and the tunnels and bridges that allow passage across the canals, it's quite possible to walk the length of Yu-Shan, from one gateway to the next, via the road system—it's just incredibly time consuming and viewed as wasteful. For the chronically poor or those hoping to transport something without being subject to the watchful eyes of the wind spirits that monitor air traffic and the canal gods, however, road travel is still a useful means of getting around Heaven.

Neighborhoods of Yu-Shan

The vast majority of the neighborhoods in Yu-Shan consist of the same general kinds of architectural and landscaping elements one would find in Creation. There are houses, gardens, roads, lamp posts, fountains, cisterns, sewers, and alleys. The difference mainly comes from the labor and spiritual power that go into creating those elements—in Yu-Shan, jade and gold and diamonds are easily crafted from the Ambrosia most gods receive in their salries, so even a middle-management god could afford, say, a shimmering tower covered in gemstones with a fountain that spews wine from the mouth of a gold statue.

This means that the true mark of a god's status is not the ostentation of his home but the amount of land he is allotted by the Bureau of Heaven. The greatest of gods, the heads of the Bureaus and the Incarnae, possess multiple tracts across the face of Yu-Shan, some of them fifty miles on a side, sprawling affairs with manses the size of major cities in Creation on their grounds and multiple layers of enchantment. The poorest of gods rely on public housing in apartment complexes in crowded neighborhoods, or worse still, live in the empty quarters of various boroughs in abandoned mansions, easy prey for whatever murderous predator sets its sights on them.

The average god of Yu-Shan lives neither in a crowded apartment building nor a city-sized mansion but instead in a beautiful house or villa on a tract of land that covers anything from a city block to a dozen acres. All of the mansions and villas in Yu-Shan share certain characteristics: they eschew long hallways, instead relying on visitors to proceed from room to room; even the smallest of them will have several courtyards and gardens carefully maintained for aesthetic pleasure; and they will all rely on minor servants for the upkeep of the buildings.

The decision to avoid long hallways—even the largest building will rarely have more than two or three halls that run the length it—is a cultural one. Gods are immortal beings, amassing remarkable treasures over the length of their lives. By storing those treasures in various rooms and requiring visitors to travel through the rooms to get to other portions of the house, the gods demonstrate both their experience, their exotic travels, and the wealth they have amassed over the years.

Morgan Hillan (order #910970)

Courtyards are elemental in nature, usually aspected along one specific elemental force. Fire gardens are popular, with long gardens of glowing embers, fountains that spew magical flames, and trees whose branches smolder perfumed smoke. Water gardens rely on pools and fountains, earth gardens on aesthetically beautiful displays of rocks and stone, and wood gardens on sculpted trees. Air courtyards rely on carefully cultivated breezes and artfully placed chimes and banners to create the illusion that one is in a fluttering forest or whirlwind, even though the wind is no stronger than a gentle whisper.

Buildings are usually between two and thirty stories high, although the largest mansions owned by the gods can extend as many as 300 stories into the air, relying on jade lift tubes to propel visitors to the appropriate floor. Some of the tubes are classical platform elevators, while others rely on fields of Essence to propel the passenger up to the appropriate floor.

Those divinities and elementals which do live in apartments vary in their living arrangements based on how much wealth they have. The wealthiest of the urban poor or the lower middle-class may live in an entire floor of an apartment tower, while the poorest families of long-term dispossessed gods who lost their positions in the Usurpation may find themselves pressed into a single room or two. Even within those divisions, there are gradations—status is accorded based on how close one's apartment building is to the quicksilver canals, for instance, or to one's place of employment.

The Orchards of the Peaches of Immortality and Leaves of Power

Scattered across Yu-Shan are 15 orchards where the peaches of immortality are grown. All vary in size and shape, but they are at least 50 square miles in size, some reaching a size of 200-300 square miles. Each orchard is warded against all sorcery and covered with domes of crystal-clear adamant to prevent thieves from simply flying in. Walls of opaque adamant surround the orchards.

The peaches grow with astounding slowness—each crop takes on the order of 500 years to mature. No Charm, sorcery, or other power known to gods or mortals can speed this process. During the centuries of ripening, these immensely ancient trees must be tended constantly to ensure the crop does not go bad.

Morgan Hillan (order #910970)

Five celestial lions guard each gate, but the orchards' interior is completely devoid of guards—no god wants to risk the chance that battle will damage the orchards and believes the presence of such heavy guard will discourage most thieves. The only beings inside the orchards are the wood elementals known as "gardeners" who maintain the crops.

Minor servants bring carts of mulch and manure to the orchards once a week, and the celestial lions inspect the carts, open the gates, and allow the gardeners to take these supplies inside. The gardeners also use these carts to haul out dead leaves and other debris.

The ripe peaches are treated very carefully—a ripe peach can remain on a tree for up to a century, but none are ever allowed to remain there for long. When a powerful god hosts a party or other gathering, he obtains a writ from the Bureau of Heaven for a dozen or more of these peaches. Servants deliver the writ to the gardeners, who carefully place the peaches into jade baskets and take them to the servants who must wait at the gate. Any servants picking up peaches will be under heavy guard.

In addition to the orchards containing the peaches, there are also a few terraced orchards in which celestial coca leaves are cultivated for processing into celestial cocaine (see **Scroll of the Monk**, p. 20). The cocaine is used by the divinities of Yu-Shan to enhance their drinks and food, to liven up parties, and to keep mortal servants and slaves functioning—at least for a short time—in such a way as to keep up with their masters. In Creation, it fetches a high price and is often used by those seeking a short road to power.

The Vineyards of the Celestial Wine

These vineyards only cover a few dozen acres in the Eastern quarter of Yu-Shan and surround a group of five buildings used to press and store the celestial wine. Would-be thieves who seek to steal so much as a bottle from the winery face 15 patrolling celestial lions and many more watchers, and any alarms sounded will bring more from the surrounding area. Each building also has five celestial lions on guard.

Two of the five buildings are devoted to actual winemaking. Each has an attached storehouse with stringently maintained environments for storing the wine, where it is kept until it has reached a proper age of at least a century. Each building is warded against sorcery and made of nearly indestructible jade.

The fifth building is where the wine gods who make the wine live and do business. Gods who wish to purchase or requisition wine send their servants here, although most have standing orders to receive shipments as they become available.

The Slums of Yu-Shan

Yu-Shan is a place of massive paradoxes. On the one hand, it is the wealthiest city known to god or man, with streets of jade and gold and towering houses for even the middle-class. On the other hand, after the chaos of the Great Contagion when the armies of the Fair Folk set much of Creation to the sword, and the Wyld devoured the boundaries of the Old Realm, Yu-Shan was suddenly burdened with a massive unemployed underclass of gods whose domains had been destroyed by the blades of the Fair Folk or swallowed by the Wyld.

A few of the gods who lost their positions were able to move onto other jobs in the bureaucracy or take work as menials. The rest, however, have been left to fend for themselves for millennia, relying on the public Quintessence system for their daily needs, public housing for their living arrangements, and the protection of more powerful gods among their social class for protection from predators.

Many of these gods still live in middle-class areas. When they have a home it is on a tiny parcel of land. When they live in apartments, the apartments consist of a handful of rooms. Their life is still the envy of even the average citizen of Creation—Quintessence can be forged into wealth, food, trinkets, and even property if the god so wishes (though such things wear out quickly), so by any standards since those of the High First Age, a poor god in Yu-Shan does well for itself, especially given that the tremors that ripple throughout human society—plague, famine, war—do not affect them.

Many of the gods do live in actual slums, however. Slums in Yu-Shan usually consist of the areas between the bulk of the middle-class and the empty quarters. Mansions on larger parcels of lands have been abandoned, so a god of limited means can still enjoy a few gardens and courtyards. Celestial lions still regularly patrol the area, providing a measure of security without having to pay organized crime. And the areas are safe enough that one can still find a minor servant to take care of one's home.

Each slum has its own identity—one of them, in southern Yu-Shan, consists entirely of gods who lost jobs in the Bureau of Nature, so the slum has been landscaped extensively and has a very natural air. Another might be made up of elementals, usually trapped in the lower social strata, so have an anti-divine bias. Other slums have developed their own slang, their own gangs, and their own communal prejudices.

Because slums naturally develop along the edges of areas out of a simultaneous need for security and land,

Morgan Hillan (order #910970)

visitors who are involved in fights in Yu-Shan—and those who are chased by the local divinities, be they street gangs or celestial lions—must be careful. A fight may start in a wealthy area, but as it moves away from a canal, the area can rapidly become middle-class and thus more chaotic and crowded, shift into an impoverished area with its own dangers, and then a wrong turn brings the chase into an empty quarter where anything goes. Celestial lions will often continue a chase through even the most dangerous quarters, but they will not tarry long if they believe they've lost their prey.

The Empty Quarters

Dusty and apparently abandoned, the empty quarters are an artifact of the constant movement of populations throughout Yu-Shan based on the ease with which new buildings may be constructed out of Ambrosia. As the rich move closer to canals, the middle-class follows, and the poor and their slums proceed in that direction as well. The areas left behind are progressively less populated until some dusty neighborhoods have been wholly emptied, the only gods remaining usually insane or predatory.

The empty quarters make wonderful places to hide. There are very rarely any nosy neighbors, and those neighbors that do live there are often sick or have reasons of their own for keeping to themselves. Response time to the use of the blue jade pillars is lengthy, and fugitives normally have plenty of time to beat feet for a hidey-hole or a new section of town. On the other hand, the idea that policing is attenuated means that predators stalk the empty quarters—rich gods looking for a sick thrill and worried about reprisals from particularly secure slums, serial killers, members of the poor looking to vent their frustrations out on someone lower than they are, and even cannibal divinities.

The Sights of Heaven

Heaven is an ageless city, designed by alien beings who predate nearly every other entity alive today and maintained by gods who have an eternity to focus on ostentation and aesthetic perfection. It is beautiful, and even middle-class gods can take their allotments of Ambrosia and craft breathtaking manses or gardens of wondrous delights. Because of this, there is no shortage of wonders to experience when visiting Yu-Shan.

Even so, some things are simply more wondrous than others. The Jade Pleasure Dome is a shining dome which houses distractions that occupy the waking hours of the Incarnae themselves, after all, and the

Deiphages

Although the threat is exaggerated in safer neighborhoods, there are groups of divinities who have gone feral lurking in the more remote and abandoned neighborhoods of Yu-Shan. They are often referred to as ghul. A god is wedded to its domain in a way a mortal cannot be, so when it loses its position in Heaven—especially because its domain was destroyed or diminished—its mental stability suffers. Gods do not control their domains, but their spiritual lives and domains are tied together. Remove the domain, and the god sometimes snaps.

The Usurpation left countless gods diminished. Some of them merely lost their positions, but many saw their domains wiped out entirely. Many of their psyches were forever shattered by the experience, and the damage done has varied from mild derangement to outright homicidal madness. Of the latter, thousands have turned to what amounts to spiritual cannibalism, using Charms to hunt down and absorb the Essence of the unwary.

Such creatures often end up haunting the empty quarters when not invading more inhabited areas. Many of them are unintelligent brutes, but once in a while more intelligent examples of the class arise, some of which are capable organizing the weaker and less intelligent deiphages. In the last 500 years, there have been three riots where small bands of cannibal divinities invaded civilized portions of Heaven, only to be driven off by troops of celestial lions. For a brief time afterward, the lions will purge known haunts belonging to the ghul, but inevitably the gods scatter, and it eventually becomes a waste of time.

The real concern of the lions is not that these gods exist—Yu-Shan has had centuries to get used to that fact of urban life. No, what concerns the celestial lions is that not all of the gods who went mad or had domains destroyed were functionaries—there are gods as powerful as the masters of the various Celestial Bureaus out there, lurking in the sewers and the empty quarters, and many of them managed to hold onto a significant amount of their intellect.

Morgan Hillan (order #910970)

Most Perfect Lotus Blossom of Heavenly Design not only houses the engine which makes sure Creation functions properly but also bends space within and without it. There are other places as well—brothels used by the Primordials themselves, the palaces of Incarnae, spaces used for martial arts tournaments and annual festivals, and the gardens which produce the peaces of immortality and celestial cocaine.

The Jade Pleasure Dome

Three miles high, the radiant home of the Games of Divinity dominates the downtown skyline. It glows from within in every color of jade, with huge plates of the substance carved in ancient designs that seem to shift as the light changes. It reflects the glory of the Unconquered Sun and Luna when their visages control the sky if they are winning the games at the moment. The circumference of the dome is covered by twenty-five gates, each one large enough to allow in a trireme. Each gate is guarded by half a dozen celestial lions, and on the lintel of each gate is a ward which strikes down those who attempt to enter without authorization.

The Jade Pleasure Dome's interior is much like a coliseum or stadium, with thousands of seats reserved for the lesser gods who are invited to watch or participate. Higher ranked gods get what amounts to well-appointed apartments or small mansions from which they can observe or participate in the Games of Divinity, and the Celestial Incarnae have practically half of the dome's accommodations for themselves.

The game itself dominates the dome's center, filling the space from ground to ceiling and apparently expanding beyond it. Dreamstones of the Games of Divinity (see below) fail to convey the precise dimensions or appearance to mortal or Exalted observers.

Surrounding the exterior of the pleasure dome is a massive plaza, usually crowded with gods shuffling to and fro on their daily business. Four times a year, the Court of Seasons festoons the area with illusions and decorations for one of its unforgettable festivals. Each festival has a unique theme, and merchant gods and the desperate set up kiosks amongst the banners, theaters and stalls in order to hawk their wares.

No Exalt, no matter how puissant, no matter how well lauded, has ever been allowed access to the Jade Pleasure Dome. Dreamstones portraying the interior are available, and Sidereal Exalted especially

Morgan Hillan (order #910970)

are prone to purchasing them. The average reborn Solar Exalt or Lunar in the Bordermarches views Yu-Shan as a distant metropolis, after all, but for the Sidereals, the Jade Pleasure Dome represents the one place in all of Heaven from which they are forever barred.

Dreamstones of the Games of Divinity

Being in the presence of the Games of Divinity is a profound experience, and everyone who views the Games dreams vividly about them for many days.

On rare occasions, one of the players will reward an important god with the chance to make a single move in the Games. Even more than simply witnessing the Games, those who make a move experience boundless, overwhelming joy and a sense of limitless power. Nearly all gods who play a turn will make several recordings of the experience, both so that they may experience the turn again and again and to sell or barter its memory for favors.

Dreamstones are the usual medium for these recordings, but gods with large stores of First Age artifacts may use other devices. High quality recordings of play will instill feelings of euphoria in anyone—god, Exalt, or mortal—who uses them. They nearly always cause addiction. Just using a stone or other recording of high fidelity requires a Temperance roll (difficulty 2) to avoid using the stone again within the next day. To resist on the second day requires a Temperance roll (difficulty 1). After three full days, no further rolls are needed.

Unfortunately, recordings of turns at the Games of Divinity are highly addictive. Every time a character uses such a dreamstone, her player must make a (Stamina + Integrity) roll (difficulty 1 + number of times she's used the recording in the past month). Failing the roll means the character is addicted and will do everything she can to experience the move again. She can make Temperance or Conviction rolls to resist doing things that violate her innermost convictions and won't risk certain death, but beyond that, an addict will agree to most actions just to get access to the memory of the move again unless she spends a point of Willpower to resist the temptation.

The character can break the addiction by rolling (Stamina + Integrity) each week without the recording, at one difficulty less than the previous addiction roll. A successful roll breaks the addiction.

Any character who botches any of these Integrity rolls will do anything to gain access to a dreamstone or other recording. Her Virtues no longer matter—the desire to experience the Games of Divinity is too strong. A character might destroy everything and everyone of value to her, sabotage everything she's spent years working to build, or sell out her entire Circle to the Wyld Hunt just for one more night with a dreamstone. Characters can spend one point of Willpower to hold off the urge to commit such extreme acts that violate her Virtues. If she goes

The Wards of the Pleasure Dome

The wards of the Jade Pleasure Dome are all intelligent, perceptive devices of strange artifice. They have an effective Perception trait of 5 and an effective Awareness trait of 5. They are intelligent and capable of communicating with other beings in odd, high pitched and lilting voices, and when they have questions about whether or not a being is allowed to enter the dome, they will interrogate it. If necessary, they will pulse as the blue jade alarm pillars do and summon nearby celestial lions. If the lions fail to subdue the potential intruder and they continue toward the entrance to the dome, the wards are permitted to use lethal force, which they will do even as they summon more lions. These lions will typically come via canal and cloud, rather than from the other entrances—the wards dislike leaving one of their number vulnerable, but they will do so if the threat to one gate is so significant that the arrival of lion reinforcements in the one to ten minutes it takes them to get there will be too late. Some wards do not wait for the lions to fail, instead striking at intruders if they move too close to the entrances while in combat with the lion.

The wards are capable of unleashing a mystic attack that causes ten levels of aggravated damage. This attack ignores armor and is aimed directly at the intruder's Essence, bypassing any and all defenses save those that explicitly defend against attacks that bypass all defenses, but the wards' attacks have an effective Speed of 3, and the ward will continue striking at intruders until they are dead or out of action. The ward can attack up to five intruders simultaneously.

A number of beings have attempted to infiltrate the Jade Pleasure Dome over the ages. A handful have defeated the lion guards, but none have yet survived the wards' attack. Any who do would have to face the wrath of all the gods within the dome, including the Incarnae.

Morgan Hillan (order #910970)

without reliving the memory for more than two days, she loses all interest in food or sleep.

To break this addiction, the character must go a full month without access to a copy of the memory, and make another (Stamina + Integrity) roll at a difficulty equal to the botched roll. If the roll is successful, she kicks the addiction but also loses a point of permanent Willpower.

Gods are more resilient to the Games—reduce the difficulty of all rolls by 1, and treat all botches as simple failures.

See **The Books of Sorcery, Vol. III—Oadenol's Codex**, page 156, for more information on dreamstones.
See **The Books of Sorcery Vol. I—Wonders of the First Age**, page 61, for an example of a First Age recording device capable recording a move of the Games of Divinity, although there are surely others.

The Celestial Bureaucracy

The Five Bureaus of Yu-Shan that make up the heart of the Celestial Bureaucracy are, in turn, divided into divisions, sub-divisions, departments, committees and action groups. Each one of these different administrative entities has one—or more typically, more—headquarters across Yu-Shan.

While several of these headquarters are located downtown within the precincts of the Central Metropolitan Zone, many other important spots litter the whole of the massive city. Lower-ranked gods insist that outside of the precincts of central Yu-Shan, the rest of Heaven is mere suburbs, but anyone of any real power realizes that true power is not concentrated in the heart of Yu-Shan but distributed all over the city's boroughs.

The Bureau of Destiny

The Bureau of Destiny is arguably the most powerful of the offices of the Celestial Bureaucracy, for it is formally overseen by the Five Maidens and utilizes the Loom of Fate and the Sidereal Exalted. Its buildings are certainly the most widely known in Heaven, housing as they do the Loom of Fate and resting so closely to the Jade Pleasure Dome.

The Loom of Fate

Housed in a humbly crafted but massive in scale, white marble domed structure in the center of the Most Perfect Lotus of Heavenly Design, the Loom of Fate is most impressive when viewed from the inside. The exterior is a non-descript dome five miles wide resting in the center of the Lotus. The inside, however, defies mortal comprehension. Balconies, walkways and staircases lead in all directions. Gravity is focused along the platforms that workers stride along in the endless pursuit of their tasks, and time is warped by the nature of the Loom. It is not uncommon for someone coming out of a hallway and walking up a staircase to look across the Loom and see his own image striding along a platform on its way to some other task, sometimes years younger—and once in a while, decades older.

Access to the Loom is strictly controlled. It is guarded by celestial lions, as are all key sites in Yu-Shan, but access ducts, airways, and hidden crevices are usually watched by scarab guardians, and less important portions of the building are staffed by lion dogs. There are three entrances—two for workers, and one for visitors on official work or guests of workers. All are guarded by the same kind of ward system that guards the Jade Pleasure Dome, although the wards themselves lie dormant unless some dangerous activity is suspected. Often times, intruders are allowed to enter the Loom of Fate, the Wards are activated, and the strange warping of time and space, as well as guardian spirits, make sure the intruders never make it out alive.

The heart of the Loom is the weft of Creation itself. From certain angles, the beauty and wonder of Creation is itself displayed as the fabric of Creation, spun from fibers of raw Wyldstuff generated by the Maidens themselves into the Tapestry, whose gradual unfolding in the Loom is the passage of time and the maintenance of reality. If the Loom were to stop turning, time would stop. If it were to come unraveled, all of the basic elements that make up Creation—gravity, the weather, the movement of the elements from the Poles outward into discrete matter—would cease to occur.

The Most Perfect Lotus of Heavenly Design

The Most Perfect Lotus of Heavenly Design is an enormous building in the shape of a perfect lotus blossom. At the center of the blossom lies the Loom of Fate, and along each petal of the Blossom, sometimes on the surface and sometimes within the petals themselves, lie the offices of the Bureau of Destiny. Surrounding the Lotus are five buildings, each one housing a division of the Bureau belonging to one of the five Maidens.

A massive affair squatting across the Central Metropolitan Zone from the Jade Pleasure Dome, the Most Perfect Lotus houses the central administrative wing of the Bureau of Destiny, apartments for Sidereals and gods who wish to rest without returning home, meeting rooms the size of stadiums, and an enormous record-keeping operation that keeps track of everything that

Morgan Hillan (order #910970)

happens within the Loom of Fate. The Most Perfect Lotus is where the gods and the Sidereals of the different divisions of the Bureau of Destiny go to meet on common ground.

Those outside the spheres of political power associate the Bureau of Destiny with the heart of Yu-Shan due to the presence of the Loom of Fate, which some would claim is the central reason for the existence of the Celestial Bureaucracy, but they are wrong—there are equally important sites across Yu-Shan. Some of these other sites, such as Sky-Spanning Awe, headquarters of the Aerial Legion, are undoubtedly capable of wiping the Lotus from the face of the city, if need be, but few are larger or grander. The Perfected Lotus is not merely a city unto itself, it is very nearly six cities, with each division of the Bureau of Destiny the size of any metropolis in Creation and the Loom of Fate equaling Creation's greatest citadels.

However, the Most Perfect Lotus of Heavenly Designs is affected by the same space warping that wracks the inside of the Loom of Fate (Alternately, some savants posit, the strange tricks of space that affect the interior the Loom were harnessed by the architects for their own uses). The buildings that seem to lay around the Lotus actually exist elsewhere, thus allowing the gargantuan camp that is the Crimson Panoply to exist in the heart of the Central Metropolitan Zone alongside a massive replica of a long-forgotten brothel and a monolithic tomb. A being entering the Most Perfect Lotus of Heavenly Designs may walk its halls and exit onto the grounds of the Forbidden Manse of Ivy and then, once finished with his business there, continue walking and find themselves walking in the region surrounding the Manse's other location in Yu-Shan, in the Lunargent Ecological Protectorate.

The effect of this strange ripple in the fabric of space is manifold, but one of the most important results is that a god who works in the Crimson Panoply of Victory is simultaneously on the eastern side of the Most Perfect Lotus of Heavenly Designs and in the Fulgent Administrative District hundreds of miles to the west. If he leaves the grounds a certain way, he can find his way to his manse on the western edge of Yu-Shan near the Crimson Panoply, far away from the rush and crowds in the heart of Heaven.

At the same time, if the god follows the corridors and leaves the Panoply another way, he finds himself within the halls of the Most Perfect Lotus and can visit any of the other divisions of the Bureau of Destiny with ease, even the Golden Barque while it is wending its way through the skies of Yu-Shan. If he chooses to leave the Most Perfect Lotus or the buildings of another division, he finds himself in the center of Yu-Shan.

Normally, one would assume that this would mean that there is a convenient method of crossing enormous sums of distance in Yu-Shan, thus negating the need for aerial rickshaws, clouds, and even the gold lane of the quicksilver canals. One would be wrong, however. None of the heads of the various divisions relish the idea of gods coming in off the street—or even from other divisions of the Bureau of Destiny—and wandering the halls of their offices in order to cut some time out of their travel. As such, gods require special writs of passage in order to enter a building that isn't part of their division, although members of every division can enter the common areas of the Most Perfect Lotus of Heavenly Designs.

The Crimson Panoply of Victory

In a sandy plain in the Lunargent Ecological Protectorate spread the fortified spires and innumerable tents of the Crimson Panoply of Victory, a battlefield metropolis of a thousand gods. Here are the divine armies of the Maiden of Battle, and although the Aerial Legion may be more powerful as a whole, no army in Heaven can match the superlative skill of Mars' legions. During the day, the hot sun beats down on fangs and talons marching in cadence and singing military songs, and in the evening the sky is lit by campfires and resounds with the laughter of soldier-gods and camp followers.

Inside the tents of the Crimson Panoply are barracks, armories, and supplies sufficient to keep and feed a dozen armies. Inside the fortress-spires within the tent city are officer's quarters, mess halls, and planning chambers with maps of every combat zone, current and potential, in Creation. The gods at the tables play war games constantly to make sure that battles in Creation happen exactly as the Division of Battles decrees—and if the outcomes are uncertain due to the intervention of Essence-wielding Exalted or God-Blooded, at least every other factor is accounted for, from supply-lines to weather to the success of disease gods at claiming the wounded and hungry.

Wandering the twisting paths of the tent city and its fortresses, one sees an army in ever readiness, gods shuffling to and fro in order to tend to conflicts potential and actual. Gods of soldiers, gods of tactics, gods of particular weapons and martial styles, gods of

Morgan Hillan (order #910970)

disease and famine and siege, all are present, working tirelessly to guarantee that conflicts in Creation go according to the planning of the Maidens and the Loom of Fate.

Deep within the armories of the Crimson Panoply lay supplies of daiklaves, ancient troves of First Age weapons, and even automata awaiting the proper commands to sweep across the countryside. There is an intense rivalry between the master armorers of the Crimson Panoply and those who toil in Sky-Spanning Awe, the base of the Aerial Legion. The Maidens play their hands closer to the vest. If the Panoply has a weapon to rival the Devil-Into-Sun Lance or the Thousand Venom Spear, they do not speak of it, but when asked, the Sidereals and gods serving under Mars do tend to smile enigmatically.

Recently, some being has sent a dozen of the most powerful mortal and Exalted generals in Creation dreams of walking through the planning rooms of the Crimson Panoply and seeing the future wars of Creation analyzed and broken down tactically. All of them covet the information within the division's headquarters. But only a few have the means of actually infiltrating it…

The Forbidding Manse of Ivy

A massive citadel crafted from huge slabs of dark green jade and adamant and covered in tendrils of ivy, the Forbidding Manse of Ivy is aptly named. Even the gods and Exalts who crave the information buried in the vaults and archives of the Division of Secret's headquarters feel a strange chill when they glance at the building, and fear runs through their spines when they walk toward it.

The Forbidding Manse exists simultaneously on the eastern side of the Most Perfect Lotus of Heavenly Designs and on the eastern side of Heaven in a fog-shrouded environment crafted to appear as a darkened moor. No matter how bright the sun in the sky, creepers of mist still cling to the muddy grounds, and the dark waters of plant-covered ponds occasionally swallow the unwary. The Manse is not coincidentally located within a few hundred miles of the Malachite Archives (see page103), where the Well of Jove rests fitfully, and occasionally Nara-O will request a personal guard and make its way to the Well to consult its portents.

The Division of Secrets holds records on every secret ever known, so security is tightest in the Forbidden Manse out of all of the division headquarters.

Morgan Hillan (order #910970)

Celestial lions patrol every corridor, the lintels of every major doorway monitor every being's movements within its halls, and units of gods on loan from the Crimson Panoply of Victory wait in secure rooms to respond to any intrusion. More than that, the gods of the division keep an eye on secrets entering into their care that indicate the holder will attempt to infiltrate their headquarters, and particularly capable potential threats are dealt with preemptively.

Within the halls of the Forbidding Manse, visitors from other bureaus and even other divisions within the Bureau of Destiny must submit to a complex approval process. The higher a being's rank, the more likely they will gain admittance, but even the eldest god or Sidereal is occasionally stymied by the arcane bureaucratic process that hands out visitor's access. The problem is that there's no way to tell how corrupt the process is, or how many of the division's members can be bribed to give or withhold access—the bureaucrats have access to all the secrets in Heaven and Creation, and presumably any god or Sidereal within the division intelligent enough to plan treason would also be wise enough to redact his own secrets before they came to the attention of the division's internal auditing program.

The Golden Barque of the Heavens

The Golden Barque of the Heavens is the Division of Journey's headquarters and the one most affected by the strange warping of the Loom of Fate. It is literally a mile-long, gargantuan golden vessel whose center of gravity is oriented along its access, so gods walk along the top, bottom and sides of it, and spars and masts and sails all rise from its body in every direction. Within its holds lie offices of every size and shape, and Sidereal Exalted and gods come and go on errands related to the division's business even while the ship hurtles through the sky all evening and day.

The ship only pauses for an hour at dawn and at dusk, for Ruvia, captain of the Barque, has decreed that separate crews of bureaucrats should work during night and day. At those times, the ship is docked at either the Quay of Dawn in the far east of Heaven, or the Quay of Twilight in the distant west. The crew changes shifts during these moments when it is docked, except for Ruvia, who lives aboard the vessel and rarely leaves it for any length of time.

Every morning the Golden Barque of the Heavens docks at the mile-high Quay of Dawn, which sits simultaneously on the eastern side of Yu-Shan against the Wall of Heaven *and* juts forth from the edge of the Most Perfect Lotus of Heavenly Designs. Every evening it rests momentarily at the Quay of Twilight against the western edge of Heaven. So perfect are the cycles that take the ship across the skies of Yu-Shan that the heads of the Bureau of Heaven have decreed that the hours of the day will be based around the Golden Barque's journey across the sky. As the ship heads west, it is daytime, no matter whether or not the sky is illuminated by Luna or the Unconquered Sun's face. If the ship heads east, it is considered nighttime. Dawn and dusk are delineated by the times the ship is docked. All of Yu-Shan runs to the rhythm of the Golden Barque's journey across the sky.

The Quays of Dawn and Twilight hold offices for low-ranked bureaucrats who do not rate a presence on the ship itself, and the evening and daytime crews of bureaucrats and messengers usually enter the ship from those towers. However, the labyrinthine halls of the Most Perfect Lotus of Heavenly Designs also lead to halls within the Golden Barque, so communication between the rest of the Bureau of Destiny and the Division of Journeys is not just limited to those times of day when someone can reach a quay. In addition, there are mirrors of travel aboard the ship which allow those with appropriate permission to gain access to Mercury's Palace of Mirrors (see p. 102). It is by such mirrors as these that the Golden Barque is, in its own way, connected to the Second City of Yu-Shan.

Alone among the headquarters of the various divisions of the Bureau of Secrets, the Golden Barque of the Heavens has been designed to fly in the skies of Creation. Neither Ruvia nor Mercury has ever spoken of how the Barque would find it possible to leave the skies of Yu-Shan for the skies of the world of mortals, and the Division of Secrets has denied access to that information. It is known that the Golden Barque is armed with mighty Essence cannons capable of laying waste to miles of the city beneath it. But if the potential destruction of all of Creation during the Great Contagion was not enough to force Mercury or Ruvia to send the ship to defend Creation, what would be?

The Violet Bier of Sorrows

The Violet Bier of Sorrows is the most feared part of the Most Perfect Lotus of Heavenly Design, for it is nothing less than a massive sepulcher where the bodies of slain gods are kept in buried alcoves. Above these grim catacombs, the Division of Endings conducts its somber business, and even the

Morgan Hillan (order #910970)

Division of Secrets is not precisely aware of what is discussed here.

The Violet Bier is an ancient sprawling building which predates the rest of the Most Perfect Lotus to a time when the Primordials ran Yu-Shan and no god had ever set foot there. Its corridors and walls are covered in heavy purple curtains similar to Sijanese embalmers' robes, and the gloom and chill of the building are broken only by the warm glow of orichalcum lamps every few yards. Noise within the building is rare, but whether this is because the bureaucrats of the Division of Endings keep to a respectful silence, or because of some side effect of the building, none can say. Rumor has it that it was designed by the original masters of Heaven as the resting place for the first thing that ever died in Creation, a memorial by the alien beings that designed the world for the first intelligent thing within it to ever perish. There are tales of gods and Exalted who occasionally lose their way within the tomb's twisting corridors and find themselves in a cold crypt, and on a stone slab in that crypt sits an ancient and mummified body. The description of the body changes in the telling, so the story is often dismissed as legend, but there are gods who will swear it happened to them.

Alone among the buildings of the Most Perfect Lotus, the warping of the Loom of Fate has little effect on the Violet Bier. Usually, the sepulcher sits on the edge of the Lotus and only there. Occasionally the tomb-offices are sighted in some distant part of the city, and the streets, which would normally exist where the Bier sits, are pushed aside to make room for it, but this is incredibly rare. Since the movement of the Violent Bier is inconsistent and cannot be predicted with reliability by any of the lower ranking members of the Division of Secrets, they tend to live closer to the center of Yu-Shan.

The Cerulean Lute of Harmony

The Cerulean Lute of Harmony is a massive pleasure palace of gay color but strangely unassuming appearance. The first brothel in Creation was called the Cerulean Lute of Harmony, and in honor of it, when the gods took Yu-Shan, they based the Division of Serenity's headquarters on it. The only problem is that the original Cerulean Lute of Harmony was a small building, and the gods, wanting to get their base of operations up as soon as possible, decided simply to increase the scale of the thing rather than redesign it. Thus, the Cerulean Lute of Harmony appears to be a normal mortal building of ancient design, only scaled to twenty stories tall and crafted almost entirely of blue jade.

Room For Growth

A side effect of the simultaneous existences of the buildings of the various divisions of the Bureau of Destiny is that the buildings have all had room to grow over the years. Expansion of the tent city that is the Crimson Panoply does not affect the carefully laid out streets of the center of Yu-Shan because the actual expansion occurs where the Crimson Panoply lies to the west. Only the Violet Bier of Sorrows, locked as it is in one place most of the time, has no room to grow, so when there is a need to increase the size of its crypts, archives, or office space, the division builds downward, into the bowels of Heaven. The excavations have not yet touched the adamant base of Heaven, and some wonder if they ever will—a few paranoid gods believe that the nature of the Violet Bier as the housing place for the first dead beings in Heaven and Creation mean that further delving will take the tunnels not to the adamant floor that all of Yu-Shan rests on but instead into the Underworld. The worst sorts of conspiracy theorists posit this has already happened, pointing to the strange atmosphere that surrounds the building as proof.

Almost all scholars and savants amongst the gods dismiss such rumors as so much hogwash, but the celestial lions occasionally send patrols into the basements of the Violet Bier of Sorrows regardless of permission from the Bureau of Destiny, and Shining Barrator grumbles about Saturn's choice of residences for her division whenever he has the opportunity. It is simply a disquieting locale.

The Cerulean Lute, like all of the buildings around the Most Perfect Lotus, is affected by the proximity of the Loom of Fate. It simultaneously exists near the Most Perfect Lotus as well as in the northern limits of Yu-Shan. Unlike the other divisions, the Cerulean Lute exists in a third place, as well—its halls, when navigated properly, also lead to the Bath of the Maiden.

The Cerulean Lute of Harmony is many things—a pleasure dome whose gods rest on silken couches and enjoy drugs and more physical pleasures on breaks, a massive bureaucracy dedicated to keeping track of human joy and pleasure, and a system for tracking the progress of human health in Creation. It is one part

Morgan Hillan (order #910970)

whorehouse, one part bureaucratic maze, and one part health center. Since the exterior of the building's limits have been set by the decree of Venus, the interior is constantly crafted and recrafted by gods of architecture in order to add variety to the scenery. The building was crafted much too large for the requirements of the Division of Serenity at the time, so it has not yet begun to require expansion, although if it does, many planners for the division expect to push out into the Bath of the Maiden.

The Commission on Abstract Matters and Celestial Concerns (The Bureau of Heaven)

The Bureau of Heaven oversees much of the day-to-day minutiae of Yu-Shan's existence, from zoning matters to permit issues to the proper functioning of the canals to law enforcement and criminal and civil judgments, to matters like weather control and the maintenance of the clock system based on the position of the Golden Barque of the Heavens. The gods of the Bureau of Heaven have tried, century after century, to set aside funding for their own giant ship to traverse the Heavens regularly, despising the idea that the Bureau of Destiny is the element by which all of Heaven sets its clocks, but so far, the matter has been rejected out of hand by everyone else. Every time it is brought up for vote again, the heads of the other bureaus roll their eyes, leading to even more resentment on the part of the Bureau of Heaven.

The heart of the Bureau of Heaven's buildings is the Hall of Celestial Stability, which houses the vast majority of the executive offices for the bureau and is largely made up of beings working for the Department of Celestial Concerns. The hall is a squat, ivory building whose stone walls are marbled with orichalcum, moonsilver, and starmetal (The starmetal comes from soulforged gods who have run afoul of the bureau). The hall's location is midway between the center of Yu-Shan and the western edge of the city, and although some would argue this is inconvenient for the bureau that manages all of Heaven's affairs, every god of import has access to the gold lane of the quicksilver canals, so distance for the bureaucrats who run Heaven, at least, is no object.

Only a few of the greatest gods of the Department of Abstract Matters rate offices in this building, which causes no end of resentment. The official reason is that the gods dedicated to memory and loss should be near their archives, but many suspect it's because Ryzala, Lady of Bureaucracy and Shogun of the Department of Celestial Concerns, effectively runs the bureau, and Taru-Han, who should be advocating for her department, is too busy with personal matters, so the Abstract Matters get shunted aside.

The basement of the hall consists of miles of labyrinthine cubicles which house the bureaucrats of the Department of Celestial Concerns and their endless records. The basement, even though it sits beneath ground level, is well lit and airy in comparison with the cramped Houses of Conceptual Guidance, and so working in these miles of underground hallway is still a pleasure for the gods of this department.

Surrounding the hall are the marble Dwellings of the Stern Maintainers of Order, which are effectively the headquarters of both the celestial auditors and censors, as well as a few buildings dedicated to the celestial lions, where they can file reports and store prisoners until a decision about their fate is made. There are magistrate offices scattered throughout Yu-Shan for decisions on minor adjudications and trifling offenses, but here in the Dwellings are the massive courthouses in which the fate of serious offenders and important matters are decided.

There are several gaols in the marble Dwellings of the Stern Maintainers of Order, and Exalted captured by the celestial lions will surely be brought to them. One of them is a communal affair where prisoners can mingle with one another before being brought before a magistrate, while two others house prisoners in individual cells. Those attempting to rescue allies should be warned that an attack on the dwellings will surely bring the wrath of the celestial lion army that guards Yu-Shan down on the intruders; cunning is likely a far more successful tact , since the lions do not often expect beings to attempt to gainsay them.

Long-term imprisonment is a rarity in Yu-Shan, since it's cheaper to bury a god alive for several decades than to house and feed them, but there is a gaol hidden within the Archipelago of the Exiles for those gods too useful to destroy out of hand and too dangerous to simply leave buried somewhere.

In a wider ring outside the dwellings are The Houses of Conceptual Guidance, owned by the Department of Abstract Matters. These buildings house the archives of the department and all but a few of the bureaucrats working under Taru-Han. Most of those working in these buildings feel dismissed and ignored by the larger Bureau of Heaven, so any dealings with

Morgan Hillan (order #910970)

these gods must be handled carefully—they are infamous for dragging their feet unless they receive what they deem the proper respect (Their attitudes have led to suggestions that the canal gods be shifted under their aegis, statements which lead to no end of complaints on behalf of those divinities). Taru-Han has a personal office in a tower here, the roof of which houses her soul collectors in massive cage-like affairs. Security throughout that building is very strict, and access to the roof is limited to Taru-Han and her chosen underlings.

The Celestial Monitors of the Seasons and Weather (The Bureau of Seasons)

The Bureau of Seasons' headquarters are in the Cloud-Parting Towers, located in the north of Yu-Shan. The towers are deceptively named, for although they do indeed part the clouds in the sky, they are just under two miles in height and float just under the Sky Dome to avoid the prohibition on buildings taller than the Jade Pleasure Dome. Clouds are commanded to float lower so that the name of the headquarters does not become a misnomer. Floating glass elevators (anchored to nothing in particular) transport gods from the ground to the Cloud-Parting Towers, although the bureaucrats of the Bureau of Seasons rely on strong gusts of wind to transport them. The towers house apartments for the Aerial Legion and the mid-level bureaucrats of the Bureau of Seasons who due to their nature as gods of storm and wind may prefer to avoid dwellings on the ground. The towers are luxuriously appointed.

Above the towers are the Platforms of Drifting Excellence. Rainbow bridges link them to one another, and jade stairways link the Cloud-Parting Towers to these platforms. The platforms are a launching point for the Aerial Legion and house the machineries that monitor the weather in Creation as well as the offices of various bureaucrats who have enough pull to obtain them. The Platforms of Drifting Excellence are the bureau's version of an office with a window, thus highly sought after.

Sky-Spanning Awe is the Bureau's large aerial fortress and headquarters to the Aerial Legion. It usually stands empty, with the Legion assigned to other duties for the Bureau. Sky-Spanning Awe resembles a large blue jade and crystal beehive, with intricately carved designs describing the Legion's martial prowess. It has five entrances at ground

Morgan Hillan (order #910970)

level, each 50 feet wide by 50 feet high. Every 100 feet above that, it has five more entrances, 30 feet wide by 30 feet high. All of these can be shut and barred from opening except by command of one of the officers of the Legion.

In times of war, the aerial fortress rides with the Aerial Legion. If it must go into Creation, the whole of Sky-Spanning Awe splits into tiny pieces and proceeds through the appropriate gateway to reform in Creation over a matter of minutes. This is an incredible sight that few beings can remember, since it has not been done in millennia.

Typically, Sky-Spanning Awe sits near the ground beneath the Cloud-Parting Towers, kept closed but frequently inspected for battle-readiness. Deep within the fortress's heart is the fabled armory, filled with weapons not used since the Primordial War, such as the fabled Thousand Venom Spear and the Devil-Into-Sun Lance. The fortress houses an armory that puts even Lookshy's to shame, and many of the Essence cannons that sit gathering dust within it can be brought to ports on Sky-Spanning Awe and used against targets below it or in the sky around it.

The Divine Witnesses of Human Works and Deeds (The Bureau of Humanity)

The Bureau of Humanity is headquartered in the Offices of the Five Directions, one building in each cardinal direction of Yu-Shan, and a fifth floating in the center above them in the heart of Yu-Shan on massive legs like nothing less than a gigantic spider.

The Hall of Sincere Aspirations sits beneath the Central Office. Most of the offices here, reserved for gods of abstract concepts, are empty due to the Bureau of Heaven's poaching. Other Halls sit further out, but still situated near the Central Office, and include:

The Hall of Gracious Superintendence is the headquarters for many city fathers. Although quite a few choose to (or have been forced to) move to Creation, enough remain here that the Hall is fairly busy. Archives monitoring the population and doings of every citizen in every city of Creation are kept here, and the bureaucrats of this hall spend a significant amount of time checking and rechecking figures against the information held by the Bureau of Destiny.

The Hall of Virtuous Patrons of Ways and Paths is reserved for road gods. As most road gods spend their time in Creation, it is typically empty, but the office space is reserved. This hall has maps of every road and path in Creation, both known and unknown to modern man. Lost highways under the sea are recorded alongside minor footpaths through the bushes of the South. The bureaucrats here spend a good portion of their time coordinating with officials in the Golden Barque of the Heavens so that the work of the Maiden of Journeys is efficiently handled.

The Hall of Uplifting Vigor is reserved for gods of tribes and nations. Much of the bureaucratic expertise here is bent on scheduling matters so that gods at odds with one another never find themselves reporting to this hall or the hall of their direction at the same time. Population data on various tribes and nations are stored here, as are directives from superiors to the gods of these tribes and nations regarding population control and migration.

While gods have offices in the various halls, they also have offices in the building corresponding to their direction. The city father of Paragon will spend part of his time working with other city fathers in the Hall of Gracious Superintendence, then later meet with other Southern gods in the Southern Office.

The Superintendency of Nature Grand and Humble (The Bureau of Nature)

The Bureau of Nature is based out of the Serene Hall of Divided Contemplation located in the north of Yu-Shan. Three-quarters of the way to the great wall is a network of parks and zones dedicated to simulating particular environments. The buildings here are of living wood and intended to sprout new sub-buildings, floors, and annexes to accommodate nature's expansion in Creation. They sprawl across the bureau's headquarters, although they do not take up a fraction of the available land. Ideally, as new species are created, each building would grow a new structure to accommodate the gods and knowledge related to said species. Since the First Age, this hasn't happened due to lack of interest or knowledge, meaning that the Bureau of Nature is a bit behind the state of affairs in Creation, and much of the Serene Hall lies in ruins after the devastation to animal life from the Usurpation and the Great Contagion.

The Vault of Knowledge, located in the center of the Serene Hall, is where everything known about

Morgan Hillan (order #910970)

any species' type and function is stored. Gods frequently search the type archives here looking for knowledge that would allow them to expand their domains (and thus their power).

The Pathways of Refined Judgment are a twisting maze of outdoor offices growing outward from the Serene Hall of Divided Contemplation. The gardeners who monitor this area re-landscape and move plants and paths in order to reorder the area according to whose position in the Hierarchy has moved upward or downward. A promotion means a larger clearing to work in and a wider and more convenient path to one's office, even though one's actual office never moves. A demotion means that the straighter line a god took to their office now meanders by one's superiors and up hills, and that the wide and airy space they once had is now closer and more stifling.

The Bureau of Nature keeps many living animals on its grounds, and while they are magically conditioned to keep them from attacking one another or those who have official business on the grounds, they make short work of most intruders. Some of these creatures are extinct super-predators from the dawn of Creation, others pack animals so effective at predation that they destroyed all of the prey in the areas in which they lived and wiped themselves out. More than one outside has been lured by an enemy to a meeting in the Bureau's grounds, never suspecting that the plan was for them to be devoured by the guardians of the Bureau.

The Palaces of the Incarnae

While the Incarnae spend most of their time in the Jade Pleasure Dome playing the Gardens of Divinity, as the most powerful gods in Yu-Shan they have commensurate properties in Heaven. The Celestial divinities have innumerable parks, pleasure domes, manses, and offices throughout Yu-Shan, but each also possesses buildings that reflect their divine nature.

The Salient of the Unconquered Sun

The Salient of the Unconquered Sun is nothing less than an enormous command headquarters used during the Primordial War during the heavier fighting. Moved brick by brick from Creation to Heaven to memorialize the war, the Salient is dozens of acres of orichalcum walls, fortified trenches, bunkers, Essence weaponry, and armories, all of which was converted into a combination museum and palace for visiting Solar dignitaries during the First Age. In the center of the great encampment is a massive orichalcum statue of the Unconquered Sun himself.

The Salient was the command headquarters for one of the major pushes in the war, and while the Unconquered Sun is not known for his sentiment, there is something about the place that still resonates in his heart. The first generation of Solar Exalted—especially those who held ground beside him during the war—were always welcome to visit the Salient and stay in its luxurious accommodations while visiting Heaven.

Since the Usurpation, the Salient has been maintained and kept in its original condition, but none stay there anymore. Solars brought to Yu-Shan will probably recognize the place from earlier incarnations if brought to it and may even experience flashbacks to the Primordial War itself. The minor servants and celestial lions which watch over the Salient will not stop Solars from wandering its halls and armories and are under ancient instructions left over from the First Age that any being that remembers the access words to the ancient weapon stores are permitted access to them.

Solars requesting to stay in the palatial base cannot be gainsaid—the laws which allowed them to lodge their were never revoked in the wake of their destruction, for the Sidereals assumed that no Solar would dare show its face in Heaven once the Wyld Hunt was created. To revoke the laws would require the Unconquered Sun's personal permission, and few among the Five-Score Fellowship seek to draw one of the Incarna's attention to the return of the Solar Exalted unless absolutely necessary. After all, the Unconquered Sun has not yet given the returned Lawgivers his imprimatur, and it would be foolhardy in the extreme to have him do so over where a Solar visitor to Yu-Shan chooses to lay his head. At the same time, it's another thing entirely to draw Solar attention to the base unless absolutely necessary, so both the Bronze and Gold Factions have hesitated to point out the Salient to Solars they bring to Heaven. The Bronze Faction fears the Chosen of the Sun might gain access to the weapon stores buried under the Salient, while the Gold Faction worries that the Salient's tendency to trigger memories of the First Age may trigger the wrong ones…ones which point to Sidereal involvement in the Usurpation.

The Auberge and The Forest of Endless Prey

The Auberge is a massive hunting lodge hidden in a hundred acre tract in the east of Yu-Shan called the Forest of Endless Prey. It is the private palace

Morgan Hillan (order #910970)

of Luna herself, and she often takes lovers here to wander the dark woods and hunt alongside her at her pleasure.

The lodge itself is crafted of the finest woods and littered with magnificent trophies of hunts from ages past—the bodies of behemoths from the Wyld and ancient creatures crafted by the Primordials themselves as prototypes for races that were never meant to be sit alongside the skulls of creatures driven to extinction by the excesses of the gods or their Solar and Lunar troops. Artifacts are mounted on the walls, some of them the personal tools of ancient Lunar heroes, others part of Luna's own hunting panoply.

More impressive than the lodge or the trophies and hunting implements that lay therein is the magical nature of the territory. When Luna is winning the Games of Divinity and the light of her image shines down on the Forest of Endless Prey, a thousand shimmering animals spring to life, pale simulacra that behave exactly as the animals they represent once did. Luna's lovers, her guests, and visiting Lunars who use the Auburge with Luna's permission are all permitted to hunt the illusory beasts as they wish, for all of them reform the next time her visage rises in the sky.

Although the beasts that appear in the light of the moon are mere figments, the Forest gives them substance. If they flee beyond its borders, they shimmer out of existence. But while they cavort within the forest's limits, they are real, if having the appearance of a phantasm. Bites from a behemoth within the forest can tear a hunter in half, poison from a serpent can kill so long as it does so before the moon leaves the sky, and the flesh of such beasts spills heart's blood as does any other creature.

Only a rare few Lunars are capable of entering the Aurburge, and Luna has not vouchsafed a new visitor from among her Exalted in centuries. Still, if one of the Chosen of the Moon could gain an invitation at the right time, she could gain the heart's blood of creatures that have not been seen on the face of Creation in millennia. It is possible for guests of Luna to invite guests of their own, and so one of her lovers might, if charmed properly, be convinced to invite a Lunar into the lodge and its grounds, but such a challenge would be epic—after all, the invitee would have to be clever enough to convince the lover to risk the wrath of one of the Incarnae, no easy feat even for the Exalted.

The Charnel Yards

Within the northern boroughs of Yu-Shan is a massive garden. Unlike the gardens that produce the peaches of immortality or the celestial coca leaves, these sprawling but well-tended grounds house row after row of graves under the aegis of Saturn herself. The stench of death hangs over the place, despite the best efforts of the minor servants set to keep the grounds clean and the air moving. There is a sense of somber melancholy permeating everything in the charnel yards of Saturn, although whether that is because this is the only proper graveyard in Yu-Shan or because of some spiritual effect in place at the behest of the Maiden of Endings none can say.

Strangers to Yu-Shan often query their guides why Heaven would need a graveyard at all, since few things here deteriorate or rot. Most items are made from Ambrosia, and are thus immune to the effects of time.

That, says those knowledgeable about Yu-Shan, is why Saturn's charnel yards are necessary. Slaves, pets, animals and other living things brought to Yu-Shan which lack the spark of divinity still age, still grow decrepit, and still grow old. Thus, Saturn has set aside a space in Yu-Shan so that living things brought here for entertainment or service or love may pass on naturally, rather than exist eternally outside the cycle of living things.

What this means is that the charnel yards of Saturn are one of the few places where ghosts can survive for very long at all, and the only place where necromancy and necromantic thaumaturgy work without fail. Sidereals of the Division of Ending often come here to research, and gods of death and decay use this area as a testing ground. They rarely do much—the charnel yards are guarded by lion dogs and scarab guardians which have been told to limit the depredations to the dead—but if a hungry ghost or other undead anomaly is to appear in Yu-Shan, it would appear here (if not in the Violet Bier of Sorrows).

Within the last year, Saturn's servants have quietly built a small hostel on the edge of the charnel yards, although for what reason, none can say with surety. Some claim that the rooms are there for the pleasure of deathknights, ambassadors of the princes of the Underworld, while other suggest that perhaps rebels within the lands of the dead may someday be cultivated as allies against the rising threat of beings such as Mask of Winters. Regardless, the charnel yards are usually avoided by most deities in Yu-Shan, and the addition of living quarters—or more properly, quarters for the dead—has only increased the area's bad reputation.

Morgan Hillan (order #910970)

The House of Iron and Adamant

The House of Iron and Adamant is a magnificent manse of the Fifth rank, belonging to Mars, the Maiden of Battles. It is an affair of stone and mahogany, its borders crafted of brilliant and deadly sharp adamant. The manse opens up onto a wide plaza in its center, separated into four fighting squares. During most times, the rings are populated with students and teachers made up of gods and the Sidereal Exalted.

The House of Iron and Adamant is staffed almost exclusively by martial gods, some of whose domains are the different martial arts styles. Puo-Leng, for instance, is the God of the Violet Bier of Sorrows Style of martial arts and spends weeks at a time at the House of Iron and Adamant teaching students. Other gods here are war gods and gods of different fighting styles or weapons. The students tend to be gods who have cultivated enough favors from others to be vouchsafed training time in the house, the God-Blooded children of powerful deities—most of who are being groomed for some spectacular destiny, and the Sidereal Exalted. Once allowed onto the grounds for training, a being cannot be turned away unless he is killed, wounded too severely to continue training, or fails out. As such, the gods who run the House of Iron and Adamant are very careful whom they allow inside. Many of them dread the day when some ambitious god or member of the Bronze Faction allows a Solar Exalted to enter the grounds for teaching purposes, not because they particularly dislike the thought of teaching a Chosen of the Sun, but because of the disorder it will cause amongst Sidereal students.

Once every score of years, the Maiden of Battles appears here herself to spar with one of the teachers. If the teacher holds their own—none have yet defeated her, of course—he is granted accolades and a permanent position on staff, in some cases even the Grandmaster's Chair, which comes with control over the school.

Nearly every school of martial arts is taught here either by a god or by a Sidereal sifu, although all of them are particular about which students they take on (No Sidereal will violate his kind's rules against instruction of their brand of martial arts, for instance). The House of Iron and Adamant is famous even beyond the limits of Yu-Shan, and at least once a century a mortal warrior is granted entrance for a time, sometimes as a boon after winning the Heaven-and-Earth Invitational Tournament of the Unconquered Sun.

The Bath of Venus

The Bath of Venus is a sprawling spa complex. The Maiden of Serenity, in the years after the Usurpation, desired a place where peace, health and happiness could reign uninterrupted, and looking out over Creation, she failed to find a spot to her liking. Creating a place of peace was easy; maintaining it, another task entirely. She could create such a haven, certainly, but war or famine would almost certainly wash over it. She could not evince the control needed to maintain her paradise indefinitely.

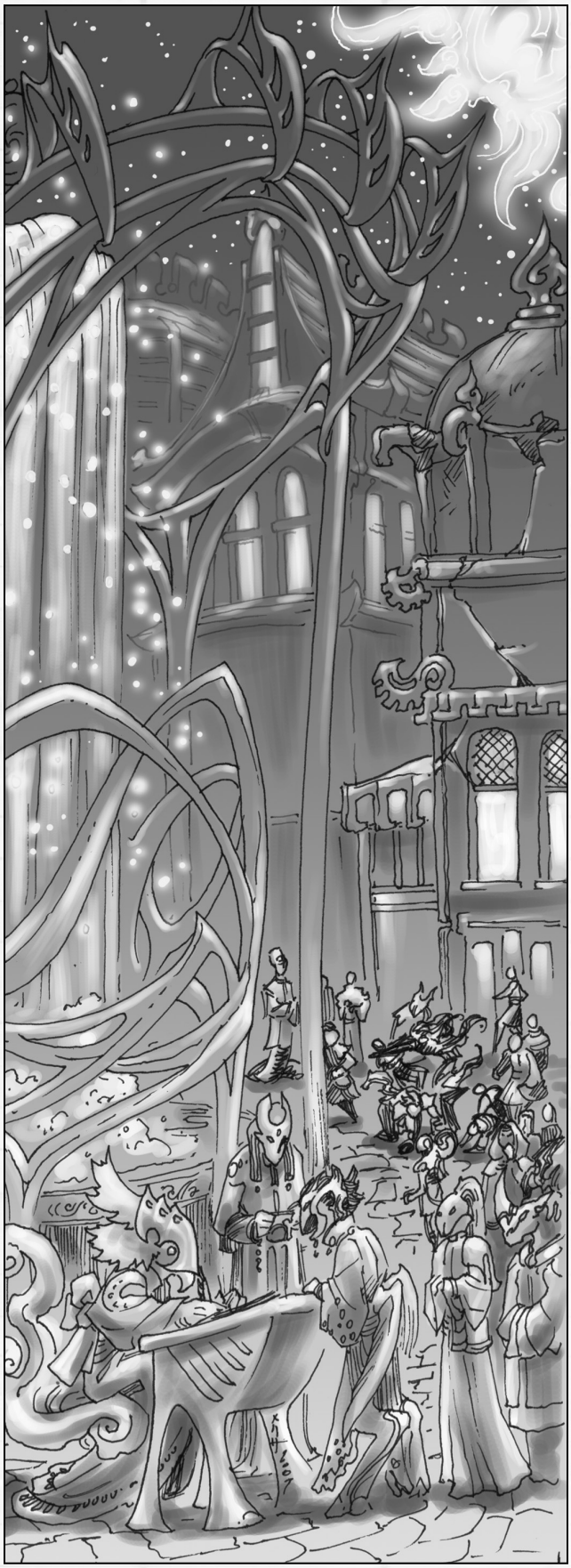
So she created the bath amidst a lovely garden in a complex of parks and groves in the southeast of Yu-Shan. Trees covered up the harshness of the sun, and when the moon rose, lamps flickered to light. Breezes blew the scent of myriad rare blossoms toward the guests of the baths, and the baths themselves—huge, stone affairs heated by warm springs—were blessed with waters that had rare healing properties.

No visitor to the bath could fail to find respite there, but that was not enough for Venus. She had her Sidereals and the gods underneath her in the Division of Serenity sent forth, and they brought to her and the baths one of each kind of animal, plant, and being. An elder Lunar bound her kind to the oath. Chejop Kejak bound the Sidereals of the Bronze and Gold Factions. A Dragon-Blooded Immaculate, brought to Heaven by a censor, swore that no Dragon-Blood would raise hand within the boundaries of the bath.

All of them—every single one—swore binding oaths to stay the hands of their own kind via ancient magic not seen use since the Primordial survivors bound themselves with their own names. If the Maiden of Serenity had attempted to protect a larger space, or something in Creation, she would surely have been gainsaid by the limits of her power. But within the relatively tiny precincts of the baths, no child of man, no beast of any kind, no poison or accident could harm the guests of the bath while they rested there. For centuries, the baths of Venus have been the one place in all of Creation where man, god and Exalt can go and never need fear treachery, pain or harm.

Until now. For Venus never found a Solar Exalted to bind his kind with her oath when she was constructing the baths. The few Solars not bound in the Jade Prison in those days were hunted like animals and unlikely to allow the Sidereals to take them to Heaven, and if they had, it is unlikely such an oath would have been binding if it was unwilling. The magic required a subject make the oath of their own free will, on behalf of himself and his kind, and no Solar in those days could have made it even if they wanted to.

Morgan Hillan (order #910970)



So, unbeknownst to most of the gods who come to the baths to plot, converse, relax and heal in total safety, their security is illusory. For the Solars have returned, and their sword hands will not be stayed within the baths. Whether or not any Solar would ever realize this fact is another matter entirely, but it remains a dark secret that the Division of Secrets has not shared.

The Palace of Mirrors

Lurking within one of the empty zones where the deiphages lurk is the Palace of Mirrors, an unobtrusive tower resting on a hill. It is the smallest of the palaces belonging to one of the Incarna and in its own way the least secure. The Maiden of Journeys, whose palace this is, relies on its unobtrusiveness and the hostile environment that surrounds it to protect it from interlopers.

Within the Palace of Mirrors's winding corridors are a series of rooms, each decorated in a different fashion and style from history. Somewhere in each room is a reflective surface. In one room, it may be an actual mirror in a brass frame the size of a man; in another it might be a pool of quicksilver in a stone basin. In one room, the mirror is only visible at night when one brings a lantern into the chamber, at which point a window looking out over the city suddenly becomes reflective. In another room, it may be a reflection from a gem in a jewelry chest.

The mirrors have different uses. The ones the size of a human being or larger are often transportation devices between places in the city. Rumor has it that one of the mirrors in the palace is actually one of the "secret" gateways from Creation to Yu-Shan, but where the gate leads—and which mirror it is hidden in—is something that an intruder would have to answer for themselves.

Other mirrors look into different places and times, and these are usually the smaller mirrors. One mirror, made up a thousand different threads that only provide a reflective surface when held side by side, gazes out over the Loom of Fate, while another flashes pictures from the murder of the Lunar bride of a Solar during the Usurpation. Other mirrors shift scenes, and one mirror is said to look out on the possible ends of Creation.

The mirrors are precious to the Maiden of Journeys because they reveal new vistas and old journeys, lead to new places, and are effectively hidden roads. She doesn't visit her palace often—the Games of Divinity occupy her as much as any of the other Incarnae—but when she does, she often comes and goes via the mirrors. Occasionally, she will loan a mirror as a boon to a Sidereal who has impressed her with his dedication to walking hidden paths or blazing new trails.

Morgan Hillan (order #910970)

The Malachite Archives

The Malachite Archives are located in a grand manse in the northwestern reaches of Yu-Shan in a sprawling neighborhood of ancient buildings at the center of a quiet and gloomy wood. The archives are notable not as a repository of hidden knowledge—the Forbidding Manse of Ivy has a thousand times more secrets within its archives—nor as a repository for written knowledge on health, nature or any other subject—the files of the various Bureaus of Heaven are unmatched in those fields.

No, what makes the Malachite Archives special is not the breadth of knowledge, but the insight that they grant. For the Malachite Archives are the Maiden of Secrets' personal library. Books thought lost to the whole of Creation and Yu-Shan are stored here, with the Maiden's personal notes in the margins. Copies of books of sorcery thought lost in the Usurpation, biographies of First Age Solar despots burned in the Usurpation, and histories of key events in Creation's history lie within the walls of the Malachite Archives, hand-picked by the Maiden of Secrets.

Alone among the Incarnae, the Maiden of Secrets visits her palace regularly. It is guarded by a wing of the greatest warriors of the Crimson Panoply of Victory, its doors bound with sorcery, and its interior trapped and riddled with secret doors and hidden rooms. Celestial lions patrol the grounds at all times, and the gods of the Division of Secrets allocate enormous resources to guarantee that the protections of the archives are secure. Those gods hired to devise traps or who see the interior are inevitably bound by powerful oaths, and if their loyalty is ever questioned, they are murdered by Nara-O's pet killers at his Maiden's request or banished to the Archipelago of the Exiles under threat of death if they utter the merest hint of Saturn's secrets.

Nara-O, especially, has pondered what wonders lie within the Malachite Archives. It has been tempted to hire thieves to test the building's security and steal away with even a tiny token of the Maiden's insight but has thought better of it, resisting the lure of disloyalty that its own innate hunger for secrets causes within its breast. The reason Nara-O can convince itself to leave well enough alone is that Nara-O is not quite convinced that the Malachite Archive is the genuine article. Why would the Maiden of Secrets, it wonders, if she wanted a private archive for her own thoughts safe from all intrusion, place it in a palace as public as the Malachite Archives? Surely the archives are a decoy, and the real books belonging to her—if there *are* real archives out there—are hidden elsewhere, perhaps in some basement or tunnel within the Hidden City (see p. 106). But—what if the Maiden is aware of that paradox and has purposely hidden the archives in plain sight, knowing that the beings clever enough to be capable of penetrating the Malachite Archives' heart will also be so clever as to assume the whole thing is too pat, too easy, and thus obviously a trap?

Then Nara-O smiles, and pushes the thoughts aside for a few more years, pondering the genius of its mistress.

Singular Locales

There are a hundred locations in Yu-Shan that exist outside the Celestial Bureaucracy proper, artifacts of either the Primordials or the strange centuries of tumult that have passed since the First Age. Many of these locales are sealed by order of the Maiden of Secrets. A few are locked down by order of the Unconquered Sun himself. And still others are kept open, the gods allowed to flock to them, for reasons known only to the Incarnae.

The Primal Forge

Not all of the Primordials' buildings have been co-opted or destroyed by Heaven's current masters. Some stand empty, locked by the Incarnae and guarded by celestial lions. Some of the empty quarters are not merely disused and underpopulated regions of Heavens but areas labeled hazardous, crowded with ancient radiations and strange buildings that the gods never felt were safe for reoccupation but too dangerous to destroy outright.

The greatest of these ancient holdfasts was the last to be shut, the Primal Forge, Autochthon's massive forge-palace, a mechanical wonderland whose corridors have rarely been traversed since the Unconquered Sun and his fellows deemed it too risky to leave open. It sits on a hundred acres of industrial wasteland in the east of Yu-Shan, a towering maze of pipes and iron walls. All of Autochthon's staff of gods and automatons were either destroyed or transferred to other positions, and the massive doors of the forge—each a hundred yards tall and capable of twisting the space they take up until they can allow in a mountain—sealed with ancient wards and incomprehensible sorcery of the highest level.

Only a few gods were ever trusted by Autochthon enough to be allowed entrance to the Primal Forge, and many of those have perished over the years. A handful joined him in his exile, forming the template for the strange spiritual entities that resided within his limitless being. Perhaps only three or four survive in Yu-Shan or Creation to witness the turn of Ages, and half of those are under secure guard by order of the Maiden of Secrets. One of them, Jakatam Shining-Hammer, has exiled

Morgan Hillan (order #910970)

himself to the distant edge of Creation near one of the distant and disused Southern gateways, where he crafts his own wonders in private using the fires of the elemental pole of fire as the heat of his forge, occasionally entertaining visitors from Heaven who beseech him to return to the city or censors sent to check on him.

Of those handful of gods who have seen the Primal Forge, if compelled, they will speak of wondrous, spiritual engineering mechanisms capable of crafting reality itself from the Wyld or using souls as cogs in great Essence machines and tiny clockwork insects capable of disassembling living beings and reconstituting them as divine tools and strange weapons. The Primal Forge is larger on the inside than its exterior would indicate, and if pressed, savants will say that the same science that allows the Loom of Fate and the mirror-gates of the Maiden of Journeys to work in the Palace of Mirrors bend space in the Forge itself. The mirrors of the Maiden are in fact inferior copies of the Forge-Primordial's craft.

Over the years, many gods have petitioned the Bureaus for access to the Primal Forge, and all have been rejected in turn. A few have attempted to sneak in, but most have been caught by the celestial lions patrolling the periphery of the forge (It is a Severity 5 offense to attempt to pierce the locked doors of the building; the punishment is always soulforging). Rumors speak of a few gods or their cats paws making it inside the forge, but all of the stories end with the intruder being killed by some ancient guardian or defense system. Of course, such rumors are false, for if the intruders were killed, who would have been left to tell the tale?

The Circus Radiant

The Circus Radiant is a massive, half-mile tall and three-mile in circumference coliseum used by the Unconquered Sun for his entertainments, although the other Incarnae have been known to make use of it with his permission. A shining orichalcum building made up of arches and pillars surrounding a massive battlefield paved with tiles of jade, the Circus Radiant is an arena like no other in all the worlds.

The greatest martial arts tournament currently held, the Heaven-and-Earth Invitational, is held within the Circus Radiant (see **Scroll of the Monk**, p. 26). Every 25 years, 100 of the greatest martial artists in Creation are invited, and the stands teem with gods, visiting elementals from the Terrestrial Courts, Exalts, and others. Other martial arts tournaments are held, from the Battle Maiden's Dance, which allows only Sidereals to compete, to the Silver Pillars Duel, a free-for-all held in Luna's name once every ten years, but none of them compare to the Heaven-and-Earth Invitational.

The Circus Radiant is notable because it is one of many buildings in Yu-Shan where reality is malleable to an extent. On the floor of the arena, for instance, the arena's managers can decide to increase or decrease the local gravity. They can thicken the atmosphere so that fighting inside the arena is like fighting in some airy liquid. They can make it light or dark, change the terrain, summon up phantasmic foes, and even transform the floor of the arena to open over a massive gulf. Even more interesting, the gardeners and other experts at shaping terrain that populate the gardens and environmental zones of Yu-Shan often transport thousands of gallons of water into the arena to wage mock naval battles or bring strange first age flyers for aerial duels. Animals from Creation and the Wyld are often transported through a nearby gateway by the Bureau of Nature to fight one another or some warrior to the death.

Not a week goes by without some duel or combat being fought into the arena, and many lower- and middle-class gods flock to it to witness bloodshed and spectacle. Unless the battle being fought involves esoteric martial arts or some special combatant, the upper management of the Celestial Bureaucracy prefers to watch the Games of Divinity, but special boxes that loom out over the battlefield and give a bird's eye view of the spectacles below await their presence. The greatest of these box seats actually detach from the arena and zoom out over the battlefield, sometimes closing in for a more accurate look at the goings on.

In The Coliseum

As yet, no one has thrown a Solar Exalt into the arena, although it goes without saying that a Lawgiver on the wrong side of the law may find himself offered a choice between some severe penalty or a day in the coliseum spilling blood. There is no regular gladiatorial warrior subculture in Yu-Shan—the greatest combatants who step onto the floor of the Circus Radiant tend to be dedicated gods of war and personal combat and the Sidereal Exalted—but the return of the Solars and the probing of the Lunar Exalted into the Threshold mean that it's just a matter of time until some enterprising god attempts to create a regular event with the Solar Exalted as stars—so long as the Unconquered Sun or the Sidereals do nothing to squelch it.

Morgan Hillan (order #910970)

The Algedonic Palace

The Primordials were sensual beings whose alien tastes defied descriptions such as "pleasure" or "pain," and when the gods swarmed into the conquered Yu-Shan, they found dozens of seraglios, bordellos, and bawdy houses throughout the city. Most had been destroyed by the Primordials or their servants before the end of the war, their walls in ruins, the beings that populated them destroyed utterly by their incomprehensible lovers, but the Algedonic Palace still stood, crowded with strange pleasures.

The Incarnae were intrigued by the Algedonic Palace, and perhaps it would have lured them into carnal addiction if they had not already become obsessed with the Games of Divinity. But the Jade Pleasure Dome ended up being the trap that caught them rather than violet stone walls of the palace. Still, the Incarnae saw a use for the place and reserved access to it as a reward for the most effective administrators within the Celestial Bureaucracy. Centuries of service would be rewarded by a few nights in the seraglio, serviced by alien life forms and strange devices, the borders between pleasure and pain, hunger and satiation blurring and commingling until the morning, when the god would leave, sated but eager for another visit.

Over the years, many of the haram, the inexplicable beings that populated the Algedonic Palace—having the status of highly coveted pets or expensive slaves within Yu-Shan's social hierarchy—have died, either due to age or some mishap from an overeager lover. They have been replaced by the most beautiful of mortals and gods of love and sensuality (bearing the title "odalisque," to signify their status in comparison to the haram). Mortals brought into the palace are often granted long life by the managers of the seraglio, and there stories that other beings are smuggled in through the gateways from Creation. It is whispered that there might be Fair Folk in the palace bound by ancient promises of love and sex, and stranger things besides—behemoths crafted to service Primordial sensuality, mechanical devices from the First Age able to craft the ultimate lover from dreamstuff, dream crystals that bear the imprint of a night with one of the Incarnae or the greatest Exalted heroes from throughout history. There are other experiences to be had, to be sure—philters that grant the imbiber the experience of what it is like to die and enter Lethe, chaotic dreams of the Deep Wyld imprinted on sheets of gossamer, books of spells that serve no other purpose than to teach the reader the arts of seduction and domination of one's lover through magic.

The Algedonic Palace is a squat compound taking up several acres in the Five Spheres Residential District in the north of Yu-Shan. Its walls are an indigo pearl that ripple with a strange warmth. The halls of the building are covered in silk curtains, and there are innumerable rooms; no visitor can say they have seen them all. Many of the countless rooms contain their own environments, lit by clever optical illusions, so one visitor will believe themselves on a sandy beach surrounded by the roaring sea while another will think she is in the deepest woods, the night music of chirping insects providing the soundtrack to her entertainments. The Algedonic Palace is overseen by a sub-division of the Bureau of Heaven called the Hedonic Administration Panel, with an advisory sub-committee made up of two Sidereal Exalted serving the Maiden of Serenity (One of their many duties). Access is strictly limited to gods and elementals deserving of reward and, on rare occasions, the most heroic of Sidereals. But the palace is renowned even amongst savants in Creation, and during the First Age a dozen Exalted would try to sneak into its perfumed corridors each year.

The Algedonic Palace, despite the power of its temptations, is not guarded by celestial lions but instead lion dogs and burly guardian divinities.

The Ten Thousand Arrow Tomb

The Ten Thousand Arrow Tomb is in a glade a hundred miles from the Jade Pleasure Dome. The glade is peaceful and quiet, constantly cooled by a gentle breeze. The Aerial Legion pays for its upkeep and the salaries of the gardener spirits and minor servants who maintain the tomb and the surrounding grounds.

The tomb itself is a simple mound of raised black earth 10 feet high with an orichalcum marker in the front of it. Covering the green lawn surrounding the mound like a thousand bristles are hundreds upon hundreds of arrows of a dozen varieties, some of them buried feather-deep in the edge of the hill, others canted at odd angles as if they were deflected by some force and sent away from the hill.

A decade after the Usurpation, few if any Solar Exalted still roamed the countrysides of Creation, driven like foxes before the Dragon-Blooded and their Sidereal advisors. The Ten Thousand Arrow Tomb marks the resting place of one of the last Solar Exalted, who stormed the very gates of Yu-Shan in order to make his way to the Jade Pleasure Dome and confront the Unconquered Sun himself. The Solar cut a swath through the defenses of Yu-Shan, dispatching lion dogs, celestial lions, huraka, war gods and masters of combat.

Morgan Hillan (order #910970)

Finally, a scant few miles from the edge of the limits of Heaven's downtown area, a dozen Sidereal elders awaited the Solar. The sky was literally blackened with arrows and spears sent flying at the Lawgiver, and for long hours, he fought off the storm of deadly weapons and Essence energies until finally, between artifacts, Charms, sorcery, and astrology, the Solar was slain.

It is recorded that the Aerial Legion had been ordered by one of the Five Maidens to hold back in Sky-Spanning Awe, torn as they were between their loyalty to their Solar superiors and their loyalty to Heaven. When the Solar fell, the Sidereals—who had by that point lost some of their number to the warrior—sought to tear the corpse limb from limb and bury it in desecrated ground, but the Aerial Legion took possession of the body and built the tomb around it. It took decades for the land to recover from the battle, but the legion set aside funds to pay for its upkeep and rehabilitation and continues to pay for its care to this day.

The Hidden City

There is another city in Yu-Shan. A Second City, made up of hidden meeting rooms and dusty secret passages, corridors running alongside sewer lines and beneath canals, lairs hundreds of feet beneath the streets that exit into basements or rooftops. The Hidden City is not just an underworld beneath Yu-Shan—there are hidden rooms in the highest offices with stairways that cut through other buildings, so that someone who enters the buried world of the Hidden City may do so from a sewer line and, after long hours in the dark and innumerable turns and stairways up and down, exit onto a rooftop somewhere miles away. In some places, mirror-gates of the Maiden of Journey have been set up and are indistinguishable from doorways, so a god steps through what she believes to be an entrance into just another room and finds herself across Yu-Shan. Some students of the city even whisper that there are hidden gateways into Creation buried within the Second City, so a basement in the Imperial Manse of the Scarlet Empire leads into the private quarters of a Sidereal Elder, while an alcove in Gem may open for the right person onto the divine skyline of Yu-Shan, seen from atop the Most Perfect Lotus of Heavenly Design.

No being—except for perhaps the gods of secrets and the Maiden of Journey and her servants—know all of the hidden byways that traverse the city of Yu-Shan. Some of these hidden rooms and secret highways have been discovered by criminal syndicates, others co-opted by secret societies for the purpose of warehousing fugitives from the celestial lions or storing weapons for a rebellion that might never occur. Some of these complexes are well appointed and climate controlled, while others are little more than humid, cavernous hollows carved against the adamant base that separates Yu-Shan from Elsewhere. Many of them date back to the reign of the Primordials, but others have been quietly built by bureaucrats over the centuries, then co-opted by some hidden fraternity or powerful god seeking a trove to hide ill-gotten gains or the literal skeletons their rise to power has created.

It is quite possible for visitors to Yu-Shan to accidentally stumble upon the Hidden City while fleeing pursuit, and those who seek succor from the powerful may find themselves hidden within the walls of some building or underneath a lake in a park. Many of the more powerful gods secure their hidden troves and private rooms with magical security or set elemental servants to guard them. Other areas belong to no one and are the resting places of strange animals left behind by the Primordials, prototypes for urban life that the ancient masters of Yu-Shan couldn't be bothered to discard. Still other locations are the haunts of cannibal divinities, driven out by the gentrification of an empty quarter or herded there by the celestial lions for later elimination.

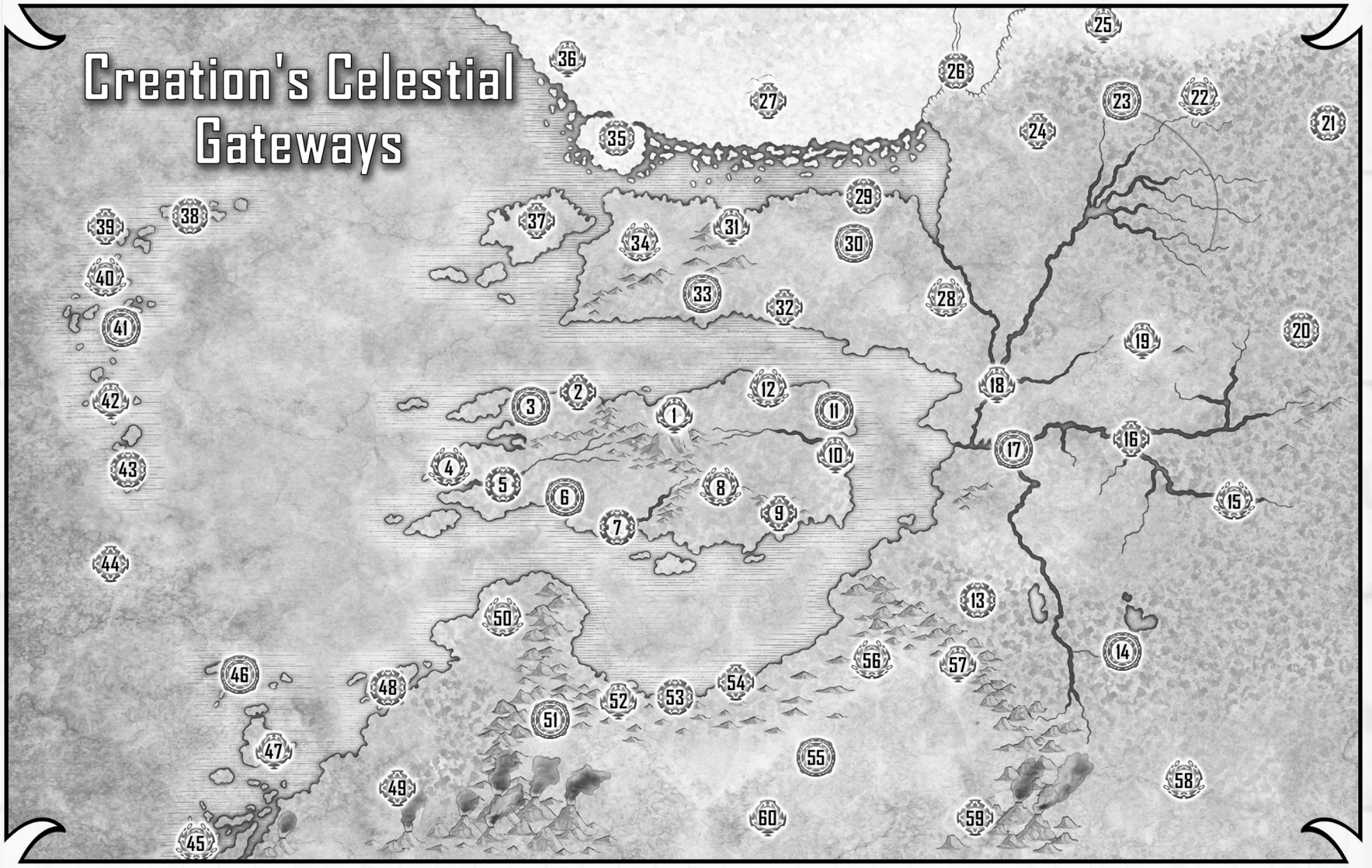
The Map of Yesa Tranh

A semi-mad and unemployed god by the name of Yesa Tranh, formerly a divine auditor for the Bureau of Nature, lost her position after the Usurpation when the species of animal she oversaw was wiped out by a Solar's death curse. She spent centuries braving the Second City to keep herself occupied, replacing her former purpose with this new one, unlocking its security systems and mapping its lengths.

She left copies of her maps with former colleagues as she completed them, so each iteration was more complete than the last. Yesa has not been seen since the end of the Shogunate, but her last map was the most complete catalogue of the underways, rooms and passages that make up the Second City that has ever been designed. The only copy of it lies hidden by the curators of the Malachite Archives within its endless shelves, while the earlier iterations are all in the hands of powerful secret society members and bureaucrats. At least two of the earlier, more incomplete maps have found their way to Creation, although in both cases the import of the pages has been lost, and they have been attributed as some clever fiction, a premodern tale told in map form for the edification of jaded First Age readers. One map lies in the Imperial Archives, while the other sits on the shelf of a Scavenger Lord in Nexus.

Morgan Hillan (order #910970)

Morgan Hillan (order #910970)



Leaving Yu-Shan

Gods and their guests utilize the gateway system to leave Yu-Shan, just as they enter it. Those few who know of the Maiden of Journey's mirror-gates or the few secret gateways often utilize those, but for everyone else, the gateway system is simple and effective, so long as one has the proper permits.

The gateways exit onto five dozen locations in Creation. A dozen of those are located on the Blessed Isle, and the rest are scattered equally over the other four directions. For those who know the location of the gates, and who have access to Yu-Shan, Heaven creates a method of travel all across the face of the world. A being need simply head to the nearest gate, then enter Yu-Shan. Once inside, she utilizes the canal or aerial transportation systems to get to the gate closest to her destination across Creation, then exits Heaven, traveling the rest of the distance to her goal.

This is by no means instantaneous transportation—the gates are separated by thousands of miles across the face of Creation in some places, and travel across Yu-Shan, even via canal or aerial rickshaw, is by no means inconsequential. But Yu-Shan is safer than most of Creation, and this method of travel often means skirting obstacles when one has to travel from the furthest depths of the West to the distant and endless forests of the East.

The Blessed Isle's Gates

Gateway 1: On the summit of the Imperial Mountain, within the ruins of Meru, is a disused gateway. Explorers have looted the city over the years but ignore the gate, not knowing that Flashing Peak uses this to enter and leave Heaven. Her sanctum is nearby.

Gateway 2: In Unkatsu Prefecture, this gateway rests behind a glorious waterfall surrounded by a well-kept stone garden. The whole area is part of a manse's territory controlled by House Mnemon, whose mistress orders the gate observed at all times.

Gateway 3: In Arudan Prefecture, the Storm Coast, a gateway exists carved out of a local rock formation. It is one of the few gates guarded by celestial lions on the Creation end because it is accessible by mortals and others without need for Charms. No one knows why the gate was designed this way or if this was some later alteration by First Age savants who knew more about the gate's construction than current gods and Exalts.

Gateway 4: In Vabahi Prefecture, this gateway exists in a field. It is guarded at all times by an Immaculate brotherhood sworn to keep it safe from interference ever since the Gold Faction used it to rescue a newly Exalted Solar and escape into Yu-Shan.

Gateway 5: In Bough Prefecture, a small cabal of the Hundred Gods Heresy uses this gateway, crafted so that it lay horizontally just beneath the surface of a beautiful lake, to pray to their gods and worship freely. As the Immaculates pay more attention to the gates since the Vabahi Prefecture rescue, this cult may find itself in danger.

Gateway 6: In Auchul Prefecture, the Plains of Rusted Iron, 600 miles west-northwest of Arjuf, the gate stands amongst cracked earth and surrounded by glyphs that predate the appearance of man and that glow and shift depending on the phase of the moon. At night, strange voices call to those nearby, and even gods find this gate haunted by something beyond their ken. One of the last Primordials died near here, and the gods suspect some remnant of it lingers still.

Gateway 7: Standing openly on a dais of jade, this gate sits in the center of the largest Immaculate temple in the area, guarded by the monks within. A local pleasure god has begun using the gate to travel to his duties in nearby Cynis brothels, and it has caused the Immaculates no end of consternation as he tempts them going to and from work.

Gateway 8: In Hajuba Prefecture, 200 miles west of Pasiap's Stair, at the foot of the Mhaltin Mountains, this gateway is literally built high up into a cliff face. Once every two decades, a lesson is held in the shadow of this gateway between a member of the Crimson Panoply and the best of the outcaste students at the stair. If one of the students win, they are granted a boon by the war god. If the war god wins, the student is marked for sacrifice by his fellows ten years from the day unless he proves himself in war. The Bronze Faction has attempted to end this tradition, to no avail.

Gateway 9: Hidden within the Dhorash Mountains, 500 miles west of Noble, this gateway is used by local nature gods and is surrounded by a sanctum used as a chapter house where members of the local Terrestrial courts and gods from Yu-Shan may treat freely.

Morgan Hillan (order #910970)

Gateway 10: Located deep within the Imperial Manse, this gate was used by gods and Sidereals wishing to treat with the Empress personally. The Empress possessed an artifact-key that allowed her to disable the gate from the Creation end, which she did frequently.

Gateway 11: In Giashu Prefecture, 150 miles north of Pangu, this gateway is hidden within the top floor of a chapter house of the Wyld Hunt. Gods using it have often been sent to aid the Dynasts and Immaculate Monks on their holy crusades against the Anathema.

Gateway 12: In Yatosin Prefecture, along the White Coast, 700 miles east of Chanos, gods of wealth use this gateway to oversee Ragara vaults in the area, since the roads here have been secured by their troops of late and the troves have increased in size.

The East

Gateway 13: Deep within the jungles north of the Summer Mountains, 600 miles south of Puyo, this gateway— built into a clearing in the jungle surrounded by First Age pylons commemorating some victory against the Primordials— has been overrun by a wing of Dragon-Blooded troops who have rebelled against the Realm's current domination by the imperial bloodlines. Nominally allied with Saloy Hin, leader of a renegade legion active in the Threshold, these troops have used the Immaculate monks they have drafted into service to negotiate with certain of the shadier elements in Yu-Shan for divine weaponry "borrowed" from sites such as the Aerial Legion's weapon storehouses and the Crimson Panoply's supply stores. If this weaponry gets used against local Solar Exalted or Realm-backed satrapies, then the Gold or Bronze faction will surely insist on audits and move individuals in place to break the Dragon-Blooded's backs.

Gateway 14: Rathess's gateway, hidden in the undercity, is under the control of Han-Tha, the Ghoul King and Eater of the Dead, and his cats paw Solar Exalt. Gods who need to be active in the area use other gateways, if possible. Several gods upset about this status quo and the wasted time involved in shunting traffic to other gateways have petitioned for a censor's intervention, but none has been forthcoming, and a few divinities have pondered hiring mercenary gods or a Circle of Exalted to handle the matter.

Gateway 15: On the south bank of the Maruto River, 400 miles upriver from Nechara, this gateway sits alone, carved out of adamant and jade. None of the locals know what use it serves and largely ignore it, but twice in as many years the behemoth known as Arad the Hunter has chosen to pick off prey going to and from Yu-Shan via this gateway. The celestial lions sent to deal with the predation were themselves lost.

Gateway 16: On the south bank of the Meander River where it flows into the Yellow, well maintained in the wilderness but far from any human settlement, stands this gateway. Its position near Great Forks means that it sees considerable traffic, especially given the current troubles with the Maruto River gateway.

Gateway 17: Nexus's gate is hidden within a massive warehouse owned by a front-company in the hands of a god of commerce, thus protecting the location from strangers. Enormous amounts of traffic proceed into and out of this gate, so a veritable market has grown up on the Yu-Shan side, tainted by divine organized crime and gang activity. The tunnel itself is hardly secure, often being used as a temporary warehouse until guards arrive to escort the material to its destination in Yu-Shan.

Gateway 18: Sijan's gateway lies in the center of a plaza of gray stone, and it is one of the few gateways carved into a monolith of soulsteel. Masque of Repose makes use of this gateway and has set guards on the Creation side to keep any of his by-blows from attempting to make their way to Heaven and embarrass him.

Gateway 19: 400 miles west of Mount Metagalapa lies a gateway carved into the side of a barren hillside, the site of a major battle during Balor's Crusade. The area surrounding the gateway is under the control of a Fey court in a Freehold, and gods making frequent use of the gate complain of the raksha's attempts to pull the gods into their personal dramas.

Gateway 20: This gateway lies on the northern boundary of the Noss Fens shadowland, 100 miles northeast of the Mound of Forsaken Seeds and the Well of Udr. It is rarely used, except by Sidereal Exalted and spies sent by Wayang or Hran-Tzu.

Gateway 21: The ruins of Xu-Lak, an ancient First Age palace, house this gateway, which stands in the periphery between the Bordermarches of the eastern Wyld and the Middlemarches. The First Age

Morgan Hillan (order #910970)

gateway has, by its very nature, stabilized an area a quarter of a mile in diameter around the gate. That portion of Xu-Lak has been pressed into service by divine emissaries, turning this city into one of the few places where Yu-Shan and the Fair Folk can meet as equals to treat and bargain. The rest of Xu-Lak is an insane and insensate chaos, a palace the raksha themselves have decreed as safe, under threat of permanent destruction. As such, the various courts of the Fair Folk often meet here to bargain and plan amongst themselves, making this spot a useful source of intelligence for Sidereal Exalted and divine intelligence services alike.

The portion of Xu-Lak in use by gods is guarded by five celestial lions and dozens of minor servants, who between them make the palace safe for use and protected from eavesdropping as well as something of an island of peace in the turmoil of the Wyld.

As for the Fair Folk, they view the existence of a cancerous stability like Xu-Lak as a necessary evil. Since they are not allowed into Yu-Shan, they need some place where Yu-Shan can come to them, and Xu-Lak serves that purpose. Every Fair Folk is allowed here to treat and plot with his fellows and with those gods with whom they can arrange a meeting, and the more fatal games of the raksha are forbidden—although temporary deaths, and the labyrinthine games of dominance and submission that make courtly life so interesting are of course allowed, so long as they do not damage relations with the divinities of Heaven. After all, given that the courts of all Creation's Fair Folk come here to meet with the gods, it would be such a shame to forbid any sport at all. Still, those who transgress and take their intrigues too far— or who dare involve the gods and Exalted in the stable regions of Xu-Lak— face permanent destruction, the only threat that truly has any meaning.

Gateway 22: This gateway is carved into a gargantuan petrified tree 200 miles north of the First Age ruins of Sal-Maneth in Halta, at the southern boundary of the Proving Ground. Those mortals or Exalted wishing to use it must brave Fair Folk and other creatures to do so.

Gateway 23: This gateway, bound in mahogany carved to look like wood, is hidden in the boles of River Blossom, a Haltan city.

Gateway 24: 250 miles east-northeast of the Lover Clad in the Raiment of Tears' Fortress of Red Ice is a gateway built into a hill of ice. The ice is impossible to melt or alter in any way. The Lover has waylaid several deities over the last few years, attempting to add them to her seraglio.

The North

Gateway 25: Near the northern edge of Creation, 350 miles northwest of the Haltan city Resplendent Peak, there lies a gateway buried within the wall of a glacier. As the glacier has moved forward over the ages, gods have been bidden by Heaven to carve access tunnels to the gateway to keep it operational, and so the gateway itself lies within a glittering chamber of ice and adamant now, a 30-meter hall lit by sunlight channeled into the mountain of ice that surrounds it. A series of brutal clans are all that remains of the First Age inhabitants of the region who were cut off from the rest of Creation by lax maintenance of environmental safeguards. A few civilized outposts, bearing only the faintest echoes of First Age high culture, are all that remain, kept alive by ancient machineries that protect them from the worst of the environmental hazards. The rest of the region is dotted with wicked Fair Folk who rely on bastardized rituals and etiquette in their dealings with the people of the area and brutal, fur-clad raiders. Very few gods have duties that take them to this region, although Vanileth has wondered about reconnecting these people with Creation via some sort of flying device.

Gateway 26: Crystal's gateway is non-descript and built out of First Age materials. Locals assume it is a monument to some forgotten First Age ruler.

Gateway 27: Diamond Hearth's gateway is built into a stone pillar nearly 40 feet high. It is heavily guarded by local constables, who are aware of its nature but worry of infiltration by pawns of the Syndics.

Gateway 28: 600 miles west-northwest of Cherak, this gateway lies in an ancient and abandoned First Age manse under the sole control of an ancient cult of Demon-Blooded offspring of a Solar akuma and his demon-brides. Gods use it rarely, and when they do, they come with armed escorts, for the Demon-Blooded are cunning and magically potent.

Gateway 29: Icehome's gateway is hidden within an old manse within the city, used by gods but forgotten by mortals.

Morgan Hillan (order #910970)

Gateway 30: 400 miles south of Icehome, this gateway is under the control of icewalkers currently and used as a means for the Bull of the North's Twilight ally to contact heavenly beings. The icewalkers have not chosen to interrupt heavenly travel yet, but things may change when the Bronze Faction decides to send a band of killers through the gate.

Gateway 31: The tunnels beneath Gethamane bear a gateway midway between the upper landings and the lower reaches, designed to allow contact between the gods of Heaven and the purple-skinned denizens of that stretch of tunnels.

Gateway 32: 200 miles east of the southeastern tip of Marama's Fell, the gateway is being used as an overflow gate for the Gate of Shadows. A tiny shadowland nearby— an extension of the Fell— has been put to use as a laboratory for Wayang's researchers into the Underworld.

Gateway 33: 200 miles southwest of Whitewall is the Gate of Shadows, sitting in the dark of a cave within a rocky hillside. The gods of Whitewall— in their identities as high-ranking members of the Celestial Bureaucracy— have purposely directed traffic through this gate to protect their own identities. Despite its remote distance from any major cities, hundreds of gods pass through it every day, and the masters of Whitewall have managed to go unnoticed as they travel to and from their city because of it.

Gateway 34: 750 miles west of Gethamane, this gateway is buried under a cairn of rocks. No obstacle to gods using it to travel to and from Creation, this gate has become popular because local Wyld barbarians have taken to worshiping the gods who use this gateway openly, providing them with a back-door income.

Gateway 35: This gateway is surrounded by Middlemarches and forms an oasis of stability. It is used by local barbarian tribes— especially the Varajtul— as a resting site. The presence of so many Wyld shamans means that gods looking for worship or to leave Yu-Shan for a career as a tribal totem use this gate, but few others do.

Gateway 36: 1,250 miles west of Diamond Hearth, the gateway here is so remote that only the gods of the strange cities in this region, long out of contact with the Realm, make much use of it. The gate itself nestles within the ruins of Tchoto-killi, destroyed in the God Wars.

The West

Gateway 37: The fractious island that surrounds this gateway was once a major bread basket for the Realm, but as its forces have pulled inward, the local satrap has watched helplessly as the island's once unified principate fragments into warring states. The gateway here lies in the center of the island, amongst the remains of a First Age city now fallen into ruin except for a few sturdy buildings that were put to use by the Realm as an armory. The armory is now constantly under siege by the various armies that wander the armory, putting the gateway itself into jeopardy. This would be of minor import, but the gloomy, pale-skinned Northern tribes of the island, who raid the shores of the North in longboats shaped like kraken, have taken to a primitive form of god worship. Corrupt and homeless minor divinities in Heaven have begun possessing the great among the raiders and assisting them in their war parties for the thrill of it, making the gateway these thrill-seeking gods' favored method of access to the raiders and increasing traffic beyond what it would normally if such illegal activities were not occurring.

Gateway 38: The gate in the city of Azure in the Coral Archipelago lies within a maze of alleys, hidden by the Charms of the local deities. Thaumaturges know of it and occasionally send prayers through it, and a pack of local Lunars has begun using it to visit Heaven.

Gateway 39: Darkmist Isle's capital city of Onyx has a gateway that accesses Heaven, heavily guarded by the Silver Prince. The gateway lies in the center of a plaza that stands in front of what is now the Silver Prince's palace. The Silver Prince will only entertain emissaries from Heaven if they bear some message of great import but has decided that he will not involve himself in the comings and goings of Heavenly messengers and travelers so long as they do not tarry in the shadowland itself for more than two nights. Those who stay longer are hunted by the Prince and his deathknights as if they were wild game, and few who have been hunted have ever survived to tell the tale.

Gateway 40: The island of Kerekis, in the Neck, houses a gate within a hidden grotto, built into a massive wall of coral. It is difficult to get to this gate, but once one knows where it is it is incredibly private and thus used by many gods traveling to and from Heaven.

Morgan Hillan (order #910970)

Gateway 41: 600 miles south of Solid Shell is a gate resting on a pillar of stone and rising out of the water. Beneath the stone pillar is one of the ancient submariner manse-bases of the High First Age, now under the control of a band of raksha, who have turned the area into a Freehold. The Fair Folk leave the gateway alone, but their hobgoblins have been known to attack gods coming out of it. Deities which rely on this gate for travel purposes have been petitioning the celestial lions for a strike against the local pests, but the lions are busy with more pressing matters. A few of the gods hope to find allies in Creation they can manipulate into striking at the Fair Folk, and if possible, wresting control of the base from them.

Gateway 42: 250 miles west of the Isle of Shadows there is a gateway crafted out of crystallized sand on a small sandbar. Gods have begun to utilize it to avoid the risks of travel through the Silver Prince's terrain but run the risk of running afoul of other threats, since the seas around here are the territory of a particularly powerful and territorial elemental court. The elemental court has begun pressing the visiting dignitaries for tribute, and it is only a matter of time before the entire situation explodes into open conflict, requiring the attention of a Celestial censor or Fakharu himself.

Gateway 43: The Coral Archipelago's capital city of Seahaven houses a gate crafted into a monolith inside the royal palace. The whole thing has been covered in shells and artwork and is barely recognizable as a gate to Yu-Shan, but the local gods know of it nonetheless and make use of it. A compromised official within the local government has sold access to the gate to agents of the pelagial coastal cult, who use it to monitor the comings and goings of local gods.

Gateway 44: Above the City of the Shining Reefs there is a circular platform crafted of jade and 20 yards wide that stands above an unbreakable glass tube leading to the City of Shining Reefs, the indolent capital city of the aquatic pelagials. The manatee-folk and their Sleeping Princes give no open sign as to whether or not they care who comes and goes but post spies to watch the platform for Sidereal raiding parties, who occasionally appear to raid the pelagial's vaults of First Age weaponry and wonders. Occasionally, a god corrupted by one of the dark forces slumbering near Oblivion will quietly take this gate and deliver some message to the priesthood that guard the Sleeping Princes, and such missives often forewarn some new move in the great game between the dead and the living, which the pelagials then carefully factor into the plans of their coastal cult. The pelagials themselves rely on Gateway 43 when they need to make use of a gate personally.

Gateway 45: 1,500 miles west-southwest of the Wailing Fen, on a volcanic island at the southern border of Creation. The inhabitants of the island chain surrounding this gateway are locked in a constant state of war with the Wyld-tainted environment. Giant man-eating plants, mutated tyrant lizards, and the Fair Folk have conspired to create a race of hardy warriors who learn how to wield a spear before the age of five. Elemental hotspots create areas where the sea itself erupts into a boiling torrent. Perhaps because of this, jaded divinities often come here to gather up men, flora, and fauna for use in gladiatorial events, while the more warlike gods will vacation here to test their mettle. A small band of Lunar Exalted have come into conflict with the gods, viewing the islands as a place to test humanity's strength, and even now they ponder placing the local tribes under their protection.

Gateway 46: An island 1,000 miles west of Nightfall Island houses this gate, sitting alone on the rocky shore. Gods eschew this island whenever possible because there have been numerous disappearances from gods using it to travel. The presence of Lintha ships and outcaste pirates in the area mean a multitude of suspects may be to blame.

Gateway 47: 600 miles southwest of Bluehaven's general territory, this gateway lies within a manse used by a local Lunar Exalted and her tribe of shark men. The Lunar is actually unaware of the gate's import or the traffic that proceeds through it, spending most of her time dealing with more mundane matters like warring with the local Fair Folk and their octopodic hobgoblins.

Gateway 48: 250 miles east of Nightfall Island, there is a pirate's cove utilized by many of the bandits in the area. It is effectively a small city of what amounts to a sandbar supporting acres of docks, where anything is for sale and everything is permitted, ruled by a coalition of the stronger buccaneers. The area once was used as something of a brothel by gods within Yu-Shan looking to experience the seamier side of life in Creation, so a handful of God-Blooded hold various ranks

Morgan Hillan (order #910970)

in pirate crews. Their parents are aware of their activities, and while they do nothing to condone it, the gods would hate to see something happen to their offspring. Given the higher rate of God-Bloods within the population, the Realm's skeleton merchant-marine fleet has taken an interest in the predations of the local pirates, and skirmishes have become more frequent.

The South

Gateway 49: Where the Font of Mourning meets the Silent Crescent, there is a gateway to Yu-Shan standing alone in the marshes in the area. A Solar Exalted has claimed the territory around the gate, and while he has done nothing yet to harry the gods using the gate to enter and leave Heaven, a few timid functionaries have begun petitioning the Bronze Faction for protection. The Gold Faction has tried to approach the Solar, but he is a member of a cannibalistic tribe of swamp dwellers and believes he rules the swamps by right of power.

Gateway 50: 250 miles northeast of An-Teng, this gateway is used by many of the regional gods to go to and from Heaven.

Gateway 51: 750 miles north of Gem, deep within the Fire Mountains, buried within a hidden cave, is a gateway crafted from the face of a giant diamond. The gateway is sentient, the intelligences that went into crafting the starmetal of the gate having retained control of their psyches over the long millennia. The gateway harbors notions of disloyalty, although it keeps this to itself.

Gateway 52: Built into the brow of the massive carving that towers over the Lap is a gateway, invisible to those unaware of it by dint of its distance from the city itself. To gods, the location of the gateway is no problem, but to mortals or Exalted wishing to enter Yu-Shan from this gate, it is highly inconvenient. In the First Age, flying machines transported pilgrims to the gateway. Now, aspiring visitors to Heaven must actually climb the mammoth carving.

Gateway 53: Paragon has a gateway built into the wall of a beautifully crafted Solar manse in the palace of the Perfect. The Paragon is aware of the gate and keeps the room under constant guard but does not interfere with the comings and goings of the deities who use the gateway. At least one elemental of low standing has sworn an oath to the Perfect in desperation while fleeing from some transgression in his Terrestrial court and gives his master information on the goings-on in Heaven, but the Perfect has no idea what to do with the information, occasionally pondering selling it to some other power in the region.

Gateway 54: Chiaroscuro houses a magnificent gateway crafted from colored glass that resides in the neighborhood controlled by Grandmother Bright. Gods wishing to use the gateway do well by obeying her rules while crossing through her territory, but it is a delicate dance—she dares not push too hard on visiting deities for fear of censure by the Bureau of Heaven, while divinities who pass through her territory know enough of Grandmother Bright to be wary of upsetting her out of hand.

Exalted wishing to use the gateway—which Grandmother Bright makes no attempts to hide—must bargain with her for access.

Gateway 55: 750 miles southeast of Chiaroscuro, in the southernmost portion of the Varang City-States, this gateway is used by Ahlat as his personal doorway into Creation. As such, there is always a band of his brides stationed nearby, making sacrifices in his name.

Gateway 56: 600 miles east of Yane, this gateway sees heavy traffic by local desert gods and by those bringing southern goods into Yu-Shan. A small market has sprung up on the Yu-Shan side, and the gateway has grown into what amounts to a caravanserai for the Guild.

Gateway 57: 1,400 miles east of Yane, where the southern border of Harborhead meets the southern foothills of the Summer Mountains, the lords of the Glass Reach, an ancient manse of incredible power, rest in opulent splendor, warring against the local beastmen and attempting to unravel the secret of the ancient Solar tombs in the area, all of which date back to before the Usurpation. Several times a year, hungry ghosts of surprising power wander from the tombs and slay any being they encounter, killing hundreds at a time. The gateway rests in the middle of the tombs in an empty building, and on at least one occasion, the ghosts have attempted to storm it.

Gateway 58: In the savannah below the great southeastern jungles, a Wyld zone has created numerous tribes of beastmen locked in an eternal struggle for survival and dominance. They await the coming of the Bright Ones, who will lead them from their constant warfare into a holy war across the South and until then fight as a form of religious obeisance.

Morgan Hillan (order #910970)

Gateway 59: 1,500 miles south of Gate 57, on the edge of an active volcanic fissure there lies the forge of Jakatam Shining-Hammer, protégé of Autochthon and one of the most knowledgeable crafters of artifacts in all of Creation and Heaven. He forges weapons and devices of the five magical materials in the heat of the fissure itself, and his works are of a quality not seen since the First Age.

Jakatam deliberately eschews contact with both the gods of Heaven and the Exalted of Creation unless it cannot be helped. He chose this locale as his home because of the lack of traffic through it and because near the fissure was a powerful demesne where a fortress-manse once stood. The only thing still standing from the manse, which fell during the invasion of the Fair Folk, is the wall housing the gate to Heaven.

Gateway 60: 1,500 miles west of Jakatam's forge is a lost city, protected from the raging elements by ancient First Age machineries. The beings who reside here are unapologetic throwbacks to the age when the Solar Exalted ruled the earth, and the only thing that saved them from destruction by the Shogunate and Sidereal Exalted was their distance from anything useful and the fact that the mines under the city produce massive volumes of firedust for use by Heaven. Over the years, the primitive priest-kings of the city have come to worship the Sidereal Exalted as Shining Ancestors and pray for the days when they will bring about the end of the world. The inhabitants of the city are fanatical worshippers of the Sidereals, and the Bronze Faction has already begun eyeing them for some future use, as well as the firedust mines their golden city sits upon.

The Calibration Gate

Unlike the other 60 gates, the Calibration gate moves constantly. Every dawn, it vanishes to reappear in another seemingly random location. During Calibration, it vanishes and reappears after every use.

The Calibration Gate only has a few constants to its manifestations—it only appears in Creation, and it always appears on a solid surface. This surface is not required to be dry land. It can appear on a ship's deck, a behemoth's back, or in an undersea grotto. The gate has no obvious pattern to its movements—it may appear in Gem the day before a destructive invasion but move on to an arctic wasteland in the North the following dawn.

Celestial Exalted can track it to a limited extent. Charms that can divine hidden information can sometimes pinpoint its current location or predict where it will appear next. Sidereal Exalted can use astrology to predict where the gate will appear next or divine where it currently is. Also, many Sidereals (and a few Lunars) know Summoning the Heavenly Portal, a spell that allows them to call the gate to their location. Lunars may use the charm called Eagle-Fish Transition Prophecy and a Wyld Quest to divine the gate's current or future location. Rumor has it that a master-level of thaumaturgy provides a ritual for tracking the gate, giving the greatest mortal savants a way to locate the Calibration Gate, but if any still possess that knowledge, no one knows of it outside of the Division of Secrets.

The Archipelago of the Exiles

Hidden away in the blue waters of the distant West lies the Archipelago of the Exiles, a sanctuary and prison for gods and elementals in disgrace or who fear for their lives. For a thousand years, the Archipelago has been a safe haven for refugees from the spirit courts, but the Time of Tumult sends ripples even to this distant sanctuary.

History & Purpose

In the wake of the Shogunate's collapse, politics within the halls of Yu-Shan became even more bloodthirsty. The final collapse of the political structures, which had begun in the Usurpation, reached a flashpoint, and in the various Bureaus, the knives came out. God moved against god for promotion and to punish slights, real or imagined. Celestial politics, never gentle, became deadly.

But within the halls of power, there are always skeletons in closets and those who know about them. Some gods finding themselves on the wrong side of a power play were in the inexplicable position of knowing too much about the failings and black deeds of their peers to be quickly dispatched. The Archipelago of the Exiles provided these gods an escape convenient for all parties involved. It became an island paradise for outcasts, a preserve for those who knew too much to be killed out of hand. And the cleverest gods among the successful recognized the need for this neutral ground to allow foes to retire gracefully. The Bureaus formally recognized the status of the Archipelago as a retreat for the discarded of Celestial society.

The rules of the Archipelago protected outcast and retired gods from assassination attempts, and by the agreement of all parties—Exiles and the potentates of the Bureaus alike—the Sidereal Exalted quietly monitored the Archipelago, investigating and punishing any reprisals against its inhabitants by those still

Morgan Hillan (order #910970)

in power and striking down with equal ferocity any Exile attempting a plot against Heaven. The Sidereals, by unanimous decree and by virtue of their Exalted nature, found themselves investigators and inquisitors on a highly rarefied preserve.

The Sidereals and the Bureaus soon realized they'd found a place to hide a prison for those spirits too treacherous to roam free—but who had secret knowledge or talents that might someday be useful—or who threatened those at the highest levels of power. Such personages now rot in the Gaol of Roaring Thunder, hidden away in the very waves and sea-foam.

Until recently, the Exiles rested easily. Gods who the tides of politics turned against, but who were too powerful or knowledgeable to murder, brought their sanctums to the islands and enjoyed an idle life amongst their fellows. Elementals who couldn't handle the aggressive new Terrestrial Bureaucracy found a retirement spot free from cutthroat politics and interminable work hours. And spirits on the run found a sanctuary where even the most powerful god dare not spill Essence.

Current Entanglements

The central dilemma facing the Exiles now is the influx of new arrivals. As Celestial society crumbles at the edges, more and more who have the wherewithal take the opportunity to flee for the sanctuary of the Archipelago. Every new god and elemental that arrives seeking shelter brings its own unique set of problems—its own ambitions, its own secrets, and its own enemies in hot pursuit. The Archipelago can handle a trickle of newcomers, but as the turning of the Ages begins in earnest, the trickle becomes a flood.

Certain islands deal with this by integrating newcomers into their own strictly regimented societies. Others, which amount to little more than tyrannies ruled by the strongest spirits present, have more problems dealing with the appearance of newcomers. If the recent arrivals are stronger, then the spirits in charge must find some way to drive them off or intimidate them in order to maintain the status quo. Failure means exile twice over.

The return of the Solar Exalted has changed the situation. The average Solar has yet to master the intricacies of spirit intrigue and is a tempting tool to bring into the Archipelago's struggles. In addition, the Sidereals find themselves working harder than ever elsewhere, and their policing of the Exiles has grown lax under the mounting distractions. Conflict in the Archipelago that would have been unthinkable a decade ago begins in earnest. Murder and enslavement appear with growing frequency, and Sidereals called to investigate must often go alone or with a handful of divine partners rather than in a Circle, as was typical before.

More dangerous for the Archipelago, the most powerful Exiles are beginning to wonder if now is the time to leave their sanctuary and find their fortunes in a changing world. Old agents of the Celestial Court ponder cashing in favors or blackmailing old superiors, disfavored independents wonder at how easy it would be to pick off the enemies that drove them into the shadows, and all gaze at the various young Exalted.

Likewise, the Archipelago becomes more intriguing to mortal and Exalt. Those looking for allies and intelligence on Yu-Shan whisper of the Exiles and their knowledge, while ambitious Dynasts hoping for an edge in the coming civil war dream of powerful spirit allies who can be bribed and cajoled by the wealth of the Realm. The Lunar Exalted might use the gods of the Archipelago to protect or expand their societies, while factions such as the Emissaries of Perfect Water, hoping to stave off the dissolution of the West, plead and placate for any edge. But finding the Archipelago, hidden as it is from maps and astrology, is a task in itself.

The Islands

Innumerable islands make up the Archipelago of the Exiles, some of them massive, others little more than sandbars peeking above the waves. Visitors should not discount even the tiniest islands—gods can hide the grandest of sanctums in even mundane places, and sometimes the most important of Yu-Shan's expatriates seek rest in the humblest of exteriors.

The following are but a small sample of the islands and sanctums of the Archipelago.

The Island of Blasphemous Prayer

Not only did the Immaculates living on this isle choose to travel to the distant West to bring proper religious practices to a region which turned out to be the home of hundreds of gods who eschewed the rigid hierarchy of Heaven with tacit Celestial approval, but they also built their meager temple on the foundations of an older building—which imprisoned an ancient demon. The demon, unknown to sorcerous lore, is the by-blow of two powerful entities of the Second Circle, and the Immaculates have accidentally released it. It has set about corrupting the small community of monks who've made the island their home, and once finished it hopes to use them to escape to the heart of Creation itself.

Morgan Hillan (order #910970)

The island is small, but with plentiful pastures and fields and a safe harbor for ships. The population is split into two groups: the Immaculate monks and their Dragon-Blooded superiors, and the islanders proper, a group of herders and farmers who supply the monastery.

The Island That is White as Bone

This island is home to a grove of massive white trees, the center of worship for three depraved artisan spirits who've gathered a tribe of humans around them. The three elementals secretly murder others of their kind and make trinkets of their forms. They're careful to prey only on newcomers who arrive from elsewhere in Creation, rather than important personages exiled from Yu-Shan, believing that elementals are less likely to be missed. So far, they've been correct. The human tribe occasionally raids other islands for wood—the elementals forbid them from cutting down the island's trees—and for sacrifices.

The Manufactory of the Ebon-Clad Masters

This tiny islet is little more than a sandbar and a dilapidated building. However, the shack disguises a tunnel that leads deep beneath Creation, where the Ebon-Clad Masters, a Circle of young Sidereals, push the boundaries of knowledge in hideous experiments, using the most ill-favored inhabitants of the Gaol of Roaring Thunder and the other islands. With black chirurgery gleaned from the pelagials and Essence-surgeries guessed at from First Age tomes, these Viziers create soulsteel and starmetal and attempt to harvest even the Essences of the Exalted. The manufactory is nearly a factory-cathedral, but those looking for it fall afoul of the Fellowship.

The Temple of Imminent Twilight

This island has become a sprawling temple, constantly under construction by the strange order of spirits who take up residence here. They welcome any gods who would join their number but attempt to bar entry to the Exalted and mortals. The Order of Imminent Twilight is monastic, given to strange martial arts and the collection of esoteric knowledge, which they hope to nurture through what they view as the unavoidable conflagration to come. They maintain an orrery in the heart of the temple that may be the most sophisticated in Creation, outside of Sidereal hands, and use it to monitor the goings-on in Creation with joyous terror. They follow some blueprint created by the founders of their order, which they hope will help them survive the eschaton to come, brought about by the rise of the Deathlords and the return of the Solar Exalted. They pray that their plans will allow them to survive what they see as the inevitable diminishing or destruction of Creation.

The Isle of the Fiery Womb

Little more than a massive volcanic peak jutting out of the ocean, this island is ruled by two fire butterflies, Ascending and Descending, who were exiled from their spirit court. The pair claim to never disagree and attack anyone who interrupts their incessant arguments to assert otherwise. They delight in flocking to ships that pass by, and sailors or travelers who wear gold or orichalcum draw their interest, inevitably resulting in the pair attempting to burn gold-bearing ships to the waterline. Other spirits make their homes on the island but keep to themselves and do not linger overlong outside of their mansions Elsewhere.

The Island of Serpents and Flowers

Home to Sliding Mirror, a Serpent-and-Egg driven out of its old spirit court for being compelled to aid in the destruction of some of her fellows at a sorcerer's bidding, this beautiful island consists of five hills of bare earth. On each hill dwells a small band of humans, the descendants of tribesmen and shipwrecked sailors. Beneath the hills are rolling meadows filled with flowers, but amongst these blossoms dwell God-Blooded serpents, the descendants of Sliding Mirror and the local snake population. Sliding Mirror views the humans as fools and enjoys watching them eke out a fragile existence.

The Island of Little Foxes

This island, large but arid, is home to a tribe of women. They rule over domesticated menfolk and pay homage to the lord of the surrounding placid seas, an Undertow named Hidden Opening. The elemental is bored with his retirement and with the virginal offerings the tribe provides him and would like his worshipers to add more interesting beings to the ritual sacrifices. The women occasionally raid other islands at the Undertow's behest, simply for entertainment's sake, although he is careful to limit their depredations to other humans and not the spirits—he's been audited by Sidereal investigators at least once before and is wary of drawing their attention again.

The Village of Lost Personages

This island, a tranquil garden paradise devoid of human residents, is a retirement community for high-ranking members of the Bureaus of Heaven, mostly political movers and shakers who know where the meteors are buried. They entertain themselves

Morgan Hillan (order #910970)

by ensnaring in petty political machinations gods and elementals unwary enough to set up residence, sometimes going so far as staging Gateway games using captured humans and the smallest of spirits as pieces. The Village is also an informal neutral ground for current members of the Bureaus—enemy factions will sit beside each other and trade information under the guise of visiting old comrades. Occasionally, the Sidereals will isolate a wayward god here and interrogate it for months or years to ascertain exactly what it knows before deciding how to dispose of it—the other spirits assist in these interrogations out of fear of the leader of the island, an achromatic sphere called Itinerate Second who ruthlessly hunts down those who attempt to escape without his permission.

The Gaol of Roaring Thunder

The Gaol is not an island but a wave formation that rolls across the seas surrounding the Archipelago. Inside, hidden Elsewhere, is a prison for beings too important to kill out of hand but too dangerous to ever allow free. Ancient ghosts, powerful Celestial criminals, renegade demons, and even the odd Exalted pet of a high-ranking Celestial god are locked in the orichalcum and soulsteel cells. The warden, a god named Towering Relentless Pillar, is so sure the prison is unassailable that he's unaware factions both inside his prison and outside are moving to free his most vile captives.

The Island of the Broken Masks

The largest island of the lot, with the most sizeable spirit population, has become a court unto itself. Its single rule is the absence of beauty—new arrivals must submit to scarification and, once scarred, may never leave. None of the marred gods are particularly powerful, and the Gaol of Roaring Thunder's warden and the residents of the Village find them comical, but the spirits of the other islands fear its population's combined might.

Morgan Hillan (order #910970)

Morgan Hillan (order #910970)

CHAPTER FIVE
THE ROLL OF CELESTIAL GODS

For a visitor to Yu-Shan, Celestial gods take many potential roles—allies capable of something as mundane as speeding along a heavenly permit hearing or as epic as calling down the Aerial Legion or enemies who hold grudges for a thousand years over the sins of an Exalt's previous incarnations. They can be bureaucratic paper-pushers who grudgingly execute the heroes' prayers, urban predators in the greatest city ever known, or investigators tracking characters down to answer for their crimes, real or invented. The gods can be a hero's friends, rivals, or lovers, with equal facility—haughty, venomous, selfish, kind, or heroic in their own right, by turns.

From the Least to the Greatest

The gods of Yu-Shan vary in appearance and power. Some are indistinguishable from the throngs of humanity, while others are sanity-blasting amalgamations of fractal shape and subluminous color who drive mad any mortal who looks upon them. The least of them are barely intelligent and capable of performing only a single task, albeit with incredible efficiency, while only the most ancient Exalted or the Incarnae themselves can bring the most powerful to heel. The lower a god is in the hierarchy, the more she's likely to be one of a thousand others of her kind—very little distinguishes one pattern spider from another. But the heads of the bureaus of Yu-Shan are all unique entities, resembling no one and nothing else in Heaven or Creation.

The exception to the rule that a spirit's nature becomes more unique as it grows more potent is the elementals, for whom an increase in power means a closer resemblance to the Five Elemental Dragons. Thus it is that the lesser elemental dragons, some of the most powerful beings in Heaven, look remarkably

Morgan Hillan (order #910970)

similar despite their massive personal and spiritual power. But in Yu-Shan, lesser elemental dragons are the exception, not the rule, and the masses of spirits who make up the population of the heavenly city are usually gods and not elementals.

What Are These For?

To create an exhaustive catalog of the gods of Yu-Shan would involve a book unto itself. In addition, for some gaming groups, such descriptions would be filled with beings too powerful for their characters to approach as anything other than kowtowing supplicants. Other players—used to a more high-powered style of play—would find themselves steamrolling over any deity in their path and laying waste to everything in Heaven before they eventually sat themselves down for a round of the Games of Divinity, using the bodies of the Incarnae as thrones.

This section provides Storytellers and players an idea of the general power level of many of the divinities, while providing traits for only the most unique or common. Storytellers can easily modify the five general templates for the gods of Yu-Shan to either design full sets of traits for the divinities in this book or to create new gods. The next section describes several of the most common kinds of god that characters are likely to encounter in Yu-Shan, and then has descriptions for the notable powers in the Bureaus of Heaven. In most cases, only the god's most notable powers and possessions are described, leaving a Storyteller free to rely on one of the templates here to tailor the final write-up to suit his game's style.

God of the First Rank: Minor Servant/Messenger/Drone

(Backing 0 or •)

These divinities are the smallest of the spirits likely to be encountered in Yu-Shan, and unlike those filling the higher ranks, are as likely to be elementals as gods. They are rarely unique beings in their own right, instead tending to be specimens of a whole race of spirit designed to do one task very well, whether it be transport messages across great distances, herd souls to the appropriate deity or storehouse, work at some repetitive task continuously and with no rest, or spy on others and report back to their superior. These deities tend to be harmless on their own, and most pose no threat even when found in great numbers. While often simple-minded, they are not unintelligent, and when presented with an obstacle that keeps them from their designated task, they tend to be fiendishly clever. While most of the individuals who make up these species of gods tend to be indistinguishable from one another, occasionally one of them develops a unique personality of its own, often seeking companionship from more powerful beings such as higher-ranked gods and the Exalted. Many of these independent gods develop personalities and means of communication similar to that of pets or small children, while others seem as intelligent as any other deity or mortal.

There are millions of these beings in Yu-Shan, and they will obey the commands of any being with Essence 5 or higher unless those orders contradict the commands of their formal superiors or a prior order they already follow.

Sanctum: If gods, spirits of this rank tend to share communal sanctums with others of their ilk. Often, these sanctums are inaccessible to others, with entrances too small for human-sized beings to enter and internal designs built to a wholly alien aesthetic.

Summoning: There are millions of elementals of this rank in Heaven, many of them unemployed. Most summoners consider them a waste of time. Visiting Celestial Exalted with Essences higher than 4 will quickly find themselves approached on the street by several out-of-work elementals of this rank, requesting positions in the character's entourage or household staff. In Creation, these elementals are so specialized and of such minimal power that most sorcerers and thaumaturges eschew them entirely in favor of their more powerful brethren, but a few summoners of meager power who hope to impress the ignorant populate their sanctuaries and homes with these beings.

Motivation: Spirits of the First Rank tend to be driven to perform one task, very well, whether it be heat a house, carry a load without spilling the contents, or herd a flock of souls to its final destination. Those spirits who develop unique personalities of their own tend to change their motivations so that they revolve around a single, superior being, and are devoted to that god or Exalt's friendship.

Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 6, Stamina 2; Charisma 2, Manipulation 1, Appearance 2; Perception 3, Intelligence 2, Wits 4

Virtues: Compassion 1, Conviction 4, Temperance 2, Valor 2

Abilities: Athletics 3, Awareness 4, Bureaucracy 1, Dodge 4, Integrity 3, Larceny 1, Linguistics (Native: Old

Morgan Hillan (order #910970)

Realm) 0, Lore 1, Martial Arts 2, Occult 2, Resistance 2, Stealth 1,

Charms: At a minimum, Gods of the First Rank possess:

Essence Bite—To stop malcontents from interfering with their appointed rounds

Hurry Home—To escape from overpowering threats

Materialize—35m

Measure the Wind—To establish another being's place within the Celestial Hierarchy

Sense Domain—In the pursuit of their appointed task

Tracking—Objects related to their purpose

Join Battle: 9

Attacks:

Clinch: Speed 6, Accuracy 8, Damage 3B, Parry DV –, Rate 1

Strike: Speed 5, Accuracy 9, Damage 3B, Parry DV 4, Rate 3

Soak: 2L/1B

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

Dodge DV: 6

Willpower: 6

Essence: 2

Essence Pool: 50

Cult, Rank and Power in Yu-Shan

Unlike the Creation-bound gods and elementals described in The Roll of Glorious Divinity I, gods in Yu-Shan typically have Charms equal to (Essence x2) + (Backing x2) + (Sum of Virtues), since they will rarely have access to the Cult background. Gods in Yu-Shan who have access to a Cult—a rare proposition—use the higher of Backing or Cult when determining the number of Charms they have.

Other Notes: While most of these gods have uniform statistics across a species, independents who have attached themselves as an Ally or Familiar to a more powerful being tend to develop a few Charms unknown to their kind, slightly higher Attributes, and a few more potent skills. Rarely do they ever become as powerful as even heroic mortals, but they often bring unique skills and viewpoints that make up for their lack of raw power—for example, lion dogs tell tales of a nest of scarab guardians finding comfort in the company of one of the Abyssal Exalted.

Morgan Hillan (order #910970)

What Do They Know?

At first blush, the gods of Yu-Shan seem like excellent sources of information for one of the Exalted new to Heaven, and in many ways they are. Most of them are very, very old, and even if they don't know something from personal knowledge, they may be able to point a visitor to someone who was actually present at the historical event or to an archive or museum bearing records of the time in question.

Two things keep the gods from being a trove of knowledge for the uninitiated. First, Yu-Shan, for all its faults, makes the finest metropolis in Creation look like a slum, and the majority of gods find no reason to leave, especially when Creation is in a time of crisis. Most of the divinities of Yu-Shan are reluctant to muddy their feet with the earth tread by mortals during the best of times, let alone when the Princes of the Earth are being murdered in their beds or the borders of reality cave. Gods tend to bunker down in those situations, unless their official duties demand they cope with the threat personally. This means that many gods who remember Balor's Crusade or the rise of the Empress do so through the lens of urban sophisticates discussing matters in some distant nation, and while they may have a few useful clues or rumors—or know someone who does—they usually can't testify to such matters personally.

Second of all, the gods of Yu-Shan are well aware of the political complexities involved in events like the Usurpation. The Solar Exalted were dispatched long ago and have returned in only the last five years, while the Sidereal Exalted have walked the halls of Heaven in the long meantime and bear no small amount of political power. The one thing the Bronze and Gold Factions can agree on is that it doesn't do to have the Lawgivers learn of their hand in the overthrow of the Old Realm's shining leaders, so the unspoken rule is: No one is to talk about the Sidereals to visiting Exalts except in the most glowing of terms. Naturally, this prohibition does not extend to the heads of departments and Bureaus, who are out of the reach of all but the strongest Sidereal coercion.

Those gods who do speak out of turn—"Casting aspersions from ignorance," as some Sidereals will frame it if forced to hurriedly explain—tend to find themselves the victim of audits, and the most talkative or pejorative tend to be moved out of the path of visiting Exalts—or disappear entirely.

Gods of this rank are often dedicated to incredibly specialized tasks, the completion of which demand unique, innate powers similar to Charms. Soul collectors, for instance, possess the ability to shepherd souls like a dog herds a flock of sheep. Assume that these powers cannot be replicated by Exalted of the Moonshadow or Eclipse Castes unless the Storyteller feels it is appropriate for her game.

Gods of the Second Rank: Functionary/ Divine Pedestrian/Dispossessed Rabble

(Backing 0 or •)

These gods make up the mass of deities who inhabit the streets of Yu-Shan. Gardeners in the fragrant orchards of Heaven, pilots of Celestial gondolas and rickshaws, mid-range servants in the manses of high-level bureaucrats, and minor functionaries within the various Departments of Heaven all fit this description. The majority of gods dispossessed by the various cataclysms that have wracked Creation—the Usurpation, the Great Contagion, and Balor's Crusade—also tend to be of this power level and wander the slums and almshouses of Yu-Shan in distressing numbers. More elementals of this rank inhabit Heaven than any other.

While beneath the notice of the Incarnae or ranking members of the Celestial Bureaucracy, these gods are the ones most likely to talk to visitors from Creation. They are often the only deities who will deign to speak to a Dragon-Blooded who is visiting Heaven, even if contempt occasionally creeps into their voices or they approach the Terrestrial as one would approach someone else's pet in a park. Many of these gods are good sources of ancient history, even if they possess the limited viewpoint of a resident of Yu-Shan during the events in question. They tend to know the city's general layout and the specifics of certain neighborhoods, and they also tend to have a general idea of the latest gossip and who holds power in what Bureau.

These gods are not a threat to an Exalted singly but in great numbers can swamp low-powered foes. More dangerous by half is the fact that those gods bearing the official credentials of a particular office, or who serve more powerful deities in their homes, often have the means to summon household guards or official law enforcement.

Sanctum: Gods who hold low-level positions tend to have small—but luxurious, by Creation's standards—apartments of their own in the case of minor functionaries or drivers, or rooms within the manses of their employers (in the case of servants). The Dispossessed, on the other hand, live in parks, abandoned

Morgan Hillan (order #910970)

buildings, or on the streets of Yu-Shan, preying on the weak and on one another, living from handout to handout.

Motivation: Gods of this Rank tend to be interested in performing their appointed task adequately enough to support their current lifestyle. The more dedicated or ambitious gods tend to have been promoted out of this rank already or be ineligible for promotion entirely for some other reason. The Dispossessed, many of whom have lost their divine domains or who have seen them destroyed, are often mildly insane, and their motivation may be best described as "struggle to survive without purpose in a world where purpose defines you."

Attributes: Strength 4, Dexterity 5, Stamina 5; Charisma 3, Manipulation 4, Appearance 4; Perception 3, Intelligence 4, Wits 3

Virtues: Compassion 1, Conviction 2, Temperance 4, Valor 2

Abilities: Awareness 3, Bureaucracy 3, Dodge 3, Integrity 3, Investigation 2, Linguistics (Native: Old Realm, Realm, High Realm) 1, Lore 3, Martial Arts 1, Medicine 2, Occult 2, Performance 3, Presence 3, Resistance 2, Socialize 3, War 1.

Backgrounds: Allies 1, Backing 1 or 0, Contacts 2, Salary 2

Charms: At the very least, Gods of the Second Rank will possess Calculated Order of Immediate Action, Domain Manipulation Scenario, Essence Bite, Hurry Home, Materialize (50m), Principle of Motion, and four Excellencies related to the god's domain and/or history.

Join Battle: 6

Attacks:

Clinch: Speed 6, Accuracy 6, Damage 4B, Parry DV -, Rate 1

Kick: Speed 5, Accuracy 6, Damage 7B, Parry DV 3, Rate 2

Punch: Speed 5, Accuracy 7, Damage 4B, Parry DV 7, Rate 3

Soak: 6L/9B (Official Robes +4B/+4L, -0 mobility penalty, +0 fatigue value)

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

Dodge DV: 6 **Willpower:** 7

Essence: 3 **Essence Pool:** 65

Other Notes: Gods of this Rank often times possess a single unique ability or knowledge, related to a narrow subsection of one field of knowledge related to their Bureau, division, or department, with limitations related to their position and quotas on the use of the power set by department heads. For example, Susudo, God of the Filially Impious Child knows every secret that a child has ever kept from his parents. When the child reaches adulthood or is forced to confess the secret to his parents, the secret is removed from Susudo's papyrus ledgers. Agramar, God of the Soldier in Retreat, may make foot soldiers and their direct superiors rout in the heat of battle as an inherent ability, but if he uses this more than a certain number of times per month as dictated by his superior, he may be audited.

Gods of the Third Rank: Heavenly Bureaucrat/Soldier/ Majordomo/Major City God

(Backing •• or •••)

Gods of the middle ranks are either soldiers in one of the armies of Yu-Shan, mid-level bureaucrats within Heaven's departments, or mid-tier operators within its social circles (Sometimes all three at once). This level of power also encompasses the greatest of servants, the majordomos and personal assistants to higher-ranked gods, who arrange their masters' day-to-day activities or manage massive households.

Deities of this rank are the middle-class of Yu-Shan, spared the drudgery of manual labor but forced to spend their days toiling for their superiors or as major deities in Creation. However, their duties usually leave a few hours free to take in an entertainment or two, engage in love affairs with their peers, plot against their rivals, and involve themselves with one of Yu-Shan's myriad factions. Those gods who do decide to join one of the innumerable conspiracies, fellowships, or hobby clubs in the city tend to be low-level members, as a rise in station in one of these groups usually spells promotion within one's job, as superiors in the faction arrange for promotion.

While these gods may pose a threat to an Exalt in Creation, their true might lies within the temporal power they wield at the behest of their commanders and supervisors, and chances are that those Exalted visiting Yu-Shan without a Sidereal or divine guide will find themselves often encountering these gods as they get shuffled from Bureau to department to division and back in a runaround as old as the first bureaucracy.

Sanctum: Gods who hold these mid-level positions tend to have either very well appointed mansions of small size or luxurious apartments. Gods in the military live in their unit's barracks, but such places often have apartments for individuals, attached to a set of common rooms. The god of this level who has managed to attain a significant rank in one of the city's multitudinous conspiracies will also have access to one of the organization's safe houses or chapter houses.

Morgan Hillan (order #910970)

Motivation: To see their domain expanded and themselves promoted to the Fourth Rank.
Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 5, Stamina 5; Charisma 3, Manipulation 6, Appearance 5; Perception 4, Intelligence 5, Wits 4
Virtues: Compassion 2, Conviction 5, Temperance 2, Valor 3
Abilities: Awareness 4, Bureaucracy 5, Dodge 2, Integrity 3, Investigation 3, Larceny 1, Linguistics (Native: Old Realm; Others: High Realm, Low Realm, One Other Appropriate Language Based on Domain) 3, Lore 4, Martial Arts 2, Medicine 1, Melee 2, Occult 4, Performance 5, Presence 5, Resistance 3, Socialize 5, War 3
Backgrounds: Allies 3 (Co-conspirators and friends in various departments), Artifact 4, Backing 2 or 3, Contacts 3 (within Heaven), Salary 3. The gods of important cities often possess Celestial Manses between 2 and 3.
Charms: The following Charms are likely to be part of a god's repertoire, but Storytellers should feel free to add, reduce or change the contents of the list. All Charms should be tailored to be used in a way that complements the god's Motivation, its domain, or both:
Banish, Benefaction, Calculated Order of Immediate Action, Divine Decree, Divine (Ability) Subordination (any three abilities related to the god's domain), Domain Manipulation Scenario, Dreamscape, Endowment, Essence Bite, Geas, Hurry Home, Impromptu Messenger, Intrusion-Sensing Method, Materialize (65m), Melodious Diagnostic Report, Principle of Motion, Storm Shuttle Passport, Worldly Illusion and any three Excellencies related to the god's purpose, including Bureaucracy.
Join Battle: 8
Attacks:
Clinch: Speed 6, Accuracy 7, Damage 3B, Parry DV -, Rate 1
Kick: Speed 5, Accuracy 7, Damage 6B, Parry DV 2, Rate 2
Punch: Speed 5, Accuracy 8, Damage 3B, Parry DV 4, Rate 3
Soak: 12L/15B (Divine Armor 10B/10L, -1 mobility penalty, +0 fatigue value)
Health Levels: -0/-1/-1/-1/-1/-1/-1/-2/-2/-2/-2/-2/-2/-4/Incap
Dodge DV: 5 **Willpower:** 8 (Many gods will increase this via Reserve of Will)
Essence: 4 **Essence Pool:** 80 (Many gods will increase this via the Essence Plethora Charm.)
Other Notes: Gods of this Rank will have one or two unique powers or abilities directly related to one minor area or a divine panoply of slightly more significant power (as noted by their Artifact rating) or both. The powers will have fewer limitations on use based on quota than those used by gods of lower ranks, and thus more freedom for abuse (or "personal initiative," depending on how one views the Celestial Hierarchy's present state and the whim of the gods). Balsaraf, God of Unrequited Love, can make any mortal fall in love with any other being so long as there is no chance of the feelings being returned, while Lo Fa, Western God of Criminal Enterprises, has an inherent power that draws the suspicion of all local law enforcement to himself when in a city or island-chain, partially due to the fact that all lost objects and coins of any denomination in the buildings he visits are spontaneously transported to his Everfull Larcenous Coin Purse of Endearing Fashion.

Gods of the Fourth Rank: Officials/Officers/Ranking Bureaucrats
(Backing ••••)

Divinities who are officers in one of the city's armed forces, ranking officials in a department or bureau, or high-level operators within the city's social circles and conspiracies have reached the effective ceiling for promotion upward, for their superiors are both long-lived and extraordinarily savvy to the intrigues that mark intra-departmental action. Rare is a god of this rank without an impressive official title, heavy responsibilities, and enough free time to still get himself into serious trouble. Occasionally, one may encounter a deity who has garnered enough personal fame to leave their position for the life of a dilettante, or a member of one of the city's shadowy factions who wields enough power to eschew a position within the Celestial Bureaucracy, but these are the exceptions, not the rule.

Gods with this much power can initiate audits and use their contacts within their bureau to speed up or slow down the execution of all but the most important prayers and work orders. They cannot initiate an investigation of a superior unless they are cunning enough to hide their involvement or sure that the superior will fall in the ensuing scandal. Regardless of the inviolability of their superiors, they can and do spend an enormous amount of time feuding with one another and punishing their underlings for every slight, real or imagined.

These gods are often as physically powerful as an Exalt of middling Essence, but to reach this rank, they have learned that physical confrontation is best left to underlings. They will often rely on pawns or inferiors to resolve physical conflicts before sullying

Morgan Hillan (order #910970)

their own hands, unless they are gods of battle or aficionados of one martial art or the other. Even if they do fit into the latter categories, such gods rarely arrive at these lofty positions without a modicum of caution.

These beings are the heart and soul of the Celestial Bureaucracy and possess all of the prejudices and affected manners of a being who resides in the greatest city in history as part of the most magnificent culture ever known. These gods view the Dragon-Blooded as little more than upjumped monkeys and mortals as something akin to insects, and they will only speak to Celestial Exalts if they think they'll reap some benefit or suffer some punishment if they don't.

Sanctum: Gods who hold these positions have massive mansions that make the greatest palaces of Creations look inferior and which are dwarfed only by those belonging to gods of the Fifth Rank.

Motivation: Gods of this rank usually exist to promote their own domain while removing obstacles to promotion.

Attributes: Strength 6, Dexterity 6, Stamina 5; Charisma 6, Manipulation 7, Appearance 5; Perception 6, Intelligence 8, Wits 6

Virtues: Compassion 2, Conviction 5, Temperance 3, Valor 2

Abilities: Athletics 2, Awareness 5, Bureaucracy 6, Dodge 6, Integrity 6, Investigation 4, Larceny 3, Linguistics (Native: Old Realm; Others: High Realm, Low Realm, 2 or More Regions Appropriate To God's Domain) 5, Lore 6, Martial Arts 3, Melee 5, Occult 3, Performance 5, Presence 6, Resistance 3, Socialize 4, War 3

Backgrounds: Allies 5 (Allies and friends in various departments), Artifact 8-10, Backing 4, Contacts 5 (within Heaven), Contacts 5 (outside of Heaven), Salary 4. The gods of important cities often possess Celestial Manses between 4 and 5.

Charms: The following Charms are likely to be part of a god's repertoire, but Storytellers should feel free to add, reduce or change the contents of the list. All Charms should be tailored to be used in a way that complements the god's Motivation, its domain, or both. Storytellers should pick any number of Charms up to this god's Essence and make them All-Encompassing Charms, without the above limitation:

Amethyst Authority, Creation of Perfection, Destiny Sponsorship, Divine (Ability) Subordination (any three abilities related to domain), Divine Decree, Domain Manipulation Scenario, Dreamscape, Emergency Prayer Relocation, Endowment, Geas, Hand of Destiny, Hurry Home, Materialize (70m), Measure the Wind, Melodious Diagnostic Report, Plague of Menaces, Principle of Motion, Signet of Authority, Symbol of Invincible Authority, Touch of Saturn, and any Excellencies related to the god's domain as the Storyteller sees fit.

Join Battle: 11

Attacks:

Clinch: Speed 6, Accuracy 9, Damage 6B, Parry DV -, Rate 1

Kick: Speed 5, Accuracy 9, Damage 9B, Parry DV 3, Rate 2

Punch: Speed 5, Accuracy 10, Damage 6B, Parry DV 5, Rate 3

Soak: 12L/15B (Celestial Vestments 10B/10L, -0 mobility penalty, +0 fatigue value)

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

Dodge DV: 9 **Willpower:** 9 (This will often be increased via the Reserve of Will Charm.)

Essence: 6 **Essence Pool:** 95 (This will almost always be increased via the Essence Plethora Charm.)

Other Notes: Gods at this Rank are only a handful of steps removed from the Incarnae and bow only to them and their direct superiors. They often possess a single, potent ability over the object of their domain that they can use at whim. Darillak, Lord of Tears, can fill a being with immense despair by catching its gaze, requiring a Conviction roll on the part of the target. Those mortals who fail the Conviction roll will try to commit suicide as soon as possible, and if stopped will continue to make attempts until they are either successful, or Darillak is presented with sacrifices equal to Resources 4 or 5. Beings of superior Essence merely fall into a black depression for a period of months based on the difference between their Essence and Darillak, while Exalts gain dots of Limit equal to the same difference.

Gods at this rank frequently also bestow powerful talismans upon their worshipers, granting +1 die to a single kind of roll related to their domain for a scene. Masaliow, the Furious Laughing Mask and god of righteous monks, gives those who successfully pray to him on the eve of battle a wooden baboon who will spring to life, circle the petitioner and confuse their enemies, granting an extra die to all Martial Arts rolls. The baboon departs when the battle is over. These powers and talismans are sometimes over surprising domains unrelated to the god's present position, as some gods retain their old powers when they are transferred to a new department.

Morgan Hillan (order #910970)

Those gods who do not have potent inherent powers at this rank often rely on panoplies of artifacts, one item of which will always be rating ••••• and related directly to the god's current position. Such gods may have potent fetish-weapons based on their own panoply, which they will loan to heroes who please them, usually artifacts of rating • through ••, although unique subordinate weapons of rating ••• are not unheard of.

Gods of the Fifth Rank: Daimyos/Shoguns/Mandarins/Bureau Heads

(Backing •••••)

Divinities who have reached this lofty rank are puissant in Heaven, answering only to one another and the Incarnae. Whole bureaucracies and armies answer to them, and while the laws of Heaven and the oversight of their peers keep them from making wholesale changes to the Loom of Fate, they can arrange for any entity in Creation—save the eldest First Age survivors of the Lunar and Sidereal Exalted—to suffer their wrath. What keeps them from doing this too often is simply that their jobs require so much of their time and energy they rarely have the opportunity to make enemies in Creation, instead dedicating themselves to dealing with their foes in Heaven.

Gods who wield this much power do not belong to factions outside of their Bureaus unless they have created such a conspiracy for their own use. The sole exception to this rule is the feud between the Gold and Bronze Factions of the Sidereal Exalted, and many gods of the fifth rank have thrown in their lot with one side or the other or are biding their time to see how the changes in Creation play out. However, most of the entities who have reached this rank keep their counsel to themselves, and not even the Sidereals may force the hand of a God of the Fifth Rank.

These divinities are politically and spiritually overwhelming to all but the most powerful of Exalted, and more than that, they possess the patience to plan for centuries in order to punish a slight or remove a perceived threat. Through the awarding of blessings to key supporters and favor trading, enemies not dispatched to a low-level position in a dead-end job may find themselves destroyed by a spirit, God-Blood or Exalt cultivated specifically for the task.

These beings' only weakness is that their focus on their own political ends in Yu-Shan blinds them to goings-on in Creation unless those events fall within their purview. Also, the glacial pace of Celestial politics and favor trading has left most of these gods unable to deal with swift and cataclysmic change. The arrival of the Deathlords, the reappearance of the Solar Exalted, the disappearance of the Scarlet Empress and the return of old threats like the Fair Folk and Lunar Exalted mean that many of these gods are scrambling to cope with a world that may crumble down around them before they get their own plans together.

These deities do not deal with inferiors unless that being has some value or reports directly to them. They will almost never deal with a Dragon-Blooded and will only engage with one of the Celestial Exalted if that being has demonstrated themselves to be truly potent politically and militarily. There are rare exceptions—Wayang, for instance, has taken a Sidereal Exalted under his wing. But under normal circumstances, the closest most Exalted will come to dealing with any of these beings is through one of its lieutenants, unless the Exalt in question has shaken the pillars of Creation.

Sanctum: Gods in these lofty positions usually possess a palatial manse somewhere in Yu-Shan, private apartments within whatever buildings house their department or Bureau, and vacation spots scattered throughout Heaven. Such locales inevitably are equipped with armies of servants eager to wait upon their master's beck and call.

Motivation: Gods of this rank are unfettered by the idea of merely being shackled to the success or failure of their domain, and pursue their own unique goals.

Attributes: Strength 7, Dexterity 8, Stamina 8; Charisma 7, Manipulation 7, Appearance 6, Perception 7, Intelligence 7, Wits 6

Virtues: Compassion 1, Conviction 5, Temperance 1, Valor 4

Abilities: Athletics 5, Awareness 7, Bureaucracy 7, Dodge 5, Integrity 7, Investigation 3, Larceny 1, Linguistics (Native: Old Realm; Others: High Realm, Any Others Necessary) 6, Lore 5, Martial Arts 4, Melee 4, Occult 2, Performance 5, Presence 7, Resistance 7, Socialize 7, Survival 5, War 5

Backgrounds: Allies 5 (Co-conspirators and friends in various departments), Artifact 10+, Backing 5, Contacts 5 (within Heaven), Contacts 5 (within Creation), Followers 3 (worshipers, pawns, inferiors), Salary 5. These gods possess at least one Celestial Manse of 5 and usually one more manse of rank 5 or lower. All but a few possess Cult of 3 by dint of being present on the Imperial Calendar as the recipient of a holy day.

Morgan Hillan (order #910970)

Charms: The following Charms are likely to be part of a god's repertoire, but Storytellers should feel free to add, reduce or change the contents of the list. All Charms should be tailored to be used in a way that complements the god's Motivation, its domain, or both. Storytellers should pick any number of Charms up to twice this god's Essence and make them All-Encompassing Charms, without the above limitation:

Amethyst Authority, Chrysalis of Preservation, Destiny Sponsorship, Divine (Ability) Subordination (any ten abilities related to domain), Divine Decree, Domain Manipulation Scenario, Endowment, Hand of Destiny, Host of Spirits, Hurry Home, Materialize (90m), Measure the Wind, Plague of Menaces, Principle of Motion, Signet of Authority, Symbol of Invincible Authority, Touch of Eternity, Touch of Saturn, and any number and type of Excellencies related to the god's domain or history.

Join Battle: 13

Attacks:

Clinch: Speed 6, Accuracy 12, Damage 7B, Parry DV –, Rate 1

Kick: Speed 5, Accuracy 12, Damage 10B, Parry DV 5, Rate 2

Punch: Speed 5, Accuracy 13, Damage 7B, Parry DV 7, Rate 3

Soak: 14L/18B (Robes of Office 10B/10L, -0 mobility penalty, +0 fatigue value)

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

Dodge DV: 11 **Willpower:** 10 (This will often be increased via the Reserve of Will Charm.)

Essence: 8 **Essence Pool:** 130 (This will almost always be increased via the Essence Plethora Charm.)

Other Notes: Gods of this Rank bow their heads only to the Incarnae and the Five Elemental Dragons. They possess potent powers related to their domains, and these gifts are unfettered by bureaucratic red tape and the oversight of superiors. These are "perfect powers," only a fraction below the Unconquered Sun's invincibility in

Morgan Hillan (order #910970)

combat or the deadliness of the raksha warlord Balor's gaze, which could slay even the mightiest Exalt. Seferon, God of Pain, can induce massive pain in any being he glances at, localizing it to a particular spot or limb or wracking a subject's entire body with it. With a glance, he can increase a being's dice-pool penalty from injury to its maximum but can cause no more pain than that as a perfect action that cannot be gainsaid.

In addition to their incredible abilities and plethora of Charms, these gods always possess a panoply of great scale made up of at least one ••••• artifact and sometimes more, and even if they choose not to bear the symbols of their office with them, they may summon them from Elsewhere at a whim. The statistics above reflect a god in Yu-Shan. If pressed into battle in Heaven or in Creation, they will wear magical armor crafted from one of the five magical materials and designed by the greatest of divine artisans personally for their use.

The Unwanted

The Unwanted do not fit into the orderly world laid out by the Incarnae and managed for thousands of years by their servants. Their ranks include gods who have been warped by exposure to the Wyld or the Underworld and who have managed to avoid death squads sent to terminate them, God-Blooded who have escaped from their parents' control and panhandle on the streets of Yu-Shan, and cannibal divinities who prey upon the teeming masses of homeless spirits dispossessed by the First Age's end.

There are rumors of worse things lurking in the cellars and catacombs that riddle Heaven's paved streets—no god set foot in Yu-Shan until the Primordials were overthrown, so no one truly knows what the former masters of the city left buried—discarded experiments and traps, monsters and slumbering servants, all awaiting some secret signal. There are still tales of ancient creatures not unlike behemoths who lurk in the warrens beneath the canal system or who slumber below the Celestial towers. While the Incarnae were exceedingly careful to search the city once they took control, there's simply no guarantee that they found everything.

Common Gods

There are a number of different gods that visitors to Yu-Shan are likely to meet frequently, and these gods vary in power and purpose from the hive-minded scarab guardians to the mighty lesser elemental dragons.

Roughly speaking, the more powerful the god, the more likely he is to be fundamentally different in goals and outlook than his fellows. While gardeners or canal gods may differ from one another in opinion and mannerisms only, lesser elemental dragons will each have different personalities, appearances, favored assumed forms and Charms and may have, as individuals, decided to experiment with sorcery or martial arts.

In addition, amongst each kind of deity there are likely to be exceptional individuals who surpass their fellows—Implacable Shining Barrator is a legendary celestial lion who handles internal investigations for the Bureau of Heaven, interrogating those suspected of dealing with the Yozi, the dead, or the Unwanted in violation of the laws of Yu-Shan, and his skills and Charms are far more diverse and advanced than those of his fellows.

In addition to the following divinities, visitors to Yu-Shan are also likely to encounter scarab guardians and lion dogs. The lion dogs operating in Yu-Shan answer to celestial lions unless they're employed privately by a god (who will have Backing ••• or better to merit such protection for their home or person) and usually function as secretaries and aides. Scarab guardians answer to the celestial lions as well and are used as security in the vaults and meeting rooms of the bureaus, as well as working home security jobs for the powerful. (Occasionally, they're used to cordon off areas where the authorities believe some particularly powerful member of the Unwanted has been active.)

Canal God

The very model of the "big god in a little job" stereotype, the bitter canal gods are the tiresome managers of the network of canals that the inhabitants of Yu-Shan rely upon for transportation, and as such see themselves as instrumental in the smooth running of the city. Because of this, they are quite willing to make any and all efforts to impress upon anyone dealing with them *just how important they are*. If this means making a god or Exalt wait in line, stopping a dragon-boat to check the papers of those onboard, or closing two lanes of a canal while they do an inspection, so be it.

They have offices within the Bureau of Heaven and operate officially as the Department of Argent and Aurum Waterways. Beneath them, a legion of dragon-boat pilots, maintenance crews, water elementals, and menials (who fish debris and the occasional body out of the quicksilver) answer to them. The canal gods split their time between doing deskwork stamping the celestial writs which allow access to the gold lanes of the canal and performing

Morgan Hillan (order #910970)

enforcement, stopping boats that use improper or forged writs.

Canal gods appear as blue humanoids in grand and colorful silk robes that always remain dry, even when they appear from the depths of a canal. Their limbs and skulls are covered in clear tentacles, similar to a jellyfish. Those on enforcement duty are empowered to summon celestial lions to aid in handling recalcitrant users of dragon-boats.

Sanctum: Canal gods' place within the Celestial Bureaucracy allows them apartments relatively near to the Bureau of Heaven.

Description: Canal gods use the God of the Third Rank template.

Celestial Lion

Celestial lions are the incorruptible guardians of Heaven, and unless they willingly choose to abandon their duty, cannot be forced to break faith with their office (They can be tricked, however). Like lion dogs, however, when celestial lions do decide to forsake their honor, they can be glorious, or terrible, as whim dictates. They guard all of the gates from Creation and operate as a police force in the city itself. The departments and bureaus can ask for a force of lions to guard their offices or investigate intrusions. A special branch, led by Shining Barrator, is proactive and investigates threats to the city proper, answering only to the heads of the Bureau of Heaven.

Celestial lions appear as orichalcum lions polished to mirrored perfection, standing three yards tall at the shoulder, and are all nearly identical. Their incorruptibility does not mean they are not world-weary, however—millennia of policing the corrupt and petty have made even the most passionate lion cynical. They are proud, despite their exhaustion with the empty pomp of Heaven, and will devour those who do not pay them proper respect, which most gods except those of the highest rank are wont to do. When the situation demands it, they are empowered to command squads of lion dogs and scarab guardians.

Sanctum: Celestial lions all have small, luxurious mansions in Yu-Shan and eschew sanctums.

Motivation: To protect Yu-Shan from harm, with all that emphasis entails—the celestial lions are far less likely to be concerned about the gods, singly or in groups, than they are the health of the city as a whole.

Attributes: Strength 12, Dexterity 6, Stamina 10; Charisma 5, Manipulation 4, Appearance 5; Perception 5, Intelligence 4, Wits 6

Virtues: Compassion 1, Conviction 4, Temperance 4, Valor 4

Abilities: Athletics 5, Awareness 5, Bureaucracy 3, Dodge 5, Integrity 5, Investigation 4, Larceny 4, Linguistics (Native: Old Realm; Others: five others) 5, Lore 5, Martial Arts 5, Occult 5, Presence 5, Resistance 5, Stealth 3, Socialize 2, Survival 5, War 4

Backgrounds: Backing 3, Celestial Manse 3, Salary 4

Charms:

Bane Weapon—Against the enemies of Heaven
Bread of Weak Spirit
Essence Bite—Against foes who stand in the lion's path without surrendering
Essence Plethora (x3)
Hurry Home—Tactical Retreats.
Materialize—Costs 65 motes
Measure the Wind—Sizing up opponents and determining the rank of beings in their presence
Ox-Body Technique (x5)
Principle of Motion—Eight banked actions
Regalia of Authority—Against transgressors of Heaven's laws
Sheathing the Material Form—All-Encompassing
Spirit Cutting—Against spiritual foes
Stoke the Flame—When lives are threatened
Touch of Saturn—Under orders from superiors
First (Ability) Excellency—Awareness, Dodge, Integrity, Investigation, Martial Arts
Second (Ability) Excellency—Dodge, Investigation, Martial Arts
Third (Ability) Excellency—Dodge, Martial Arts
Divine (Ability) Subordination—Martial Arts and Occult, in the service of defending Heaven
All-Encompassing Divine (Ability) Subordination—Investigation

Join Battle: 11

Attacks:

Bite: Speed 5, Accuracy 11, Damage 19L/2, Parry DV -, Rate 1
Claws: Speed 4, Accuracy 12, Damage 17L/2, Parry DV 5, Rate 2
Clinch: Speed 6, Accuracy 11, Damage 12B*, Parry DV -, Rate 1
*When performing a crush action while clinching, celestial lions may elect to inflict lethal damage rather than bashing, through use of their bites

Soak: 30L/30B (Orichalcum Hide 25L/20B; Hardness: 10L/10B)

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

Dodge DV: 5 **Willpower:** 8

Essence: 5 **Essence Pool:** 120

Other Notes: None

Morgan Hillan (order #910970)

Gardener

Gardeners are a species of wood elemental, cousins to the artisans so common to the Wood Courts of Creation. Unlike the artisans, gardeners specialize in horticulture and take no greater pleasure than creating massive ornamental grounds that are pleasing to every sense—visually perfect examples of color and shape whose scents please even the most jaded nose, and each petal feels like some unearthly fabric to the touch, and where wind elementals and occult geography guarantee that the wind through the gardens sounds like the whispers of a long lost lover. Even taste comes into play—teas and meals are served in the centers of these gardens and the smell of spices and flowers are purposely cultivated to complement the meals served. Such is the aesthetic power of the greatest of gardens that high-level officials have gone to war over their creator's services. The best of these elementals wield immense power over the leaders of Heaven, and a few cunning visitors to Yu-Shan, despairing of approaching the heads of the Bureaus directly, gain the friendships of these artists for a leg up.

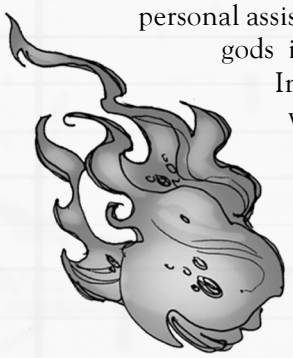
Gardeners appear as lithe humans made from a thousand intertwining vines, with flowers where hair should be. They make ornate costumes out of living plants for both themselves and their masters.

Sanctum: Gardeners typically live in abodes appropriate to their skill and fame—the greatest live in massive mansions where each room is a different garden. In one of these gardens, the gardener will keep a sanctum made of vine and petal.

Description: Gardeners are invariably Gods of the First Rank, but the best of their kind wield political power well beyond their status, whispering in the ears of Heaven's masters.

Lesser Elemental Dragon

Lesser elemental dragons are the highest ranked elementals routinely employed by the Celestial Order and because of this break the normal social rules for elementals. So potent are their powers and so elevated is their rank that all but the most powerful gods are unable to dismiss them as dim cousins as other elementals are so readily ignored. The only elementals more powerful than the lesser elemental dragons are so fearsome that each singly poses a threat to Creation. Almost every celestial censor is a lesser elemental dragon, but they also serve as leaders to many smaller branches of the Bureaus and as personal assistants to the most powerful gods in Heaven, including the Incarnae and the regional war gods. So it is that the lesser elemental dragons are the elite of the Celestial Bureaucracy and masters of the spirit courts of Creation.



Morgan Hillan (order #910970)

The lesser elemental dragons of Yu-Shan are, if anything, more supercilious than their counterparts who monitor Creation, if not quite so temperamental. They are all too aware of the prejudices of the gods of Yu-Shan against elementals, and many take special pleasure in insisting on proper forms of address. Manners are everything to these elementals, and every being that deals with them in even the least capacity should know exactly the proper modes of address and just how low to kowtow or be able to defend their disrespect with a show of political power or physical force capable of intimidating the dragon—and beings of such power are rare indeed.

Their natural forms are large, wingless, serpentine dragons with jewel-colored scales and fearsome claws on all of their limbs. They may also assume a humanoid form, which varies based on their personality—some choose to look like perfect humanoid sculptures of their element, while others appear as elementally-touched humans not unlike high-Essence Dragon-Blooded.

Summoning: Mortals and Exalted powerful, audacious, or foolish enough to summon one of these beings usually receive instead a response by a minion in the lesser elemental dragon's employ. If the minion feels the request merits the dragon's personal attention he will return to Heaven and plead the mortal's case for personal intervention.

Motivation: Every lesser elemental dragon possesses a unique motivation and outlook. Due to their elemental natures—or, some argue, their place in the upper ranks of the Celestial Order—many desire to see the status quo and the Heavenly Mandate continued and resist threats to that balance.

Attributes: Strength 7, Dexterity 6, Stamina 10, Charisma 4, Manipulation 5, Appearance 6, Perception 5, Intelligence 4, Wits 5

Virtues: Compassion 2, Conviction 5, Temperance 2, Valor 3

Abilities: Athletics 5, Awareness 5, Bureaucracy 6, Dodge 5, Integrity 5, Linguistics 5 (Native: Old Realm; Others: Any five others) 5, Lore 5, Martial Arts 4, Melee 5, Occult 5, Presence 5, Resistance 5, Socialize 3, War 3

Backgrounds: Backing 4, Celestial Manse 4, Contacts 3,

Charms: The following Charm list simulates an "average" lesser elemental dragon—the eldest and strongest may possess more. Because of their power and the wide range of tasks they are expected to perform, many have anywhere from three to ten All-Encompassing **Charms:**

Amethyst Authority, Blessed (Element) Rejuvenation, Chrysalis of Preservation, Dematerialize (85m), Destiny Sponsorship, Divine (Ability) Subordination (any three abilities), Claws of the Angry Dragon, Divine Decree, Domain Manipulation Scenario, Endowment, Geas, Hand of Destiny, Host of Spirits, Hurry Home, Loom Stride, Measure the Wind, Paralyze, Plague of Menaces, Ox-Body Technique (x7), Principle of Motion, Scourge, Signet of Authority, Symbol of Invincible Authority, Touch of Eternity, Touch of Saturn, Words of Power, and any number and type of Excellencies according to the lesser elemental dragon's position.

Join Battle: 10

Attacks:

Bite: Speed 5, Accuracy 10, Damage 11L, Defense 2, Rate 1

Clinch: Speed 6, Accuracy 10, Damage 7B, Rate 1

Claw: Speed 4, Accuracy 11, Damage 10L, Parry DV 5, Rate 2

Dragon's Suspire: Speed 6, Accuracy 11, Damage 4L, Range 10, Rate 1

Soak: 13L/26B (Dragon hide, 8L/16B; Hardness 10)

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

Dodge DV: 9 **Willpower:** 10

Essence: 7 **Essence Pool:** 120

Other Notes: Socially, lesser elemental dragons are considered equivalent to gods of the Fourth Rank, despite being more mystically and physically potent. Each one of them is unique and has spent centuries or millennia collecting artifacts, learning sorcery, and mastering ancient lore. No two of them will be alike except insofar as they are all immensely potent and their forms have coalesced into the shape that all elementals take as they grown in might. Storytellers are encouraged to give them personalized Charm sets and behaviors (**The Books of Sorcery Vol. IV—The Roll of Glorious Divinity I** has several examples of lesser elemental dragons who wander Creation, although the dragons of Yu-Shan will on the whole be less idiosyncratic in behavior but more potent, having access to all of the wonders of Heaven).

Minor Servant

Minor servants are ubiquitous elementals instrumental to the running of Yu-Shan. Tiny beings, they appear as glowing flames floating on the wind, friendly versions of wood spiders, whirling dust motes, collections of raindrops and diminutive humans made of soil. They create running water in mansions, warm their owner's offices, work as butlers and baggage-handlers, and keep rooms cool. Every mansion has dozens or hundreds of these beings working to keep the place in tip-top shape, and any

Morgan Hillan (order #910970)

visitor to Yu-Shan will be approached by several out of work minor servants who will see to their master's comfort in exchange for a few pieces of Ambrosia, finely crafted jade, or other trinkets. Visitors who promise to create a shrine to their minor servant in Creation will have that creature's loyalty for as long as the shrine exists.

Summoning: Minor servants are rarely summoned by mortals because they are of such limited use, lack the flash and power of a greater elemental servant, and still endure only the short elemental period of servitude. On the other hand, powerful summoners amongst the Exalted in times of leisure often summon minor servants to create running water, heated bedrooms, cold-rooms for food storage, and landscaping for their manses and palaces.

Description: Minor servants are always gods of the First Rank.

Pattern Spider

Pattern spiders are the creations of Autochthon, designed to automate the maintenance of the Loom of Fate. Each spider, regardless of rank, appears to be a mechanical spider made of cunningly wrought plates of the five magical materials, its clockwork head equipped with eight jade eyes of various colors. The smallest of the spiders is three feet in length, while August Weavers, mid-level manager units, are twice that size, and there are even larger, more senior spiders assisting the functionaries of the Bureau of Destiny with long-range forecasting and planning. The greatest of the spiders is Asna Firstborn, who was personally crafted by Autochthon and who possesses the power to create more of her kind.

Although the pattern spiders appear to be mechanical constructs, each is a god in its own right. They are capable of speaking, and when they do, their words have a buzzing, mechanical quality. They ignore most individuals who would speak to them unless those individuals are their superiors or one of the Sidereal Exalted.

The pattern spiders work tirelessly and unceasingly maintaining the Loom of Fate, and the lack of respite occasionally wears on them. Most pattern spiders demonstrate their displeasure for the lack of break from their duties by punishing the Sidereal Exalted whenever the opportunity arises and generally simmering in silent resentment. Rarely, once every few centuries a single pattern spider will become entranced by a particular pattern of the weave of the Loom of Fate, usually centered on an important individual. These spiders have been known to occasionally tamper with the Loom so as to bring these individuals into their presence, whereupon the spider finds some way to secret himself onto the object of their attraction. None outside of the spiders know of the times that a spider has gone missing and traveled with another being as a companion or familiar for years, his absence covered up by his fellows, until his companion passes away from old age, whereupon the spider makes his way back to the Loom, although surely such incidents can be counted on one hand throughout the whole of history.

Sanctum: The pattern spiders share a communal sanctum wrought into the crevasses of the Loom of Fate. No living being has ever seen its inside.

Description: Pattern spiders are gods of the First Rank, while the August Weavers are gods of the Third Rank.

Soul Collector

Soul collectors herd souls as a sheep dog herds sheep, flitting toward them and nudging them, collecting dozens at a time and then prodding them toward their destination in either the Underworld or the pool of Lethe. Particularly large scenes of death, such as battlefields and sites of genocide, often see flocks of soul collectors at work, although few beings actually possess the power to witness them about their task. Before the creation of the Underworld, this system was automated, and the cycle of reincarnation hardwired into the design of Creation. But with the sundering of the cycle of life and death that occurred when the first Primordial died in the great rebellion of the gods, the machineries in place failed. Beings like the soul collectors and their precursors were needed to shepherd souls to the Underworld because the system in place was no longer capable of working independently of divine intervention and the personal oversight of the Celestial Bureaucracy. If, for whatever reason, the soul collectors were removed from this process, the system would collapse further, speeding the destruction of Creation and starving the Underworld of new souls.

The soul collectors instinctively know how to sort through the souls to find which ones go where, for it is a product of the nature of the soul rather than a decree by any god or soul collector that determines whether or not a soul will reincarnate or persist as a shade. The soul collectors sole job is to escort the shades to their destination, for the system that would have made sure they arrived is now shattered. The soul collectors lack anything more than an animal intelligence, although they are geniuses at finding their way to a soul in need of herding

Morgan Hillan (order #910970)

toward the afterlife. Few beings, if any, have found a way to avoid the raven wings and grasping hand of the collectors.

The soul collectors answer only to Taru-Han within the Bureau of Heaven, and she occasionally uses her power to co-opt a soul before it reaches its destination—while the soul collectors are not capable of misplacing a soul or sending it to the wrong final destination, they are allowed to "delay" its arrival at Lethe or the Underworld at the behest of their superior.

The soul collectors are not the first such beings to be used for this purpose. Originally, the shadows of particularly dutiful mortals were carved away from their bodies at death in the first few years after the Primordial War and used as shepherds, as the soul collectors are today, but these beings—called sheut—were independent thinkers and soon began abusing their authority, accepting bribes to push a soul into an afterlife in the Underworld or take a soul destined for survival as a shade and forcing it into Lethe. Eventually, the sheut began plotting rebellion. After their mutiny, discovered by the Solars of the Night Caste and the Chosen of the Maiden of Endings, they were hunted down and bound in soulsteel chains by the Exalted. The sheut were then cast into a prison that lay within the great well at the center of Stygia, although not without some cost to the victors, for the Neverborn rest fitfully in their eternal slumber. The sheut lay there to this day. After the pogrom against them, a god was appointed to handle the matter, but his fate has been stricken from divine records and his name placed under a seal by the Maiden of Secrets.

Sanctum: Soul collectors rest in massive rookeries atop the Commission on Abstract Matters and Celestial Concerns. The quiet susurrus of their black feathers and the shuffling of their wings within their cages is a haunting sound indeed, and those few gods allowed to maintain their housing by Tau-Han are said to be disquieted by it.

Description: Soul collectors are strange creatures, appearing as a pair of raven wings joined to a featureless, feathered sphere from which juts a single dexterous arm.

Notable Celestial Personages

What follows is a list of some of the better known gods of Yu-Shan. It is by no means exhaustive, and as turmoil within the Celestial Bureaucracy is often an outgrowth of turmoil in Creation, the so-called immovable ruler of one department may be here one day and gone the next if something upsets the status quo outside of Yu-Shan (or within it).

Many gods belong to brotherhoods, secret societies, and societies for the advancement of their members. Where such societies bring something interesting to the game, they are discussed below. However, it is safe to assume that even the gods who do not have membership or control of such a society explicitly spelled out in their description either belong to or associate with others who belong to such an organization.

But What Do I *Do* With Them?

Storytellers should feel free to move gods out of certain positions and into others or do away with them entirely. This is a common sense extension of the Golden Rule. But as long as you're making changes to the Celestial Bureaucracy, why not make those changes an extension of your epic storyline? After all, characters that are shaking the pillars of the earth are also shaking the pillars of Heaven, and nothing establishes the significance of the changes that characters have wrought on the face of Creation quite like some god losing its damn job.

Witness how many divinities were demoted and promoted after the Great Contagion or the Usurpation, then ponder what awaits the halls of power now that your player characters are conquering city-states and overthrowing spirit courts. Now-unemployed gods are probably looking for payback, and newly promoted successors are looking to encourage the characters to keep doing whatever it is they're doing. So maybe you don't want Burnished Talon and the Hierarchy of Function clogging up the Bureau of Nature, that doesn't mean he can't end up an enemy of the Circle for some interference in his plans.

In addition, even if a Storyteller wants to use the divinities of Yu-Shan exactly as presented here, she should establish exactly how the characters' actions have affected how the gods view them. Characters who lay waste to whole cities will earn the gratitude of the god of ruins while earning the ire of the gods of civilization. Each will want to encourage, redirect, or manipulate the characters to their own ends.

Nothing cements your player characters' position as the most important figures in your game like seeing the effects of their actions reflected in the eyes of Heaven.

Morgan Hillan (order #910970)

Amoth City-Smiter

Amoth City-Smiter is the God of Tumbled Ruins, although his official position is Sub-Director of Bribery and Finance in the Bureau of Humanity. He covets Wun Ja's position as head of the Bureau and has begun undermining her by discreetly lending intelligence and spiritual support to the Lunar Exalted of the more radical branches of the Silver Pact. In turn, the Lunar Exalted strengthen Amoth and weaken Wun Ja by turning towns and cities into smoking ruins and forcing the survivors to join the barbarous tribes under the Lunar's control, live as slaves, or fall to the knife. Oddly enough, this method of undermining his superior, while destabilizing the borders of reality and leaving atrocities across the landscape of Creation, allows Amoth to guarantee a peaceful transition to a new rank in Yu-Shan. If his plan succeeds, Wun Ja's power will simply be eclipsed by his, and a promotion will be inevitable. A happy side effect, of course, is that numerous Wyld tribes on the warpath across the Threshold have started small cults in Amoth's name, granting him more Essence as his plans succeed.

However, hints of his plan have been uncovered by Fleeting Maelstrom, one of Implacable Shining Barrator's best investigators. Although most gods only give lip service to the Celestial laws against meddling in Creation's affairs, Amoth's efforts run the risk of destabilizing reality and leaving the Threshold open to attack by the Fair Folk. Amoth is now desperately seeking allies—or pawns—who can be used to either cover up his misdeeds or remove Fleeting Maelstrom.

Amoth has a massive, ruined mansion in Heaven but spends most of his free time wandering Creation's ruins. He takes such a personal interest in the ruins of First Age cities that he has been known to assault treasure hunters and Scavenger Lords who attempt to build cities on top of the ruins of First Age metropolises and relies on his Lunar allies or dogs of the unbroken earth—who answer to him, amongst other superiors—to mete out justice to those who attempt to either rebuild the ruins or clean them from the face of the earth.

Motivation: To see all of Creation rubble, and all its inhabitants living in it.

Description: Amoth is a god of the Fourth Rank, although his growing cult, the expansion of his domain, and his potential promotion put him on the cusp of the Fifth Rank. Amoth takes the form of man with the lower body of a great serpent.

Virtues: Compassion 1, Conviction 4, Temperance 2, Valor 2

Essence: 6

Asna Firstborn

Asna Firstborn is the first pattern spider, handcrafted by the Primordial Autochthon. She is massive, three-yards long, forged from all five magical materials, and so beautifully wrought as to make anyone with the least knowledge of craft or art gasp at her wonder. Autochthon did not entrust the gods with the secret of creating new spiders, but neither did he have the time nor interest in populating the Loom of Fate by his own craft, so he created in Asna the ability to spawn the pattern spiders from her mechanical womb. Although many Sidereals and gods think the pattern spiders are a finite commodity, believing that the power that allowed her to populate the Loom was a one-time act, the truth is that Asna can create any number of spiders, any time she wants. Those few who know that she retains this power wonder what other fail safes and abilities Autochthon built into her.

Asna is quiet and unassuming, like all of her progeny, but as the Sidereals and gods slide into conflict and corruption, she sometimes wonders if she should begin to insert new directives into the pattern spiders as they weave the Loom. The more paranoid Sidereals wonder if she already does this, believing that anomalies in the Loom are Asna's doing. However, these are idle thoughts on Ansa's part, and she would need some great push before she made them a reality—another cataclysm that threatened the whole of Creation, perhaps, or the return of her creator.

Motivation: Asna is focused with maintaining the Loom of Fate and the pattern spiders who operate it at maximum efficiency.

Description: Asna is a god of the Fourth Rank, and in addition to the normal powers of a god of that rank, she can also create more pattern spiders, a unique ability that no other god or Exalt has been able to duplicate. In addition, few if any individuals in Heaven have a greater knowledge of the workings of the Loom of Fate or the designs of Heaven on the destinies of individuals. Finally, she also has the ability to completely sever a being from the warp and weft of the Loom, although this is a secret she keeps to herself. Some Sidereals suspect it, but they keep such fears to themselves, worrying about what a Pattern Bite from Asna herself would cost them if they upset the current status quo through fearful utterances.

Virtues: Compassion 2, Conviction 6, Temperance 2, Valor 2

Essence: 6

Morgan Hillan (order #910970)

Blue Crest Merchant

Blue Crest Merchant is the God of Naval Trade and works under Ruvia, Captain of the Golden Barque and God of Roads. He was the God-Blooded child of the last god who held that position and a mortal woman whose beauty had entranced him. Blue Crest Merchant spent decades building a mighty trading empire in the West and strengthening his father's domain until his father granted him immortality as a god in exchange for Blue Crest Merchant's ceding his empire to the Guild, which in those bygone years had only just begun to expand in the West.

Of course, life as the master of a trading empire was far more gratifying than the prospect of eternity as his father's lackey, and after centuries of boredom and the occasional humiliation or empty promotion until he occupied a position just below his father, Blue Crest Merchant had had enough. He approached the Architects of the Empty Vault and had his father murdered. The Architects guaranteed that he rose into his father's position, despite the prejudices against those born as mortals, and in exchange Blue Crest Merchant has aided his fellow Architects over the years in their own promotions.

Blue Crest Merchant, to everyone's surprise, has been incredibly successful expanding the domain. The Guild, the Realm's navies and shipping interests, the Silver Prince, and the islands of the West all do a brisk trade with one another, and every year his domain expands further. Two things mar his success—the Lintha and the encroaching Wyld.

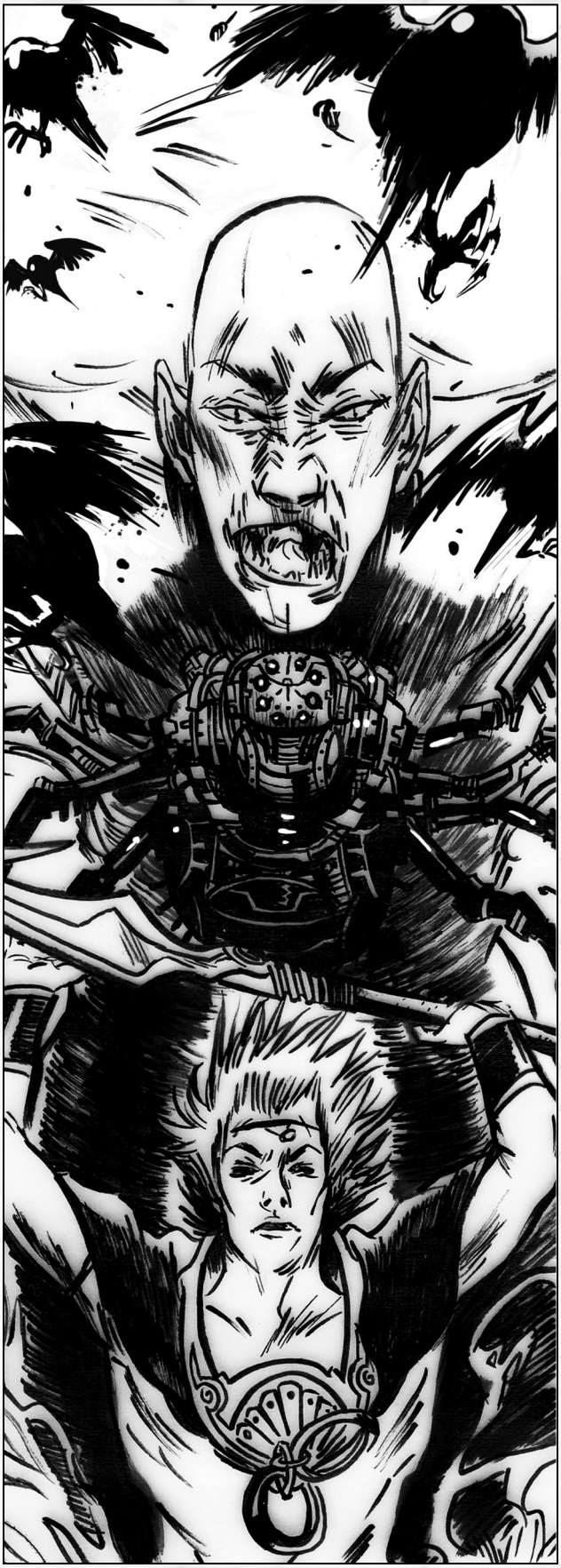
Motivation: Blue Crest Merchant sees the arrival of the Solar Exalted as just the thing he needs to expand the borders of Creation and remove random elements from "his" West, and he now—along with some of his fellow Architects—plots to entice a Circle of Solar Exalted into taking on the Demon-Blooded pirates and the Western Fair Folk while covertly providing the Lawgivers with support. If ancient threats like the Brass Leviathan, the Lunar called Leviathan, or other threats to Western trade pop up, he will deal with them as well.

Description: Blue Crest Merchant is a god of the Third Rank, and while his personal power is nothing for higher-ranked gods to fear, his ambition, contacts, and vision make him a threat to many gods above him in the bureaucracy.

Other Notes: Blue Crest Merchant will not hesitate to make use of the Architects of the Empty Vault, nor they him, and Exalted new to Heaven looking to gain allies may do well to allow Blue Crest Merchant to prod them into taking on his enemies in the West.

Virtues: Compassion 2, Conviction 4, Temperance 2, Valor 3

Essence: 4



Morgan Hillan (order #910970)

Burnished Talon

Burnished Talon is Daimyo of Mammalian Predators and Shogun of Hierarchy of Function within the Bureau of Nature. He is also something of an *enfant terrible* in Yu-Shan, pushing the Bureau of Nature to use the long-discarded functional taxonomy; using his underlings to breed new races of animal via Charms and exposure to the Wyld and then introduce them to Creation, hoping they breed true; and importing innumerable breeds of animal into Yu-Shan as fad dictates and leaving the fate of such animals to their fickle owners, thus creating frequent population explosions of escaped predators—who then lurk in the various disused territories of the city.

While Burnished Talon is the leader of a hopeless movement within a disused Bureau, he is able to accomplish his whims because he is, simply, incredibly charismatic. He fetes everyone possible, does favors for anyone who asks, and always throws the best parties. In addition, his numerous misadventures make for fantastic stories. Perhaps if he seriously attempted to climb the ladder of the Celestial Bureaucracy, his sins would be held against him, but the fact that his position and philosophy essentially doom him to a future without promotion means that he's a threat to no one, except the sanity of the gods who have to put up with him in the Bureau of Nature.

Burnished Talon always carries with him at least one unique pet, snuck in past the quarantines of the celestial lions and bred in the Wyld or by his engineers. He craves novelty and new animals, and any beings of Creation who would gain his valuable friendship—and access to his contacts—need only use sorcery or their wiles to create or track down some new species.

Motivation: Burnished Talon is a lively fellow who seeks only to make an eternity trapped within a dead-end position in Yu-Shan *entertaining*.

Description: Burnished Talon appears as a handsome mortal man of perfect physique and joyous demeanor, although the nature of his form shifts from century to century—he currently appears as a man from the deepest South, with sun-bleached blonde hair and striking blue eyes within his chalcedony skin. He is a God of the Fourth Rank.

Virtues: Compassion 3, Conviction 2, Temperance 2, Valor 4

Essence: 6

Flashing Peak

Flashing Peak is God of the Imperial Mountain and Shogun of the Hierarchy of Type in the Bureau of Nature. As the god of the most visible landmark in Creation, she is the most powerful deity in her bureau and one of the most powerful deities in Yu-Shan. However, she is inflexible, refusing to admit that times have changed since the First Age, thus relegating her to leadership of the least powerful Bureau in Heaven. She would be capable of forcing her way into a position of power in one of the other Bureaus if her political opponents had not pushed Burnished Talon into leadership of the other hierarchy that contends for control of the Bureau of Nature, creating an opponent that is tailor-made to garner Flashing Peak's ire and keep her focused on issues in her own backyard rather than on her ambitions elsewhere. Burnished Talon's troublemaking and flagrant disregard for propriety means that Flashing Peak is kept ever occupied, but her rigid adherence to the ancient models of intra-Bureau etiquette also means she is unable to simply frame him or have him murdered out of hand.

Flashing Peak appears a beautiful, eight-foot tall woman carved of polished basalt. In Heaven, she is surrounded by supporters who believe, as she does, that if they unflinchingly refuse to accept that Yu-Shan is decayed and corrupt, by sheer dint of will and example they may bring back the glory days of the Celestial Bureaucracy. She has been distracted, however, by a recent obsession with Ragara Jazir, a Dragon-Blood who she deigned sup with one evening while he attempted to climb her mountain's steepest face. She suddenly finds herself torn between her unflinching rigidity and her desire for this Dynast and through him, a newfound interest in the future of the Realm. The factions of Yu-Shan interested in the survival of the Realm have a potential inroad into Flashing Peak's favor.

When she is not in Yu-Shan, Flashing Peak keeps a massive sanctum on the Imperial Mountain. In Heaven, she resides in a mansion the size of a small city whose spires mirror her mountain's silhouette.

Motivation: Flashing Peak wants to live in a Yu-Shan unriven by politics and untainted by corruption or pettiness.

Description: Flashing Peak is a god of the Fifth Rank.

Virtues: Compassion 2, Conviction 5, Temperance 4, Valor 4

Essence: 9

Morgan Hillan (order #910970)

The Blind Mountain Society

The Blind Mountain Society is the name whispered by the enemies of Flashing Peak and those who follow her in living their lives as though Yu-Shan were not a corrupt and massively inefficient bureaucracy and instead the tightly functioning engine of government that existed in the High First Age. None of these naysayers would dare utter this name in front of the Blind Mountain Society's faces, since they tend, on the whole, to be ancient and puissant gods of the Fourth and Fifth Ranks, although a few shoguns and mandarins of equal rank will occasionally point out that though the Celestial Bureaucracy undoubtedly functioned more smoothly in the First Age, it was still something less than the idealized society Flashing Peak makes it out to be.

Sidereals of the Bronze Faction and their divine allies worry that the return of the Solar Exalted might put ideas in Flashing Peak and her allies' heads. Moderates amongst the Bronze doubt that Flashing Peak would ally with a group opposed to the current inhabitants of the Blessed Isle, but the more extreme members of the faction plan on playing on her nascent romance with the Ragara Dynast who has caught her eye. The Gold Faction has not sought the Blind Mountain Society's aide, as to earn it they would have to be willing to cede far more power to the Solars insofar as Heaven's operations are concerned than they intend to.

Ghataru

Ghataru is Shogun-Regent of the Seasons and Weather, Warlord of the Aerial Legion, and head of the Celestial Monitors of the Seasons and Weather, known now in this corrupt age as the Bureau of Seasons. Ghataru controls the mechanical aspects of the weather in Creation and is warlord of the Aerial Legion, making him one of the most powerful gods in Heaven—in theory. In practice, Ghataru views himself as a loyal subject acting under the Mandate of Heaven and a mere placeholder for the Solar Exalted, so he limits his activities to occasionally relieving droughts in Creation and keeping the weather just random enough to guarantee prayers to his Bureau. Because of his reliability and unwillingness to demonstrate his power, his Bureau is seen as useless and outdated. But now, with the return of the Solar Exalted, all of Yu-Shan waits to see how Ghataru will react if one of the Solar Exalted asks Ghataru to cede command of the Aerial Legion or the Bureau to her.

Ghataru does not know what he will do if—or more accurately, *when*—that event takes place. He, like many members of Flashing Peak's derisively nicknamed Blind Mountain Society, believes that Yu-Shan in the First Age was an ideal worth fighting for, and it is in the name of that ideal that he has bided these long centuries without utilizing his full power. Unlike many members of the Blind Mountain Society, he understands that the Yu-Shan of today is a beautiful fruit rotted and worm-ridden from the inside and that there is no guarantee the newly reborn Solar Exalted will have the power or the wisdom to utilize his weapons. His hesitancy and his personal might as warlord of the Aerial Legion keep his foes from simply assassinating him out of hand or dispatching him in a coup. As it stands, the Bronze Faction presses him daily for use of his forces in dispatching the Solar Exalted, while other gods search for a Solar worthy enough in Ghataru's eyes that he would cede the Bureau. Ghataru himself waits.

Ghataru has quietly thrown covert support behind the Gold Faction to see if they can produce a Solar Exalted capable of taking over his role, but he is suspicious of the Sidereals and wonders if it might not be better if he or one of his underlings undertook the task themselves. To that end, he has a small group of gods looking in the Threshold for a Circle that would be capable of living up to Ghataru's expectations. What he does with them then is anyone's guess, but one thing is certain: their path will not be easy. Ghataru has waited centuries for this opportunity and has never in all that time succumbed to the temptation his power represents. His successor would have to be at least as worthy.

Ghataru appears as a muscular black giant with four arms, wearing ornately carved armor in whose reflection one can see flashes of lightning and the movement of massive thunderheads. He is bald, and his eyes reflect no light, making him appear inscrutable. He does not smile easily, and when he worries, which is often of late, he rubs the palm of his hand with his thumb. Ghataru resides in Spartan apartments within the Bureau's buildings now, concerned that his foes will attempt to assassinate him before he has a chance to decide whether or not to cede power to the Chosen of the Sun. His apartments, and anywhere else he travels, are always guarded by thunderbirds, huraka, and celestial lions. Before the current chaos, he dwelled in a massive country home on the eastern edge of Yu-Shan when not at work.

Morgan Hillan (order #910970)

Ghataru is aware of his subordinate Nasri's affection for him but unaware of the conflict it has torn in her soul. He has not allowed himself to consider whether or not he would permit himself to love her if he ever steps down, but does feel genuine affection for her nonetheless.

Motivation: Ghataru desires the smooth operation of the Celestial Mandate, with Exalted ruling, the Bureaucracy smoothly functioning, and himself retired or acting as an advisor to the new head of the Bureau of Seasons.

Description: Ghataru is a god of the Fifth Rank, but his personal power and the lore at his command, not to mention the military might he commands with a whisper, all mean that he is one of the most powerful gods in Yu-Shan short of the Incarnae themselves.

Virtues: Compassion 2, Conviction 4, Temperance 5, Valor 5

Essence: 8

Golden Reverie

Golden Reverie is the God of Euphoria and one of the chief gods in charge of the Cerulean Lute of Harmony. While he officially answers to Yaogin the Fair, the head of the office, and his two subordinates Uvanavu, the God of Health, and Livilla, Goddess of Prostitution, Golden Reverie has cunningly managed to gain control of all three. He feeds Yaogin a steady diet of powerful soporifics that keep him in a stuporous trance while pitting Livilla and Uvanavu against one another. Both Livilla and Uvanavu follow their lieutenant's suggestions rather than allow one another to control the fate of the department while Yaogin attends to his own pleasures.

Golden Reverie's goal is simple: he desires the world to rely on drugs for ecstatic pleasure, since actually

Morgan Hillan (order #910970)

arranging for the miserable curs that populate Creation to feel genuine pleasure without chemicals is, in his opinion, an impossible task. He supports the Guild's efforts to addict whole populaces to their products, encourages House Cynis's ambitions and dictates the goals of the division so that they focus on only the basest conceptions of joy. He has even bribed divinities in the offices of the Loom of Fate to hide the Guild's Beasts of Resplendent Liquid from official view and works tirelessly to stop any effort by the Sidereals or other gods to put a stop to the Guild's drug trades.

Unfortunately, the chaos in the Threshold and the crusades of both the death-cults—promising eternal pleasure in death—and the newly returned moralists amongst the Lunar and Solar Exalted pose a threat to Golden Reverie's plans. However, none of them as yet suspect that Golden Reverie, the cleverly hidden inferior of the gods in charge of bringing serenity to the masses, would be the architect of plots against them. And because of that, the temperate and moralistic powers in Creation are in constant danger of Golden Reverie, who will stop at nothing to bring an end to them and their efforts. To better serve his aims, Golden Reverie has created numerous pleasure domes within Yu-Shan where he plies gods of lower rank through subordinates in order to gain control of them. While the pleasure domes themselves are not illegal in this decadent age, if the truth of Golden Reverie's massive interference with Creation reached the ears of Sidereal auditors or celestial lions, his whole plan would unravel, and he would surely be soulforged into some trinket.

Motivation: Golden Reverie wishes to spread euphoria across Creation by the spread of drugs.

Description: Golden Reverie is a God of the Fourth Rank but is currently in effective control of his division, having the ear of gods far more powerful than he.

Virtues: Compassion 1, Conviction 5, Temperance 2, Valor 2

Essence: 4

Hran-Tzu

Hran-Tzu is the God of Decay, the Raven King, Executive Director of the Office on Rot and Deterioration. His office falls under the purview of at least three different supervisors in the Bureau of Humanity, Seasons, and Destiny, all of whom consult him on matters that affect his area of expertise while simultaneously keeping an eye on him. Hran-Tzu's power has grown since the end of the First Age and reached its peak at the end of the Great Contagion, when all of Creation was one massive charnel pit. Hran-Tzu has managed to hold on to most of his power in the ensuing years as Creation's cities and peoples pass on.

Hran-Tzu's sub-ministers and servants all know that few in Yu-Shan despise the inhabitants of the Underworld as much as their master. He works tirelessly to counter the plans of the Deathlords and studies them whenever he gets the chance. He views their eternal limbo as anathema to his own place in the circle of life, death, decay, and rebirth. More specifically, he sees their death-cult's tendency to preserve the remains of the dead (partly to celebrate their passing, more pragmatically to create sturdy houses for nemissaries) as a personal affront. Hran-Tzu funnels support to those who fight the Deathlords and works in laboratories to unravel the puzzle of Abyssal Exaltation. He has even approached Lytek for aid in this endeavor. Hran-Tzu's research has led him to suspect that the pelagials of the City of Shining Reefs (see **The Compass of Terrestrial Directions, Vol. II—The West**, p. 123) and their sleeping princes represent some link to the dead Primordials. Hran-Tzu is desperate to convince willing gods, heroic mortals, or Exalts who could travel into the city to see for themselves what secrets lay in those quiet tombs and report back to him.

His efforts to unravel the secrets of the dead have led some faction in Yu-Shan to move against him, although he has no idea who. This group has begun to wage a war of rumors against Hran-Tzu, trapping him in repeated audits. Hran-Tzu is now little trusted by his superiors, for they now ironically see his purview as too linked to death, and thus the Underworld, the Neverborn, and the Deathlords. He has, in effect, been tarred with the same brush as Wayang, but given the prevalence of Hran-Tzu's domain, he wields too much power to be simply ostracized or shuffled into another position. Hran-Tzu does not know the size or scope of the forces arrayed against him but knows for certain that they answer to the Neverborn—the Primordials apparently still have their hands in Yu-Shan, even through the veil of death.

Such is Hran-Tzu's personal power that he managed to arrange that a behemoth be brought into Yu-Shan as a pet for his mansion, requiring the creation of at least one new kind of artifact as well as bending whole departments into researching whether such a thing was allowable, and if so, which permits were necessary and how to get them. The behemoth, the Ur-Snake, is a kind of massive proto-serpent a quarter of a mile long, as much worm as snake, with fifty heads and two-dozen tails. Those in the Celestial

Morgan Hillan (order #910970)

Bureaucracy who see behemoths as an abomination plot to rid Yu-Shan of the Ur-Snake, but Hran-Tzu has so far managed to block their attempts. The Ur-Snake guards Hran-Tzu's personal mansion and has devoured several assassins who work for the shadowy forces that oppose him.

Motivation: Hran-Tzu wants the cycle of life, death, decay, and reincarnation to function as smoothly as possible, and for all aberrations to be excised from the Engine of Creation.

Description: Hran-Tzu is a god of the Third Rank on paper, but the numerous apocalyptic events that have befallen Creation over the years means that his personal power is equal to that of a Fourth Rank divinity. At his personal peak, he was the equal of a God of the Fifth Rank. He appears as a set of empty funeral cerements surrounded by flapping and cawing ravens, who quiet when his voice emanates from his clothes.

Virtues: Compassion 1, Conviction 4, Temperance 3, Valor 3

Essence: 5

Hu Dai Liang

Hu Dai Liang is the Shogun of the Crimson Banner and Lord General of the Division of Battles. She is one of the greatest warriors in Heaven and is one of the main sources of military knowledge for the Bronze Faction, whom she aided in the Usurpation with advice and knowledge. Since then, she has whole-heartedly supported the armies of the Realm and has used the Scarlet Empire to pursue her philosophy of change through war and violence.

Her decision to support the Bronze Faction has meant that she is currently scrambling to keep ahead of the changes in Creation. The disappearance of the Scarlet Empress and the brewing civil war in the Realm mean that Hu Dai Liang is caught between her support of the Realm and her role as god of war—if she staves off war for too long, she risks losing face and potentially being replaced by one of her many ambitious underlings. If she pushes the Realm into war, her longtime Sidereal allies will turn on her. She is currently at a loss how to handle the situation, which must be dealt with carefully, but she has decided that if need be, she will betray the Bronze Faction. She has begun sending trusted agents into the Realm who stand ready to either try to stave off war, or begin it, depending on her final decision.

Motivation: Hu Dai Liang wishes to keep her grasp on her personal and political power, usually through promotion of her domain, but by other means if necessary.

Description: Hu Dai Liang is a beautiful woman with gorgeous butterfly wings of rose and crimson, edged in black. She is never without her red lacquered armor and spear with blood-red pennant. Her weapon changes length at whim, from a scepter to a battle pike.

Hu Dai Liang is a god of the Fourth Rank, but her prominent position as a supporter of the Bronze Faction means that she wields considerable political power and enjoys commensurate status.

Virtues: Compassion 1, Conviction 2, Temperance 2, Valor 5

Essence: 6

Itzcalimon

Itzcalimon is the God of Blackmail and Divine Resources Supervisor for the Bureau of Secrets under Nara-O. Like many gods in Yu-Shan, it enjoys wielding power in Creation—in Itzcalimon's case, it does so by collecting secrets belonging to various factions and then pressuring vulnerable leaders to do as it wants. Itzcalimon currently supports Houses Iselsi and Cynis, the former because their secrets make them incredibly vulnerable to its specific brand of leverage, the latter because no other house is quite so good at discovering the vulnerabilities of others and exploiting them. At the same time, to cover its bases, Itzcalimon supports the Gold Faction of the Sidereals, on the off chance that the Dragon-Blooded Dynasts are riven and scattered, where their sins will make them suitable targets for blackmail and pawns in Itzcalimon's plans.

Itzcalimon was once a god of the Southern plains, but he was promoted to God of Blackmail by the Maiden of Secrets after his predisposition for exploiting the weaknesses of others became apparent to the Bureaus. His drive to dominate others is rooted in his own dark secrets—Itzcalimon is one of the gods who has been compromised by the Ebon Dragon, at the end of the war against the Primordials. The Yozi spared Itzcalimon's life in exchange for binding oaths which bent his will utterly to his new master, so thoroughly that even after the Ebon Dragon's capture and imprisonment, Itzcalimon is still his pawn. It is the Ebon Dragon's nature and purpose to test the limits of his prison, and beings like Itzcalimon give him the opportunity to operate in Yu-Shan and Heaven freely even while eternally bound by an oath on his own name. When the Ebon Dragon bids Itzcalimon to perform a task, the broken divinity has no choice, and so thorough is his abasement that he can no longer even dream of resisting his master's will.

Morgan Hillan (order #910970)

Motivation: Itzcalimon wants power over others through their secrets, and through that power, to protect his own secrets from discovery or being used against him.

Description: Itzcalimon is a god of the Third Rank, although there is no limit to what buried powers the Ebon Dragon has wrought into his soul. Itzcalimon appears as a writhing mass of serpents in the form of a humanoid, usually clothed in the finest outfits money can buy.

Virtues: Compassion 1, Conviction 1, Temperance 2, Valor 3

Essence: 4

Laughing Ragamuffin

Laughing Ragamuffin is the God of Smuggling, working under Ruvia, Captain of the Golden Barque, serving the Maiden of Journeys. Laughing Ragamuffin has been the primary sponsor of the Guild over the years, although he also supports any organized attempt at smuggling. Laughing Ragamuffin answers prayers, and those who sacrifice an item of great personal value at a shrine hand-built in his honor may be awarded with dreams that show the smuggler the quickest and safest road through a blockade or monitoring operation.

Laughing Ragamuffin craves Ruvia's position and would cede his considerable authority with the Guild to whoever aided him in achieving his goals. Unfortunately, gods invested in subsidiary Guild efforts—such as Golden Reverie and his interest in the Guild's drug dealing—do not want to upset the status quo. Laughing Ragamuffin is aware of the resistance to his efforts at self-advancement and, knowing of Ruvia's forays into the Threshold on donkey-back, is planning to use his contacts in the smuggling world to move cats paws into Ruvia's path and arrange matters so a fatal battle is inevitable. These unsuspecting dupes will know nothing of Laughing Ragamuffin, so will not be traced back to him if they aren't successful; if they do succeed, Laughing Ragamuffin will be the only god in the highest ranks of his division ready to move into the Captaincy.

Motivation: Laughing Ragamuffin is concerned with his domain only insofar as it allows him to be eligible for promotion.

Description: Laughing Ragamuffin is a god of the Third Rank. He should be a god of the Fourth Rank by all rights, but Ruvia's efforts at limiting the ambitions of his subordinates by splitting the executive positions within the Barque to daytime and nighttime shifts means that Laughing Ragamuffin has been cheated of his rightful place in the hierarchy. Laughing Ragamuffin appears as a mad and precocious child, dressed in ragged finery.

Morgan Hillan (order #910970)

Virtues: Compassion 2, Conviction 4, Temperance 2, Valor 2
Essence: 4

Livilla

Livilla is God of Prostitutes, Right Hand to Yaogin the Fair, Bearer of the Lapis Ewer. Livilla is currently enmeshed in conflict with the Left Hand of Yaogin, Uvanavu. Much of this conflict stems from their support for different factions of Sidereals—as God of Prostitutes, Livilla is a proud supporter of the Bronze Faction, as the Solar Exalted's reign and the prosperity that went along with it meant that there were very few people who felt compelled to prostitute themselves out of hunger or poverty. The Dragon-Bloods and their atavistic desires to reproduce meant that under their control, Creation always had a need for prostitutes, ranging from high-end courtesans to downtrodden rent-boys. In addition, the conflict between the two is fueled by Golden Reverie, who serves both the Right and the Left Hand.

Livilla has decided that, to break the stalemate with Uvanavu, she will give herself wholly to the Bronze Faction. If they help her remove her rival, she will use her wiles and skills to shift Yaogin's addiction from Golden Reverie's drugs to her own sensual gifts, effectively gaining control of Yaogin and thus the entire division in the name of Kejak and his allies.

Motivation: Livilla wants nothing more than to see sex as commoditized as possible, and for Creation's political and economic state to be well suited to such transactions.

Description: Livilla is a powerful divinity of the Third Rank. She is a beautiful humanoid who bears both male and female genitalia and dresses in provocative clothing custom tailored to show off her best features, male and female. Despite her hermaphroditic nature, she prefers others refer to her with the feminine pronoun.

Virtues: Compassion 1, Conviction 4, Temperance 1, Valor 3
Essence: 4

Luranume

Luranume is the Master of Fivefold Luck, the Lord of Auspicious Surprises, and the Second Syndic of Whitewall. Officially, his office is located in the Bureau of Destiny, but Luranume is the only god in the organization who does not report to the Five Maidens. Instead, he acts as an independent manager able to call on the Bureau's resources and reallocate manpower but answers only to the Incarna Luna, who uses him as a check against the Maidens.

When the Bureau of Destiny was put into place, Luna called upon Autochthon to create a being that would serve as her agent within the Celestial Bureaucracy. Luranume was the answer, a chaotic force housed in a physical form and whose power was insinuated into the whole of Creation. Opponents of Luranume claim that he is a force of chaos in the orderly weft of the Loom of Fate; his proponents claim that he introduces necessary randomness into Creation and thus keeps it from falling into stagnation.

Luranume is a strange god. He never answers prayers to him in his role as Master of Fivefold Luck, although he works tirelessly for the betterment of Whitewall. He has been known to show up on battlefields and in times of trouble, shifting the balance of power discreetly through the use of his mastery of chance. Every general knows the adage concerning how the battle was loss for want of a shoe, but Luranume represents the opposite side of the coin—how the shape of history changes due to some minor fluke.

Motivation: Luranume's motivation is two-fold: to use his powers of coincidence and luck to make Creation a better place with the minimal effort, especially Whitewall—using the proverbial want of a shoe to win battles for progressive elements—and when Creation is in its darkest hour, to fulfill the destiny whispered in his ear by Luna and Gaia at the moment of his creation. Complicating matters is that even Luranume does not know exactly what that purpose is and will not discover it until the moment is right.

Description: Luranume is a god of the Fourth Rank, although he possesses a number of powers that other gods do not, including the ability to interface with the Loom of Fate. He has never used this power, but in effect it would give him access to something akin to Sidereal astrology.

Virtues: Compassion 3, Conviction 2, Temperance 4, Valor 2
Essence: 5

Luxana

Luxana is the Goddess of Recorded Knowledge and serves under Nara-O as one of its lieutenants in the Bureau of Destiny. She is a prim goddess, formalistic and intent on using the current chaos outside of Yu-Shan to lay the groundwork with whichever group comes to power in Creation. She dreams of a world in which literacy is universal, and not simply for charitable reasons—it is Luxana's nature to know every fact recorded in written form, so she hopes that a new renaissance and universal literacy will bring her

Morgan Hillan (order #910970)

Autochthon?

Astute observers of Celestial politics have often asked why Autochthon, instead of Gaia, was drafted into creating Luranume for Luna. Luna has a closer relationship with Gaia, dating from before the overthrow of the Primordials, and if Luna is playing at some secret strategy, it would seem logical for her to trust her long-time lover.

The truth of the matter is that Autochthon and Gaia had equal hands in Luranume's construction. Autochthon was chosen because no being knew the Loom of Fate better, and Luna depended on Luranume's powers of coincidence and surprise to interface perfectly with the work of the pattern spiders. At the same time, Luranume is connected to Creation in a way different from that of other gods, and this connection was granted to him by none other than Gaia herself.

Luranume had become the topic of discussion by the Twilights of the late First Age, and several of them were very close to discovering exactly how he was constructed and in what way he connected to the fundament of reality. Theories abounded, including talk of his powers being a backdoor into the weaving of the Loom of Fate. One theory posited that hidden within his design was a key to restarting—or even reformatting—the Engine of Creation which sewed reality from raw Wyld matter. Sadly, a month before these Exalted were to release their top-secret findings to the Deliberative, they were butchered to a one in the Usurpation, and their encoded notes were burned by the Dragon-Blooded and Sidereals who knew nothing of their import.

to near omnipotence, buoying her past Nara-O in the hierarchy, and allowing her to overthrow it without ever actually betraying it (Like many of the gods who serve Nara-O, she knows that a plan to betray it would be patently obvious to a god with its abilities.).

To that end, Luxana lends discreet support to various forces in Creation—Scavenger Lords, Twilight caste Solar Exalted, No Moon Lunar Exalted, and scholarly Dragon-Blooded. Particularly progressive regimes (not exactly thick on the ground anywhere in Creation) also garner her whole-hearted support when they show up.

Luxana fears the Time of Tumult. Every time Creation has suffered an apocalyptic event, the course of knowledge has been set back, and in some ways permanently diminished. Much knowledge common in the First Age is known only to a handful of people today, many of whom refuse to teach it to others or commit it to writing because learning is a valuable commodity. She greatly fears the coming conflicts and does not know whether to throw in her lot with the Bronze Faction and support the status quo or some other group. Recently, while in Creation, Luxana was approached by an emissary of the Walker in Darkness, who sought to persuade her that knowledge does not perish in the Underworld and that she may be better served by aiding the cause of the dead. She declined the invitation then, but her curiosity has been piqued.

Motivation: Luxana hopes to circumvent another cataclysmic event in Creation that may destroy or setback the course of human knowledge.

Description: Luxana is a god of the Fourth Rank. She appears as a porcelain-skinned woman in severe robes, surrounded by dozens of servitor spirits who each carry a tome or scroll. She need only gesture and the right book is brought before her, carrying whatever information she needs. A side effect of her rank and power, which she does not discuss, is that she knows the location of every book in Heaven and Creation.

Other Notes: Luxana's librarian spirits are gods of the First Rank and appear as flapping cherubs with tomes chained to their wrists.

Virtues: Compassion 3, Conviction 4, Temperance 2, Valor 1

Essence: 5

Lytek

Lytek is the Right Hand of Power and God of Exaltation. Because Dragon-Blooded Exaltation is passed through the blood, he does not control which Terrestrial Exalted will take the Second Breath, but he does control the time of their Exaltation. As far as Celestial Exaltation is concerned, while he cannot truly control who Exalts, he can manifest discreet and minor influence over the event, and he regulates what memories carry from incarnation to incarnation. He prunes the dross of previous existences from the Exaltations, choosing which memories cling to the shard of power. When a Celestial Exalt dies, the Exaltation flits back to an ornate cabinet in Lytek's office to await his care and its chance to be reborn in Creation. Lytek treats each Exaltation as a work of art and does not discuss them with anyone outside of designated individuals in his own department or in the Bureau of Destiny. Lytek's neutrality is famed far and wide—he loves all of his works equally and does not favor the Lunar, Sidereal or Solar Exalted over one another.

Lytek, along with the Maiden of Secrets, is one of two beings who know of the Great Curse for certain, and he has spent millennia since the Usurpation looking for a cure. In addition, he also sees the Abyssal

Morgan Hillan (order #910970)

Exaltation as a perversion of his own work and, along with several members of the Gold Faction and Hran-Tzu, seeks a way to undo it.

Within the Bureau of Heaven, Lytek lost immense status and power when the Solar Exalted were bound within their Jade Prison and Ryzala, head of the Bureau, demoted him from co-head of the Bureau in favor of Taru-Han, who was more pliable. The reappearance of the Lawgivers has spurred Lytek to ambitious plotting once more. He has allied with the Gold Faction, and although the Bronze Faction is unhappy with this turn of events, they also fear his power over their own Exaltations, so they have quietly relied on Ryzala's hatred of Lytek to eventually solve their problem.

Motivation: Lytek desires to see all of the Exalted achieve greatness, and by doing so demonstrate his own superlative mastery of his craft.

Description: Lytek is a god of the Fourth Grade who possesses several extraordinary abilities unique to a being in his position. He has stores of memories from previous Exaltations within the vaults of his office and can show them to one of the Exalted, or even graft it to their spirit without their knowledge, triggering flashbacks to previous incarnations. He can show an Exalt the quickest way to power, reducing the time necessary to increase a being's Essence (This technique was used during the war against the Primordials to get Exaltations belonging to casualties back into the fighting as swiftly as possible, and Lytek's technique consists mainly of granting memories of those training sessions). He also has an encyclopedia of every Charm ever created, even one-of-a-kind signature charms belonging to long-dead heroes, so long as it belonged to one of the Exaltations that have passed through his doors, and while he cannot grant access to such Charms, he can demonstrate which Charms led up to their design and offer insight into their development. He appears as a well-dressed citizen of the First Age, sculpted wholly of light. In the presence of Celestial

Morgan Hillan (order #910970)

Exalted, his patronizing attitude is apparent—he frequently touches them without permission, asking probing questions about what memories from former lives they've experienced as well as their experiences in the Second Age.

Other Notes: Lytek's panoply includes a dozen surgical implements that belonged to the previous god of Exaltation, known as the Divine Apparatae of Periapt Surgery, and these items, at least, truly were created by Autochthon for use in field alteration of an Exaltation in the war against the Primordials. It was not unknown for one of the Exalted to perish on the field of battle, where their Essence would flit back to a field hospital where it would be quickly altered and then implanted into a waiting vessel. Lytek's own ability to manipulate an Exaltation is innate, but he occasionally uses these tools for delicate work. These tools are, at all times, kept under lock and key sufficient to stymie the efforts of the most puissant Exalts, so those attempting to lay hands on these must either convince Lytek to allow them to look at them or be one of the greatest thieves in Heaven and Creation.

For those who do gain access to the Apparatae, the Essences of the Exalted finally become open to modification by a being of less power than a Primordial. Best simulated by Storyteller fiat, the memories that accompany an Essence can be trimmed and altered, the Essence can be implanted in a vessel—appropriate or not—and, with appropriate mastery, the Essences can even be altered into something *different*, although what that means would be up to the Storyteller. Lytek's experiments in using the Apparatae to negate the Great Curse have yielded nothing but failure.

Needless to say, these implements are *each* Artifact N/A, if the Storyteller deems them available to characters at all, and should only fall into the hands of the characters after a long and suitably arduous quest. Gaining access to the Apparatae is only the beginning of such an epic.

Virtues: Compassion 4, Conviction 4, Temperance 1, Valor 3

Essence: 7

Masque of Repose

Masque of Repose is God of Funereal Arrangements and serves directly under Wayang in the Violet Bier of Sorrows while working tirelessly as the god of Sijan, where he spends much of his time. The previous city-father of Sijan was destroyed in his sanctum by some mysterious assailant, just like the god to hold the position before him, and Masque of Repose stepped into the job because no one else would take the promotion. Technically speaking, it is highly illegal for a god of Masque of Repose's stature to violate the laws of Heaven in such a way as to hold two such titles, but given the stigma attached to any who work closely with Wayang, and the risk associated with the Sijanese work, nobody wants the Masque's job enough to call in the audit.

Masque of Repose is unconcerned with the current rise of the Deathlords and specifically with the appearance of Mask of Winters so close to his city. He has no idea that the ancient ghost-scholars want to feed the whole world to Oblivion, and if he did, would think their likelihood of success minimal. Masque of Repose has found that he gets prayers in equal amounts from members of the Underworld-influenced ancestor-cults as well as the reincarnation-focused religions of the Realm and the Threshold. He believes Sijan itself is positioned perfectly no matter how the conflict between the living and the dead works itself out.

The Missing Auraclast

One of the greatest secrets Lytek keeps is that one of the Divine Apparatae of Periaptic Surgery has fallen into the hands of another being. This item, the auraclast, is used to crush the souls of the Exalted so as to allow removal of the Essence from within. It literally destroys the eternal spirit of the being it is used against, permanently rendering them unable to ever reincarnate or reappear as a ghost, destroying both the hun and po souls and tearing loose the Exaltation within. It was used in the battles against the Primordials to tear free the Exaltation of a soldier after his soul had been ruptured by a Primordial's attack, clearing the Essence free of the twisted and useless souls of the soldier and allowing it to seek a new host quickly and cleanly.

Lytek is at a loss—the auraclast went missing within the last year, and he has no god in his confidence that he trusts to look for it. The only thing to his advantage is that no one outside of the thief knows what an auraclast looks like. Lytek is considering putting out word discreetly that an object of that description is missing, without revealing what it is used for. Even that plan has holes, however—and skirts over the question that nags at Lytek's dreams: Who has the auraclast, and what are they using it for?

Morgan Hillan (order #910970)

If Masque of Repose seems blithely unconcerned about the lands of the dead, he's far more worried about the lands of the living. The Masque is easily enamored of mortal women of a certain temperament, and he enjoys nothing more than shedding the cold of Sijan or the Violet Bier of Sorrows for the warmth of a vivacious mortal's embrace. He cannot stand the pale beauties of the Underworld or shadowlands, and insists that his paramours be buxom, joyous, and apple-cheeked. The Masque's problems arise because his liaisons have been resulting in children with improbable frequency of late, and those children in turn tend to demonstrate a strangely precocious amount of their father's power. No less than two dozen God-Blooded of Masque of Repose's descent wander the Scavenger Lands and the northeast right now, working as heroes, bandits, conquerors, and in one case, experiencing an Exaltation, and those are just the ones Masque of Repose knows of. He's currently scrambling, trying to figure out who's behind his current fecundity and what long-term end it serves. In addition, he's deathly afraid that one of his by-blows will cause some kind of trouble sufficient to bring Celestial auditors into the picture, and his effective immunity as a god in a job nobody wants will stop being sufficient to protect him. Worse still, he suspects that if his children ever get organized and come looking for some kind of payout, he may be put into an extraordinarily awkward position.

Motivation: Thousands of years of easy management has weakened Masque of Repose's dedication to his domain, and now he desires nothing more than a pleasant time of it—a city to oversee, obedient children to dote on, peace between Creation and the Underworld, and a smiling and happy woman to warm his bed.

Description: Although Masque of Repose should be a god of the Third Rank, his position as god of Sijan means that he bears the power of a god of the Fourth Rank.

Virtues: Compassion 1, Conviction 3, Temperance 2, Valor 2

Essence: 5

Marilaq a'Lam

It is said that no demon has ever laid foot in the city of Heaven, but that is only technically true. No demon's feet have ever trod the golden streets and adamant highways of Yu-Shan, but the offspring of one of that debased race resides there. She is Marilaq a'Lam, Demon-Blooded Offspring of Berengiere of the Second Circle, and Thrice-Chained Ambassador of the Gaoled, Sister of Neomah and Mistress of Ivory Bonds. Her hair is barbed silk, her eyes pitch-black pools of liquid night, and her form able to instill desire in even the most devout cenobite. Her body is simultaneously full of lush curves and hard ridges of muscle, and her hidden places offer pleasures both obvious and subtle. She possesses three sets of sex organs, according to rumor amongst the Bureaus and departments of Heaven, and more than one god has seen her carried through the streets on her litter or bound within her wagon and bit down on desire for the forbidden secrets she carries.

Born to a mortal assistant to one of the greatest First Age Solar Exalted of the Twilight Caste, who was seduced by Berengiere as she danced for his master, Marilaq a'Lam was an adventuress, scholar, and courtesan amongst the Solar Exalted, always suspected of treachery but too tempting a morsel for the debased pleasure-seekers in the Twilight's circle to deny. Her master was not kind—he forced her to long years of perverse enslavement and even compelled her to read *The Broken-Winged Crane* to unleash her full potential. As the Usurpation began and she saw her masters slain during the feast, Marilaq ran, not trusting the Sidereals or Dragon-Blooded to choose to spare her for her beauty and skill at the arts of love. She fled to Malfeas, where she lived for many centuries, acting as her masters' agent in Creation when necessary, serving as assassin, spy, and tutor to savant and Scavenger Lord over the ensuing years until she was chosen as Ambassador to Heaven.

Brought to Heaven on a wagon of jade, bound by chains of lead and adamant, wearing a collar of orichalcum noosed by moonsilver rope anchored to the floor of the wagon, no precaution was too great to guarantee that Marilaq a'Lam did not do mischief upon her arrival in Yu-Shan. Her transport was overseen by Implacable Shining Barrator himself, and she was escorted by a trio of celestial lions and a small army of lion dogs and other gods. She was deposited—unceremoniously—into a locked manse on the periphery of Yu-Shan, where she waits. When the Incarnae or one of the gods of the Fifth Rank is desirous of word with the Yozi, Marilaq a'Lam is empowered to speak on their behalf, and when needs must, any of the Princes of Malfeas may possess her lush form and speak through her full lips (bypassing the usual limits of time on such possession).

She is treated with some respect. She is allowed to throw parties, although the celestial lions are always present, keeping a close eye on whomever lingers too long or seems too taken with her. She is allowed visitors, if they get permission from their

Morgan Hillan (order #910970)

superiors, a series of licenses and writs granted only to the favored. And she is allowed servants, a handful of chained and beaten rebel gods who sided with the Primordials during the great war. Shining Barrator thinks this is enough.

He is wrong. For Marilaq a'Lam is the Sister of Neomah, her womb always ripe and heavy with child. Her three sets of sexual organs allow her to fertilize herself, although she rarely does so, for tainted semi-demonic offspring would surely be detected by Shining Barrator's lion inquisitors or the Sidereals. Instead, she takes a hair from a partier, a scraping of skin from a visitor, a piece of saliva from a suitor. Those are all she needs to create offspring god enough to go unnoticed by the celestial lions. Her by-blows are tiny things, well suited to escaping the cordon around her manse and wandering unnoticed through the streets of Heaven. They slither and crawl and creep out of her presence, and hide amongst the homeless gods of Yu-Shan, watching, and preying, and growing.

Motivation: To be the vessel for the will of the Yozis and to spy on the gods of Yu-Shan, occasionally suborning one through the use of her potent sexual presence.

Description: Marilaq a'Lam's alien beauty is nearly irresistible to gods and mortal alike. She is equal to a god of the Fourth Rank, and her by-blows range in power from a god of the First to a god of the Second Rank.

Virtues: Compassion 1, Conviction 4, Temperance 1, Valor 3

Essence: 5

Nara-O

Nara-O of the Hundred Veils is Keeper of Secrets and Master of the Division of Secrets and one of the chief gods of the Bureau of Destiny. It reports directly to its Maiden, and other than that keeps its counsel utterly to itself. It is called the Hundred Veils because it appears draped in heavy clothes of blue and gray, with no part of its body uncovered. Some whisper that Nara-O is impossibly gorgeous or hideously ugly—the truth is, no being knows for sure. Those who attempt to penetrate the layers of clothing come to ugly ends—Nara-O's secrets keep themselves.

Nara-O hoards knowledge and gives little in return. It does not explain its orders, and those who balk at carrying them out are quickly replaced. It knows every secret any being in Creation holds that it does not share with another being, so it is nearly omniscient and knows the location of buried treasures, secret ambitions, nursed hatreds, and illicit acts of every stripe.

Nara-O has remained incorruptible and loyal to its Maiden for all of history but follows its own counsel and mistrusts her Chosen. It has been known to occasionally prod the Sidereal Exalted, and none of them can say if its vague comments are allusions to some secret fact it knows or merely jabs at rivals whom it deems incompetent.

Motivation: Nara-O desires to keep its secrets, and since it knows the secrets of every being in Heaven and earth, it has many secrets to keep. Paramount amongst these secrets now is his nascent conspiracy and its goals.

Description: Nara-O is a god of the Fifth Rank, and possesses a number of powers commensurate with its wide domain. The greatest of these powers is access to any secret known by any being. Obviously, telling anyone one of these secrets removes it from Nara-O's domain and records, so the god is utterly loathe to give up any information unless it gets something far more valuable in return.

Virtues: Compassion 2, Conviction 4, Temperance 6, Valor 2

Essence: 8

Nasri

Nasri is General of the Aerial Legion, Daimyo of Rainstorms, and Daimyo of the Season of Air. An elemental storm serpent of incredible age and power, she answers directly to the warlord Ghataru, for whom she nurses an unrequited love. As long as Ghataru is bound by his duty to the Bureau of Seasons, he will not countenance any distractions, so she hopes to help him find a successor and thus create an opportunity to press her suit. She is the mistress of both weather warfare when Heaven goes to battle and the great storms that occasionally batter Creation in peace. Beneath Nasri are the five regional storm deities, in both peace and war, and during wartime the five Wind Masters also fall under her control. During peacetime, she must work with them to ensure that proper winds blow to fuel her storms.

Unlike her superior, Ghataru, Nasri is not convinced that the Solar Exalted deserve to be placed back in control of the bureau, and her doubts stem from long conversations she has had with several Sidereal Exalted, who have used their philosophy to sway her to their point of view. Surely if the Solar Exalted were meant to control the Bureau, the Unconquered Sun would have sent a directive to that effect. And when they do get control, they will undoubtedly use it to overthrow the only real edifice of stability and order in Creation, the Scarlet Realm. In her mind's eye, she sees her troops forced to go to battle against the artifact dragons of the Realm and the Defense Grid which her Legion typically supplements, which will undoubtedly cost many of their lives, and for what...?

Morgan Hillan (order #910970)

She is now plagued with doubts, each one becoming more pressing due to the Bronze Faction's urgings, and is torn between her loyalty and love for Ghataru and her duty to the Aerial Legion and Creation. If Ghataru ever does allow a Solar Exalted to gain his favor, there's no telling what Nasri will do, or if she will snap under the strain of her conflicting impulses entirely.

Motivation: The urgings of the Sidereal Exalted and her natural duty, loyalty and love for Ghataru have given her twinned, potentially conflicting Motivations which are tearing her apart. She is torn between a desire to love Ghataru and follow his orders and a desire to keep the Solar Exalted from using her troops as tools.

Description: Nasri is an elemental equal to a god of the Fourth Rank, and as leader of the Aerial Legion commands hundreds of warrior-gods of the Third and Fourth Ranks. She appears as a beautiful woman whose skin is covered in the feathers of a thunderbird, and whose eyes crackle with lightning, when she is not in her true form, that of an ancient storm serpent.

Virtues: Compassion 2, Conviction 4, Temperance 2, Valor 5

Essence: 5

Parad

Parad is the Left-Hand of Power and God of Inherited Might. He is an adjutant to Lytek empowered to trace the bloodlines of the Terrestrial Exalts. Parad suffered a major blow to his domain when the Dragon-Blooded began to breed with mortals, and he has never quite forgiven them for that. He now traces lineages of all sorts, from mortals with the blood of gods or Exalts coursing through their veins to the children of ghosts and demons, determining in whom Exaltation—in the case of Dragon-Blooded—or the powers of their parents—in the case of the other beings—will manifest.

Because his domains include Dragon-Blooded and the by-blows of more powerful entities, Parad is something of a third-tier god within the Bureau of Heaven despite his divine power, and he has simmered in resentment for dozens of centuries. As the Left-Hand of Power, he should, in his opinion, at least rival Lytek, as he did in the early days of the First Age, before the Dragon-Blooded decided they simply couldn't live without mating with mere mortals. He's spent the time since his banishment to relative obscurity attempting to reconstruct a bloodline of "pure" Dragon-Blood with the commensurate legendary Breeding that such a family would possess,

Morgan Hillan (order #910970)

even going so far as to maintain a Terrestrial seeming within the Thousand Mazy Path's Office of the Divine Elemental Essence, which tracked marriages, births and breeding for the Scarlet Empress herself. Under this disguise, he created the Crimson Parlor Matriarchs, a cabal of Dragon-Blooded women in their twilight years who sought to intermarry their bloodlines for power, promotion, and breeding quality over the last few hundred years, with no small amount of success.

But it seems without the blessings of one of the Five Elemental Dragons themselves, the achievement of his goal—a Dragon-Blood of First Age power—is impossible. Parad now spends his time in his office plotting genealogical data and considering some method for convincing one of the Dragons to sign off on his petition.

Motivation: To return the Dragon-Blooded to their former glory and thus arrange a rise in his own fortunes while tracing the divine, demonic, and Exalted bloodlines of Creation in order to create beings of such puissance that his own glory will be unmistakable.

Description: Parad appears as a Terrestrial Exalt of shifting elemental aspect and ancient power. He is handsome, but his eyes are too crafty and his bitterness becomes apparent after any long conversation. He occasionally takes the form of various other identities he has set up in the Realm to monitor the Office of Divine Elemental Essence or the Golden Parlor. He is a god of the Third Rank politically but possesses many unique powers related to when he was a god of the Fourth Rank in the early First Age.

Other Notes: While Lytek controls when a Dragon-Blooded will Exalt, it is Parad who oversees how powerful the offspring of Dragon-Blooded will be and how strongly their breeding will show.

Virtues: Compassion 2, Conviction 3, Temperance 2, Valor 3

Essence: 4

Ruvia

Ruvia is Captain of the Golden Barque and God of Roads and one of the most attentive gods to the ongoing tumult in Creation. He has ears everywhere, and every god who reports to him is forced to do so in excruciating detail. Ruvia is obsessed with the network of roads, paths, and highways that ring Creation; the towns and cities they connect; and the commerce and trade that makes society function. He knows that the financial transactions and travel that his domain facilitates are the only thing holding back the raksha who wait hungrily beyond the bounds of reality, and he presses constantly for more roads to be built into the Bordermarches and shadowlands, thus expanding his interests.

Ruvia runs his division with incredible efficiency, although he makes sure to limit the access of inferiors to the bigger picture, even splitting them into daytime and nighttime shifts to keep potential rivals from gaining an idea of what Ruvia is doing. Ruvia has many plans, from plots to expand the engine of Creation and bar the Fair Folk from reality to conspiracies that will curb the ambitions of the various city gods and smash Wun Ja's plans to pieces. He has not yet made up his mind whether or not he will throw in with the Bronze or the Gold Faction, although he leans toward the Bronze simply because he feels the status quo leaves less room for mistakes.

Motivation: Ruvia desires the expansion of his domain and thus the progression of society out of barbarism and into a new golden age, all while sealing off reality from the raksha.

Description: Ruvia appears as an old man with long hair and a voluminous beard, clothed in robes of saffron. When he travels in Creation, he appears on the back of a mule, carrying a sack from which he can procure any object and a mallet from which he can curse or bless any being with a blow. He is unquestionably a god of the Fifth Rank.

Virtues: Compassion 2, Conviction 2, Temperance 5, Valor 2

Essence: 7

Ryzala

Ryzala is the Lady of Bureaucracy and Paperwork, Shogun of the Department of Celestial Concerns, and unofficial director of the Bureau of Heaven. Technically, she is the equal of Taru-Han, but the latter's obsession with her off-the-books collection leaves the Bureau in Ryzala's hands, making her the most powerful little god in Yu-Shan and answerable only to the Incarnae.

As goddess of paperwork, Ryzala receives prayers from both men and gods so is buoyed by their entreaties. She appears as a many-armed, mantis-like woman constantly at her desk, shuffling and filing dozens of papers at once. She is, as a being of such incredible power, heavily invested in the status quo, and the reappearance of the Solar Exalted and the disappearance of the Scarlet Empress have left her paralyzed with indecision. Until she decides what to do, she bides her time, occasionally stopping one faction or another from pushing the situation in Creation to a boiling point. If many of the other gods and factions in Yu-Shan seek to pursue some new path or find the answers to questions that plague the present, Ryzala represents the stasis of the status quo—she will not make a decision on any matter until she is forced to and is intent on slowing down the progress of those around her.

Morgan Hillan (order #910970)

Ryzala does have one weakness—she secretly dislikes the Sidereal Exalted. In her mind, most of the missteps that have threatened the smooth running engine of Heaven can be laid at their feet. The Usurpation, to her mind, has clearly been revealed as a mistake, opening up the door for the Great Contagion, Balor's Crusade, and centuries of Dragon-Blooded ineptitude. The Solar Exalted were no prizes, either, but none of their decisions left Creation open to utter destruction at alien hands. And with no Creation, there is no need for a Celestial Bureaucracy, and with no Celestial Bureaucracy, there is no need for a Bureau of Heaven. She is not convinced that the returning Solars are a good thing, but she will keep the Fivefold Fellowship from using its clout openly to destroy Solars who visit Heaven unless there is a very good reason—invading the Jade Pleasure Dome, perhaps.

Motivation: To maintain the current status quo.

Description: Ryzala is a god of the Fifth Rank, and more powerful than any god in Heaven other than the Incarnae themselves.

Other Notes: Ryzala, as the head of a powerful Bureau unhampered by oversight and buoyed up by mortal and divine prayers, has almost limitless resources at her disposal, and while she officially answers to the Unconquered Sun, he has never corrected even her most gross displays of power.

Virtues: Compassion 1, Conviction 5, Temperance 5, Valor 3

Essence: 9

Scarazan

Scarazan is the goddess of Divine Reallocation, a dull-sounding title that belies the fact that she is the single most feared and despised god in all of Yu-Shan. It is Scarazan who sits in judgment on gods whose domains have faded into obscurity and who handles their transfer to other, less important domains; their removal from employment entirely and casting out into the slums of Yu-Shan; or their trials for crimes against Heaven and subsequent smelting into starmetal.

Scarazan rejoices in her power, and while she does not get to decide who gets charged or sentenced, which falls to the censors, she does get to mete out the punishments. This has put her on the most wanted list as far as most of the various factions of Heavens are concerned, for Scarazan's predecessor was somewhat more circumspect about whether or not he enjoyed the destruction or diminishment of his fellow gods. Scarazan is unaware of the various plots against her, but if she found out about them, she would be forced to turn to Creation to find allies or pawns to defend her. She doesn't have enough real power to offer anything to any other god in Heaven, nor any ability to affect the outcomes of divine reallocation itself.

Motivation: Scarazan has no ambitions. She simply desires to see god after god demoted, cast out, or destroyed, regardless of whether they deserve it, and to do the deeds herself.

Description: For all her power over the gods who come before her, Scarazan is a god of the Third Rank.

Virtues: Compassion 1, Conviction 3, Temperance 2, Valor 2

Essence: 4

Shining Barrator

Shining Barrator is one of the leaders of Yu-Shan's celestial lions and de facto head of the Department of Peculiar Matters of Special Import, also known derisively as the Special Branch. Infamous for his unflinching self-discipline and unbending dedication toward completing a goal, Shining Barrator is called "Implacable" by those who have dealt with him, a nickname of which he is quietly proud.

Shining Barrator spends his days overseeing investigations into divine bureaucrats, watching for breaches in Yu-Shan's security, and untangling conspiracies involving networks of gods, Yozi or Underworld infiltrators. The Incarnae give him wide latitude, and Barrator can officially be gainsaid only by their commands once he begins an investigation. Unofficially, Barrator is careful when moving against the interests of the Sidereals and the gods of the Fifth Rank, who would surely destroy him without a thought if he crossed them too badly. At the same time, those gods and the Chosen of the Maidens are careful not to bring themselves into Shining Barrator's view—they know that if they came under his attentions, their personal enemies may support the lion's investigation. And why discard a tool you yourself may someday put to use? In this way, by being useful to everyone but his current target, the lion has kept himself alive and powerful.

Shining Barrator takes a personal interest in all newcomers to Heaven, especially any Solar Exalted, representatives of the Deathlords, and the titleholder of Ambassador of Malfeas. He has no personal interest in the Solar Exalted unless they are accused of causing trouble and avoids the Gold/Bronze Faction struggles as tangential to his efforts to keep Heaven secure. More to the point, he mistrusts the Sidereal Exalted greatly and suspects strongly that they are more fallible than any of the gods. In this, perhaps, he thinks of gods too highly.

Morgan Hillan (order #910970)

Motivation: To protect Heaven from all threats, internal and external alike.

Description: Shining Barrator is a massive celestial lion, due to his immense experience possessed of more Charms and abilities than his brethren. More than that, every celestial lion, lion dog, and guardian spirit in Yu-Shan answers to Shining Barrator if he wills it, and his power over internal security matters can be checked only by one of the Incarnae or a very important god of the Fifth Rank, such as a department head.

Virtues: Compassion 1, Conviction 5, Temperance 5, Valor 5

Essence: 7

Taru-Han

Taru-Han is the goddess of dying and the Lady of Souls and the head of the Department of Abstract Matters within the Bureau of Heaven. She does not decide who dies—that is handled by the Maiden of Endings and the fate planning committees. Instead, she oversees the act of dying and the supervision of souls to the afterlife, which she effects through soul collectors (see p. 132-133).

Taru-Han's power escalated greatly after the Usurpation and the Great Contagion, and she utilized the enhanced prestige and power to expand what had once been a minor vice of hers—the waylaying of souls for her collection. Although she does not keep the souls permanently, she delays their arrival at their final destination, sometimes for centuries at a time. The souls she chooses are always the most "perfect" souls—the souls of heroes, genocidal villains, mighty conquerors, and unearthly beauties. So obsessed is she with her collection that at this point, she gives very little supervision to the gods underneath her, except as it concerns possible rivals for her position. She utilizes her soul collectors to spy on her rivals, and when one seems like they may move against her, she finds information or doctors charges against them and makes sure

Morgan Hillan (order #910970)

the censors and celestial lions move in for the kill. She is currently eyeing Lytek and plans to remove him shortly.

Motivation: To spend time with her collection of souls, to cull the worst and replace them with the best and brightest.

Description: Taru-Han is a god of the Fifth Rank who appears as an inhuman, swirling vortex of gray smoke.

Other Notes: Taru-Han has the power to order the soul collectors to do her bidding when she desires it, and is the only being who can order them to divert a soul or pursue some other task (such as spying on her rivals).

Virtues: Compassion 1, Conviction 2, Temperance 3, Valor 3

Essence: 7

Uvanavu

Uvanavu is the Chrysanthemum Shogun, God of Health and Well-Being and Left Hand of Yaogin, in addition to bearing the title Third Syndic of Whitewall and possessing one of the most potentially powerful domains in Heaven. Despite these benefits, he is the very model of the harried, put-upon Celestial executive. Not only was his domain substantially weakened during the Great Contagion, but his position in the Bureau of Destiny is hemmed in by a supervisor who spends his time in a drugged stupor and a rival of equal power who thinks health and well-being are obstacles to her goal of creating a world full of prostitutes. The city he oversees in Creation is threatened by a particularly precocious Solar Exalted warlord called the Bull of the North to one side and one of Creation's largest and most vicious shadowlands to the other. And, to make matters worse, Uvanavu has recently discovered that Golden Reverie, who Uvanavu once thought his only ally in Heaven, has been manipulating him in order to push forward Golden Reverie's own agenda, violating the few Celestial edicts that anyone actually cares enough to enforce in the process and putting Uvanavu and his rival Livilla's head on a plate for negligent supervision charges if an auditor finds out. It's no wonder Uvanavu prefers to spend his time in Creation rather than Yu-Shan.

Uvanavu is a mess. He can't let anyone know exactly how threatened he is and puts forward an air of calm and serenity at all times, but inside he's desperate to find some solution to his problems. He needs some plan to neutralize Golden Reverie's ambitions, get Yaogin to pay attention to the management of the division—Uvanavu doesn't want Yaogin's job, he's got enough on his plate as it is, he just wants him to step up and do his work—*and* cut Livilla off before she eliminates his position or worse still has him assassinated. In addition, finding some way to neutralize the Bull of the North's acquisitive tendencies before they reach Whitewall's borders would be wonderful, but the Syndic's decision to support the Solar Exalted and Livilla's recent decision to—pardon the pun—prostitute herself out to the Bronze Faction means that the obvious tools to use, a Sidereal hit team, are not available. Finally, the number of gods who hate the Deathlords more than Uvanavu can be counted on one hand, and he forces himself to scrape together the time to shrink Marama's Fell and strike out at the forces of the Underworld whenever possible.

Due to his powerful domain and his role as Syndic, Uvanavu has plenty of possible carrots to offer Creation's heroes or mercenary gods if they choose to act on his behalf, but they need to be as capable of operating in Heaven's corridors of power as they are fighting off barbarians from the walls of Whitewall, which is a tall order. He doesn't just need strong-arms—he's got plenty of those guarding his city—he needs cunning and clever operators capable of pushing back a shadowland, treating with the Bull, and breaking heads—quietly—in the upper-levels of the department.

Motivation: Uvanavu desires the return of the Creation-wide health programs of the First Age, and he endeavors to bring this about by sponsoring the reborn Solar Exalted and using Whitewall's glory as a rallying point and by destroying the shadowlands that blight Creation. Lately, he has also pondered throwing Livilla into the Mouth of Oblivion if opportunity presents itself.

Description: Uvanavu is a god of the Fifth Rank, but he's surrounded by so many enemies that his power by itself will avail him to only a minimal extent.

Virtues: Compassion 3, Conviction 5, Temperance 2, Valor 2

Essence: 8

Vermillion Ink Silencer

Vermillion Ink Silencer is the God of Mergers and Liquidations and a shining example of how the vagaries of Creation-bound current events and politics can propel a nobody into the stratospheric reaches of divine politics. Serving under Wayang in the Violet Bier of Sorrows, Vermillion Ink Silencer was a simple functionary who had been promoted to his current position due to his diligence and networking abilities, but the effect the recent disappearance of the Scarlet Empress has had on the business interests of the Realm, domestic and foreign, has meant that he is suddenly the master of a powerful and growing

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domain. The current tumult in the Blessed Isle has meant that there's just enough uncertainty to cause business owners everywhere in Creation to speculate heavily, devouring weaker businesses while absorbing stronger ones, which in turn has resulted in Vermillion Ink Silencer's rise into the upper-middle ranks of Celestial affairs.

Vermillion Ink Silencer is being feted and flattered, romanced and dazzled, and due to the intensity of his current fame, it has gone to his head. A wiser god may have realized that current events in Creation are creating a temporary boom in their domain, enjoyed the social updraft while it lasted, and then tried to go back to a normal life, but Vermillion Ink Silencer doesn't see the inevitability of his ride coming to a close. He's stepped on underlings, badmouthed superiors, and gossiped about all the people who everybody else knows you're not supposed to speak out of turn about. All the while, his new "friends" are milking him for all he's worth and those he's crossed are plotting ways to punish him for his temerity.

As it stands, a few of Vermillion Ink Silencer's friends from before his current popularity—Masque of Repose, a fellow god within the Violet Bier, and Black Ice Shadow, a Sidereal Exalted—are hoping to find some way to negotiate with the more powerful gods Vermillion Ink Silencer has crossed in order to save him from soulforging when his domain slides back into obscurity, which will mean an immense amount of favor-brokering and politicking. That is, if Vermillion Ink Silencer doesn't upset someone so much they have him murdered out of hand.

Motivation: Enjoy the fruits of his labor and rest on his laurels while his domain generates endless power for him.

Description: Vermillion Ink Silencer appears as a vaguely humanoid crustacean in formal robes of the latest fashion, although his clothing has the garishness common to the newly popular and powerful. He is a god of the Third Rank, and his domain's increase in importance has not yet resulted in heightened personal power. Perhaps if the current wave of buyouts and mergers continues for another few decades, he might begin to scrape the Fourth Rank, but the reappearance of the Solar Exalted and the rise of the Deathlords certainly means that the boom, such as it is, will end soon.

Virtues: Compassion 2, Conviction 2, Temperance 1, Valor 3

Essence: 3

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Wayang

Wayang is the Black Puppet Mask, the god of silence, and head of the Violet Bier of Sorrows. He typically appears as a man wrapped in fabrics of pure shadow, with only his eyes glowing. He never speaks but instead utilizes a personalized form of sign language that communicates every idea he wishes with perfect clarity. He can appear anywhere he wishes so long as there is shadow present. He is also able to listen through any shadow, and while none of his subordinates know for certain if he has this ability, they suspect enough that they are careful about talking near any darkened area. Little do they know that Wayang may actually hear through any shadow in Yu-Shan, a power he uses sparingly, for fear that the other gods will discover it.

Wayang moves carefully because after the Fall of Thorns, he found himself under suspicion due to his actions in commissioning studies of the Deathlords and their servants, as well as arranging for a Sidereal to be raised within the confines of a Shadowland and taught necromancy. The whole Bureau now wonders if Wayang is a pawn of the Deathlords, and Wayang knows that there is indeed a traitor within the division and is not convinced that it isn't himself.

Motivation: To understand the Deathlords and use that information to check their power.

Description: Wayang is a god of the Fourth Rank, despite his august position. He is, however, one of the more clever gods in Yu-Shan and uses that cleverness to make up for his lack of potency among the gods of the Fifth Rank.

Virtues: Compassion 3, Conviction 3, Temperance 3, Valor 4

Essence: 5

Wun Ja

Wun Ja is god of the Shining Metropolis and Director of the Bureau of Humanity. She was once one of the most powerful gods of Yu-Shan in the First Age, but the destruction of the greatest cities of that era was a massive blow to both her spiritual and political power, and in the chaos following the Usurpation many of the gods of the Bureau were co-opted by the Bureau of Heaven. Despite her slide into the Fourth Rank of gods, she is still one of the most powerful gods in Heaven due to tithing by her subordinates, but she is incapable of appreciating that fact and sees it merely as a stopgap measure that has slowed her descent, not stopped it. As such, she is desperate to increase the power of her domain and the bureau's influence and will break any of the laws of Heaven to do so.

Wun Ja has made overtures to both the Gold Faction and the city fathers and mothers of Creation. She is the lead proponent of the Bureau of Humanity providing aid to the Gold Faction and works tirelessly for its success. She funnels resources to the Gold Faction in exchange for promises that the cities of the Threshold will not be destroyed as the Solar Exalted regain their power, while working closely with the Sidereals of that alliance to cut the Realm off from the Threshold.

At the same time she pushes the gods of various cities to seize control of them. This is not just to boost her political power but her own personal resources, for the gods of the various cities all tithe prayers to her, and so growth in their worship means an attendant increase in her own.

Motivation: Wun Ja is desperately afraid that her Bureau will be diminished, and she will be politically destroyed. To avoid this fate, she will do nearly anything.

Description: Wun Ja appears as a tall, slender woman made entirely of glass and metal, but she can take more humanoid shapes when the occasion requires it, especially when she walks Creation. She is a god of the Fourth Rank, although she believes she teeters on the edge of the third.

Other Notes: Wun Ja has made a concrete alliance with the Gold Faction and may call on its Sidereals and the Solars who study under them when the need requires it, although she would be surreptitious about seeking such help, as the Bronze Faction still dominates heavenly affairs.

Virtues: Compassion 2, Conviction 2, Temperance 3, Valor 4

Essence: 7

Xaos the Hidden

Xaos is the God of Things Undiscovered and answers to Nara-O, for what little good it does the latter, for Xaos is utterly mad. During Balor's Crusade, as the Fair Folk battered the walls of Creation, Nara-O bade Xaos slip behind enemy lines and, using guile and Charm, ferret out the enemy's tactics. Whatever Xaos learned, he has yet to share in detail, for he was found in an area of the Middlemarches, his form broken into scintillating Wyld energy, his mind lost in a purgatorial landscape. He claims, in his rare lucid moments since his return to Heaven, to have learned the true name of the Wyld, but every time he attempts to utter it, listeners around him fall down mad and Xaos suffers from another break with reality. Still, when his madness is at its worst, Xaos is useful, and Nara-O has appointed a dozen lesser gods to write down his rantings and assigned a whole sub-division to attempt to interpret them. What truths Nara-O gleans from these volumes when it takes the time to read them is unknown, for it keeps its secrets close.

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Xaos resides now in offices within the Division of Secrets. Even those who gaze too long at his writhing and dynamic form report a pull on their sanity, accompanied by strange insights into the nature of reality. It is for that reason that whenever he receives important visitors, Xaos hides himself behind a bamboo screen and speaks only of topics that are unrelated to whatever revelations he had within the Wyld. Only then can he maintain his elusive hold on sanity.

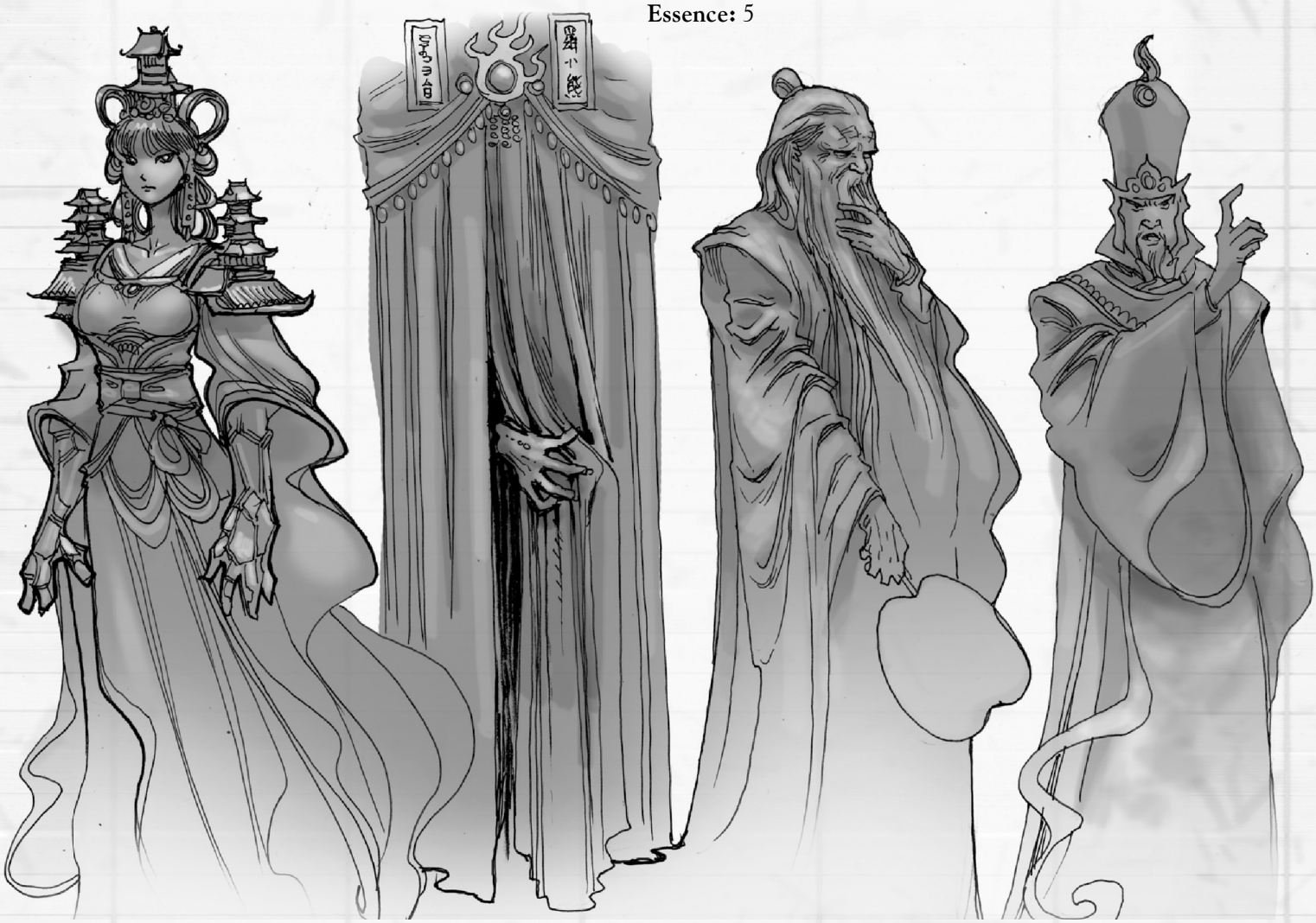
Motivation: At one point, Xaos's goal was to catalog the secrets of those things that were undiscovered, until they shifted out of his domain and into the domain of another god within the Division of Secrets. Now, his motivation is simply to hold onto his sanity long enough to impart the terrible knowledge he gained all those years ago in the Wyld to another being who can put it to use.

Description: Xaos is unquestionably a god of the Fourth Rank. His ordeal within the Deep Wyld has left him transformed, however. As part of his domain, Xaos knows all of the secrets of the world that have not yet been uncovered, and his time in the Wyld has left him with incredible insights into the ways of the raksha, the Deep Wyld, and the Shinma, but revealing too much of it triggers his psychotic breaks and inevitably leaves the listener mad until the knowledge is forgotten, wiped from her mind, or removed in some other manner.

Other Notes: According to one theory, Xaos is effectively now one of the Unshaped Fair Folk, although his ties to the Celestial Bureaucracy and his origin as a divine personage mean that he is able to exist, albeit in a diminished form, within the static reality of Yu-Shan. Nara-O finds the risk of having such a corrupted god so near the Loom of Fate prohibitively dangerous, but Xaos keeps all secrets undiscovered, and Nara-O knows all secrets, so Xaos forms a portal to knowledge that Nara-O covets. Within its heart, Nara-O wonders if Xaos has not been transformed into some kind of weapon against the Loom of Fate itself and for that reason never lets Xaos within its presence.

Virtues: Compassion 3, Conviction 2, Temperance 2, Valor 3

Essence: 5



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Yaogin

Yaogin is the mortal-born lover of Venus, the Maiden of Serenity, who in the dawn of Creation espied him sleeping on a hill underneath a moonlit Southern sky. She cast innumerable blessings upon him and during the war against the Primordials kept him secure when the very future of Creation was in doubt, eventually making him a god in his own right. When Incarnae were shaping the Celestial Bureaucracy into its present form, Venus whirled him through the divine hierarchy until he held a position just below her in the Division of Secrets. He is now Bearer of the Lapis Ewer, which contains the heavenly draughts of illumination and pleasure, and a full-fledged power in his own right.

Sadly, those who know Yaogin claim he has grown lazy and indolent, addicted to both sips from his Lapis Ewer as well as all manner of drugs provided for him by Golden Reverie, a subordinate god of ecstasy. In his fugue, he allows the reins of power to fall to his two titular Hands, Uvanavu and Livilla, whose own conflict with one another presents a stalemate that only Golden Reverie can break, putting him in effective control of the whole Division of Secrets.

There is more to Yaogin's reverie than meets the eye, but due to the distracting infighting amongst the management beneath him, few are likely to look closely at it. While wandering Creation a century ago, Yaogin was set upon by a powerful Lunar Exalted, whose venomous bite managed to infect even his divine form. Yaogin, concerned about keeping his position in the absence of Venus's attentions and with Livilla's ever-present ambition nagging at his heels, has hidden his wound, which bleeds constantly and drips a clear poison. Yaogin relies on the Lapis Ewer and the opiates of Golden Reverie to minimize the pain but in the process has numbed himself insensible. He occasionally has moments of clarity, however, in which he attempts to find beings in Heaven and Creation capable of finding his attacker and producing some antidote to the poison that rots his divine form. But Yaogin doesn't even know the name of this mysterious Lunar Exalted…

Motivation: Yaogin's desire has always been to share the love in his heart with others, washing them in the glow of pleasure and serenity that he experienced in the love of Venus and thus ease their suffering. In his agony, this desire has turned inward, and he seeks to use pleasure and serenity to ease his own pain.

Description: Yaogin still retains the fresh-faced beauty that enthralled the Maiden of Serenity, although now it is marred by his heavy-lidded gaze and sweaty brow, which occasionally, when he thinks no one is looking, wrinkles in agony. He has full lips, dark hair, and enchanting eyes. Heaven recognizes Yaogin as a God of the Fifth Rank, but the wasting disease he suffers from and his inability to attend to his duties in anything other than a cursory, distracted manner mean that he is effectively a god of the Third Rank. If he could be cured, he would quickly assume his former power.

Other Notes: Yaogin possesses the Lapis Ewer (Artifact •••••), a powerful artifact and symbol of office, capable of inspiring artists, stirring warmth into even the coldest heart, and granting freshness and vitality. Sadly, the venom which courses through Yaogin's system seems to be one of the few things the Lapis Ewer cannot cure.

Virtues: Compassion 5, Conviction 2, Temperance 2, Valor 2

Essence: 3

The Syndics

The identity of the Syndics as Luranume, Yo-Ping, and Uvanavu is a secret known only to a handful of beings in Yu-Shan, one covered up by the Bronze Faction out of fear that the Syndics' heavenly political power will embolden the Golds. Among them, the Syndics are so highly placed that they lie beyond the auditing power of any bloc in Heaven. The only weak link in their security is that Uvanavu is so extraordinarily stretched thin by his conflicting responsibilities that his foes within his department may assassinate him out of hand, not even knowing he's a Syndic.

The Bronze Faction hopes to capitalize on that vulnerability by utilizing Uvanavu's rival Livilla, if possible, and then discarding her to rid themselves of the smoking gun linking them to the matter. The most delicate aspect of the whole plan is Yaogin, Uvanavu and Livilla's superior. If he is hurt in the power struggle, the favor the Maiden of Serenity holds for him means that those involved will be subject to censure by Venus, at the very least, and she will surely not rest until the conspiracy is revealed.

Yo-Ping

Yo-Ping is the Celestial Minister of Harmony and God of Peace, and while he nominally answers to Taru-Han, her focus on her own interests means that Yo-Ping comfortably does whatever he wants with little or no oversight. Along with Uvanavu and Luranume, he is also one of the three Syndics of Whitewall and the most powerful of the trio. He oversees the five directional gods of peace and political stability that counterbalance the directional gods of war; because of this, Yo-Ping often consults

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with the war gods' director, E-Naluna, with whom he is on good terms.

After the Primordial War, all of Creation prayed to Yo-Ping for peace and prosperity, and he reigned as one of the most powerful gods in Heaven. When the Sidereals plotted the overthrow of the Solar Exalted, Yo-Ping loudly protested and only kept his position due to the fact that the Maiden of Serenity chose to support him (While she was in favor of the Usurpation, she could not bring herself to censor a god whose only sin was promoting her domain). Although the chaos that followed the Usurpation led to a loss in power, Yo-Ping suffered less than any other god, because the people of Creation continued to pour prayers to him for peace and stability.

As the Time of Tumult rolls onward, Yo-Ping receives even more prayers than usual, and his power grows correspondingly. The return of the Solar Exalted excites him beyond measure—Whitewall is associated with the Unconquered Sun, and before the Second Age, Yo-Ping served that Incarna personally. It seems inevitable that the success of the Solar Exalted will mean success for Yo-Ping and the other Syndics. To facilitate his plans, he has used his immense power to pressure the Convention of Air to place Sidereals of his choice into the convention's open seats—Sidereals who just happen to be members of the Gold Faction. Chejop Kejak has to struggle mightily just to keep these seats open, but the impasse has drawn to a close, and within the next few months, the new seat holders will be announced.

Motivation: Yo-Ping desires to spread harmony and peace across Creation while keeping enough war and strife so that his subordinates and the war gods do not find themselves in conflict with one another. He will begin this task by bringing the Unconquered Sun's gaze back to Creation by turning Whitewall into a perfect shrine to the Incarna's glory.

Description: Yo-Ping is a god of the Fifth Rank and possesses power that places him in the upper ranks of Heavenly might. He falls just short of the Incarnae themselves.

Other Notes: Yo-Ping, as a being just under the power of the Incarnae, possesses access to a perfected ability, similar to the Unconquered Sun's indomitability in battle. Yo-Ping possesses the Superlative Sign of Harmony, and when he gestures and commands it, peace falls across all mortal battlefields, and even the greatest of Exalted must rest and attempt to negotiate. If those negotiation attempts fail, so be it, battle begins anew—but such a battle will be conducted harmoniously, and the clash of swords and the singing of arrows will have a beauty of its own. Only the Incarnae, the Yozis, the Neverborn, and the greatest of the raksha such as Balor, may resist this imperative, for Yo-Ping's ability works through the weft of Creation and the weave of Fate itself.

Virtues: Compassion 4, Conviction 5, Temperance 2, Valor 2

Essence: 9

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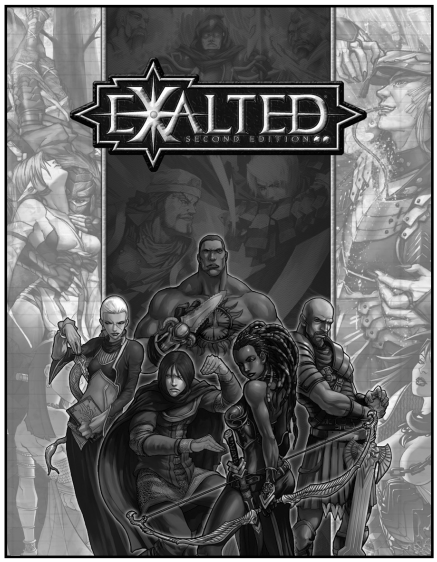

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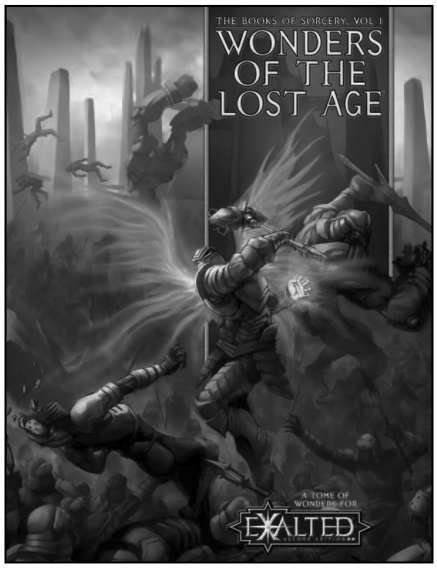

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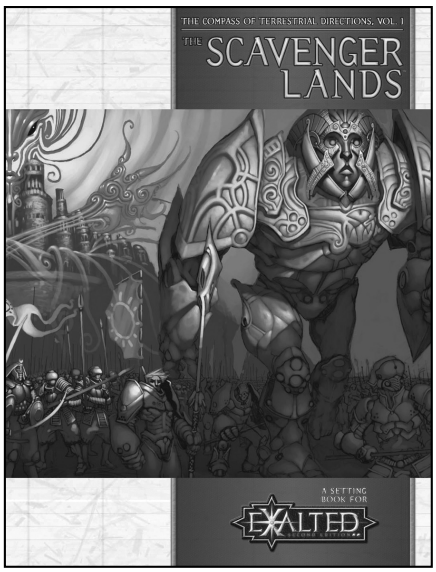

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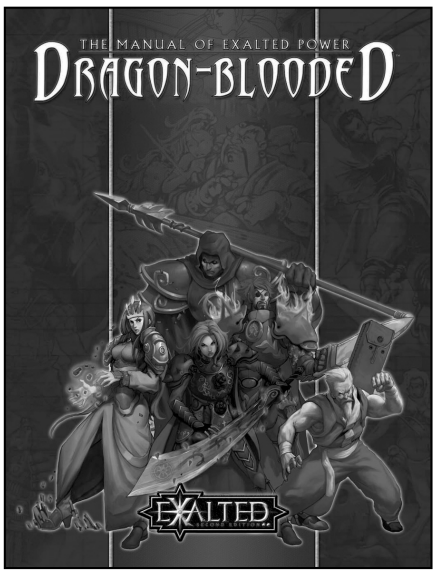

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